

**HANDES AMSORYA**

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR ARMENISCHE PHILOLOGIE

**ՀԱՆԴԵՍ ԱՄՍՕՐԵԱՅ**

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**“Many have come here and have deceived us”:  
Some Notes on Asateur Vardapet (1644-1728), An Itinerant  
Armenian Monk in Europe\***

Sebough David Aslanian

“The individual with his forensic characteristics is at one level the obvious and irreducible minimal unit for the historian of society (or what the economists might call the “primitive” for purposes of analysis)...” Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham: Mass.,: Brandeis University Press, 2011, 2)

In his *Chronicle of the Sacred Congregation of the Armenians belonging to the Order of Saint Anthony*, Matteos Evdokiats'i, the chronicler of the Mkhitarist order on San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon, has the following entry for the year 1722 regarding a peripatetic monk who wandered his way onto the island and was given a safe haven there.

And many were the clerics among the Armenian nation whose heartfelt wish was to join our Congregation, and if this were not possible to live at our convent as one among the wanderers...Among them was a certain elderly monk from Julfa whose name was Astuats'atur, who after many years of wandering around had come to Venice. Upon seeing that our Abbot had received this island of San Lazzaro and was adding buildings on it, from year to year, and that the congregation that was established there was getting stronger and multiplying also from year to year, was at once becoming famous in reputation and gaining favors in the eyes of the powerful as before the general populous of the city, he too wished to be part of our monastery. He did not expect to be welcomed as a member of the order, for he was already in his nineties, but rather to live out the remainder of his days among us as a guest at his own expense and to write out his will before a notary public and following his passing to de-

posit his belongings in the treasury of Venice and to make us the sole beneficiary of his estate if we were to keep him with us till the fruition of his life.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Matteos Evdokiats'i, *Ժամանակագրությունն սրբազան կարգի միաձանցն Հայոց* [Chronicle of the Sacred Congregation of Armenians belonging to the Sacred Order of...], folio 297. «Բազում էին ի հալկազեան սեռի մերում՝ եկեղեցականք, եւ աշխարհականք, որք ի սրտէ կարի իմն ըղձանային ի միաբանութիւն մեր մտանել, եւ թէ այս անհնար իցէ, գէթ իբրեւ զմի որ ի պանդխտաց ի վանս մեր բնակ լինիլ. եւ ի սմին յայսմ գկեանս իրեանց ազատ ի զբաղանաց՝ առ ի մեղաց զգուշութեամբ յաստուածային պաշտամունս հանապագորդել: Եւ այնպէս յօր ելից իրեանց գալստեան տեսոն ամենայնի արթուն զգաստութեամբ զանցինս իրեանց պատրաստ մատուցանել: Յորոց մի էր եւ ոմն Աստուածատուր անուն ծերունի վարդապետ՝ ժողայեցի, որ ի բազում ամաց հետէ պանդխտութեամբ ի վեհեշ կայր: Սորայ տեսեալ՝ զի արբայ հայրն մեր զարթոյն Ղազարու կղզին առեալ՝ ամ յամէ ըզշինուածս յաւելու ի մնա. եւ միաբանութիւն՝ զոր հաստատեալն էր, ամ յամէ երթալով երթայ եւ զօրանայ՝ բազմանայ եւ բարգաւաճի. Սիանգամայն եւ մեծամեծացն առաջի՝ եւ յաչս առհասարակ ժողովրդեան քաղաքիս շնորս գտեալ, քովեստիւք պերճանան եւ գերահամ-





Figure 1: Tombstone of Astuatsatur Shadanēnts', San Lazzaro degli Armeni, photo courtesy of Meroujan Karapetian.

