

SEBOUH DAVID ASLANIAN. *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*. (The California World History Library, number 17.) Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2011. Pp. xx, 363. \$49.95.

As the title suggests, this book has an enormous geographic scope carefully anchored to early modern Armenian trade communities. Scholarship on both the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, especially for late ancient and early modern periods, has in the past fifteen years or so been increasingly creative and evocative of world history themes, such as maritime violence (piracy and hostage taking) and long-distance travel literature produced by Asians. Sebouh David Aslanian takes a fresh look at a more the familiar theme of wide-ranging trade between Asia and Europe. He argues that relevant Armenian records from church, monastic, and family archives constitute important Eurasian primary sources. These sources, he contends, help to reduce the gaps in quantity and quality between overall Asian sources and those of European trading companies and travelers that constitute “proxy” sources of Asian history (p. 22). Aslanian generously acknowledges the scholarship on which he builds, especially the unpublished dissertation of Edmund Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants from New Julfa: A Study in Premodern Trade” (1991).

The main analytic framework of Aslanian’s study is a reconceptualization of early modern “trade diasporas” as “circulation societies,” that is, as dispersed nodes—connected to a center and to each other—that circulate merchants, credit, goods, and information (p. 13). The central node in this case was New Julfa, the suburb of Isfahan in which the Persian Safavid Shah ‘Abbas resettled residents of Old Julfa in Armenia after uprooting them from and destroying their old town during more widespread hostilities with the Ottomans. The other dependent nodes, some already existing and some newly established, were located as far afield as Amsterdam, Venice, Izmir, Madras, Canton, Manila, and, a bit later on, St. Petersburg and Jakarta.

Two of three central chapters (five and six) employ the language of the nodal model and the dynamic notion of circulation, but the term “trade networks” appears frequently also and suffices for the author’s purposes. The strategy of these two chapters is empirical, following the evidence where it leads. For example, in order to arrive at an opinion as to whether the New Julfan merchants established a joint-stock company as opposed to relying on patriarchal family companies, Aslanian introduces evidence from a treaty with a Russian tsar written in a Julfan dialect, documents involving Armenians in the High Court of Admiralty, London, and detailed histories of two Armenian families (pp. 144–165).

The third central chapter is the seventh, titled “Trust, Social Capital, and Networks.” Here, Aslanian argues that studies of trade diasporas take for granted the existence of trust among groups adhering to the same eth-

nic and/or religious identities. To problematize the concept of trust, Aslanian turns to “social capital theory” that includes norms of proper conduct within a social network and sanctions for not following those norms (such as loss of reputation and ostracism). He finds social capital highly relevant to trade circulation societies that rely on *commenda* and other forms of partnership over extended spatial and temporal distances. Aslanian examines the “closed” coalition of New Julfa merchants and their norms or customary laws. The far-flung Armenian Church dioceses and the informal assembly of New Julfan district heads provide Aslanian with “multiplexity,” that is, connectivity on different but intersecting levels of social capital. The virtually closed nature of these connections, however, along with a *single* central node, meant that the New Julfan network seldom engaged in cross-cultural trade, thus delimiting its diversification and growth.

Aslanian returns to his theoretical framework of a nodal circulation society after describing the collapse of New Julfa under violent extortion tactics of Nadir Shah in the 1740s. After that collapse, none of the many scattered nodes of the Armenian merchant society developed into a central replacement. This failure, coupled with competition from the British East India Company in India, may have contributed to a shift away from interest in resuscitating a merchant coalition to a new focus on recovery of Armenia as a homeland/state. The idiosyncrasies of the New Julfa situation mean that Aslanian’s theoretical framework does not fully or satisfactorily play out. The author highlights the need for further research in various topics, one of which is a comparative examination of different circulation societies. Aslanian makes a start in his final chapter, comparing significant characteristics of Multani Indians, Sephardic Jews, and New Julfans.

This is the kind of book that entices readers to spend time not only with the text but also with the bibliography and endnotes, retracing research steps and finding new paths to benefit their own work. It is good to have so much detail and analysis of the New Julfan network in one place, and even better to have a new lens through which to view early modern Eurasian trade.

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ELIZABETH STEPHENS. *Anatomy as Spectacle: Public Exhibitions of the Body from 1700 to the Present*. (Representations: Health, Disability, Culture.) Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2011. Pp. viii, 166. \$90.00.

Scholars from diverse disciplines will be interested in the material that Elizabeth Stephens traverses: wax Venuses, popular and educative anatomy museums, side-show exhibitions of freakish bodies, and so on. For several hundred years, in changing ways, human bodies—dead and alive, whole and in parts, actual and modeled—have been turned into anatomical objects for popular and educative display. Stephens, like others including Michael Sappol in *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*: