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Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of Admiralty in London, 1748–1752¹

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The Armenians in seventeenth and eighteenth century India did not always get a “good press” from European and Asian competitors and collaborators, being often disliked as the Jews were in Europe or as the Chinese were in Southeast Asia, for being allegedly grasping and greedy middlemen, or monopolists and engrossers. But as persecuted minorities in their Persian or Turkish-ruled homelands, and as emigrants bereft of the support of a strong colonial power, they inevitably developed techniques which enabled them to survive and sometimes to prosper in unpropitious circumstances.

—Boxer (85, emphasis added)

This article offers a non-fictional detective story that enables, and is embedded within, a larger analytical narrative. For reasons that will become clear, I as a historian and archival researcher play an unusually large role in the detective story, a tale of how I tracked down documents that enabled me to reconstruct an act of British colonial-era piracy against merchants of the Armenian trade diaspora in the eighteenth century. At the center of the narrative is an Armenian-freighted² merchant ship called the *Santa Catharina*, whose cargo the British Admiralty confiscated in India in 1748 and for the possession of which a complex trial was conducted in London between 1749 and 1752. The case pits a trade diaspora against a state, and the analytical narrative discusses the contestation between the waxing power of an imperial nation-state and the waning power of a transnational diaspora. My article situates the *Santa Catharina* trial in a context in which a form of familial-ethnic merchant capital competed with a national-stock-holding merchant capital (that is, the English East India Company), worked with as well as clashed against it, all in an environment increasingly dominated by the colonial conflicts of Britain, France, and the *nawab*³ states of India. That larger context was shaped by the ever-increasing reach of the British state, the English East India Company it chartered, and the navy and law courts that enforced the company's privileges and encroachments.

What was the impact of this process of British colonial expansion on the parallel expansion of the Armenian trade diaspora, considering

that the Armenian expansion was taking place not only in the same space to which British juridical discourse was increasingly being applied but also within the same geographic space of its economic and attendant political/military conquests? Bereft of a state of its own and dispersed across vast geographic distances, upon what methods did the Armenian trade diaspora rely to compete with its more organized imperial rivals? In addition to retelling the story of the ship's trial, my essay aspires to study how the "stateless power" (Tölölyan, "Rethinking") of a diaspora can emerge and function, not always successfully but over long distances, and how private postal services far ahead of their time, intelligence networks, and the resulting information asymmetries enabled that diaspora to compete.

Focusing on the narrative of the *Santa Catharina's* trial in London, I will argue that the Armenian trade diaspora of the Indian Ocean had developed its own distinct "techniques" of survival and prosperity that enabled it, as a *stateless social formation*, to compete and excel against its better-organized European and Asian rival networks of trade. This essay seeks to highlight two such techniques that appear to be unique to the Armenian trade diaspora of the early modern period, though further research may indicate that similar techniques were shared by other trade diasporas of the period. I shall refer to the first technique, following Renee Barendse⁴ and in reference to the central node of the Armenian trade diaspora, as New Julfa's⁵ "global intelligence networks." This consisted of an elaborate system of communication and sharing of information across vast distances through a privately funded network of commercial mail that New Julfa merchants seem to have instituted rather early in their trading history. The second technique was the Armenians' practice of relying on the state institutions of their host societies to defend their "transnational interests" abroad in cases involving clashes with other states and their juridical practices. Arguably, this technique may be seen as a forerunner to the lobbying functions of contemporary diasporas, although its success clearly depended on the continuing fiscal benefits successful diasporic trade and other functions provided the "host" states (for the role of Julfa merchants as financiers to the Safavid state, see Baghdiantz McCabe, *Shah's Silk* ch. 5). As we shall see, the *Santa Catharina* trial in London brings both of these facets of "stateless power" to the forefront.

Merchants and Culture: The Trajectory of an Investigation

My interest in Armenian merchants in Iran and India began during my research for a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University on the "origins" of Armenian nationalism and the "national revival movement" in the eighteenth-century Armenian diaspora

(Aslanian, “Treason”). In the course of my investigations, I became particularly interested in the patronage activities of a group of transnational Armenian merchants known as *Khwajas*, who had migrated from New Julfa/Isfahan in the empire of Safavid Iranians to Mughal India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were operating from their new base in Madras. Between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this Perso-Indian community of Armenians had bankrolled the nascent craft of Armenian printing in Europe, the Middle East, and India (Zekiyan, “Armenian Way”; Baghdiantz McCabe, “Merchant Capital”). It had patronized a literary revival and the formation of the modern Armenian literary canon, which was spearheaded by a small band of Armenian Catholic missionaries, known as the Mekhitarist Order, living in Venice. This same Perso-Indian community had financed the establishment of schools of higher education in Venice, Paris, New Julfa, Moscow, and Calcutta. In addition to their financial patronage and their role in setting up a “diasporic public sphere” (Tölölyan, “Elites”) that enabled the cultural revival movement to gain momentum in the diaspora, some members of this merchant community were cultural and intellectual producers in their own right. This was the case of Shahamir Shahamirian, the wealthiest Armenian merchant in Madras during the second half of the eighteenth century, who set up an Armenian printing press in Madras in 1772 and authored a republican constitution for Armenia in 1787, more than a century before the existence of such a state (Aslanian, *Dispersion*; Tölölyan, “Textual Nation”). The first Armenian newspaper in the world was published on Shahamirian’s press in Madras in 1794, again with the financial patronage of the merchant class.

My research interests gradually drew me away from my initial concerns with the interaction of the Armenian trade diaspora in India with other Armenians *across* the diaspora and homeland to their ties with local Asian (in this case Indian) merchants and societies, as well as with the European states and their state-backed East India Companies, which were well on their way to establishing colonial dominion in Asia. It was in the course of this shift that I stumbled upon a remarkable trove of archival documents in a London archive, which serves as the basis of the present study. This treasure consisted of more than 1,700 mercantile documents from the 1730s and 1740s (mostly business letters and correspondence) confiscated by the British navy in India and shipped to England to be presented as “exhibits” in a high-stakes trial in London. The letters were written by Armenian merchants and their families residing in New Julfa/Isfahan to their agents and correspondents in India. Given the nature of my discovery and the unique window

these papers provided for understanding the inner workings of the Armenian trade diaspora in Persia, India, and the Indian Ocean, I decided to abandon my earlier dissertation topic and redirect my research to the examination of these documents. The fact that, in addition to containing thousands of pages of mercantile correspondence, this archive also holds several thousand pages of court proceedings pertaining to a high-stakes trial pitting members of the Armenian trade diaspora against the British state made the study of this archive even more pertinent to understanding Armenian–European (in this case British) relations and the development of the Armenian trade diaspora in the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth century.

The Making of the Armenian Trade Diaspora(s)

One of the first scholars to popularize the concept of “trade diaspora” was Philip Curtin. Curtin defines his use of the term as follows:

Commercial specialists would remove themselves physically from the home community and go to live as aliens in another town, usually not a fringe town, but a town important in the life of the host community. There, the stranger merchants could settle down and learn the language, the customs and the commercial ways of their hosts. They could then serve as cross-cultural brokers helping and encouraging trade between the host society and people of their own origin who moved along the trade routes. At this stage, a distinction appeared between the merchants who moved and settled and those who continued to move back and forth. What might have begun as a single settlement soon became more complex. The merchants who might have begun with a single settlement abroad tended to set up a whole series of trade settlements in alien towns. The result was an interrelated net of commercial communities, forming a trade network, or trade diaspora—a term that comes from the Greek word for scattering, as in the sowing of grain. (2)

Curtin’s characterization gives a good description of the formation of Armenian trade diaspora communities in the *longue durée*, but it fails to provide a compelling explanation of the genesis of such trade diasporas. Moreover, Curtin’s definition is so loose that it indiscriminately incorporates a broad spectrum of traders, from the stateless Armenians and Jews to the powerful European trading companies and their representatives.

More recently, in an attempt to clarify some of the conceptual ambiguities surrounding the literature on diasporas, Robin Cohen

has presented a broad typology of diasporas, ranging from “trade diasporas” (of the sort discussed by Curtin) to what Cohen calls “victim diasporas,” that is, communities created through violent uprooting and massive displacement. Cohen treats these two typologies as though they were mutually exclusive. As the Armenian case demonstrates, however, “trade” and “victim” diasporas have been intimately linked in history, suggesting that the first type often evolved out of the second.

The first massive waves of dispersion in Armenian history took place in the eleventh century, following the collapse of the last Armenian kingdom on the Armenian plateau. After the sacking of the Bagradit capital of Ani by the Seljuks in 1064, large numbers of Armenians fled to the Genoese “seaborne trade diasporas” of the Crimea on the northern shores of the Black Sea, where they established vibrant colonies in Kaffa, Tana, and, later, further north in Kamenits in medieval Poland. From the Crimea, Armenian merchants migrated northward to Galicia (in southern Poland) where, by the late thirteenth and especially fourteenth centuries, they had already settled in considerable numbers in the Polish city of Lvov. Along with the Jews, Muslims, and Ruthenians, Armenians constituted an important merchant community in this medieval city known for its trade and crafts. They traded in spices and silk from the east, which they carried through the overland caravan routes to northern Poland and farther north and west into Europe. Armenian trade was also oriented to the south through the Black Sea port of Trebizond (now in Turkey), whence it headed southwest to the Mediterranean and southeast to Persia. The importance of Armenian merchants in medieval Poland is attested by the special privilege bestowed on them in the Magdeburg Law passed by Casimir the Great in 1356 (Nadel-Golobich).

When the Ottomans seized the Crimea in 1475, Armenian refugees from that peninsula migrated to the lands of Eastern and Central Europe and settled in Moldavia and Transylvania. These colonies were to provide important relay stations for the trade diaspora networks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At about the same time, an Armenian community was established in Constantinople. A patriarchate was founded there in 1461 when the Armenians of Bursa were invited to settle in the new Ottoman capital (Bardakjian). Beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Armenians also played important roles as merchants and diplomats in Abyssinia, now Ethiopia.⁶

The diaspora was not the only place where Armenian merchants thrived. As a result of their strategic location astride the overland trade routes connecting European consumers to the silk-producing regions of Persia, some towns and cities also prospered in the homeland, ruled by a variety of Turkic dynasties. This was particularly the case with a narrow strip of land in the Armenian frontier

zone straddling Ottoman and Persian boundaries. Pressed between the mountain range of Sewnik and the left bank of the Arax, this area witnessed, in the sixteenth century, the spectacular rise of a constellation of trading villages and market towns that served as vital corridors for the overland trade routes to and from Asia (Leo 55; Baibourtian). The most prominent of these towns was (Old) Julfa, located on the left bank of the river Arax. Suppliers of Persian raw silk to the Mediterranean and Europe, the merchants of Old Julfa experienced a phenomenal rise in their prosperity during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. They were already involved in long distance trade from the second half of the sixteenth century, as their presence in all the important commercial centers of the Levant, the Mediterranean, and as far away as in Mughal India indicates. In the 1590s, despite coming under Ottoman control following a series of devastating wars between the Ottomans and their Safavid rivals, Julfan merchants came to enjoy the patronage of the Safavid state (Alishan, *Sisakan* 409–28; Herzig “Rise”). Julfa’s reputation as a rich commercial town attracted not only the attention of European merchants and travelers in the Levant but also that of the Safavid monarch, Shah Abbas I (1587–1629). Perhaps this explains why the town’s inhabitants were accorded relatively privileged treatment when, during one of the brutal Ottoman–Safavid wars in 1603–1604, Abbas I ordered the deportation of up to 300,000 of the region’s Armenians (Davrizhet’si;⁷ Herzig, “Rise”) to the silk-producing regions of Persia. Many perished during the long journey of deportation and in the early days of resettlement. The population of Julfa was resettled near the outskirts of Isfahan, where they founded the mercantile colony of New Julfa. What started as a “victim diaspora” (Cohen) soon became a prosperous “trade diaspora.” Employed as a domestic “service gentry” (Matthee, *Politics* 84–9) for the Safavid state and granted a near-monopoly on the export of Persian silk in 1619 (Della Valle 2: 59; Matthee, *Politics* 101–3), the Armenian merchants of New Julfa established, in a short time, one of the great trade diasporas of the period when modern life, including capitalism and colonialism, were being shaped. To understand how this trade diaspora functioned, the kinds of “stateless power” it generated to survive in a competitive world, we need to examine briefly the concepts of “circulation” and “trade network” as the latter have recently been reformulated in the work of Claude Markovits (Markovits; Markovits, Pouchepadass, and Subrahmanyam).

Circulation and the New Julfan Trade Network

According to Markovits, a trade network is a circuit that consists of a nodal center and a cluster of dispersed points around it,

connected both to each other and to the center. These points are “stations” or settlements where merchants from the center or “node” reside either ephemerally or for longer stretches of time. Where a significant number of such merchants exist, they erect ethno-religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples, as well as other institutions that serve to transmit their identity (schools, printing presses, cultural societies, etc.) These points or stations are connected to each other and to the center through what Markovits calls the “circulation of men and things” (Markovits 2). Markovits argues that there are at least five things that circulate along such circuits or networks: (1) merchants; (2) credit; (3) goods; (4) information (about market conditions, “the secrets of the trade,” etc.); and (5) women. Of these, only women and information circulate exclusively *within* the network. The others circulate both within a given network and in other coexisting networks. The reasons for this are easy to understand; merchants, commodities, and credit, for instance, need to circulate and mingle with coexisting networks (even rival ones) because of the exigencies of commercial life and its rules (otherwise there would be no exchange, as Markovits puts it). Women and information, on the other hand, are crucial to the maintenance of the identity/integrity of the network and are thus jealously guarded possessions. Their presence in the network is therefore governed by the laws of endogamy. In most cases, few women circulate in networks, but those who do, do so as wives of merchants in their community.

What is interesting to note about this model of circulation is that the objects that travel through the circuit have their origin at the center, or “node,” of the network. The center is thus not only “where capital is raised and where capitalists have their main place of residence” (Markovits 25), it is also the source of the merchants, the commodities, and the information that keeps the merchants apprized of the latest market conditions and of news concerning their community residing in the center. Women also originate from the center. In this connection, it was not unusual for eighteenth-century Julfan merchants to travel “home” to Isfahan/Julfa, often from India, sometimes from places further afield, such as Manila, with the intention of marrying a bride from their community (see Ms. Ramo de Inquisición, folios 212r–216v, especially 213v, for the case of a Julfan merchant in Manila named Santiago di Barrachiel who returned home to Julfa in the course of his global journeys to marry a Julfan bride). There are also cases of Julfan women being sent from their homes to far-flung places such as Basra or Madras to be betrothed to eligible suitors.

Soon after its founding in 1605, the Armenian suburb of New Julfa/Isfahan, as we shall see, became a “nodal center” of a far-flung network of commercial settlements. Though not all Armenian

merchants trading and residing in these dispersed trade settlements were from New Julfa, the overwhelming majority had important family and business ties to this prosperous Armenian colony in the suburbs of Isfahan, which they regarded as their “home.” New Julfa was thus the principal center or “node” of this trade network; it supplied the network with circulating merchants (most of whom were *commenda*⁸ agents working for their masters or *Khwajas* residing at home in Julfa), with vital information in the form of commercial correspondence as well as a sophisticated system of transmitting commercial knowledge (knowledge of accounting, manuals with trading itineraries, prices of commodities in various markets, etc.). It also supplied a prized commodity (Iranian raw silk especially for Western markets) and, most importantly, capital and credit. Furthermore, as a leading Armenian religious center with its own diocese, New Julfa also provided the network with a retinue of circulating priests and clerics, who helped maintain the identity of the communities dispersed along the network.