Six years later, Astuatsatur Vardapet Shadanēnts', as he was formally known – or “Asateur,” “Dieudat,” “Deodato” as he was known to non-Armenians – passed away on the island.<sup>2</sup> His tombstone inscription (see figure 1) on pink marble in the courtyard of the cathedral reads, “This is the tomb of Vardapet Astuats'atur from Julfa who was about a hundred years of age when he completed his corporeal life. He stayed in the care of our congregation for six years until his death in the year of the savior 1728, as is written below.”<sup>3</sup>

Who was Astuatsatur Vardapet and how did he end up on the island of San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon? No scholar of Armenian history known to me has ever mentioned him as a historical personage, and there is no known entry devoted to him in several biographical works.<sup>4</sup> However, a folder bearing his full name Տէառն Աստուածատուր Շադանէնց [Master Astuats'atur Shadanēnts'] accompanied with the inscription (in faded pencil) “1677-1719,” holds some answers to our questions. The file is stored in the previously unconsulted and rich depository of documents once belonging to Venice's Armenian church of *Santa Croce degli Armeni* founded in 1688 in the parish of San Zulian and now kept among the island's other records and until recently largely unknown to scholars. Asateur's folder contains about thirty-one personal letters written to him between the years 1677 and 1719, an important certificate of Catholicity from Rome dating to 1682, and a dozen or so financial papers including several promissory notes and other certificates. Most importantly perhaps, the file contains a seven-folio notarial document dated 18 August 1689 pro-

բաւ լինի. ցանկացաւ եւ ինքն ի վաճա մեր լինիլ. ո՛չ ի թիւս միաբանիցն յաւելեալ. զոր ոչ մարթ էր մնա ընդունելոյ ակնունիլ, քանզի ինճնամեմիս ուրեմն էր, այլ ի ճիւրից կարգի ծախիւքն իրովք մինչեւ ի վախճան կենաց իւրոց առ մեզ բնակիլ: Եւ արքունի ճօտարաց տալ գրել ի կտակի իրում զամենայն ինչ'որ իւր իցէ, յետ վախճանի կենաց իւրոց ի ցեքն դնել. եւ պողոյն միայն ճոյ[ն] ըզմիաբանութիւն մեր մշտնջենաւոր ժառանգ առնել. եթէ զինքն մինչեւ ի կատարած կենաց իւրոց առ մեզ պահեսցուք: Զի էր ճորայ եօթն հազար դաճեկան»:

2 I will hereafter refer to him as Asateur in the body of the essay unless quoting directly from the seventeenth century notarial document reproduced in the appendix, where I will maintain the original orthography.

3 The transcription of the tombstone was first made by Hovannes Torossian in his influential biography of Mkhitar. See Յովհաննէս Վ. Թորոսեան, *Վարդ Մխիթարայ Արքայի Սեբաստացոյ*

(Venice San Lazzaro, 1901), 176. «Այս է տապան Աստուածատուրոյ վարդապետի ճորայեցոյ որ էր ամաց իբր հարիւրոյ մինչ եզերեաց զկեանս մարմնոյ, սա ամս վեց առ մեզ կացեալ կրոնիս մերոյ բարերարեալ բարեաւ վերջնով վախճանեցեալ Յամի փրկչին որ ստորագրեալ» (1728)»

4 Asateur is mentioned in neither Hrach'ea Acharean's *Hayots' Andznanneri Bararan* (Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names) (Yerevan: Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakut'yun, 1942) nor Hakob Anasyan's *Haykakan Matenagitut'yun, V-XVIII cc.* (Armenian Bibliography, 5<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries) vol. 1-2 (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakchut'yun, 1976). The nineteenth-century work of Mkhitarist father Mateos Maghak'-T'ep'ileants', *Kensagrut'iwn Ereweli Arants'* [Biography of Notable Individuals] volume 1 (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1839) has several Astuats'aturs but not our own priest, presumably because he was not “notable.”

