

Among Armenians, the word was first used as early as the thirteenth century and in some cases became part of the last name of individuals, as in *Hocapap*, *Hocamir*, *Hocamali*, *Hocapek*, *Hocacan*, *Hocasar*, *Hocihan*.<sup>5</sup> The *hocas* of the Iranian-Armenian community are particularly well-known, though *hocas* existed in Western Armenian provinces and in Istanbul. In Armenian, the word was primarily used to refer to established merchants of the community. The Turks also commonly called Armenian merchants *hoca*. However, the title is sometimes used to designate wealthy individuals in general, and while it is safe to assume that most prosperous Armenians of the period accumulated their wealth through trade and finance, the fact cannot be assumed *a priori*. Furthermore, though wealth and leadership are almost inevitably linked in this period, in the history of the lay component of the Armenian *millet*, it cannot be safely assumed that any nouveau-riche Armenian merchant whom sycophants might honor by addressing as *hoca* did indeed hold a position of leadership in the *millet*.

The origins of *hocas* are not clear. An examination of the colophons reveals that the title was used predominantly in the provinces. A colophon dated 1401, speaks of a *khavtjah* or *khotjah* Masudshah, “one of the gentlemen of the city of Tavriz.”<sup>6</sup> Another colophon, dated 1423, mentions “the famous and honorable great *hoca* baron Amir.”<sup>7</sup> Fortunately, there is evidence that not every prominent figure of the community was automatically honored with the highly regarded title. In many a colophon that mentions wealthy and prominent members of a community, only some of the individuals listed are distinguished with the title *hoca*, while others, apparently indistinguishable in prominence and privilege, are named without the honorific. In many instances all the members of a family bear the title: a father, his sons, his brothers and their sons.<sup>8</sup> In others, some members of a family are called *hoca*

---

<sup>5</sup> **Hratchey Adjarian**, *Hayots Andsnanunneri Bararan* [Dictionary of Armenian Proper Names] (Erevan, 1944), p. 526.

<sup>6</sup> **Levon S. Khatchigian**, *JE Dari Hayeren Dseragreri Hishatakaraner, Masn Aratjin (1401-1450)* [Colophons of Fifteenth Century Armenian Manuscripts, Part One (1401-1450)] (Erevan, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328. **Idem**, *Part Three (1481-1500)* (Erevan, 1967), pp. 60-61; **Vasken Hagopian** and **Ashot Hovhannisian**, *Hayeren Dseragreri JE Dari Hishatakaraner, (1601-1620)* [Colophons of Seventeenth Century Armenian Manuscripts (1601-1620)] (Erevan, 1974), p. 25.