By the late seventeenth century, the Julfa merchants had established a trade network stretching from Amsterdam in the west to Canton (Guangdong) and Manila in the east. Gradually, many locations along this far-flung network saw the rise of trade diaspora settlements, some outgrowing their specific trade diaspora functions by evolving into full-fledged communities equipped with their own churches, community centers, printing presses, and so forth. Astrakhan on the northern shores of the Caspian Sea was among the first of such colonies settled by New Julfa merchants in the Russian empire. By the first half of the seventeenth century, it had flourished into a thriving commercial and cultural center. The Armenians of the city enjoyed considerable local autonomy and had their own independent court (known as the Rathaus) with its own canon of laws, a Metropolitan See of the Church, and a printing press (Poghosyan v–mxxii; Yukht). New Julfa merchants had also settled in Moscow and Saint Petersburg in the 1750s, re-invigorating much older Armenian communities in both places. This northward migration of New Julfan merchants was facilitated by a series of treaties signed between the leading families of New Julfa and Czar Alexevich from 1667 through 1673, granting special privileges to Armenian merchants to trade along the northern route across Russia, the Baltic region, and thence to Germany and Holland. Armenian merchants also signed treaties with Sweden and the Duchy of Kurland (now Latvia), gaining privileges to conduct trade through the region, and a few years later the Swedes granted them permission to use the Baltic port of Narva (Gulbenkian, “Philippe de Zagly”). Older Armenian communities (some dating from the medieval period) in Poland, Ukraine, and Transylvania persisted well into the eighteenth century.

Armenian merchants from Julfa also turned up in the Levant and the Mediterranean. Their presence in Ottoman-controlled Aleppo predated the founding of New Julfa by more than a century (Sanjian; Simeon Lehatsi; Surmeyan; Masters). They were in Smyrna beginning in the 1630s and used that port to ship their goods to Venice and Amsterdam (Sarukhan; Kosian 29–45; Goffman 52; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). Their most important bridgehead in the west was the Republic of Venice, where Armenian commercial ties went back to the thirteenth century (Alishan, *Hay-Venet* 442–9, *Sisakan*; Zekiyan, *Le Colonie* 886–90, “Xoğa Safar”; Gianighian, “L’ospitio,” “La chiesa”; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). Merchants from Old Julfa are recorded in the archives of the city beginning in the 1570s (Alishan, *Hay-Venet* 370–80; Herzig, “Rise”; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). In Livorno (Leghorn), New Julfans had become the dominant element of the city’s thriving Armenian merchant community by the 1660s (“Report by Basilio Barsegh”; Ughurlian, *Patmutiwn, Storia*; Fischer; Salvini; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). Both cities had Armenian churches and were important centers of Armenian printing. Starting in the 1620s, Julfan merchants had also settled in Marseilles, where their strong commercial presence unleashed harsh protectionist measures that forced them to relocate their businesses to the neighboring tax-free port of Livorno (Tékéian 12–40; Rambert and Bergasse 64–70; Macler; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). New Julfan merchants had also settled in Cadiz, Spain, at the gateway of the Americas, beginning in the 1660s (Sopranis; Ortiz; Simões; Ashjian; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3). There were few Armenian communities in northwestern Europe, as most merchants preferred to settle in strategically important port settlements along the shores of the Mediterranean.

Amsterdam was an exception. New Julfans were attracted to the city because of the “strength of Dutch capital,” which made it “possible for [them] to receive prompt payment in cash and to place orders for their return cargos of cloth as soon as they arrived” (Herzig, “Venice” 160). Moreover, the city had the advantage of being the seat of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC, established in 1602) and was famous for hosting dissident minorities, such as French Huguenots and Sephardic Jews from Portugal. Armenians from Smyrna (Izmir) and Constantinople (Istanbul) had settled there as early as the 1620s (Sarukhan; Acharian; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3; Herzig, *Armenian Merchants* 139; Bekius). As elsewhere, New Julfa’s dramatic expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the growth of Amsterdam’s Armenian community, making it by far the most significant New Julfan outpost in Western Europe. By the 1690s, the most eminent members of Amsterdam’s Armenian

Amsterdam was not merely a trade diaspora colony for the Armenians but a fully functioning and multifaceted community is evidenced by the fact that the city's first Armenian Church was founded in 1663–1664 (Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3; Torgomian). A new church was erected in 1714 and renovated in 1748. Interestingly, both churches were endowed by Julfa merchants. What is more, a series of Armenian printing presses operated in Amsterdam from 1660 to 1718, supported by the financial patronage of the Julfa merchants, thus making the city one of the leading centers of Armenian printing; it was also here that the first Armenian Bible was printed, in 1666 (Gregorian; Chemchemian; Ishkhanian; Levonian).

Surprisingly, despite England's prominence in the East India trade and the symbiotic and at times tense relationship between the English and the New Julfa merchants in Iran and India, there was no resident Armenian community in London until the late seventeenth century. Though Julfa merchants had visited London as early as 1645, it was only in the 1690s that London became home to some forty Armenian merchants, mostly from India and Julfa. At least one prominent Julfa family, the Ghalandarians (known in English records as the Calendar family), had a resident representative in the city. Indeed, it was a member of this family, Khoja Panos Calendar, who signed the famous 1688 Treaty of East India Company with the Armenian Nation, to which we shall soon turn (Ferrier, "Agreement"). A handful of New Julfa Armenians resided in London in the first half of the eighteenth century; however, as our examination of the *Santa Catharina* trial will indicate, their numbers had declined to a mere two or three individuals by the 1750s. Whatever ties Julfa merchants had with the English capital were not institutional in nature but based on individual initiative, with Armenian merchants from the community of Amsterdam periodically moving back and forth between the two commercial centers, using Amsterdam as a "peripheral node" for the colony in London and other Armenian trading centers in Western Europe (Herzig, "Venice" 161).⁹ The first Armenian Church in England was consecrated in Manchester only in the second half of the nineteenth century (George).

In the East, the principal *locus* of Armenian trade was in Mughal India, where Armenians had already visited as early as the sixteenth century, traversing the long caravan routes across Afghanistan and Kashmir and sailing from the Persian Gulf (especially Hormuz) in Arab vessels to Cambay near Surat (Teles de Cunha; see Kevonian, "Un Itinéraire," for a thirteenth-century Armenian travelogue to India and Southeast Asia). In the sixteenth century, Akbar the Great invited Armenians to settle in his capital at Agra. The first Armenian Church in that city dates from 1562 (Seth 2; Poladian, *Agrayi Hayerç*; Aslanian, "Hndkahay," *From the Indian* chap. 4). In

the next century, New Julfans visited India in greater numbers to establish communities in all the major trading centers of the subcontinent. A major factor behind this expansion was the simultaneous expansion of the English East India Company into India. Though Armenians were trading in India long before the advent of the English and other Europeans, the treaty between the company and the “Armenian Nation,” signed in London in 1688 (see below), acted as a catalyst for more Armenian migration from Iran to Mughal India. There was an irony here. On the one hand, the English East India Company opened new opportunities for the Armenians, such as allowing and even encouraging them to settle in its new settlements in India. But the company also obstructed Armenian advances when these were seen by the English as detrimental to English interests. In Bengal, the Armenian presence goes back to the early seventeenth century. The oldest Armenian tombstone in Calcutta appears to date from 1630, almost seventy years before the foundation of the English settlement at Calcutta. (Seth; Aslanian, “Hndkahay,” *From the Indian* chap. 4; for a different view, see the important contribution by Bhattacharya 292 n. 62). To the north, Armenians had settled in the Dutch settlement of Chinsura (also known to Julfans as Chichra, near the trading port of Hughli) starting in 1645 (Seth; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 4); their church there was consecrated in 1695. In the seventeenth century, one of the most important Armenian communities in India was in Surat in the northwestern corner of the subcontinent, where the majority was of New Julfan origin (Seth 225; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 4).

On the Coromandel Coast, Armenian merchants seem to have settled in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; they were residing in Meliapur or San Thomé (a few miles south of Madras) before the Portuguese arrived in 1517 (Gregory, “Armenians”; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 4; Martin 1:335). According to contemporary sources, the Portuguese learned of the region’s indigenous Christian population and of the existence of a church connected to the legend concerning the martyrdom of Saint Thomas from Armenian merchants in Pulicat, further north on the coast (Gulbenkian, *Estudos* 1:113–4; Schurhammer 2:567). Indeed, the Armenians were so well entrenched in Meliapur that they helped the Portuguese rebuild the town, which they rechristened San Thomé (Gregory, “Armenians”; Martin 1:335). Perhaps it is not surprising that when this town fell to the Qutb Shahi dynasty, the rulers of the southern Indian kingdom of Golkonda, in 1662, an Armenian named Marcus Rosado was appointed as its governor (Gregory, “Armenians”; Seth 604–6).¹⁰ Arguably their most important settlement in the Indian Ocean as a whole was at English-administered Madras, their “peripheral node” to other settlements further east. Armenians were also operating out of Syriam, Ava, and Pegu (in present-day

Burma/Myanmar) in the seventeenth century, and possibly earlier (Yule, *Narrative* 141–2; Hamilton 1:203, 2:22–3; Harvey 346; Poladian, “Brmahayk”; Acharian; Sarkissian; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 4; for the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Wright), and had crossed the Himalayas in the 1660s to settle in Lhasa (Tibet), where they had a small colony (1660s–1720) whence they conducted trade with the Chinese heartland (L. Khachikian; L. Khachikian and Papazian; Petech, *Missionari*, “Itinirario”; Csoma; Manucci 2:413; Richardson). In the first half of the eighteenth century, Julfans had settled in what are now Malaysia; Indonesia (Hordananian; Coless; Collectie 606 Armen Joseph; Sarkissian); Canton (Guangdong), China (Poladian, “Chinastani hay”; Morse 2:84–5); and, starting in the 1660s, in Manila in the Philippines (Quiason 37–41, 88–90, 93, 98, 171–2; Clarence-Smith, 118–119; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 4).

Most of these settlements in the world of the Indian Ocean were certainly direct offshoots of the network’s nodal center at New Julfa, populated by its great merchant families and their agents; consequently, they were connected to and *through* that great suburb of Isfahan. However, the same cannot be said for all the colonies in the Mediterranean and Europe. In the latter case, other settlements of the Armenian trade diaspora, such as those in the Crimea, Constantinople, and Smyrna, acted as “subsidiary centers” (Braudel 157).

The colonies situated across this immense network were dovetailed both through the Armenian Church in Julfa, under whose spiritual jurisdiction most of the Eastern colonies fell (Aslanian, “Hndkahay”; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 3; Ghougassian), and especially through the juridical activities of an institution in New Julfa known as the *vacharakanats zhoghov*, or Assembly of Merchants (L. Khachikian; S. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi* 39–45; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 5). Composed of the township’s *Kalantar* (mayor/provost), as well as the leading merchants of New Julfa who were also the *Kadkhudas*, or elders, of each of the township’s twenty districts, this legal body adjudicated disputes between New Julfan merchants both at home and abroad in the overseas colonies. It ratified important legal documents such as wills and powers of attorney, to which we shall briefly turn in the body of this essay, and mediated agreements between Armenian merchants from New Julfa and foreign states, as in the case with the 1667 agreement with the Russian Czar (renewed in 1673), discussed above. By ensuring that merchants maintained a good reputation as honest and reliable men and ostracizing from the New Julfan “coalition” of merchants those who were deemed fraudulent in their commercial activities, this body generated a high degree of long-distance solidarity and cooperation among New Julfan merchants, based on kinship and ethno-religious ties.

Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State

It was *this complex network of solidarity and circulation as well as monitored trust* that enabled the Armenian merchants of Julfa to successfully engage in commerce in the Indian Ocean, alongside their fellow Asian merchants and their more powerful European rivals, especially the English East India Company. Most scholars agree that Armenians dominated the overland trade between Iran and Europe and had a strong presence in India, where they acted as an important link between the worlds of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. With the arrival of the European East India Companies in the waters of the Indian Ocean and their subsequent control of shipping lanes, the terms of trade had shifted against the Armenians. But even then the Armenians did not hesitate to embark “in maritime trade when they realized that it was the only way to fight European competition” (Mauro 273). Their ships flew their own flags—red, yellow, red, with the lamb of God in the center—respected in most ports in the Indian Ocean (Terteriants 186; “Patmutiun Hay” 7:52; Mauro 273). And when they felt it necessary to prospect for new markets and trade routes, “they did not hesitate to embark on a coordinated political and commercial strategy directed by the leading citizens of New Julfa” (Mauro 273). In 1667, as mentioned above, they signed an agreement with Czar Alexevich, thus gaining the right to transport their merchandise across the northern route through Moscow; the agreement, which was not implemented until 1671, was renewed in 1673 (S. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi*). In the early 1680s, they made overtures to the French East India Company to ship their merchandise on French vessels from the Persian Gulf and Surat directly to Europe, a proposal that failed because of disagreements between the parties (Matthee, “Merchants” 241, n. 27; Martin 2: 188).

Of all rival networks, the one that posed the most serious challenge for the Armenian trade diaspora in the Indian Ocean was that of the English East India Company, established in 1600. As early as 1615, when the company began to look into trading prospects in Safavid Iran, there were tensions between its representatives and local Armenian merchants in Isfahan. In 1619, when a public auction was held for the right to export Persian silk, the English were outbid by the Armenians, who succeeded in gaining a quasi-monopoly on the Persian silk trade (Della Valle 2:59; Matthee, *Politics* 101–3). For the rest of the seventeenth century, the company did all it could

to compete with the Armenians on the northern land-based routes, trying to undersell them in the cloth they brought in from Aleppo. However their costly infrastructure, their deficient knowledge of the interior, and their dependence on bulk trade, made it impossible for the Europeans to dislodge

the resourceful Armenian traders from their position of strength. Having failed at outright competition, the English in the 1680s and 90s attempted to capitalize on the instability of the Turkish trade route and the Armenian commercial expansion into Europe by proposing business arrangements with the Julfans. (Matthee, “Merchants” 240–1)

Unable to compete successfully with their Armenian rivals, the English thus resorted to the policy of “if you can’t beat them, join them” (Van der Cruysse 361). To this end, as we have seen above, in 1688, the company’s court of directors approached an eminent Armenian merchant, Khoja Panos Calendar (Ghalandarian), a native of New Julfa then residing in London, with terms for a treaty of cooperation. According to the treaty that was signed between Khoja Panos, on behalf of the “Armenian Nation,” and several representatives of the company, including Sir John Chardin, the Armenians were to “alter and invert the ancient course of their trade to and from Europe” by having “liberty at all times hereafter to pass and repass to and from India on any of the Company’s Ships on as advantageous terms as any Freeman whatsoever” (Ferrier, “Agreement” 438–9; for the broad context of relations between the Armenians and the East India Company, see Ferrier, “Armenians”). In return for abandoning the overland route to Europe via the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians were promised “liberty to live in any of the Company’s Cities, Garrisons, or Towns in India, and to buy, sell, and purchase Land or Houses, and be capable of all Civil Offices and preferments in the same manner as if they were Englishmen born,” and to “always have the free undisturbed liberty of the exercise of their religion” (Ferrier, “Agreement” 439). This treaty, however, was not binding on all Armenian merchants of New Julfa origin, and it was especially not respected by those merchants who were already active with their own independent shipping in the “country trade” (i.e., port-to-port trade) in the Indian Ocean.

It is in this context that the relationship between the Armenian trade diaspora and the East India Company must be explored. This relationship was prone to be peaceful when the English needed the Armenians to further their own designs in India, as when they sailed to Manila using Armenian “colors” and Armenian-owned ships instead of their own company vessels, which were barred from Manila by the Spanish authorities (Quiason 37, 90; Montero y Vidal 2:120–1; “Copia de los autos contra capitan Francisco de La Cruz de nacion Armenio”), or when they acquired Mughal *farmans* (royal decrees) granting them lands to build “factories” (fortified trade settlements) and attendant trading privileges (as was the case when an Armenian merchant named Khoja Israel di Sarhat acquired the famous *farman* of 1698, granting to the English the territory that

later became Calcutta; Seth 419-29; Bhattacharya 311). But Armenian–English relations became fraught with conflict when Armenian merchants engaged in spheres of trade where the English clearly had the upper hand. This was especially the case with maritime trade; as early as the 1680s, a number of Armenian merchants in India had become important ship owners and plied the maritime routes from the Persian Gulf to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond to Manila. Numerous cases of outright English piracy against Armenian vessels in the Indian Ocean suggest that when the competition was too much to bear, the English did not hesitate to resort to extra-judicial means to hinder Armenian gains (Barseghov, “Iz istorii”). The case of the confiscation of the Armenian-freighted ship the *Santa Catharina*, to which we now turn, also demonstrates that confiscation of Armenian vessels, during wartime, under the pretext that they belonged to enemies of the Crown (in most cases the French, with whom the British were at war) was also a strategy used by the English to thwart the commercial activities of Julfan Armenians. The *Santa Catharina* trial also demonstrates that, though stateless and dispersed, the Armenians were far from entirely powerless when it came to resisting a more sophisticated imperializing network, represented by the East India Company’s activities in the Indian Ocean.