duced by the bishopric of Marseille [L'evesché de Marseille] that will serve as the focus of this investigation. A kind of certificate of identification, this document contains affidavits and testimonies on the wandering preacher by five sworn witnesses affirming that Asateur was indeed the person he claimed he was, that is, a *bona fide* Catholic monk, belonging to the order of the Armenian Basilian friars in Isfahan, who was then preaching his way through and collecting alms across the religious centers of post-reformation Europe.<sup>5</sup> The certificate is important in its own right because it raises the question of why, during the second half of the seventeenth century, parish authorities in the Provençal city would consider it necessary to “recognize” and validate someone’s identity before witnesses and a notary public? Could the issuance of this certificate have anything to do with what Alan Hunt, in a different context, has called a “crisis of recognizability” in the early modern period that was itself a symptom in part of a larger crisis of vagrancy and mobility?<sup>6</sup> The certificate

might also hold clues to the question of what the life of one wandering monk might teach us about larger matters connected to both early modern global and Armenian history as well as the history of the migration of Eastern Christian bishops or missionaries across early modern Europe. Was Asateur vardapet’s life, as fragmentary as our knowledge of him may be, in any sense “typical” of anything outside of perhaps itself? If so, what sorts of legitimate generalizations can we make on the basis of one such fleeting life and the traces it has left in this certificate as well as in several archival collections?

The certificate is also meaningful when viewed as a small window on the circulation across the porous frontiers of early modern Europe of hundreds of Eastern Christian bishops and priests who like Asateur ambulated through what may be called religious “charity networks” stretching from places like Isfahan, Diyarbekir, Aleppo, and Mount Lebanon in the Near East to Warsaw, Rome, Paris, Lisbon, and Cádiz in Europe, and Mexico City, Santa Fe, and Yucatan in New World beyond. The presence of these subaltern-like wayfarers through Europe and beyond has recently become the focus of scholarship by Bernard Heyberger, John-Paul Ghobrial, and especially Cesare Santus.<sup>7</sup> This scholar-

5 Though Asateur is frequently identified as a “Basilian monk” from Isfahan, it is important to clarify here that there does not appear to have been a distinct order of Armenian Catholics known as Basilians in Isfahan at the time. Rather, the designation Basilian was a vague category ascribed by medieval and early modern Roman Church authorities to some Eastern Christians, including Greeks and Armenians. The label designated those who followed the mid-fourth century ascetic St. Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia. See C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, second edition (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 9-10 and Cirillo Korolevskij, “Basiliani” in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1930) [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/basiliani\\_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/basiliani_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/). I thank Cesare Santus for the clarification.

6 Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 1996), 288.

7 The modern scholarship on Eastern Christian relations with Europe is traceable to the classic work of Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au Temps de La Réforme Catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994) but has regained momentum recently with the publication of a new spate of studies with a global historical focus on mobility and alms-collection. See Bernard Heyberger, “Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection,” 26, and Bernard Heyberger, “Chrétiens orientaux dans l’Europe catholique,

ship helps us pose the question of whether the increase of alms-collectors from the East traveling across the religious and imperial frontiers of Europe and claiming to be genuine missionaries helped trigger a “crisis of recognizability” among church and state authorities alike in the early modern period. Was such a crisis connected to Eastern alms-collectors part of the reason why the bishop of Marseille went to great lengths to “certify” Asateur’s identity as a legitimate Armenian-Catholic missionary?

This essay seeks to address some of these questions. Through a careful reading of this notarial document as well as other papers and certificates Asateur Vardapet left behind, the essay reconstructs the microhistory of this peripatetic Armenian monk, tracking his journeys from his birthplace of New Julfa, Isfahan to Constantinople, Venice, Rome, Livorno, Lucca, Poland, Paris, Lyon, and Marseille while the pilgrim preached in Catholic and Armenian apostolic churches alike and collected alms. In addition to reproducing, in the appendix, a transcription, annotation, and translation of this certificate, the essay argues that the notarial document in question demonstrates the close link between global mo-

bility in the early modern period and the rise of what Valentin Groebner has called the birth of “early modern practices of identification.”<sup>8</sup> What is more, a microhistory of Asateur’s life as an intrepid itinerant across the worlds of Asia and Europe sheds important light on the role of mobility in the making of the complex worlds of the early modern Armenian diaspora. Before turning to Asateur’s paperwork and the question of who this obscure individual might have been, let us briefly examine how an upsurge of geographic mobility coupled with Europe’s inability to manage a surge of information flows led state and religious authorities there to go to great lengths to curb unauthorized mobility and scrutinize the identity and authenticity of mobile individuals and especially those hailing from distant and alien worlds in the East like our wandering alms-collector.

