

the most powerful figure was Abro or Abraham Çelebi, a seventeenth century figure about whom the illustrious Armenian writer of the century, Eremia Çelebi, has written extensively. After 1644, Abro Çelebi served the Ottoman army in Crete as its officially appointed purveyor. In 1659 he was thrown in jail when his patron, the Grand Vezir Deli Hüseyin Pasha, was decapitated for embezzlement. Abro survived the crisis and continued serving the Ottoman state, this time collaborating with Köpülü Oğlu Ahmet Pasha.²⁵ In the Armenian *millet* Abro Çelebi was known for his support of charitable and cultural activities. He sponsored the copying of many manuscripts, the construction of a number of churches and the repair of others. He was a strong supporter of Bishop Eghiazar Ayntaptsi in his struggle with his numerous antagonists.²⁶ The mercantile organization he put together was essentially a familial one, and it is not surprising to see that members of his family continued to be prominent up to the later eighteenth century. His brother, Bedros Çelebi, was also a well-known figure, while his son, Matdeos Çelebi, was wealthy enough as well as vain enough to purchase a certificate of nobility from the French king Louis XIV in 1687. In 1717, Matdeos's three sons obtained from Peter the Great of Russia special permission to Open Russian trade to Armenian merchants of the Ottoman Empire; this was an event of considerable importance in the economic history of the empire.²⁷

Andon Çelebi was a similar seventeenth century figure about whom the contemporary Armenian historian, Davrijetsi, writes: "this man was ... so renowned and famous that he was known by the Ottoman kings, [as well as] in the country of the French, and of the Persians. He was a man of great means and of many properties."²⁸ Andon Çelebi, who had houses in Bursa, his birthplace, in Izmir, where his commercial headquarters were located, and in Istanbul, was wealthy enough to pay on the spot and in cash for the load of an entire caravan coming from Persia, or the cargo of a vessel

²⁵ Mikayel Tchamtchian, *Patmutiun Hayots* [History of the Armenian People], 3 vols. (Venice, 1784-1786). 3:698-709.

²⁶ On the struggles that Eghiazar Ayntaptsi relentlessly continued to wage for many years, see Anasian, *Azatagrakan Sharjumnern*, p. 72 passim; Siruni, *Polis*, 1:516 passim; Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 2:2559 passim; Tchamtchian, *Patmutiun*, 3:697.

²⁷ Siruni, *Polis*, 1:485-486.

²⁸ Arakel Davrijetsi, *Patmutiun* [History] (Vagharshapat, 1896), pp. 338-339.