Naturally, these charitable activities of the *hoca*s were not exclusively motivated by their piousness and selflessness. Part of it, it is true, was the result of in grained, almost instinctive habit: the preservation of Armenian cultural and religious values and identity was a value in itself to many of the leading families of the Armenian *millet*. But these acts were primarily designed to gain popularity, ard eventually control, over the *millet*. The *hoca*s' long term goal was the liberation of their nation from foreign domination, under their leadership and for their own economic interests (these two points will be further discussed later in this chapter). As a matter of fact, after 1666 their slogan became the liberation of the Armenian fatherland.[20]

*Hoca*s did not form the only moneyed segment of Armenian society. Many Armenian notables in Istanbul and the provinces were called *çelebi*. Unlike *hoca*, the origin of the word *çelebi* is not well established, and there has been no satisfactory explanation of the history of its use. According to most recent studies, it is thought to derive "from the Anatolian Turkish Çalab [*çäläb*] meaning 'God'."[21] Çeleb as a term was "applied to men of the upper classes in Turkey between the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a title primarily given to poets and men of letters, but also to princes."[22] While in Ottoman Turkish it denoted "writer, poet, reader, sage, man of keen common sense, in modern Turkish it means "well-educated," "gentleman," "man of refinement."[23] Its usage among Armenians was a reflection of the Ottoman-Turkish custom.

As in the case of *hoca*s, the assertion is made that Armenian *çelebi*s included "elements of the old [Armenian] feudal nobility as well as those who had risen from the ranks of artisans in cities."[24] Again, there is no historical evidence to substantiate the first contention, while the latter is a universally accepted fact.

Among the great number of prominent Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who were called *çelebi*, the best known and perhaps

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20 **Anasian**, *Azatagrakan Sharjumnern*, p. 83.

21 *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., s.v. "Çelebi," by **W. Barthold** and **B. Spuler**.

22 *Ibid*.

23 *Ibid*., and *New Redhouse*, s.v. "Hoca."

24 **Anasian**, *Azatagrakan Sharjumnern*, p. 59.