### Certification, Mobility, and the Age of Dissimulation

Over the last few decades, historians have argued that early modern Europe experienced hitherto unknown levels of information flows from three principal conduits: the “discovery” of new worlds, the “recovery” of old texts, and the publication of millions of books through the proliferation of the technology of print. What is more, information networks managed by long-distance corporations such as the East India Companies headquartered in London and Amsterdam, as well as global missionary orders like the Society of Jesus centered in Rome flushed Europe and other parts of the world with a surge of potentially unmanageable volumes of

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XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles,” in Bernard Heyberger and Chantal Verdeil, eds., *Hommes de l'entre-deux, Parcours individuels et portraits de groupes sur la frontière de la Méditerranée, XVIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2009); John-Paul Ghobrial, “The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory,” *Past and Present* (February, 2014): 51-93; Ghobrial, “Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (2017): 153-173; Cesare Santus, “Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Travelers, and 'Refugees' in Early Modern Rome,” in Emily Michelson (ed.), *Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome*, Brill, Leiden (forthcoming).

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8 Valentin Groebner, *Who are you? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Mark Kyburz and John Peck (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 199.

data resulting in what Ann Blair and others have described as “information overload.”<sup>9</sup> This in turn resulted in what one scholar has called “epistemological slippage” or “the tendency of information to escape its original social contexts, becoming reassembled in emerging inscriptive forms....”<sup>10</sup> As a result of increasing volumes of information and the often unknown provenance of such material, early modern societies and states, much like our contemporaries in the age of social media, experienced mounting difficulties when it came to differentiating *fake* news from what was genuinely trustworthy and believable.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the early modern world witnessed two parallel developments that also conspired to undermine people’s sense of credibility in the authenticity or trustworthiness of information as well as the identity or identities of individuals and communities with whom they came into contact.

The first was the unprecedented growth in the mobility and circulation of people and things. As Timothy Brook has outlined in his marvelously evocative work, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World*, mobility on a global scale – one

much more sustained than ever before, faster, and covering a wider arc of connections – was a principal feature of the early modern world and of the seventeenth century in particular. For Brook, “more people were in motion over longer distances and sojourning away from home for longer periods of time than at any other time in human history.”<sup>12</sup> Like Brook, other scholars of world history have also highlighted “the common factor of mobility” and forced migration as key hallmarks of history during the period roughly between 1500 and 1800. The enslavement and violent migration across the early modern Atlantic of approximately twelve million Africans is well known, as is the expulsion of around one hundred thousand Jews and three hundred thousand Muslims (Moriscos) from the Iberian Peninsula in the wake of the Reconquista and the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition. Other groups’ mobility across early modern boundaries is also emblematic of the larger leitmotif of mobility during the period. Puritans, Mennonites, Huguenots, Quakers, Russian settlers fanning out across Siberia, and of course Armenians, on whom my own work focuses, formed distinct communities whose members were driven across long distances as a consequence of imperial expansion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In many cases, this upsurge of mobility across the early modern world was facilitated by the rise of what I have elsewhere called “infrastructural public works projects” or the building by centralizing states and empires both in Europe as well as Asia of an infrastructure of roads, canals and ports and shipping lanes that facilitated

9 Ann M Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 12.

10 Benjamin Breen, “No Man Is an Island: Early Modern Globalization, Knowledge Networks, and George Psalmanazar’s Formosa,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 17, no. 4 (January 1, 2013): 391–417; Steven J. Harris, “Long-Distance Corporations, Big Sciences, and Geography of Knowledge,” in *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader*, edited by Sandra Harding (Durham and London, 2011), 61–83. See also Simon Schaffer, “Newton on the Beach: The Information Order of the *Principia Mathematica*,” *History of Science* 47 (2009): 243–276.