Before we turn to examining the “stateless power” of the Armenian trade diaspora as exemplified in the *Santa Catharina* trial, we need to start with the paper trail of documents and clues that leads us to reconstruct the ship’s trial more than 250 years after this trial was held in London.

Making Sense of the of the *Santa Catharina* Trial in London, 1748–1752

For some scholars, no doubt, archival work is logistically too difficult or temperamentally uncongenial. Such must survive by their theorizing, and hope to invent a concept which catches on. But history is too important to be left to stay-at-home theorists. (Hyam and Henshaw 7)

The Asia, Pacific and Africa Reading Room of the British Library possesses a collection of Armenian mercantile documents that scholars of New Julfa have described as among the richest sources of mercantile documents for the study of Armenian trade in the eighteenth century (L. Khachikian, “Ledger”; S. Khachikian, “Hayrusakan,” *Nor Jughayi*). Known as Lansdowne¹¹ 1047 and 1048, this collection comprises some 320 documents ranging in nature from letters of credit, *commenda* contracts,¹² and powers of attorney to last wills and testaments. Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare (1856–

1924), the cataloguer of Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum, first brought them to the attention of Armenian scholars at the turn of the twentieth century, when he described them in his *Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts in the British Museum*:

Two scrap-books, 18 by 11½ in inches, containing 320 letters and other documents relating to the confiscation by Admiral Griffin in 1746 of a vessel called the Santa Catherina. This vessel belonged to Armenians, and was bound from Bazra to Calcutta with a cargo of silver. The owners sued the English Government in the Court of King's Bench in London in 1751; and these documents relate to the case. Each bears on the verso a memorandum, written in Spanish, of its contents. They were written from New Dschulfa or Ispahan, Surat, Bazra, Madras, Calcutta, and other places, during the years 1738 to 1748; and are mostly dated according to the Lesser Armenian era of Azaria. Most of these documents are copies attested by Armenian seals, but some twenty-four are originals. The Language in general is the Armenian dialect spoken in Persia, but a few are composed in Turkish and Hindustani. (Conybeare 352–3)¹³

After half a century of scholarly neglect, Sushanik Khachikian (“Hay-rusakan,” *Nor Jughayi*) and Edmund Herzig (“Armenian Merchants,” “Family Firm”) became the first historians to work on these papers and to incorporate them into their analysis of the intricate structure of commercial organization underpinning Julfan trade. Both scholars hailed the Lansdowne collection as a leading source of documentation for New Julfan commercial history. While I was in London on a research trip in the spring of 2003, Gevork Ter Vardanian (senior researcher and head of the department of manuscripts at the Matenadaran, the state repository of Armenian manuscripts in Yerevan), in an e-mail communication, brought the Lansdowne collection to my attention.

Upon examining them, I was puzzled by a peculiar feature that had been ignored by previous scholars. The verso side of each document, as Conybeare had noted, bears a brief “memorandum in Spanish,” followed by two signatures: those of a certain Stepan di Khojijian (written in Armenian script) and Jacob Treve (in Latin script). In most cases the Spanish-language entry reads: “*Una carta que no concierne al navio Santa Catherina ni al su cargacion* [A letter that does not concern either the ship *Santa Catharina* or its cargo].” The documents are numbered sequentially, but an earlier numbering system has evident gaps and is crossed out and replaced by new numbers in pencil, indicating the work of a later hand. This peculiarity, coupled with Conybeare’s enigmatic reference to the trial

in which the Armenian merchants “lodged a law suite against the British government” (352–3), prompted me to investigate the origin of the documents. So far as I knew, no one had tried to piece together their history. How did they end up in the British Library? If, as Conybeare writes, the documents “relate to the *Santa Catherina* trial at King’s Bench” (352–3), why did the Spanish memoranda on the verso sides state that the papers in question concerned neither the *Santa Catharina* nor its cargo? Also, the random gaps in the numeration system struck me as suspect and raised the possibility that these papers were originally part of a larger pre-classified trove of papers. But what piqued my curiosity, above all, were the two signatures following the Spanish memoranda. Who were Stepan di Khojijian and Jacob Treve?

At around the same time, I made the acquaintance of a graduate student from Yale University named Gagan Sood, who, unbeknownst to me, was working on Persian-language documents (mostly business contracts) stored in another collection at the same Asia, Pacific and Africa Reading room of the British Library where I was consulting documents. Mr. Sood’s papers belonged to Lansdowne Ms. 1046 and consisted of eighty-two documents mostly in Persian, some of which had cryptic notes in what was, to him, an unfamiliar script. When Mr. Sood called upon me to inspect them, I immediately recognized the writings as Armenian notations made by some of the same individuals who were involved in the documents I was studying in Lansdowne 1047 and 1048. We were later to realize that these Persian-language documents were, by a strange coincidence of fate, also connected to the Armenian-freighted ship the *Santa Catharina*. Given our mutual interest, Mr. Sood and I began what proved to be a very fruitful collaboration on tracking down the history of these documents. During the initial three months during which Mr. Sood and I had joined forces in London, before we decided to go our separate ways, he made invaluable contributions that allowed me to lay the initial groundwork for my subsequent investigation into the fate of the *Santa Catharina* and the Armenian owners of her cargo.¹⁴

Mr. Sood led me to the original *Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts*, held in the rare manuscripts room of the British Library. The entry under manuscripts 1046–1048, written by Henry Ellis in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the Armenian documents first surfaced in the collection of the British Museum, provides a slightly different description of the documents’ background than that found in Conybeare’s catalogue entry:

A collection of Original Papers in the Armenian and Persian languages appearing to be mercantile documents produced by some Armenian merchants in the East India trade, in a

lawsuit, of which the management was undertaken by Philip Carteret Webb, Esq. who is said to have purposely studied those languages for the service of his clients, and to have succeeded so well as to gain their cause with very considerable emolument to himself. (Ellis and Douce 2:270)

Philip Carteret Webb was a famous antiquarian, bibliophile, solicitor, and collector of manuscripts in mid-eighteenth-century England (“Webb, Philip Carteret”; see also below). Spurred by the intriguing reference to this eccentric character and to the possibility that an English solicitor had taught himself Armenian to serve his clients, Mr. Sood and I conducted an extensive search for Webb’s papers in the British Library, but to no avail. However, my fortuitous search in the online catalogue of the Public Records Office (PRO)¹⁵ archives in Kew Gardens yielded a remarkable find. Among the more than 9 million documents in the collection, my search results led me to several boxes containing the trial proceedings of the *Santa Catharina*, along with numerous bundles of “Armenian papers” relating to the trial. According to the archival records, these papers were seized in 1748 in the Indian Ocean as part of the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo and shipped to London to be employed by the captors as “Exhibits” before the High Court of Admiralty (HCA), where the *Santa Catharina*’s fate would be settled in accordance to Prize Law legislation. An important element of such legislation was the preservation of all ship’s papers found on board at the time of a ship’s capture and their translation into English. In the case of the *Santa Catharina*, the papers in question were not ordinary ship’s logs but consisted of a remarkably rich array of documents belonging to Armenian merchants. They include about 1,700 mercantile letters and contracts, more than a dozen encyclicals written by Armenian priests in Julfa and Chinsura in Bengal, five or six letters in Italian and Latin from the Carmelite mission in Rome addressed to recipients as far away as Beijing, two handwritten breviaries and religious notebooks belonging to the famous Armenian merchant benefactor of Madras, Khoja Petrus di Usan, as well as an extremely valuable accounting ledger of the Khwaja Minasian family.

What I had stumbled upon in the course of my investigations at the PRO (in many boxes, some not listed in the PRO’s online catalogue but discovered during physical rummaging in the archives) was a treasure-trove of letters written by a vast network of correspondents across the Armenian trade diaspora of the eighteenth century that were intercepted by the British Navy and deposited into an archive, as into a *geniza*,¹⁶ before they could reach their recipients. Following its legal traditions, the court was compelled to hire a translator to have the documents translated. A quick perusal of them revealed that, contrary to the double catalogue entries, the

papers in Lansdowne 1047/1048 were not “produced by Armenian merchants in defense of their lawsuit” but were originally a tiny fragment of the *Santa Catharina*’s confiscated cargo. After the trial, they had somehow passed into the hands of Philip Carteret Webb. They were sold to Lord Lansdowne in 1770 at an auction of Webb’s manuscripts and subsequently donated to the British Museum (see below). Two important clues or traces found on the ship’s papers indicated this to be the case. First, the verso side of each document pertaining to the *Santa Catharina* trial (in the HCA series) bears the same handwriting in Spanish, followed by the signatures of Stepan di Khojjian and Jacob Treve. Moreover, the enumeration system is identical to that found in the Lansdowne material. After laboring on the PRO papers for many months, I was finally able to piece together the story of the *Santa Catharina*’s capture and the even more interesting narrative of its trial in London, to which we now turn.

Narrative of a Ship’s Capture

Be it known that it is the manner & Custom of Armenian Merchants in their trading for one or more merchants to buy or hire a ship to send abroad to Bengall or any other place or port, and in that ship Severall Merchants layd goods and carry Rupees and bills of Exchange, and several of the said Merchants themselves and the factors of others of them go in the said Ship and sometimes some of them go over land and upon the arrival of the said Ship and Merchants at the port or place assigned the said merchants and factors do by agreement dispose themselves two or three or more in a Company and go to the markets and other places of trade in said country and purchase such goods as are proper and then bring them to the place or port where the ship is and they divide the goods so purchased according to each man’s proportion, and that being done they separetely make the said goods divided with each mans particular marke, and load the same upon the said ship and said merchants or factors return to the ship with said goods. And the Master of the said ship signes a bill of loading to each person certifying how many Bayles belong to each person not naming the contents or prizes, but each merchant or factor encloseth in every ye Bayles a piling bill setting forth the contents of each Bayle and also brings with them the books which likewise contain the particulars of his goods and their prizes. (HCA 24/127)¹⁷

In the spring of 1748, several Armenian merchants in India hired a vessel in Bengal to take them and their cargo from Calcutta to Basra in the Persian Gulf and back. The merchants freighting the

ship were factors working for senior associates belonging to the Khwaja Minasian family, one of the most eminent merchant families in New Julfa. Relying on the Armenian custom of long-distance credit, Khwaja Emniaz and Aghamal di Shafraz Minas John, senior members of the Minasian family in New Julfa, had invested the capital of their family firm in a maritime business venture that promised great returns. For this purpose, they had dispatched a junior member of their family named Khwaja Minas di Elias to India and ordered him to set up residence in Calcutta, where he was to hire a vessel and travel on it as “super cargo” to Basra, where he would dispose of the Bengali merchandise and credit the profit thereof into the firm’s account. The vessel Khwaja Minas hired was a 200-ton Portuguese ship carrying seventy passengers and crew and mounting twenty carriage guns. It was owned and commanded by captain Joaquim Feria di Leitas, a Portuguese sailor born on the outskirts of Lisbon and residing in Goa. According to the agreement the two men signed, Captain Leitas was to

hire[...] his ship to Coja Minas Elias Armenian at Calcutta in the month of November 1746, for sixteen thousand five hundred Arcot Rupees to be loaded with whatever goods the Armenian should think proper and to go to and from Bassorah and to touch at any port going or coming for the sale of his cargo as he should think. (Deposition of Joa Feria Leitas, HCA 42/026)

The *Santa Catharina*’s voyage began in Calcutta in January 1747 with a cargo of bales of raw silk, Bengali cloth, rice, and spices. Three months later, the ship arrived in Basra. There, its cargo was sold and the ship took on more merchandise, including fifty chests of silver *zolotas* (one among a myriad of currencies in circulation in the East) and rosewater. Like most “country ships” sailing in the Indian Ocean, the *Santa Catharina* was manned by a mostly Indian crew and carried several passes of safe conduct. According to a deposition given by the ship’s second mate in preparation for the later trial, the vessel sailed most of her voyage under Portuguese colors but, significantly, hoisted Armenian colors on the last leg of her return journey from Cochin (on the southwestern coast of India, near present-day Kerala) to Bengal (Deposition of Acculment de Rozario, HCA 42/026). In addition to her Indian crew, her passenger list included two Armenians, including the supercargo Khwaja Minas di Elias and another member of the Minasian family, Johannes di Gregory, who was carrying with him an accounting ledger. There were also two French passengers on board who were headed to the French colony of Pondicherry, in addition to several crewmembers of French origin. In the winter of 1747, the ship made a brief stop at

Cochin to take on wood and water before proceeding to sail to Bengal.

Meanwhile, hostilities had begun in 1744 between Great Britain and France over the war of the Austrian succession (1740–1748). As was customary during times of war, a British naval squadron, under the command of Admiral Thomas Griffin, was dispatched to the Indian Ocean empowered to take enemy vessels at sea as prizes. Relations between the two European states escalated in the fall of 1746 when, in a bold move, French forces from Pondicherry sacked and occupied the English factory and town of Madras. About a year later, on 30 April 1748, one of the ships belonging to the English squadron, the *HMS Medway's Prize*, commanded by Captain Holmes, intercepted the *Santa Catharina* shortly after the Armenian-freighted vessel had rounded Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India and was on the last leg of its return voyage to Calcutta (*Medway's Prize*, n.pag.).¹⁸ On the pretext that the ship was sailing under French colors, the captain ordered the confiscation of the ship. The captors took “sixteen thousand Pondicherry Rupees out of the Portuguese ship,” released the passengers and crew, and sent the vessel to Fort Saint David (Cuddalore) to be stripped and sold (“Letters of Admiral Thomas Griffin” folio 83).¹⁹ The proceeds from the sale were deposited in an East India Company account in London and held there until the High Court of Admiralty in London could reach a final verdict on the status of the captured vessel. It was at this stage that the papers on board the *Santa Catharina* were carefully collected and shipped to London, to be entered as “exhibits” in the ship’s trial. They were treated with such meticulous attention and shipped to London because a recent Act of Parliament concerning the trial of prize cases stipulated that “the translating [of] the material Ships Papers, is of Necessity and not to be dispensed with, the Judge being bound by the Rules laid down by these Acts of Parliament, and by the Law of Nations and Course of Admiralty, to peruse the Ships Papers and Writings *before* he proceed to give Sentence” (Webb, *Observations* 24). Before turning to a discussion of the translation of the ship’s papers and the court’s use of them, it is important to identify the New Julfan owners of the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo, with the primary goal of understanding the organizational structure of New Julfan trade and subsequently the “techniques” used by stateless Armenian merchants, as exemplified by the *Santa Catharina* trial.

The Khwaja Minasian Family Firm of New Julfa

It further appears by these papers, that the custom among these People is to keep a Capital in their Families to trade with, and that the Chiefs of the Family, in the Nature of a

patriarchal Government, manage the Affairs and Trade of the Family at Home, at Julpha, and send the younger Branches to different parts to trade, with such and such Sums as they advance to them, out of, and on Account of, the general Capital of the Family: Beside which Sums, each Person has a Stock to trade with, on his own Separate Account. ("Case on Behalf of the Respondents" 16)²⁰

The above passage is from the appendix of the "Respondents Case" published in March 1752, immediately after the end of the *Santa Catharina* trial. It describes the essential nature of the New Julfans' trading organization and brings to the fore the central role of the family firm as the basic organizational unit of the Armenian trade diaspora of the eighteenth century.

The most persuasive accounts of the merchant organizational structure of New Julfan trade are provided by Edmund Herzig and Shushanik Khachikian. Both scholars point out that the fundamental organizational structure of New Julfan trade was the family firm.²¹ According to them, rather than having a unified trading company along the lines of the European companies, each of the suburb's leading merchant families had its own family firm. Both historians therefore reject the claim that New Julfa had a European-style trading company and argue instead that individual family firms were the principal forms of trade organization utilized by the Julfa merchants. The *Santa Catharina* papers reinforce this view, as a majority of the papers concern various aspects of the business transactions of the Khwaja Minasian family firm.

The Khwaja Minasians were among the leading merchant families of New Julfa in the second half of the seventeenth century. The patriarch of the family was one Khwaja Minas, son of Panos. The available evidence on this merchant paints a picture of an extremely affluent transnational businessman with contacts in Mughal India, in his native Isfahan, and in Russia. Very little is known of Khwaja Minas's early commercial activities. It is likely that he became wealthy in the same manner as most of his fellow Julfan merchants, that is, by working as a *commenda* agent for another wealthy merchant. That this might well be the case is suggested by the "book of memoirs" of Monsignor Basilio Sceriman (Shahrimanean), written in Italy in 1733, whose author notes that "a certain Minas, who was Mister Sarhat's factor [i.e., *commenda* agent], ... in the course of time had come to possess almost one million Venetian Ducats [worth of wealth] and was the richest [merchant] of almost all the Julfans" ("Libro di Memorie," n.pag.). The same source mentions that Sarhat Sceriman (the patriarch of the Catholic-Armenian Shahrimanian family, and one of the wealthiest Julfan merchants of his time) had married off one of his sons to the oldest daughter of this Minas, who

was apparently trading on behalf of his master in India, in the mid-seventeenth century. In any case, in the 1660s, Khwaja Minas seems to have settled in Surat, where he conducted business with local merchants as well as with the Portuguese and the English (Boxer).²² An English East India Company document from 1662 refers to one of Minas's ships, the *St. Michael*, giving passage to two company officials traveling to Mocha (Baladouni and Makepeace 54). Other documents from the Surat Dispatch Books indicate that Minas owned a fleet of merchant vessels, which plied the waters of the South China Seas (Siam and Timor) and traded as far away as Manila (Baladouni and Makepeace 71). In 1669, Khwaja Minas "ranked as one of the wealthiest merchants of Surat" (Boxer 83). An "able and well reputed Armenian merchant," Minas is already mentioned in 1665 as the "President of the Armenians" of Surat (Baladouni and Makepeace 59). In 1676, he seems to have settled in Bombay at the invitation of the English (Gopal, 204). An indication of his stature back home in New Julfa can be inferred from the fact that he was one of twenty-three signatories to a letter sent by the *Kalantar* (mayor/provost) of New Julfa and other prominent members of the community to the Russian Czar in March 1671 (S. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi* 24–8; Herzig "Family Firm" 141–3). In his last will and testament, written in New Julfa in 1700, shortly before his death, Khwaja Minas left his fortune to his four sons.²³

Like many wealthy Julfan families, the Minasians seem to have weathered the political and economic storms caused by the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 and the sacking of Isfahan by Afghan troops. The real blow to their fortunes came with the usurpation of the Safavid mantle by the Afshar tribal leader Tahmas Kuli Khan (who adopted the name of Nadir Shah upon assuming the Persian throne in 1737). The political and economic instability resulting from Nadir's despotic and extortionist policies had a direct impact on the Khwaja Minasians. In a well-known incident, Nadir had two Armenians, four Jews, and two Indians burned alive at the stake in Isfahan's Central Square (*Meydan-i Shah*) in 1747 over an incident involving the purchase of a valuable horsecloth (Herzig, "Armenian Merchants" 107; Ter Hovhaneants 1:278–9; Chick 1:652; Bellingeri; Bazin 301) The fact that the object was studded with precious jewels had excited Nadir's rapacity, moving the tyrant to torture its owners in order to extort money. Nadir's Armenian victims were both wealthy sexagenarian merchants: Khwaja Emniaz, the last surviving son of Khwaja Minas di Panos and most senior member of the Minasian family firm, and Harutiun (Aratoon) Shahrmanian, a scion of New Julfa's wealthiest Catholic-Armenian family, who, unlike his brothers and sons residing in Venice, Livorno, and Madras, had decided to stay behind in New Julfa.²⁴ This incident, according to one of the Carmelite missionaries stationed in Isfahan,

“ended by throwing into consternation the whole Armenian community, already terrified by the fear of being all put to the sword, in accordance with the threats of the barbarian shah” (Chick 652). The irreversible decline of New Julfa and the mass exodus of its leading families began at this time (Chick 671; Herzig, “Family Firm” 106–7; Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 8). Some of these families migrated north to Russia and settled in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Others settled permanently in Venice, Livorno, Amsterdam, Madras, or Malaysia. The greatest number of New Julfan families, however, fled by caravan to the Ottoman-held cities of Baghdad and, especially, Basra, as well as to the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Rig, and used the latter as a springboard to India. The Minasians belonged to this last group of refugees.

From Basra, the remnants of the Minasian family migrated to Surat, where the patriarch of the family had resided in the seventeenth century, and thence to the rich commercial centers of Bengal, such as Saidabad (the Armenian suburb of the provincial capital, Murshidabad), Hughli, Calcutta, and as far south as Madras. Khwaja Minas di Elias (*Santa Catharina’s* supercargo) was a resident of Murshidabad and Calcutta in the 1750s; his descendents were still living in Chinsura and Calcutta in the middle of the nineteenth century (Seth 484). There were also Minasians residing as far afield as Tiflis (in the Russian Empire) in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia and Malaysia/Pinang; Wright 309).

Though they were scattered in India and Iran, the Minasians arranged their business affairs by working together as a family firm. As the oldest male of the family, Khwaja Emniaz (and, following his death, Aghamal di Shafraz) naturally served as managers of the firm, while younger cousins such as Khwaja Minas di Elias and others worked for the firm as business associates. In principle, the brothers invested their family firm’s capital in their business ventures, but outside investors also made joint ventures, adding their own capital to a growing pool of investments. As the *Santa Catharina* papers demonstrate, these outside investors included many prominent Julfan families. One might even go so far as to say that the Who’s Who of Armenian merchants in Julfa and the Indian Ocean were involved as shareholders in the *Santa Catharina’s* cargo. The *Santa Catharina’s* roster of investors also includes local Asian merchants from India, including Mughal authorities connected to the court in Murshidabad. This accounts for the presence of business contracts and letters written in Arabic, Hindustani, and Persian in Lansdowne 1048.

This set of investors was not, however, physically present in London to contest the seizure of their wealth. Among those involved in the contestation of the British seizure was a figure who led me, 250 years later, to this investigation.

Translation in the Archives: The Double Identity of Stepan di Khojijian

1 July 1751

Which day appeared personally Jacob Treve of the Parish of Saint James Dukes place London Gentleman and made oath that he was employed by Mr. John Haman Agent to the Captors of the ship Santa Catherina taken by his Majesty's ship Medways Prize in the East Indies to go to Holland and find a person capable of Translating Armenian writing into some European language, no person being to be procured in England, that accordingly he went thither and found an Armenian whose name is Stephen Cogigia or Stephen Cogigian, with whom he agreed and brought him to England, where he was Employed between the month of January one thousand seven hundred and forty nine and the month of January one thousand seven hundred and fifty in Translating the papers taken on board the said Ship Santa Catherina together with this Deponent who took the Translations into the Spanish language from the said Cogigia's dictating, he the said Cogigia understanding the Spanish but cannot write the same. (*Santa Catharina* logbook, HCA 42/026, n.pag.)

The above affidavit, preserved in one of the logbooks containing Spanish and English translations of the *Santa Catharina*'s papers, provided me with the first in a long line of clues toward unraveling Stepan di Khojijian's identity. My fascination with the ship's story had begun with his enigmatic signature on the back of the papers stored in the British Library. Who was this mysterious Armenian, and what role did he play in the narrative of the *Santa Catharina* trial?

Jacob Treve's affidavit and several other "clues" left behind in the trial papers of the *Santa Catharina* went a long way toward bringing Khojijian out of the obscurity of his signature at the British Library and into the light of history. However, the most fascinating clue came to me from a book first published in London in 1792, written by a famous Armenian from India. *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin the Armenian Written in English by Himself* is regarded as the seminal text of the eighteenth-century Armenian "national revival movement."

Joseph Ēmīn was born in Hamadan, Iran, in 1726 and raised in Calcutta, where his father had taken him with the aim of grooming him in commerce. Rejecting commerce, Ēmīn fled from his father and traveled to London in 1751 in order to get an English education and to use both the martial and the liberal arts of Europe to liberate what he thought of as his "oriental" countrymen. In London, he managed to meet and, in some instances, to befriend eminent

representatives of British society, including the likes of Edmund Burke and William Pitt, the secretary of state. He had then embarked on a series of quixotic and fruitless campaigns into the mountains of Armenia, dreaming of liberating his countrymen from Persian and Ottoman domination. In the 1780s, he retired to Calcutta and wrote his memoirs, covering events from the time of his arrival in London in 1751 to his clandestine expeditions in Armenia in the 1780s.

Like other scholars in my field, I had read Ėmin with a view to understanding his role in what is referred to in Armenian historiography as the “Armenian liberation struggle of the eighteenth century.” When intuition guided me to revisit Ėmin’s text while investigating the *Santa Catharina* trial, I chose to read it from a fresh angle, focusing on the first segment of the narrative, wherein the author describes his formative years in London, including his arrival there in 1751 and his life as a porter while he tried to scrape together a living to pay for his enrollment at the Woolwich Military Academy. This facet of Ėmin’s biography was ignored by previous scholars, as though it had nothing to contribute to eighteenth-century Armenian history or to Ėmin’s future life as putative liberator of his people.

Read symptomatically, however, the opening sequence of Ėmin’s autobiography yielded fascinating clues concerning the presence (or lack thereof) of Armenians in London. It also cast unexpected light on the *Santa Catharina* trial and some of its leading personalities. Early in his work, Ėmin informs his readers that his father has lost a large fortune in a business venture involving two Armenian ships sailing to Bengal. He gives the following account of the incident:

The late Admiral Griffin, like Nadir Shah, in the year 1746, took two Armenian vessels at the bar of Madras, one from Basra and other from Mukca [Moka], all with ready cash, amounting to twelve lacks of rupees, with passports and protection from the honourable council of Calcutta; yet he carried them to England. The honourable court of directors took great pains, and did the utmost to recover the vessels and money by law, but could not; and they were at last condemned as enemies’ property. When the lawyer was making his speeches on the subject, the author unfortunately was sent by an Armenian to the court of king’s bench, the very year in which he arrived in London [i.e., 1751]. (Ėmin, *Life* [1792] 34–5; *Life* [1918] 16)

This passage struck me for its remarkable similarity to Conybeare’s catalogue entry, quoted above. The fact that the *Life and Adventures* was the only source before Conybeare to allude to the capture of a ship/vessel that might have been the *Santa Catharina*

and to suggest that its trial took place at “king’s bench” led me to conjecture that, as an eminent Armenologist and cataloguer of Armenian manuscripts at the British Library, Conybeare must have been aware of Ėmĭn’s work. On my second visit to London in November 2003, I raised the matter of the reliability of Conybeare’s catalogue entry with Dr. Vrej Nersessian, the present curator of Armenian manuscripts at the British Library. I asked him if he knew where Conybeare had obtained his information for the catalogue entry. Dr. Nersessian brought an earlier *Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts* to my attention. This catalogue exists only in manuscript form and was compiled in the early 1910s by an Armenian scholar named Soukias Baronian, who worked for the British Library in an unofficial capacity. Interestingly, Baronian’s work served as the basis for Conybeare’s catalogue. On consulting Baronian’s entry for Lansdowne 1047 and 1048, I realized that my earlier hunch that Conybeare’s information about the *Santa Catharina*’s trial at King’s Bench derived from Ėmĭn’s work was correct, since Baronian’s entry refers to the above-quoted passage from Joseph Ėmĭn’s *Life and Adventures* as his principal source (Baronian folio 283). As we shall see, Ėmĭn was mistaken about the venue of the trial, a mistake that Conybeare, following Baronian, uncritically reproduced. What is more, Conybeare’s claim that the Armenians won their lawsuit against the British government is equally erroneous and originates from his misreading of the earlier entry prepared by Henry Ellis for the *Lansdowne Catalogue*.

The passage from Ėmĭn’s autobiography, quoted above, mentions an Armenian who sent him to King’s Bench upon his arrival in London. Who could this Armenian have been? I turned to a later segment in Ėmĭn’s narrative, where he describes his arrival in the British capital on board an Indiaman from Calcutta. When he first arrives in London, Ėmĭn immediately realizes that, unlike other important commercial cities in Europe, London does not have an Armenian church or a resident community of Armenian merchants who can provide him with an ethnic network of assistance. Indeed, he mentions only two London-based Armenians in the initial pages of his *Life and Adventures*. One of them makes an early appearance in the story and is described derisively as “Mr. Stephenus the Armenian Jew” (*Life* [1792] 80; *Life* [1918] 45). In the course of the narrative, it becomes evident that Stephenus played a nefarious role in Ėmĭn’s life in London. Ėmĭn first refers to him in the third chapter, where he recalls (writing in the third person) how “a fortnight after their arrival,” Ėmĭn and his Armenian friend Masseh, who had traveled together from Calcutta, “met an Armenian at the royal Exchange, named Stephenus, who shipped off Masseh to Amsterdam, and took Ėmĭn to his lodging, at one Mr. Newman’s on Downgate Hill, facing Skinner’s Hall” (*Life* [1792] 58; *Life* [1918] 31).

According to Ēmīn, Stephenus had agreed to pay for his lodging expenses but shortly afterward had complained to the landlady, threatening to leave the premises if she did not force Ēmīn out. Apparently, Ēmīn had been over-eating his daily portion of one shilling's worth of meals, and this is the reason that the two Armenians had a falling-out. Apart from being miserly (hence Ēmīn's stereotypical appellation of him as "Stephenus the Armenian Jew"), Stephenus had also gone out of his way to undermine Ēmīn's efforts at earning a livelihood in London and, moreover, had attempted to proselytize him to the Roman Catholic faith, to which Stephenus appears to have converted. When I first read these passages on Stephenus, I wondered whether Stepan di Khojijian of the *Santa Catharina* story and Ēmīn's "Stephenus the Armenian Jew" were the same individual. After all, there were only a handful of Armenians in London at the time, and the probability of more than one of them being named Stephenus was quite negligible. Based on an affidavit by Khojijian found in the *Santa Catharina* papers, which supplies an address for Stepan di Khojijian identical to that of Stephenus, it is clear that they were in fact the same individual (Attestation of Stephen Cogigian and Jacob Treve).

Admiral Griffin's papers, held at the British Maritime Museum in London, cast further light on Khojijian's identity. According to Griffin, Khojijian was an Armenian merchant residing in Amsterdam before his arrival in London. In his papers, Griffin describes how, as the principal representative of the captors, he was obliged to find a competent person to translate the Armenian documents into a European language for the purposes of winning the lawsuit. It was in this context that Griffin (through his agent John Haman) hired "Jacob Treve the Jew," a London-based merchant originally from Venice,²⁵ to travel to Amsterdam with the task of finding an Armenian proficient in both the Julfa dialect and a European language (NMM-GRI-26, entry under November 1749). Griffin's papers suggest that Treve was put into contact with Khojijian through the warden of the Amsterdam Armenian Church, a certain Matheus di Ovan John, a man who will resurface later as a central protagonist in the *Santa Catharina* trial. That Khojijian was a New Julfa merchant trading in Amsterdam is also attested to by the above passage from Ēmīn, in which the latter states that Stephenus shipped Masseh (Ēmīn's Armenian mate) to Amsterdam, presumably to become an apprentice in trade. The High Court of Admiralty (HCA) papers allow us to account for Khojijian's whereabouts and activities in London for the duration of his employment by the court. The court papers do not indicate anything else about him. Ēmīn notes that he met "Stephenus" as late as the autumn of 1753, which suggests that Khojijian was still in London two years after he had finished translating some of the *Santa Catharina* papers. In this

context, Ėmin writes that Stephenus had become a fugitive from justice and risked being thrown in jail on account of owing money to two merchants, an Armenian jeweler named Peter Paul, who had recently arrived from Madras, and an unnamed Jew to whom he “owed £300 on a joint bond” (Ėmin, *Life* [1792] 81; *Life* [1918] 45–6). According to Ėmin’s recollections, Khojijian was reduced to poverty and apparently worked as a porter before dying penniless in London a few years later (i.e., sometime in the late 1750s).²⁶ There is no trace of his demise in the British archives, nor is there any will or testament left by him. The HCA papers are also silent about his Catholic affiliations but, as we shall see later, have some revealing things to say about his involvement in the *Santa Catharina* trial. That aside, it is clear that Khojijian was an integral part of the *Santa Catharina* trial as well being a vital link in the “intelligence networks” of Armenian merchants.

