

represent a struggle for power between two groups of the Armenian bourgeoisie. That there was competition, rivalry, and even struggle among the members of this class is a historical fact; but the battle lines were not so clearly drawn along the configurations of the two titles. I shall return to this point in the conclusion of the chapter.

The study of this wealthy bourgeoisie, which is the predecessor of the *amiras* in several ways, is further complicated by the introduction of yet another title: *mahtesi*. Siruni claims that the individuals who bore the title, in Istanbul and in the provinces, formed a separate class.<sup>57</sup>

The term *mahtesi* means, etymologically, someone who has gone on pilgrimage to Jerusalem;<sup>58</sup> it is derived from the Arabic word *muqaddesi* or *muqdasi*, meaning “he who has gone to Quds” or Jerusalem, therefore, a pilgrim.<sup>59</sup> The Christians used either form of the term while the Muslims preferred the use of *hadjdji* (or *haci*, in Turkish), which also means pilgrim, from the Arabic *hadjdj*, “pilgrimage.”<sup>60</sup> The Armenian word *mahtesi* had a number of variations: *mughtesi*, *mghtesi*, *mahtasi* or *mahdasi*, etc.<sup>61</sup>

The view that the individuals called *mahtesi* formed a separate class is based on the assumption that

the use of the title *mahtesi* in the seventeenth and eighteenth century sources leads us to the conclusion that it was given to a certain class [of people] who had a [prominent] position in the Armenian nation and were also involved in civic life.<sup>62</sup>

Curiously, Siruni, makes this claim even as he refuses to accept the *hocas* and *celebis* as separate classes. To support his contention he cites several instances where among the sponsors of various church reconstructions were included individuals whose names were preceded by the epithet or

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<sup>57</sup> Siruni, *Polis*, 1:492.

<sup>58</sup> Adjarian, *Hayeren Armatakan Bararan* [Armenian Etymological Dictionary], 6 vols. (Erevan, 1926-1933), 4:760.

*Idem*, *Andsnanunneri*, p. 171.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem*, *Arnatakan*, 4:760-762.

<sup>60</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., s.v. “Hadjdj,” by A. J. Wensinck; *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Hace.”

<sup>61</sup> Khatchigian, *Hayeren Dseragreri*, Part One and Part Three.

<sup>62</sup> Siruni, *Polis*, 1:493.