11 Breen, “No Man Is an Island,” 393.

12 Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 19.

mobility and movement on a level never before experienced.<sup>13</sup>

One of the larger societal consequences of early modern mobility was the radical shift in the way many people related to questions of sociability and its correlates of “recognizability” and identity, both on a personal and collective level. In this connection, it is important to note here that medieval societies (whether in Europe or Asia) had a sense of sociability that was predicated on a physically rather restricted space with “sites of encounters” that were “not too distant” and few in number, to paraphrase the French historian Robert Muchembled.<sup>14</sup> Without exaggerating, it is fair to say that most individuals before the onset of the early modern period probably never left the villages or hamlets into which they were born. As the late Polish philosopher and social theorist Zygmunt Bauman has noted, “Villagers and town dwellers alike knew most of the others they were ever likely to meet, because they had ample opportunity to watch them – to watch continuously, in all their functions and on most diverse occasions. Theirs were communities perpetuated and reproduced by mutual watching.”<sup>15</sup>

With the development of infrastructural reform projects and the building of

canals, roads, bridges, long- and short-distance shipping, harbor facilities and the like, not to mention the forced migrations and dispersal of entire communities in the early modern period, all this began to gradually change. Beginning in the sixteenth century, an “extension of social space” brought a fundamental change in the lives of early modern men and women, as social relations and even what it meant to be an individual or for that matter a group started to shift. The uptick of mobilities across Europe and Asia began to dissolve the once secure and familiar boundaries of the “small, stable and tightly controlled”<sup>16</sup> world in which most premodern people lived. This necessitated new ways of managing social relations, creating a sense of familiarity and trust beyond the “limits of the gaze” and also of imagining what it meant to belong to communities that were considerably larger and more anonymous than those that came before. Moreover, with more mobility not only were people exposed to new possibilities of what Stephen Greenblatt has famously called “self-fashioning” but were also encouraged sometimes to fabricate entirely new identities for themselves.<sup>17</sup> As Miriam Eliav-Feldon has noted, this in part led to the rise of imposture, deceit, and dissimulation across Europe and arguably elsewhere as well. “Early modern Europe,” she writes in her recent work, was “teeming with impostors.” Individuals “from all walks of life were inventing, fabricating and dis-

13 Sebouh David Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Global Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800* (under contract with Yale University Press).

14 See Robert Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (xv-xviii siècles)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 45 and 52 quoted in Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity, and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 39. My thoughts in this and the following paragraphs are indebted to Bauman as well as Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Western World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 11-12.

15 Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters*, 39.

16 Ibid., 40.

17 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), and the excellent discussion in John J. Martin, “Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (Dec. 1997): 1309-1342.

guising themselves, lying about who they were or pretending to be someone they were not.”<sup>18</sup>

The second parallel development to Europe’s information overload that helped erode people’s sense of trust in whether people were who they said they were as opposed to dissimulators carefully camouflaging their true identities was the rise of what has been called the “confessional state.”<sup>19</sup> As a number of scholars beginning with Perez Zagorin have noted, the emergence of “orthopraxy” and the hardening of religious and confessional boundaries among individuals or groups in sixteenth century Europe not only led to the Reformation and Counterreformation as well as nearly a century of confessional wars in Europe, but it also produced multiple communities whose members were compelled to resort to religious dissimulation to preserve themselves.<sup>20</sup> Thus, even before the emergence of Confessionalism in the Reformation, the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478 and the forced conversion or exile of Iberian Jewry spawned tens of thousands of “New Chris-

tians” or Marranos who led externally Catholic lives but retained an inner adherence to their Jewish traditions. The same was the case with many Iberian Muslims who as Moriscos were forced to disown their Muslim faith in public and adopt Catholicism. These crypto-Jews and Crypto Muslims who practiced the art of deceit and religious dissimulation were joined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by other communities of dissimulators including Nicodemites among both formerly Protestant and Catholic communities who also feigned one outward lifestyle while secretly practicing another identity.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, the seventeenth century marks an important period within the history of the early modern world in general and the history of identification practices in particular. The century witnessed a global alignment or conjuncture of generally three processes that had been around more or less from the beginning of the early modern period but had yet to converge and momentarily overlap: 1) ever-increasing data and “information overload” generated in part through long-distance in-

18 Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.