“Intelligence Networks” and “Long-Distance Trust Coalitions”: A Power of Attorney Sent from New Julfa to Amsterdam

On the eve of the European expansion into and colonization of Asia, most mail on the continent moved along an overland postal circuit already set up by various missionary orders, whose members frequently journeyed between Europe and their missions in the East. As René Barendse notes in his pioneering study, “the VOC and the other East India companies were simply using a pre-existing network which had gradually been perfected by Asian merchants and missionaries from the sixteenth century onwards” (26). European consular officials also handled mail for the companies. Alongside these two carriers/couriers of mail, there was a courier network used by Armenian merchants to create an “intelligence network” between their various trade diaspora outposts in India and Europe and their home in Julfa/Isfahan. “Armenian networks of intelligence stretched far and wide throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas,” writes Barendse (27). These networks were constituted by an elaborate system of mail (both over land and, by the eighteenth century, increasingly over sea) delivered from one trade-diaspora settlement to another through a network of correspondents and messengers who made a living delivering mail for their masters. It seems that some of the major family firms in Julfa, including the Minasians, had their own corps of messengers or “runners,” known by the Persian terms *shatir* and *chapar* (see Aslanian, “Salt,” *From the Indian* chap. 6), whose business it was to dispatch mail and to ensure that it got to its recipients. The extensive nature of Armenian networks is demonstrated by the fact that often the Dutch and English East India Companies relied on Armenian messengers to remit their mail

across the vast distances separating Europe from Persia and India. The VOC, for instance, had its own Armenian “runners” in Isfahan, and when they needed extra help they resorted to hiring the messengers belonging to Armenian trading companies (Barendse 36–7).

C.R. Boxer, in a statement quoted at the beginning of this article, mentions that though bereft of a state of their own, Armenian merchants in India “inevitably developed techniques which enabled them to survive and sometimes to prosper in unpropitious circumstances” (85). However, given Boxer’s lack of elaboration, it is unclear to what “techniques” he refers. Scholars of New Julfan trade such as Khachikian, Herzig, and Baghdiantz McCabe have addressed one such “technique,” namely the complex system of letters of credit used by merchants in New Julfa to transfer their capital to faraway places such as Tibet and Amsterdam, thereby expanding the scope of their trading ventures across vast geographic and political divides (S. Khachikian, *Nor Jughayi*; Herzig, “Armenian Merchants”; Baghdiantz McCabe, *Shah’s Silk*). Below, I shall introduce two additional “techniques” of survival and prosperity used by the Armenian trade diaspora in India and elsewhere.

The first of these I shall call the global “intelligence networks” of New Julfa merchants. I use this term here to refer to what may be called the “postal system” underpinning social and economic life in the eighteenth-century Armenian trade diaspora. It consisted of a complex network of correspondents and couriers that covered the vast geography of New Julfa’s trade diaspora. One may think of it as a grid of knowledge and information connecting Armenian merchants trading in Amsterdam, in the far West, to their diasporic business partners and community kin in India and China in the East. In helping the members of the New Julfan trade diaspora communicate information across great distances with relative efficiency and speed in the context of the eighteenth century’s rather poor standards of communication, this grid gave the New Julfa merchants a crucial edge over their Asian and European rivals and collaborators in trade by enabling them to communicate sensitive market information and knowledge, thus making it possible for them to make judicious investment decisions in relation to prevailing market conditions (Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean* chap. 6). In this connection, Claude Markovits’s observations on the circulation of information are important to bear in mind:

It is the capacity of the merchants to maintain a constant flow of information within the network that ensures its success. This means two things: first, that “leaks” have to be avoided as much as possible, secondly, that information must circulate smoothly within the network, both spatially and temporally, as it gets transmitted from one generation to another ... in the

long run, the most successful merchant networks have been those most able to process information into a body of knowledge susceptible of continuous refinement. This body of knowledge, of a pragmatic nature, which is mostly about markets, is more or less congruent with what is often called the “secrets of the trade.” (25)

Second, and more importantly, the steady flow of information made possible by the New Julfan intelligence network helped maintain a sense of commercial and cultural cohesion in the otherwise polycentric and geographically scattered/segmented societies that characterized Armenian diasporic life. (For Armenian “polycentrism,” see Aslanian, *Dispersion*.) The resulting communication flows allowed New Julfa merchants both to utilize existing transnational solidarity, trust, and cooperation (grounded on kinship ties and ethno-religious loyalty) across the vast spaces of their trade diaspora and, through the success of these efforts, to generate more solidarity. While such economic and social success did not necessarily translate into political power, the presence of New Julfa’s intelligence networks allowed its merchants to exercise influence in regions where they did not have immediate representatives.

As an example of how this was done, consider the case of a merchant ship called the *Santa Reta*, owned by two merchants, an Armenian and a Greek, both trading out of Madras. The ship was confiscated as a “prize” by the British navy near Canton (Guangdong), China, in 1780 after its owners were forced out of Manila, where they were trading at the outbreak of war between Britain and Spain. The case of the ship was then brought to trial in London during the same decade. Following the capture of the vessel, its Armenian owner, Muchertich Vasseli (also identified in the court papers as “Battista Basil”), wrote a petition/letter to the only fellow New Julfan known to him, who resided in London at the time. In his letter, written in Armenian, Muchertich asks Peter Paul (who, interestingly, turns out to be the same person mentioned by Joseph Ēmīn in his memoirs, above) to assist him in the trial of the *Santa Reta*, then underway at the High Court of Admiralty, giving Peter Paul power of attorney to represent him before the court. What is noteworthy about this document is the rhetoric of kinship and “nationality” invoked by the Armenian in China to establish long-distance trust and solidarity with another New Julfan residing in London. The letter begins with the following introductory note, wherein the Armenian petitioner introduces himself as a native of New Julfa and invokes the network of solidarity that binds him to the other Armenian merchant in faraway London:

Our dear Sir, it is long since We heard your most worthy character and good name and upon hearing the same it caused

great joy to us both but we have never had the honor of being by letter or by ourselves in your Service but since we hear your honor resides there and having heard your most worthy and also respected character [...].

After describing the “misfortune and melancholy affair which happened to [him]” and his business partner in Manila, the writer then proceeds to petition the London-based New Julfa Armenian for assistance:

We pray to God that he will bestow on you long life and great prosperity that you may have power to help us two poor distressed Persons as that we and others always hearing first the great goodnesses that you have [done] to the Armenian nation [*hayots azgin*] which we at all times must respect with all our Soul and Body your great goodnesses here and everywhere and more so whoever hears the same will join with us in the same great Praise and goodness which is due to you and speak the same here and everywhere. (HCA 32/440/14, folio 3)

The distressed Armenian in China had probably learned of Peter Paul’s “good reputation” and “worthy and respectful character” as a London merchant from fellow Julfans in Madras. After all, Peter Paul was an Armenian merchant from Madras and an “insider” to the Julfan trade “coalition.” (On the importance of “coalitions” in fostering trust in long-distance merchant communities, see the pioneering work by Avner Greif [“Reputation,” “Contract,” “Organization”]; for its application to the Julfan case, see Aslanian, “Social Capital,” *From the Indian* chap. 5.) Consequently, rather than traveling to London in person in order to represent himself before the court, he sent several copies of his power of attorney to London. As we shall see, a similar attempt by New Julfan merchants to rely on their intelligence networks to generate long-distance *trust coalitions* was at the heart of the *Santa Catharina* trial.

Given the prominence of Amsterdam in New Julfa’s global trade diaspora and its proximity to London, it should not come as a great surprise that, if the Khwaja Minasian family wanted to seek assistance in procuring justice in the *Santa Catharina* trial underway in London, they would appeal to one of their fellow Julfa merchants residing in the Dutch capital. Indeed, in 1750, following the first defeat of the Khwaja Minasians’ case at the High Court of Admiralty, a New Julfa merchant recently resettled from Amsterdam to London approached the court with a curious *vakilagir*, or power of attorney, addressed “To the Armenians of Julpha who are Inhabitants of Amsterdam or Venice.” The merchant claimed that the document in question was sent from New Julfa and authorized

him, a New Julfa merchant previously residing in Amsterdam, to enter a legal claim for the cargo of the ship on behalf of its Armenian owners, who were unable to be present in person. As no claim to the ship or its cargo had been entered by then, the court reluctantly admitted the document and proceeded to inspect its authenticity. Upon cross-examination, the claimant said that two copies of the power of attorney had been mailed from Julfa to Amsterdam, whence, he said, they had been mailed to him in London.²⁷ This claimant was none other than court translator Stepan di Khojijian. The document he presented to the court is remarkable both because of its content and also because of the way it reached London. Evidently, the power of attorney (referred to in the court papers as the “Instrument”) was written in New Julfa and dated 30 Atam 135 (according to the lesser Armenian Era of Azaria²⁸), which corresponds to 30 May 1750, and sent to Amsterdam by “express mail” via Astrakhan in Russia and thence north to the Baltic Sea and down to the Dutch capital, where it arrived, in a record time of forty-five days, on 15 July of the same year. The person who received it in Amsterdam was a New Julfa merchant named Matheus di Ovan John, who, as we noted above, was at the time the warden of the city’s Armenian Church. The unusually swift nature of the document’s delivery did not go unnoticed by the captors’ counsel, who were already suspicious of its authenticity. As is well known, the overland postal system of the eighteenth century (dependent on the courier networks of merchants, consuls, and clerics) was notoriously slow; the average letter from Persia took between four and eight months to reach Amsterdam, and it was not uncommon for mail to take longer than a year to travel the long road from New Julfa to Amsterdam. Suspicious of this fact and eager to invalidate its admissibility in court, the captors, led by Admiral Griffin, summoned before the court a Dutch merchant named Martin Kuyck Van Mierop, who had resided in Astrakhan in the 1740s and had kept a detailed registry of the time it had taken for mail to travel from his father in London to the Russian trading outpost near the northern shores of the Caspian Sea. According to Mr. Van Mierop’s deposition, though the speed with which the “Instrument” had reached Amsterdam was very unusual, it was not entirely impossible for a document to cross the Eurasian landmass in such a short time, provided that it was sent by “express courier” and also given “favorable winds on the Caspian Sea” (“Attestation exhibited by Smith”). The captors were taken aback by this testimony, since their aim in taking the Dutchman’s deposition was to move the court to dismiss Khojijian on the grounds that his document was dubious and therefore inadmissible. The court, however, overruled their objections and continued to deal with the Armenian in his dual capacity as both translator and claimant. This was because the judges were aware that there were

only two other Armenians in London capable of translating the ship's papers. The court therefore initially admitted the "Instrument" as a crucial piece of evidence in the trial and accepted Khojijian's own translation, which, in English, reads as follows:

To the Armenians of Julpha who are Inhabitants of Amsterdam or Venice

30th Atam, 135/1750 Julpha & Isphahan

Be it known to you that in the year 133, a Ship called the *Santa Catherina* freighted by some of our nation, in which Khwaja Minas son of Elias went as Supercargo: going from Bassora to Bengal was taken by the English. We thereby request that you would procure one of our nation of Julpha to go over to England and to appear before the Honorable Directors of the India Company and desire their assistance for procuring our reimbursement of what has been unjustly taken from us and at the same time to desire they will please to assist the Armenians of Julpha untill they have recovered their effects, which if effected to put the same out at Interest on some Publick Fund: of all which the said Armenian is to give us Notice at Ispahan and to our Correspondents in India. But in case the Honorable Directors do not grant us the assistance we require and that the Courts of Justice of England do not do us the Justice of causing our effects to be delivered to us: The Armenian sent to England not obtaining the Company's assistance to recover the said effects nor any Decree or Order of the Court of England for delivery thereof shall in such cases procure authentick certificates of the proceedings and send them to Isphahan by means of those of our nation who shall be in those places, and the same coming to our hands *we shall do whatever lays in our power to prevent the English Gentlemen from laughing at us*; as the taking of that ship is the total ruin of our People. We doubt not but you have heard that fifteen of our poor people are in Prisons of Bassorah, Bengal and Surat: *and we on our own parts are pretty much oppressed at Isphahan by the Revolutions which have happened there for want of a chief, being overburdened with taxes these things added to our aforesaid loss have entirely ruined us*; however we shall endeavour to support ourselves in the best manner we can, till such time as we receive an answer to this letter. But if contrary to our hopes we do not meet with relief, we declare we hereby desire the Gentlemen of Amsterdam and Venice not to deviate from nor alter the directions hereabove which are of equal Interest to them as to their Servants.

1. [signature/seal]Hagamal de shafraz Minas John
2. [signature/seal]Johanes de Havet Sheriman

3[signature/seal] Hovhaness de Gaspar Jewrick John

4. [signature/seal]Paulo de Kachik Topjohn

5. [signature/seal]Safras de Panus Galdar

6. [signature/seal]Mnatsakan de Piratam

7. [signature/seal] Mirza de Ovan John Shicur
by order of Peter de Waistcan

(“To the Armenians”; emphasis added)

Matheus di Ovan John, the warden of the Armenian church of Amsterdam, who claimed to have received two copies of the document in Amsterdam, swore before a notary public in that city that “after the receipt of the [Armenian papers] in pursuant of the orders which he had received, has sent the Said Paper writings, signed and sealed as aforementioned to Stephan Cogigian, at that time residing in London, being then the only native of Julfa residing in London known to him the Deponent, to the end to observe the orders contained therein, and to be delivered to the East India Company” (HCA 42/026). The fact that Khojijian was originally hired by the captors as a translator and suddenly “pulled off the Mask and changed Characters [...] and became a Claimant of the greatest part of the Cargo of the ship, on behalf of certain Armenians, resident at Julpha near Hispahan” (“The Appellants Case” 5) caused much discomfort for Admiral Griffin.²⁹ Given the threat the translator posed to the captors’ interests, Griffin became suspicious of the Armenian’s motives. In a letter to Thomas Tyndal, the King’s proctor, he protested Khojijian’s newly discovered interest in the affair and the setbacks this was causing for the case. He referred to Khojijian as that “Perfidious Armenian Cogia Cogigia who in the first place betrayed his trust to his employers as interpreter, in the next place had sworn (Armenian like [!]) backward and forward on the same subject, [that] he is also claimant for the folks in Julfa.” Griffin ended his letter by asking the proctor “who employs the perfidious Cogi Cogiga [*sic*] again for I have not? One may reasonably suppose it is somebody that is desirous of destroying our clame [*sic*]” (letter dated 29 September 1751 “Correspondence of Admiral Griffin”).³⁰

To be sure, Griffin had reason to be concerned. For, unbeknownst to him and his counsel, the court of directors of the East India Company had taken a special interest in supporting Khojijian and, through him, the Armenian merchants in Isfahan, even if doing so meant taking a stand against important British naval figures.

The Company and Armenian Merchants

On 15 January 1751, the court of directors of the East India Company convened a special meeting at their residence at India

House, the company's headquarters on Leadenhall Street in London. Present at the meeting was Dr. George Lee, Esq., an attorney at law with extensive background in prize legislation. The meeting was convened to discuss the matter of Stepan Khojijian's "Instrument" and its legal status in the trial of the *Santa Catharina*. Dr. Lee perorated at length on different facets of the *Santa Catharina* case and explained the circumstances under which the Isfahan-based Armenian owners of the ship were compelled to send their power of attorney to Europe:

The Armenian Merchants of Hispahan not being able to procure in the East Indies satisfaction for their loss and not having any of them any particular Correspondent in Europe they all of them joined in an authenticated Instrument under their hands and seals addressed to the People of their own nation residing at Amsterdam and Venice desiring and authorizing them with the assistance of the English East India Company to procure them satisfaction *and intimating that in case they do not succeed they will by means of the Persian or Indian Government seek for justice agt. The East India Companys Affects in those parts of the world.* ("Law Cases and Opinions" folio 34; emphasis added)

Lee then advised the court of directors to support the Armenian owners of the ship's cargo and Stepan di Khojijian as their representative in London:

Considering that this is a Transaction of the Armenian Merchants who cannot be presumed to know the forms of proceedings in European Courts of Admiralty I am of the opinion the original of the paper left herewith and which should be got from Amsterdam is a sufficient authority not only for Coga Gian as being an Armenian of Amsterdam But also for the East India Company to claim on behalf of the Merchants of Hispahan in order thereto, *the East India Company must appoint some person to be their Syndick who in the name of the Company together with Coja Gian must enter a claim in the Admiralty Court on behalf of the Merchants of Ispahan for Goods seized on board the St. Catherine and sold in the East Indies which were the property of the said Merchants.* ("Law Cases and Opinions" folio 34; emphasis added)³¹

Two weeks later, the court of directors heeded Dr. Lee's opinion and appointed "the Companys Syndick to appear in their name in the High Court of Admiralty and Claime on the behalf of several Armenian Merchants such part of the ship St. Catherine and her

Cargo taken by his Majesty ship Medway Prize in the East Indies as shall appear to be the respective property of said Armenians” (*Court Book* folio 290). This set the legal stage for Khojijian to make an appearance before the court, not as translator working on behalf of the captor’s counsel, but as claimant for the Armenian merchants of New Julfa.

