

not led to a clearer understanding of the underlying situation than that presented here, because the data, though plentiful, lack clarity and continuity. On the other hand, few Armenian scholars have seriously focused upon the significance that *hocas* and *çelebis* represent for the early modern period of Armenian history. Among those who have examined the subject, there are two opposing views. One view holds that each title represented a separate class, with an identifiable historical role, while the other rejects such clear-cut differentiation, and is less willing to impart political significance to the titles.

The first view, expounded mainly by Soviet Armenian scholars headed by Anasian, not only accepts the existence of two classes but posits the theory of a “class struggle” between them.⁴⁶ This struggle is said to have been so intense that “it turned into social upheaval.”⁴⁷ *Hocas*, it is claimed, declared an unremitting struggle against their antagonists, and the locus of the clash became the Patriarchate of Istanbul. Control of this administrative center of the Armenian church in the Ottoman Empire was tantamount to dominance over the Armenian people and *millet* within the borders of the empire. Without delving into details, suffice it to state that proponents of this school of thought find *hocas*, who were numerous and stronger in the provinces, to be better attuned to the sentiments and aspirations of the Armenian masses than the *çelebis*, the majority of whom gravitated to the Ottoman capital.

This view maintains that the *çelebis* considered themselves natives of Istanbul and thought of *hocas* as newcomers.⁴⁸ It finds support in the fact that *çelebis* were most frequently, if not exclusively, *sarrafs*, i.e. bankers, and were therefore

closely connected with the Ottoman Palace and the feudal environment... In the seventeenth century they had already adopted, to a great extent, the characteristics of nobility, and

⁴⁶ Anasian, *Azatagrakan Sharjumnern*, p. 62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*