19 On “confessionalization” and the rise of the confessional state, see Thomas A. Brady, Jr. “Confessionalization: The Career of a Concept,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 1-20; Marc Forster, “With or Without Confessionalization: Varieties of German Catholicism,” *Journal of Modern History* 1 (1997): 315-347; for a broader view suggesting the usefulness of the concept for Ottoman and Safavid history, see Tijana Krstić *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

20 For the foundational work and general overview see, Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990).

21 For Marranos and crypto-Jews and Nicodemites in Italy, in addition to the overview in Zagorin (38-62) see the excellent treatment in John J. Martin, “Marranos and Nicodemites in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 577-599; for Moriscos and the use of *taqiyya* or religiously sanctioned dissimulation, see Devin Stewart, “Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco *Taqiyya*,” *Al-Qantara* 34, no. 2 (2013): 439-490; Maria del Mar Rosa-Rodriguez, “Simulation and Dissimulation: Religious Hybridity in a Morisco Fatwa,” *Medieval Encounters* 16 (2010): 143-180; Ronald E. Surtz, “Morisco Women, Written Texts, and the Valencia Inquisition,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 32, no. 2 (Summer, 2001): 421-433. For Nicodemites, see Zagorin (63-152) and Stefania Tutino, “Between Nicodemism and ‘honest’ dissimulation: The Society of Jesus in England,” *Historical Research* 79, no. 206 (November 2006): 534-553.



formation networks handled by East India Companies and global religious missionary orders such as the Society of Jesus and facilitated by the printing revolution, 2) the increasing mobility of individuals (including a significant number of Eastern Christians moving across parts of Europe in quest of alms-collection) and communities across regional frontiers and the dissolution of earlier more intimate forms of sociability and “recognizability,” and 3) the rise of the early modern confessional state and the subsequent forced conversion of entire communities from Iberian Jews and Muslims to Protestants in Catholic lands and Catholics in Protestant countries. The conjuncture of these processes during the seventeenth century helped spawn multiple cases of individual “impostors” and religious dissimulators across Europe. In light of these developments, the saturnine conclusion of the French philosopher and essayist Michel de Montaigne of 1580 that “Dissimulation is one of the most striking characteristics of our age” certainly takes on a less alarmist tone.<sup>22</sup> By the seventeenth century if not earlier, it is therefore not surprising to note that Europeans experienced heightened fears that individuals were not always who they seemed to be. This simultaneously provoked what has been termed as the “crisis of recognizability.” The combination of all these developments eroded the conditions of social intimacy, familiarity and trust that had previously enabled people to “recognize” and identify others around them and distinguish authenticity from falsehood, a “genuine” individual from a fraud and impostor, a confessor of one faith from a crypto believer in another,

a genuine alms-collector from a deceitful opportunist. It was in this larger context of increasing mobility, escalating information, and the spread of religious dissimulation that European state authorities and religious institutions began to implement new technologies of identification. “Passports,” safe-conduct passes, letters of recommendation, certificates of Catholicity in religious circles and so on, all became no longer optional or privileged means of travel but necessary paperwork one needed in order to be mobile. Eliav-Feldon following Groebner’s lead has best summarized the consequences of these momentous changes on the rise of new technologies of certification.