Diaspora Lobbying and “Stateless Power”: Armenian Merchants and Nawab Alivardi Khan in the Bengal

Almost simultaneous to their extension of the power of attorney, the factors of the Khwaja Minasian family residing in Bengal, along with other merchants with a vested interest in the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo, had recourse to a second “technique” of survival and prosperity alluded to above, but not elaborated, by Boxer. Just as George Lee of the East India Company had predicted, not gaining satisfaction in the courts of England, the Armenians “lobbied” the local Mughal authorities in Bengal to redress the injustices done to them by the English.

According to a letter dated November 1751 in Calcutta and sent by Khwaja Minas di Elias to Stepan di Khojijian in London, Minas di Elias confessed to having been compelled to join other interested parties in the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo, including several Mughal merchants, Armenians, and a Greek, “in a complaint to the Nabob against the India Company” (“Letter No. 96”). Apparently the injured parties had first appealed to the English governor of Calcutta with papers proving that *they*, and not the French, were indeed the true owners of the confiscated ship’s cargo but had been thrown out of the governor’s office with insults. (For the visit of the “Armenians and Turks [i.e., Mughals]” to the governor of the company in Calcutta and the rejection of their petition, see the “Bengal Consultation”.³²) In their complaint to Alivardi Khan (the “Nabob,” or, rather, *nawab* or governor of Bengal), the owners of the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo were joined by Bengal-based Armenian merchants who, along with Mughal merchants, were joint owners of another ship named the *Chandernagor*, which was also confiscated around the same time by Admiral Griffin’s fleet upon its return to Bengal from the Persian Gulf, again under the pretext that it was an “enemy’s vessel belonging to the French King or his subjects.” Given their common concerns, the Armenian and Mughal owners of the cargo of the *Santa Catharina* and the *Chandernagor* joined forces and “lobbied” Alivardi Khan’s *darbar* (or court) in Murshidabad (the provincial capital of Bengal) by petitioning Bengal’s most prominent merchant, Khwaja Wajeed (also known as Wazid or Wajid), an Armenian who had possibly converted to Islam and “stood in high favour at the court of Ali Vardi Khan” (Chatterjee 243). By the mid-1740s, Wajeed

had climbed his way to the position of principal representative of Bengal's merchant community (both Armenians and others) at the *nawab's* court, as his title, Faqhr Tujjar or "Chief of Merchants," indicates (Chaudhury, "Khwaja Wazid," "Trading Networks"; Chatterjee 243–4). He had acquired a monopoly of Bengal's lucrative saltpeter trade that magnified his fame and fortune and made him "one of the most important figures in the commercial and political life of Bengal" (Chaudhury, "Trading Networks" 55). Wajeed was also a part owner of the *Chandernagor*, and this fact made him "spearhead the protest against the English" (Chaudhury, "Trading Networks"; on Wajeed's role as the person who took the Armenians' complaints to Alivardi's court, see the evidence in letter dated 27 January 1748/49 in Datta, *Fort Williams* 320, par. 30). To further his own interests against the company's menacing influence in his domains, Alivardi resolved to support the Armenians' claim. In a special *parwana* (order) addressed to William Barwell, the English governor of Calcutta, dated 9 January 1749 (almost a year after the capture of the *Santa Catharina*), the *nawab* informed the English that

The syeds [Arabs], Moghuls, Armenians, &c Merchants of Houghly have complained that laaks³³ of goods and treasure with their ships you have seized and plundered, and I am informed from foreign parts that ships bound to Houghly you seize on under pretence of their belonging to the French. [...] These merchants are the kingdom's benefactors; their imports and exports are an advantage to all men, and their complaints are so grievous that I cannot forbear any longer giving ear to them. ("Bengal Consultations" 4)

He then threatened the governor with harsh reprisals against English trade in Bengal if the company failed to promptly return the goods of his Armenian merchants. "As you are not permitted to commit piracies," he warned in his *parwana*, "therefore I now write to you that, on receipt of this, you deliver up all the merchants goods and effects to them, as also what appertains unto me, otherwise you may be assured a due chastisement in such manner as you least expect" ("Bengal Consultations" 4). Apparently, the *nawab* had personal property on board one of the ships seized by Admiral Griffin's squadron. To placate the *nawab's* wrath, the governor apologized for any offence caused to his personal property, which he promised to immediately return. He even sent a "fine Arabian horse" as a gift in the hope of ingratiating himself with Alivardi. As for the Armenians' merchandise, however, Barwell explained that the matter was not up to him or the company, who in any case were not responsible for the seizure of prize ships. Nonetheless, he promised

to send a copy of the *parwanna* to the “Generals of the ships of war,” and gave assurances that he would keep the *nawab* informed of any developments.

Not satisfied with the governor’s response, Alivardi then ordered his troops to lay siege to the company’s factory at Kasimbazar. This act was followed by an embargo on English shipping on the Hughli River, thereby bringing the company’s trade in the region to its knees (for the conflict between Alivardi and the company see Datta, *Alivardi* 117–23).

Alarmed by the damage caused to its trade in the Bengal, the company summoned the principal representatives of the Armenian community in Calcutta. It threatened to exile the Armenians from the city unless they signed a letter to the *Nawab* stating their satisfaction with the company’s efforts to bring them justice. Faced with the prospect of exile or payment of damages suffered by the company’s trade as a result of Alivardi’s siege, the Armenians informed the company that, if they were forced to, they would leave behind their church in Calcutta and resettle in the neighboring French settlement of Chandernagore, where they had been welcomed, taking with them their yearly customs dues. The company decided not to pursue the matter any further, fearing the loss of substantial revenues accruing from Armenian taxes. Not only were the English thus forced to succumb to Armenian counter-threats, they were also compelled to pay approximately 100,000 rupees in damages to Ali Vardi Khan, money that would be earmarked for partial restitution to Armenian owners of both the cargo of the *Santa Catharina* and the ship *Chandernagor*.

As far as the Armenians were concerned, in addition to receiving partial restitution for their losses, another positive consequence of Alivardi’s *parwanna* was that it further compelled the company’s court of directors in London to look after Armenian interests. This was most likely the reason the court of directors agreed to support Khojijian, going so far as to provide the Armenian interpreter with a syndic and legal counsel in the hope of restoring the ship’s cargo to its Julfa-based Armenian owners.

The above case of the pressure Armenian merchants brought to bear on Alivardi’s *darbar* demonstrates how early-modern trade diasporas such as that of the New Julfa Armenians did not hesitate to “lobby” and apply mediated pressure, through third parties, on the state institutions of their host societies to represent the interests of their own “stateless nation.” It is interesting to note that the *Santa Catharina* trial was not the first instance in which Armenians resorted to foreign states to “lobby” for their own special interests. In 1698, when the Armenian-owned ship the *Quedah Merchant* was plundered by the notorious English privateer and pirate Captain Kidd, its Armenian owners appealed both to Emperor Aurangzeb

and to Shah Sultan Hussein (1694–1722) of Iran to intervene on their behalf (Aslanian, “European Piracy”; Barseghov; Richie) The resulting pressure by these monarchs led to Kidd’s trial and execution in London in May 1700; the East India Company had arranged for the *Quedah*’s Armenian owners to be personally present at the trial in London, in hopes that they would return to India and report on the swift nature of “English justice at work” (Richie 211; Zacks 338, 375).

To the very end of my investigations, I was unable to untangle how the *Santa Catharina* trial had ended. I knew that, like other scholars who had uncritically followed Conybeare’s entry in his *Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts at the British Museum*, I had been misled into believing that the Armenians sued the British government at the Court of King’s Bench and had won their lawsuit in 1751. This assumption had cost me two months of searching in vain in the King’s Bench series at the PRO for cases from 1751 in the hope of stumbling upon the *Santa Catharina* papers from the final court hearings. It was only after a preliminary research into the historical background to King’s Bench cases revealed that only criminal cases were ever brought to trial there that I realized Conybeare had sent me in search of a red herring.³⁴ To solve my riddle, therefore, I had to return to the earlier *Lansdowne Catalogue* entry prepared by Henry Ellis. More particularly, I had to address the role of Philip Carteret Webb in the ship’s trial and somehow uncover more information about this eccentric personality. I had come full circle in my investigations.

Ellis’s cryptic allusions to Webb’s role in the story seemed promising and, on the face of it, more reliable than Conybeare’s musings, especially since Ellis was writing only sixty years after the events he was describing. However, I still had a considerable obstacle to overcome. Ellis’s catalogue entry, which I have reproduced in an earlier part of this essay, like that of Conybeare after him, suggests that the Armenians won their case, which seemed equally untenable to me in light of a court document I had chanced upon in a box of court papers from an earlier date that includes an oblique reference to the Admiralty’s decision to condemn the ship as a lawful prize. However, this did not rule out the possibility that Webb might still have been a principal player in the trial and therefore might hold the key to unraveling the coda of the *Santa Catharina* narrative.

“Roguery and Forgery” in the Archives: Philip Carteret Webb, Khojijian, and the Court’s Final Verdict

Not much is known about Philip Carteret Webb’s life. One of the few biographical accounts on him is a concise entry in the *Dictionary*

of *National Biography* (DNB). According to this source, Webb was born in 1700 in Wiltshire, England. He was admitted attorney-at-law in 1724 and, at an early age, “acquired a great reputation for knowledge of records and of precedents of constitutional law” (“Webb” 1019). He later became a leading member of the Society of Antiquaries, for which he succeeded in obtaining a charter of incorporation in 1751. Webb used his foothold in this society to pursue his wide-ranging literary interests, publishing prolifically on diverse topics, including a pamphlet titled *Observations on the Course of Proceeding in Admiralty Courts in Prize Causes* (1747). From 1754 to 1761, Webb held a seat in Parliament, representing the “corrupt constituency” of the borough of Haslemere in Surrey, where he owned a large estate (“Webb” 1019). In 1756, he was made joint solicitor to the treasury, serving in that post for nine years. Parallel to his legal and political activities, Webb was also an avid collector of obscure manuscripts. In 1757, he purchased nearly one-third of the legendary library of Sir Julius Caesar (a judge of the High Court of Admiralty in the late sixteenth century), which, along with Webb’s other manuscripts, was dispersed at auction in 1771 by his widow.³⁵ It was at this auction that Lord Shelburne (later Lord or Marques Lansdowne, he of the *Lansdowne Catalogue*) purchased several lots of Webb’s manuscripts. After Lansdowne’s death in 1805, when his collection was due to be sold at auction, the Trustees of the British Museum petitioned Parliament for funds to purchase it as a whole. The House of Commons acquiesced, providing the museum with the purchase price of £4,925. The collection entered the British Museum’s holdings in the fall of 1805 and was entrusted to Henry Ellis, head librarian in charge of the Department of Manuscripts, who set to work on them in collaboration with his under-librarian F. Douce. The two men published their massive *Catalogue of Lansdowne Manuscripts* in two volumes in 1812 and 1819. This is the peculiar genealogy of the Lansdowne material (including Lansdowne Manuscripts 1046 to 1048) at the British Library (Harris 33).

The *DNB* does not mention Webb’s involvement in any Admiralty cases, though it attributes to him the curious treatise about prize law mentioned above. Nevertheless, we know from Admiralty Court papers that Webb was hired as a solicitor for at least three separate cases concerning prize ships in the late 1740s. Moreover, the minutes of the court of directors (IOR B-72, folio 94)³⁶ indicate that Webb was a solicitor for the trial of the ship *Chandernagor*, which was owned by a consortium of Armenian and Mughal merchants from Bengal and which was, along with the *Santa Catharina*, the subject of Alivardi Khan’s *parwana* to the East India Company in Bengal. (For affidavits from the *Chandernagor*’s Armenian owners, see “Letters to the EIC” folios 49–62; for the company’s role as

claimant on behalf of the Armenians owners of the *Chandernagor*, see letter dated 24 February 1748/49 in Datta, *Fort Williams* 329, para. 8.)³⁷ That Webb was also a solicitor in the *Santa Catharina* trial is attested by Ellis in his entry in the *Catalogue of Lansdowne Manuscripts*, where he states that the newly acquired Armenian and Persian mercantile documents belonging to the *Santa Catharina* (bound in three separate volumes and catalogued as Lansdowne 1046, 1047, and 1048) were “produced by some Armenian merchants in the East India trade, in a lawsuit, of which the management was undertaken by Philip Carteret Webb, Esq. who is said to have purposely studied those languages for the service of his clients, and to have succeeded so well as to gain their cause with very considerable emolument to himself” (Ellis and Douce 270). Was Webb, then, hired by Armenian merchants in India to defend their case in London? Did he teach himself Armenian to win their lawsuit, as Ellis seems to suggest? On the face of it, this would seem to make sense. It would explain why the Armenian documents surfaced in the British Library’s collection. According to this scenario, Webb presumably would have come across them during the trial, following which the papers could have remained in his possession and subsequently been sold at auction to Lord Lansdowne. This, at any rate, was my working hypothesis when I embarked on my investigations. What I found, however, was utterly unpredictable, given the previous assumptions and expectations that the historiography of this episode had nurtured in others and in me.

The *Santa Catharina* trial is discussed at length in one rare publication authored by Webb, which is not mentioned in the *DNB* article. It is also not in the collection of Webb’s manuscripts or books stored at the British Library. Entitled *The Right Honourable Lords Commissioners for Hearing Appeals in Prize Causes in the Affair of the St. Catherine Prize, State of Facts relating to Vice-Admiral Griffin’s Complaints against Philip Carteret Webb* (hereafter *The State of Facts*), the pamphlet was published in London in 1752.³⁸ Judging by the fact that it was produced for the judicial use of the Admiralty judges and therefore not for popular consumption, we can conjecture that only a few copies of this pamphlet were printed. It would have remained entirely unknown to us had I not conducted a search using the online English Short Title List catalogue for rare books to discover that one copy of this work had survived in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

The State of Facts is a fascinating work on a number of levels. First, it reveals that, despite the *Lansdowne Catalogue* entry, Webb was not employed by the Armenian merchants. On the contrary, he was hired by their opponent, Admiral Griffin, as a solicitor for the Captors’ Counsel. In other words, Webb provided his services *not* to defend the *Santa Catharina* but to have it *condemned*. Instead of

winning the case for the Armenians, as Ellis's entry seems to suggest, Webb was pivotal in defeating their cause. *The State of Facts* is also fascinating because of the light it sheds on the obscure identity of Stepan di Khojijian and on his role in the *Santa Catharina* affair.

