

all the *çelebis* were former *hocas*, former merchants and bankers, who, after reaching a certain position [of prominence], strove to obtain also the title *çelebi* and a more conspicuous position in governmental affairs, and to insure for themselves authority and rank within the Armenian community.<sup>53</sup>

It is difficult to adjudicate the claims made by these two views, but more doubts are raised by Anasian's argument. It is probably the case that wealthy merchants from the provinces made gestures towards leading a "liberation" movement in the seventeenth century; this movement has been studied in considerable detail and need not concern us here. It is also clear that many of these merchants bore the title *hoca*. Fifteenth century colophons record hundreds of *hocas* and no *çelebis*.<sup>54</sup> In the collection of colophons for the years 1601-1620 only two *çelebis* are mentioned, one of whom lived in Istanbul.<sup>55</sup> It seems clear that the *hoca*-merchants aspired to succeed as financiers at the capital, and that as they succeeded they aspired to the title *çelebi*. Anasian himself admits that this honorific had "a special attractiveness, and that is why *hocas* often liked to be glorified with [it, though] in reality they remained the same merchant-*hocas*."<sup>56</sup> All this does not support the idea that the honorifics represented two "classes" involved in a struggle over political issues about the liberation of the Armenian people. It suggests, rather, that there were divisions between the once-dominant provincial power-elite (usually *hocas*), and the later more polished urban members of this elite, centered in Istanbul. Specializing in finance and making their fortune as *sarrafs*, were *hocas* who added the title *çelebi*, or the sons of *hocas* who preferred the newer title, or became *çelebis* directly without ever having carried the other honorific: Abro, Andon and Eremia *çelebis*, all of whom have already been mentioned, belonged to this latter category.

Soviet Armenian historians have a tendency to see class-struggle where other kinds of clashes are at issue. The evidence suggests that Siruni (a Western Armenian historian) is closer to the truth, and that the clashes between the not-very-clearly demarcated groups of *hocas* and *çelebis*

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<sup>53</sup> Siruni, *Polis*, 1:491.

<sup>54</sup> Khatchigian, *Hayeren Dseragreri*, Part One (1401-1450) and Part Three (1481-1500).

<sup>55</sup> Hagopian and Hovhannisian, *Dseragreri*, pp. 274-275 and 350.

<sup>56</sup> Anasian, *Azatagrakan Sharjumnern*, p. 67, note 1.