Occasions when individuals were required to prove their identity were multiplying from the late Middle Ages on. In addition to the circumstances mentioned above -- financial or commercial transactions with strangers, claiming a legacy or a privilege or reclaiming a deposit--almost all travel, not only when going abroad, would necessitate carrying some form of “passport,” particularly in times of epidemics or of political upheavals. *Furthermore, as mobility increased, licenses and diplomas were more frequently demanded as proof of qualifications for practising [sic] certain professions.* Population growth, recurrent waves of epidemics, migrations caused by religious revolutions, larger armies, mobility over larger territories including overseas, expanding commercial activities -- all these increased manifold the number of unfamiliar faces coming and going and demanding benefits or privileges to which they were not necessarily entitled. In what appeared to some observers as a collapse of stability and order, licensing became the panacea of authorities for most social problems, as well as the method by which they hoped to dis-

22 Michel de Montaigne, “On Giving the Lie,” in *Michel de Montaigne, the Complete Essays*, transl. M.A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 756.

tinguish the genuine from the fraudulent.<sup>23</sup>

Eliav-Feldon notes the special role in this history of certification of what she calls the “a large fraternity of criminals, a veritable underworld and an alternative society” constituted by wandering robbers, thieves, bandits, swindlers, and pickpockets.<sup>24</sup> The presence of these mobile populations threatened the established order. She also mentions those who carried counterfeit licenses as well as “phony mendicant friars” whose existence in the early modern period caused alarm among authorities and led to the rise of what can only be called “licensing” and certification.<sup>25</sup> Missing in Eliav-Feldon’s already colorful list of itinerant subjects are Eastern Christian alms-collectors whose numbers in the early modern period begin to rise as a result of the larger phenomenon of early modern mobility. Such individuals were found “lurking in all sorts of places... across the horizons of early modern Europe” and even in the New World.<sup>26</sup> According to the investigations of Bernard Heyberger and John-Paul Ghobrial, the number of these itinerant monks wandering the roads and streets of Europe probably never exceeded a thousand to two thousand individuals in the period under discussion. Numerically small as it was, this new population of Easterners was nonetheless significant enough to create an image of the “stock character of the wandering Eastern Christian” and to fuel “imperial paranoia” and heightened concern among Church authorities eager to

curb and monitor the circulation of what they sometimes deemed undesirable elements among them.<sup>27</sup> The requirement of official licenses or certificates for wayfaring mendicants by the Catholic church beginning in the mid-1600s provides the sufficient backdrop against which we can now turn to a close reading of the notarial certificate issued to Asateur, the Armenian Basilian from Isfahan who was already wandering his way across Europe and probably collecting alms when he reached out to the authorities in Marseille with a request to issue him a new certificate.

#### **Marseille, 1689: A Forensic View of a Notarial Document**

On 17 August 1689, a special meeting was convened at the main Catholic cathedral of the port city of Marseille. Present at the gathering were five Armenians who had been summoned to testify on behalf of one of their countrymen, a priest from the opulent suburb of the Safavid capital of Isfahan known as New Julfa. Two men stood out as being particularly important and bearing some gravitas for the authority they wielded. The first was the most senior bishop at Marseille’s main cathedral named Ange Cotta, “priest and doctor of Holy Theology and law protonotary of the Canonical theology of the Holy See of the Major Cathedral church of this city of Marseille, Vicar and Official general and representative of the Diocese of Marseille.”<sup>28</sup> It appears that as the religious official in charge of the Cathedral, Ange Cotta was a pivotal actor in initiating the meeting.

23 Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors*, 197. Emphasis added.

24 Ibid., 109.

25 Ibid., 112-113.

26 Ghobrial, “Migration from Within and Without,” 156.

27 Ibid., 162 nd 164.

28 Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, “*Extrait des Registres de L’evesché de Marseille*” unpaginated document. See also the appendix of this essay.

The other official whose authority in the chamber cannot be underestimated was a royal notary of Marseille named Pierre de Sossin. As a “broker of public trust,” Master Sossin was called to the meeting to certify and validate the proceedings.<sup>29</sup> He was especially prized because of his signature, sign, and seal that would be placed at the bottom of the certificate for the production of which the meeting had been summoned (See figure 2). In the eyes of both church and state, the latter would impart an aura of authenticity, trust, and recognition on the testimonies Sossin would oversee regarding the real identity of Asateur and his *bona fides* as a certified Catholic priest and missionary from a distant land in the East.