Webb wrote the *The State of Facts* to elucidate his position in his legal dispute with Admiral Griffin, which emerged after the conclusion of the trial. At the crux of this litigation was a quarrel over Griffin's failure to recompense Webb for services rendered in the trial of the Armenian ship. The aim of *The State of Facts* is thus to establish Webb's indispensable role as solicitor in producing a verdict in favor of the captors. In this context, Webb asserts that, in addition to his customary responsibilities as solicitor, he performed other services that were pivotal to producing a verdict condemning the ship as a lawful prize, for which he was not properly remunerated by Griffin. These services involved his work in establishing for the court that Khojijian's power of attorney was a brazen "roguery and forgery" (Webb, *The State of Facts* 23).³⁹ Of course, Webb was fully aware that this document was the principal barrier standing between the Captors and a verdict of condemnation by the court. He must have known of the parliamentary act of 1664 stipulating "procedures to be followed to make lawful claims to prizes by persons residing in foreign countries." Rule 3 of this act asserted that "no claim by the subject of an allied power or by a British subject was to be allowed to proceed unless sufficient authority from the owner of the prize was produced in court, or made to appear." This was qualified by Rule 4, which specified that "*spoliation of papers or fraudulent papers was to result in the condemnation of the ship*" (legislation from *Law and Custom of the Sea* 2:53, qtd. in Roscoe 36; emphasis added). The Captors' Counsel was also aware of these rules; that is why they were so eager to disqualify Khojijian's "Authority" as a forgery almost as soon as the Armenian introduced the document to the court. Webb alludes to this when he writes, "During the Pendency of the Cause in the Court of Admiralty, the Captor's Counsel suspected this Paper to be a forgery: but how to bring it to the Tryal or to prove it to be so, did not occur to any one during the Year the Cause was proceeding in that Court" (Webb, *State of Facts* 24). Webb was right, of course, because the Captors' Counsel had gone to great lengths to invalidate what it called the "Pretended Authority" from Julfa. As we have seen above, their first strategy was to debunk the "Authority" by demonstrating that it could not have arrived from Isfahan to Amsterdam within the forty-five-day period indicated by the dates on the document. Frustrated in that effort by the testimony of the Dutch merchant, in March of 1752, when the *Santa Catharina* trial was beginning to wind down, the Captors engaged in a full offensive to expose the "fraudulent"

nature of Khojijian's power of attorney. They visited Mr. Van Mierop, the Dutch merchant who had initially testified that it was indeed possible for a letter to reach Amsterdam from Isfahan in the time indicated on the power of attorney, and compelled him to "revise" his testimony, stating that it was "extremely improbable" ("Attestation exhibited by Tyndal").

Even this new deposition failed to sway the court. The Captors then consulted two of London's leading paper-merchants to perform a "fiber" analysis of the paper "with a view to see whether the Forgery could be detected by the date, Marks and Manufacture, of the Paper on which the Pretended Authority was wrote" ("Case of Register" 4). The experts could not provide the desired proof, thus forcing the Captors to call upon Mr. Webb, who then performed services beyond the call of duty. A "Schedule of Expenses" submitted by the Register of the Court provides the following record of Webb's services for 26 February 1752:

Attending with the said Authority [i.e., the power of attorney], and Part of the original [ship's] Papers, on Mr. Webb and Mr. Tyndall, upwards of four hours, examining the Nature of the Paper on which Several of the genuine Armenian Papers at Hispahan, [*sic*] were wrote and comparing the Same with the Paper on which the pretended Authority was wrote. Mr. Webb discovered the Paper was similar, and of the same fabric, in both, by which it came out, that the dissimilitude of the Paper was not supported by fact. ("Case of Register" 4)

Webb was nonplussed by this setback. He found a clever way of circumventing the problem by proposing to compare the signatures and seals on the ship's original papers with the seals and signatures affixed to the "Pretended Authority" by the seven merchants in Julfa. But this was a tricky endeavor, since it required a person with a working knowledge of Armenian. Webb describes how he set about this complex task in his pamphlet:

The Armenians set the Impression of their Seal, or Chop, in Ink, to all Instruments they sign; and, in their solemn Papers, such as Bills of Exchange &c. they rarely subscribe their Names, but put the Impression of their Chop, which they constantly wear, fastened to a Chain, round their Necks. There were near 1700 Armenian Papers on board the Prize, of which only 403 had been translated:—the rest were in Bundles indorsed thus: *Papeles que no concierne al Navio Sta. Catharina, ni a su cargaciou* [*sic*]; papers, which do not relate to the Ship St. Catherine or her Cargo—without any Account of their Contents or by whom they were signed. In order to make the

intended Comparison, it was necessary to have a Person, who could read Armenian, and by that means be able to select from the rest such original Papers, as appeared to be subscribed with the Hands and Seals of any of the Seven Julpha Merchants.—Mr. Webb, before he set about the Task himself, inquired for a Person, who could read Armenian: He could hear of only one in England [Mr. Whiston⁴⁰], whose Health would not permit him to undertake it.—Upon this, Mr. Webb had the *Courage to attempt it himself*; and the *Success exceeded his Expectation*; for by the help of an Armenian Grammar⁴¹ and Dictionary⁴², and infinite Application, he learned the *Armenian characters*, and *first Elements* of the Language, so far as to be able to read Armenian Signatures at the Bottom of the Papers; and by that means, Selected a great number of original Instruments, Signed and Sealed by Five of the Seven Persons, whose Names and Seals were supposed to be set to the Authority in question; upon *comparing of which*, it appeared, the respective hand-writing and Seals of each of those *five* Persons to the Several *genuine* Instruments *were exactly similar*; but that there *was not the least similitude* between such their genuine hand-writing and Seals and the pretended Hand-Writing and Seals to the *suspected Authority*. (Webb, *State of Facts* 24–5)

According to Webb, the fact that he had taught himself enough Armenian to succeed in exposing Khojijian's "brazen forgery" was pivotal in defeating the Armenians' claim to the ship. After all, he argued, the Captors owed their victory at court, and the significant booty they were granted, "in a great degree, to Mr. Webb's having previously detected the Forgery." Though Griffin was unwilling to recognize the value of Webb's services, Webb pointed out that

the Captor's counsel were so sensible of the Share Mr. Webb had in this Affair, that, long before the present Complaint, they frequently declared, *That, as to the Prize in Question, Captain Holmes took the Prize from the French, but that Mr. Webb took it from the Armenians*. (Webb, *State of Facts* 27; emphasis added)

The upshot of Webb's testimony was that the court finally threw out Khojijian's and the company's claims as lawful representatives of the Khwaja Minasian family in Julfa. In their final printed case, the Captors described the power of attorney as a "falsified" paper and alleged that "this paper never was at *Ispahan*; but that it was framed either in *England* or *Holland*" ("Appellants' Case" 10). Besides taking at face value Webb's perjured testimony about

Khojijian's alleged forging of the seals and signatures at the foot of the document, the court also noted the following concerning the usual protocol among the Julfan Armenians:

The *Armenians* are remarkable for the manner of their Attestation of any Instruments they expect should be deemed to be Authentick: which they frequently procure to be attested by 10 or 15, or more witnesses; and the Attestation of Witnesses is deemed by them so necessary to give Authenticity to what they Sign, that, contrary to the practice of all other commercial People, they use it in their *Bills of Exchange*. ("Appellants Case" 10)

Needless to say, this was an astute observation regarding the ratification of bills of exchange among Julfan Armenians. What the court and the Captors could have added was that Julfan merchants followed an even more stringent protocol when it came to ratifying or authenticating legal documents such as powers of attorney, wills, and property deeds. In the latter case, such documents had to be officially ratified by New Julfa's Assembly of Merchants, and, as such, had to bear the signatures and seals of the township's *Kalantar* in addition to at least fifteen of twenty *Kadkhudas* (district heads) representing the twenty neighborhoods of New Julfa (see Aslanian, *From the Indian* chap. 5, for a discussion on the role of the Assembly of Merchants in Julfan commerce). This was the procedure to be followed when presenting an official document before a legal body of a foreign state. In the case of Khojijian's power of attorney, however, only the seven seals and signatures of the document's authors were present, and the usual protocol of having those seals attested by members of the Assembly of Merchants had been patently ignored. But this, of course, was no reason to dismiss the document as a forgery. As we shall see, there were good reasons why the Minasians had not followed the usual protocol for authenticating their document.

News of Khojijian's purported fraudulent activities reached the court of directors on 24 April 1752 and was recorded laconically in the Minutes of that day (*Court Book* folio 724).

The Admiralty's decision undermined the East India Company's policy of supporting the Armenian merchants by sponsoring Khojijian's claims. The company was left with no choice but to withdraw from the case. Given that the Armenians had no representative in London to claim the ship's property and, when need be, to take issue with the court's ruling, the Lords Commissioners were free to pronounce the ship an "Enemy vessel." As was customary during the War of Austrian Succession, during which England and France were on opposing sides and were involved in intense rivalry in the Indian

Ocean, the Captors, led by Admiral Griffin with the full support of the Crown, claimed that the Armenian-freighted ship was in fact the property of the French king and his subjects. The way was thus cleared for the court to deliver its swift verdict condemning the *Santa Catharina* as a lawful prize, thus allowing the Captors to share the spoils. That a significant sum of money was at stake in the outcome of the trial is evident from the total value of prize money, estimated by the court at £41,419 (several million US dollars in current currency).

Five days after the court threw out Khojijian's claims, it delivered its final verdict in favor of the Captors. That same week, the "Notices" section of *The London Gazette* ran the following public announcement:

Notice is hereby given to the officers and Company of his Majesty's ship Medway Prize, who were on Board at the taking of the Sta. Catherina in the East Indies, that their respective shares of the Produce of that ship and her Cargoe, lately condemned as Prize to them, will be paid, on Wednesday the 29th of April next, at the King's Arms on Great Tower Hill; and the Shares not then demanded, will be paid at Mr. Henshaw's Office, on the 1st Tuesday of every Month for three years after.

Thus ended what Griffin once referred to as the "long labour troublesome affair" of the *Santa Catharina* trial (letter of 29 September 1751 in "Correspondence of Admiral Griffin").

Conclusion

All networks, even the most solid, sooner or later encountered difficulty or misfortune. And any failing at the center of the network sent out ripples that affected all its outposts, perhaps most of all those on its periphery. (Braudel 163–4)

Fernand Braudel remarks in his characteristically astute fashion that trade networks collapse because of "failings" and attendant complications that occur at their center but have devastating ramifications beyond the core. In the case of the New Julfan trade network, the most severe "failing" to the network's center occurred in 1746–1747, when Nadir Shah imposed more than 90,000 tumans (an astronomical figure) in taxes on the New Julfans and allowed his soldiers to systematically loot the suburb. At the height of his extortionist campaigns in New Julfa, Nadir also had the most senior members of two of the suburb's leading merchant families, including the family that owned the cargo of the *Santa Catharina*, publicly burned alive at the stake and "threatened to put the whole commu-

nity to the sword and to treat the Julfans more harshly on his next visit” (Herzig, “Armenian Merchants” 108; see also Bellingeri 120–4; Bazin 301–2; Chick 1:652–3; for an account of the chaos and carnage in New Julfa at this time see also Desvignes; Aslanian, “From the Indian” chap. 8). This event, as is briefly noted above, caused a mass exodus from New Julfa of its most wealthy families, who fled to India, Russia, and the Mediterranean. New Julfa as the nodal center of a vast network never recovered from this blow. Simultaneous with this critical “failure” in the center, the Julfan network experienced another fatal blow, this time when its “peripheral node” at Madras became the target of widespread looting that accompanied the French conquest of that city in 1746. With the ruin of its nodal center at New Julfa and the concurrent temporary collapse of its most important subsidiary center at Madras, the rest of the network gradually deteriorated and collapsed. By the end of the eighteenth century, New Julfans had ceased to be important players in international trade, and their trade diaspora had lost its significance and power.

This dual collapse can be seen as a subtext in the story of the *Santa Catharina* trial. The *Santa Catharina*’s capture by the British navy and its ensuing trial took place in the penumbra of the economic and social devastation of New Julfa by Nadir Shah’s disastrous policies, on the one hand, and the conquest and looting of Madras by French forces, on the other. (On the targeting of Armenian merchants by French forces, see *Colonies: Inde* folios 287a–287b.) In the resulting chaos in New Julfa, the suburb’s autonomous administrative body, known as the Assembly of Merchants, in all likelihood also collapsed and was defunct. This led the owners of the *Santa Catharina*’s cargo to draft a power of attorney to be sent to London without going through the normal protocol of having their document approved and notarized by the suburb’s governing legal body and, therefore, without the attesting seals of the township’s *Kalantar* and the rest of the township’s most eminent representatives. One result of this breach of protocol was to make it easier for the captors of the *Santa Catharina* to dismiss the power of attorney as a forgery and thus to clear the way for the condemnation of the ship.

As for the fate of the owners of the ship’s cargo, they not only lost their capital with the confiscation of the *Santa Catharina*, they were also forced to flee their homes in New Julfa and seek asylum in the Persian Gulf ports of Bandar Rig and Basra, where they appealed to the VOC to extend to them its protection and security. In a petition sent to the VOC in 1753 (a year after they lost the trial in London), Aghamal di Shafras Minasian, the acting director of the Khwaja Minasian family firm and the family’s ruling patriarch, along with four other prominent New Julfan merchants, wrote the following:

Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State

We Armenian merchants, Persian subjects, born and living at Julfa, inform you that due to the ruin and adversity that has struck us, because of the troubles in Iran, we were forced to abandon home, wife and children and to disperse ourselves to support our families. This is the reason why we have gone to live in Rig and Basra and to get our families here, which are held by force at Julfa. Rig is a safe place and is well governed, however, there is no guarantee that this will remain so in the future. Therefore extend the protection of the VOC over us, because we fear for our lives and goods in Turkey [i.e., Basra, then under Ottoman rule]. You will see that we will not be ungrateful servants of the VOC. ("Petition from Aga Mal Sarfras")⁴³

In addition to highlighting the collapse of the New Julfan trade network, the *Santa Catharina* trial is important to understanding the workings of the Julfan Armenian trade diaspora and its relationship with better-organized and state-backed rivals, such as the English East India Company and the British state. My narration of this trial and its broader context has attempted to demonstrate how, despite some serious disadvantages, the Julfan Armenian trade diaspora managed to put up a fight and how "stateless power" and "techniques of survival and prosperity," in the form of an information and intelligence network as well as sustained "diaspora lobbying" and appeals to the state institutions of "host" societies, were important elements in this fight.

Despite these sophisticated "techniques of survival and prosperity," however, the New Julfa Armenian merchants were no match for the imperializing network of their British rivals. They were out-gunned and juridically outwitted and cheated by their powerful rivals. Indeed, one of the lessons of the *Santa Catharina* trial is that the trade networks of unarmed and stateless trade diasporas such as that of the Julfan Armenians were perhaps the greatest victims of intra-European wars fought in the Indian Ocean.

Notes

1. I wish to thank Khachig Tölölyan for his indispensable role in the development of this essay and Houri Berberian for her constant encouragement and insightful comments. Nader Sohrabi, Rudi Matthee, and Francesca Trivellato, my dissertation advisors, as well as Willem Floor, Edmund Herzig, Shushanik Khachikian, Bhaswati Bhattacharya, William Gervase Clarence-Smith, Keram Kevonian, Boghos Levon Zekiyan, Margaret Makepeace, Loretta Nassar, Tim Kiern, Levon Avdoyan, and Ara Sanjian, also read an earlier draft. I thank them all for their suggestions. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my parents, Bedros and Rita Aslanian, and to Kourken Sarkissian for providing me vital funding to make archival trips to London and New Julfa, Isfahan in 2004-2005. I also wish to thank Professor Richard Hovannisian for inviting me to present a preliminary version of this paper at the UCLA International Conference on New Julfa in November 2003. Finally, I am grateful to my friends Bedross Der Matossian, Ara Mguerdi-

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chian, Helin Avedisian, Gabriella Djerrahian, and Danny Beylerian for their moral support. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings.

2. The Armenians had leased the ship and owned most of its cargo. See below for more details.

3. By “*nawab* states” I mean those political entities that emerged in the twilight days of the Mughal Empire and enjoyed a relative degree of autonomy and independence from the Mughal dominions to which they once belonged. The most obvious example of such a state was Bengal, once the richest *suba*, or province, of the Mughals, but for all intents and purposes an independent state in the 1740s under the rule of Nawab Alivardi Khan (1740–1756) until 1756, when it became part of the dominions of the English East India Company and was subsequently integrated into the British Empire in India. The term *nawab* derives from the Persian *nevab* (itself derived from Arabic) and signifies “governor.” It was corrupted into the English “Nabob.” See Yule *s.v.* “nabob.”

4. I thank Lakshmi Subramanian for drawing my attention to Barendse’s work, as well as to that of Claude Markovits.

5. New Julfa is a suburb of Isfahan, the capital of Safavid Persia, founded by Armenian silk merchants forcibly resettled in Iran in 1605 by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I. Within a short period this suburb became the “central node” or center of a global Armenian commercial network that lies at the center of the present study. For studies of New Julfa, consult Herzig, *Armenian Merchants*; L. Khachikian; S. Khachikian, “Hay-rusakan,” *Nor Jughayi*; Kevonian, “Marchands”; Kevonian and Aghassian, “Le commerce,” “Armenian Merchant,” “Armenian Trade”; Baghdiantz McCabe, *Shah’s Silk*; Ghougassian; Aslanian, “Kani mé,” “From the Indian.”

6. See Pankhurst for a broad historical overview; Bruce (2: 130–61) and Schurhammer (1: 680–1) for Mathew (Matteus), the Armenian ambassador/envoy to Portugal in 1509; and Donzel for Khwaja Murad’s embassies to India and the Dutch East Indies in the seventeenth century.

7. For a recent English-language translation of this source, see Bournoutian.

8. The *commenda* agent was a junior merchant (usually without capital of his own, but with good knowledge of accounting and, above all, a good reputation) who worked for a more wealthy merchant, known as the “capitalist” in European sources or as “*Agha*” or “*Khoja*” in Armenian and Persian sources, who would provide capital to the agent to invest during his travels overseas. Whatever profits accrued from these ventures, one-fifth to one-third of the sum would remain with the traveling merchant, while the sedentary capitalist would receive the remainder. Most Julfan merchants gained access into the world of trade by becoming *commenda* agents for richer merchants. For a discussion of the role of the *commenda* in Julfan commerce, see the contemporary account by the English traveler John Fryer. For a rigorous analysis of it in the Julfan context, see S. Khachikian (*Nor Jughayi* 121–39) and Herzig (*Armenian Merchants* 213–38), as well as chapter 6 of my forthcoming dissertation. The best treatment on the origin and history of the *commenda* is by Abraham Udovich (“At the Origins”; *Partnership*).

9. That the London Armenian community was a “satellite” community of the Dutch capital is indicated by half a dozen letters stored at the British Library relating to the Armenian community in London. Most were written by Armenians in Amsterdam.

10. For the original of Rosado’s 1664 letter to King Charles II of England, see SP 102, “State Papers Foreign, Royal Letters.”

11. The collection was named after Lord Lansdowne (1735?–1805), the owner of the manuscripts before the British Museum (renamed the British Library in the early 1970s) acquired them in 1805. See below for the history of the collection.

12. See note 7 above.

13. Conybeare’s notice was first picked up in an obscure article in Armenian published in 1921 in the Venice-based journal of Armenology, *Bazmavep*, by S.M. Gregory, who discussed the Lansdowne papers in the larger context of Armenian manuscripts stored in the British Library. See Gregory, “Haykakan.”

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14. Mr. Sood and I collaborated in London during April and May of 2001 and later, by e-mail correspondence, till August of the same year, at which time we decided to continue working on the trial of the *Santa Catharina* separately. Many of the findings reported in this study that pertain to the initial stages of the *Santa Catharina* trial are the result of our joint work. I have given, to the best of my ability, full credit to Mr. Sood where the credit of “a break in the case” was his alone. I undertook several significant trips to London in 2004 and 2005, where, for instance, I made important discoveries such as the final proceedings of the trial as well as several printed cases containing summaries of those proceedings. I have been informed by Mr. Sood that he has written his own version of the *Santa Catharina* story, which I have not had the opportunity of examining and look forward to reading when it is published.

15. In 2003, the PRO was officially renamed “The National Archives.” All further references to this archive in the present essay, however, will use its traditional name.

16. The Hebrew word *geniza* (derived from the Persian *genj*, meaning “treasure”) refers to an antechamber of a synagogue where, in the medieval period, worn-out documents invoking the name of God were stored before they were ritually buried. The use of the term in historical circles was first popularized by the late Solomon Goitein in his ground-breaking study *A Mediterranean Society*, as well as in numerous essays. Goitein was the first scholar to systematically use thousands of documents from the tenth century, written in Judeo-Arabic and stored in the *geniza* of the synagogue of Ben Ezra in Fustat (Old Cairo), where they were preserved without being disposed of until the late nineteenth century. The preservation of these documents allowed Goitein and his followers to investigate the social history of the Mediterranean zone and its cultural-economic links to India during the medieval period.

17. The above passage is from an affidavit submitted to the Admiralty Court in London in 1700 by two Armenian merchants from India, Agha Piri Calendar and Coji Baba Sulthanoom, at Captain Kidd’s famous trial, on which occasion the Indian-Armenian merchants had traveled to London to appear in court and to press charges against William Kidd for plundering their ship, *The Quedah Merchant*. Though the document predates the *Santa Catharina* by half a century, its description of the maritime trading habits of Armenians in India corresponds to the reality on the water in the 1740s. For the historical context, see Aslanian, “European Piracy”; see also Barseghov, “Delo korolevskogo.”

18. See entry under “Sunday, April 30, 1748” in *Medway Prize*, Captain’s Log. It is interesting to note that, in his logbook entry, Captain Holmes clearly describes the *Santa Catharina* as a “Portuguese vessel.” However, contemplating the prospect of receiving his share of the ship’s booty, Holmes later claimed the vessel belonged to the enemies of the Crown, that is, the French.

19. Admiral Griffin recorded this event in one of his letters from India dated December 1749, writing that during his command “Lord Bertic [?] in the Winchester in Company of Cap Holmes in the Medways Prize took Sixteen thousand Pondicherry Rupees out of a Portuguese Ship bound to Bengal with the Wife of Mons. La Premene as passenger on board.” He then added that “we have advice of its being sent from Pondicherry to Madrass to be stript. But it is since demanded by an Armenian merchant in our settlement in Bengal (Cojee Minas Elias) and I am apprehensive will be delivered up again for want of proper Evidence” (PRO 30/8/361, folio 83).

20. I thank Aram Arkun for kindly photographing this rare pamphlet from the New York Public Library collection at my request.

21. In contrast to Herzig and Khachikian, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, in her *Shah’s Silk for Europe’s Silver*, has recently put forth the revisionist view that the Armenian merchants of New Julfa had formed a unified trading company, referred to by her as Nor Jughayi Vacharakanakan Enke-rootiun (The Trading Company of New Julfa), along the lines of the various European Trading Companies operating in the world of the Indian Ocean. In a chapter devoted to this issue, Baghdiantz-McCabe hypothesizes that this company must have been formed sometime in the 1640s when the Julfa merchants lost their privileged monopoly on Iran’s silk trade. She makes the following assertions. First, that, in contrast to the English East India Company, the New Julfa Trading Company was not organized around the principle of publicly owned shares; rather, it was a conglomerate of the smaller family-owned companies that had pooled together their capital

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under a single, unified corporate structure. Second, that the Julfa Company was not backed by a state, as was the case with the various East India Trading Companies, but had the institutional backing of the suburb's elected representatives, including the Kalantar (mayor). These views are not persuasively supported by the available documents.

22. C.R. Boxer's essay is the only available discussion on Khoja Minas di Panos. However, see the important documentation from the India Office Records reproduced in Baladouni and Makepeace. See also Kevonian and Aghassian ("Armenian Merchant Network" 77 n. 11) for a brief discussion of the possible existence of at least two Khwaja Minases during this period and Teles de Cunha for Khwaja Minas's relations with the Portuguese Crown and the Estado da India in the 1660s. Unlike Kevonian and Aghassian, my position is that there was, more than likely, only one prominent Julfan merchant named Khwaja Minas in the 1660s who was active both in Surat and New Julfa, and that this Minas had a marriage alliance, through his eldest daughter, to the Catholic Sceriman/Shahrimanian family of Julfa and Venice.

23. The original will is in "Wills—New Julfa"; for a transcription see Ter Hovaneants 1:159–61, and for an English translation see Herzig, "Armenian Merchants" 289–90.

24. In addition to the two Armenian merchants, Count Peter Shahriman (the brother of Harutiun) and another member of the same family, Agha Nazar, were also condemned to public burning. However, they managed to escape their fate by going into hiding. Count Peter was lured out of hiding after Nadir's departure from Isfahan and was severely bastinadoed by the governor of Isfahan, to the point of death. His brother Count Leo Shariman died of a "broken heart" the following day. Harutiun, Leo, and Peter were brothers of Count David Shahriman of Livorno (Chick 654; Bellingeri 102). On the Shahriman family, see the family history by Fortunato Seriman, the last of the Sherimans in Venice, written in 1855 (the folder that contains the manuscript also has a printed family tree of the family, in which Khoja Minas is also mentioned); see also the extremely valuable introduction by Maxwell White; Sanacore 127–61; Gugerotti; and Hermet and Ratti di Desio.

25. Jacob Treve was a member of a distinguished Jewish family from Venice who had resettled in England in the first half of the eighteenth century. Unlike his other relatives, he had dropped the final "s" from his last name. See the brief mention of him in Wolf. Interestingly, it is very likely that the family of Stepan di Khojijian, originally from New Julfa/Isfahan, were also residents of Venice in the 1650s, as a seal in a marriage certificate stored in a Venetian archive seems to suggest. For the certificate, see "Curia Patriarchale." I thank Giampiero Bellingeri for bringing the existence of this obscure will to my attention, and Francesca Trivellato for first informing me of the Treves family's historic links to Venice. It is very likely that Stepan di Khojijian learned Spanish as a resident in Manila in 1735, where he had settled and officially converted to Catholicism, as the records of the Philippine Inquisition indicate. The same year the Inquisition authorities took Khojijian's testimonial and recorded his conversion to Catholicism in Manila, they also recorded the appearance before their office of another Julfan merchant by the name of Minas di Elias, the supercargo of the *Santa Catharina*. The fact that both Julfan merchants were in Manila during the same period and both had converted to Catholicism suggests that they must have known each other in faraway Manila fifteen years before the *Santa Catharina* trial in London (see Ms. Ramo de Inquisición, folios 227r–230v, for Esteban di Codidyan [i.e., Stepan di Khojijian] and folios 199r–204v, for Minas di Elias).

26. After his translation services for the court ended in 1751, Khojijian began making a living by entering the "corals for diamonds" trade with India. See his 1757 petition to the Court of Directors of the English East India Company to send corals to India in exchange for diamonds (see IOR E/1/40). Thus, contrary to Emin's assertions, Khojijian was alive and apparently doing well in London at late as 1759, when he is recorded as having married a woman named Susanna Splidt at the St. Giles Cripplegate Church in London (see Parish registers of St. Giles Cripplegate Church).

27. One copy of this document is in the collection of the *Santa Catharina* papers in the High Court of Admiralty (see "To the Armenians"); the other is in LM 1047, folio 153.

28. The Calendar of Azaria, also known as the "small calendar," was invented by Catholicos Azaria (himself from Old Julfa) in the sixteenth century and was formally instituted in 1616 to replace the traditional Armenian Calendar (known as the "Greater Armenian Calendar"), which

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began in 552 CE. To compute Azaria dates, one adds 1615 to the Azaria year for all dates after 21 March (the beginning of the year) and 1616 to dates before 21 March. Thus Azaria year 75 (after 21 March) would correspond to 1690 (1615 + 75). It should be noted that Julfan merchants and, especially, priests often employed both the Greater Armenian Calendar and that of Azaria. The Azaria Calendar also had its unique nomenclature for months (thirteen months in all, including a five-day month called Haveleats). To convert Azaria dates to Gregorian ones, see the conversion tables found in Abrahamian (118-20). Abrahamian's book also has an insightful discussion (115–20) on the origins of the Azaria calendar and its use until the mid-nineteenth century among Julfans, both in Julfa and in its overseas settlements, especially those in India and Indonesia. Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe's assertion (see *Shah's Silk* 88) that the Azaria Calendar was instituted by New Julfans to celebrate or mark the founding of their colony in Iran is incorrect and stems from a misunderstanding of the calendar's origin. As Abrahamian points out, the Azaria Calendar began the year in 1616 (not 1615, as Baghdiantz-McCabe claims) not because this year was symbolic for Julfa's history but because the Greater Armenian Calendar that began in 552 CE had run its (mathematical) course and needed to be replaced by a new system of organizing time.

29. Griffin was eager to receive his share of the booty to cover the mounting expenses of his court-martial trial, then underway in London. See "Griffin" for details on his court martial.

30. I thank Gagan Sood for his assistance in procuring this letter.

31. I am grateful to Gagan Sood for supplying me with a transcription of this document.

32. I thank Gagan Sood for supplying me with this document.

33. A *laak* is an Indian term for a unit of a hundred thousand.

34. I thank Gagan Sood for informing me about the nature of King's Bench cases.

35. The auction was organized by Sotheby's of London. See *A Catalogue*. A microfilm of this rare catalogue can be found at the British Library.

36. The following minutes were recorded at a Court of Directors Meeting held on Wednesday 28 June 1749: "Order'd . . . That Mr. Philip Carteret Webb have liberty of Inspecting and taking Copys of such Papers relating to the Ship Chandernagore and her Cargo taken by His Majestys Ships in Ballasore Road as Mr. Cole shall agree to." IOR B-72, folio 94.

37. A court document providing an annex of expenses incurred by various individuals associated with the Captor's Counsel includes the following service provided by Webb: "Drawing of abstract in the Proceedings of the ship *Chandernagor* in relation of Admission of Claims." See "Admiral Griffin's Memorial" in HCA 42/47. The same entry is also found in Webb's printed pamphlet on the subject (*The Right Honourable* 13). Immediately before this entry Webb also lists his various visits to India House to deliver certified documents in relation to the *Santa Catharina* case. This suggests that the company was also a claimant on the *Chandernagor*, and, moreover, that the court of directors was moved to act on behalf of both Armenian-owned ships as a result and in the context of Alivardi Khan's *parwana* to the company's governor in Calcutta.

38. The title page does not bear a date, but, given the context in which the pamphlet was written, it was more than likely published in the fall of 1752. Unlike similar "State of Facts" printed for the use of Admiralty judges, this pamphlet has not been preserved in the HCA 42/47 series at the PRO. To the best of my knowledge, the only extant copy, which (judging from the marginal notes on page 3) appears to have belonged to Mr. Webb himself, is in the Huntington Library collection in San Marino, California.

39. There was much hysteria over forgery in mid-eighteenth-century Britain, stemming in large part from the "revolution in finance" ushered in by the transition to a paper economy in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth. Forgery of paper documents was declared a capital offense in the Forgery Statute of 1729 and remained so for the rest of the century. See McGowan.

40. The Whiston brothers were English Orientalists who studied Armenian with the Vanandetsi

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family of scholars and printers in Amsterdam, and translated the celebrated work of the fifth- to eighth-century Armenian historian Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, into Latin for the first time. See *Chorenensis Mosis*.

41. The Armenian grammar referred to by Webb was most likely Joachim Schröder's *Thesaurus Linguae Armenicae*, published by the Vanandetsi press in Amsterdam.

42. There were only a handful of Armenian dictionaries published before the 1750s. Webb could have relied upon Jacob Villote's *Dictionarium novum Latino-Armenium*. Most likely, however, he was using Schröder's *Thesaurus*, published a few years prior to Villote's lexicon. The reason that Webb would more probably have used Schröder's manual is that the latter was more widely available in London and, moreover, unlike Villote's *Dictionary* or any other lexicon hitherto available, Schröder paid particular attention to the Armenian dialect used by Julfa merchants.

43. I am grateful to Willem Floor for supplying me with this document and its translation.

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ACFM	Archives Colonial Fonds Ministériels, Aix-en-Provence, France
AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Seville
ASCA	All Savior's Cathedral Archives, New Julfa/Isfahan, Iran
AGN	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City
APD	Archivio Patriarchale o Diocesano, Venice
ASV	Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Venice
ASPF	Archivio Storico, Congregazione per l'evangelizzazione dei Popoli o "de Propaganda Fide," Vatican
PRO	Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, National Archives of Great Britain, London
HCA	High Court of Admiralty
BL	British Library, London
GL	Guildhall Library, London.
LM	Lansdowne Manuscripts 1046–1048, BL
IOR	India Office Records, BL
NMM	National Maritime Museum, London
ARA	Algemeen Rijkarchief, The Hague, Netherlands
<i>Prize Appeals</i>	A collection of printed cases relating to ships confiscated during the War of Austrian Succession, originally belonging to Sir George Lee. Held in the New York Public Library collection, call no. KC+++p.v. 20–21.

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