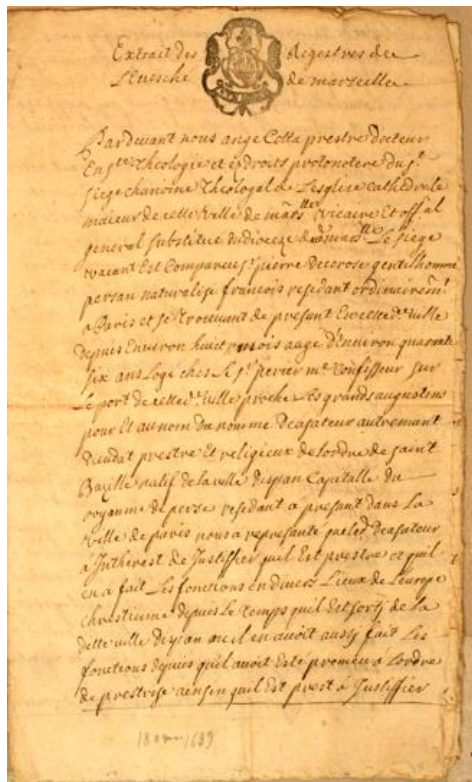


Figure 2: Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, “Extrait des Registres de L’evêché de Marseille”

The five witnesses and their court-appointed translator were domiciled members of Marseille’s tiny but influential Armenian community of predominantly silk and textile merchants as well as printers and publishers from the commercial suburb of Isfahan known as New Julfa.<sup>30</sup> Some, like “Jean archevesque de chamiran en armenie,” had scarcely been living in the port city as they had arrived only three months prior and were probably only passing through this important trading, alms-collecting, and information center in the Mediterranean. Others, like the official translator Simon di George, were veteran residents with deep roots in the French city and would live there more or less uninterruptedly for nearly twenty years. One witness, Pierre de Corose was described as a “Persian gentleman” and “naturalized Frenchman.” We know very little about him as he does not seem to be not-

30 The best study of Marseille’s Armenian community in the early modern period is Olivier Raveux, “Entre réseau communautaire intercontinental et intégration locale: La Colonie Marseillaise des Marchands Arméniens de la Nouvelle-Djoulfa (Ispahan), 1669-1695,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 1, no. 59 (2012): 83-102. For Marseille as a center of Armenian printing during the second half of the seventeenth century, see Sahak Djemjémian, *Hay Tbagrutiwn ew Hrom, 17rd Dar* [Armenian Printing and Rome, the 17<sup>th</sup> century] (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1989). See also the excellent studies by Raymond H. Kévorkian, “L’imprimerie Surb Ējmiacin et Surb Sargis Zōravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et catholiques à Constantinople (1695-1718),” *Revue des études Arméniens*, NS 15 (1981): 401-437, idem., “Livres imprimés et culture écrite dans l’Arménie des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *Revue des études Arméniens*, NS 16 (1982): 345-356, and Sebouh David Aslanian, “Print and Port-to-Port Mobility: Censorship and Letters of Excommunication in the Work of Oscan’s Press in Livorno and Marseille,” in *Early modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers across the Global Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800*.

29 Laurie Nussdorfer, *Brokers of Public Trust: Notaries in Early Modern Rome* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009).

ed in any other source. However, given his “Persian” moniker, we can surmise that he was a merchant from New Julfa and a subject of the Safavid empire. Like a few others from his township, Corosse had benefitted from Louis XIV’s policy of allowing a select group of foreigners to pay a steep price (along with the mandatory conversion to Catholicism) and receive naturalization letters (*lettres de naturalité*) in order to become French citizens or subjects of the crown.<sup>31</sup> As a “naturalized Frenchmen” or “naturalisé François,” Corose was one of five or six Armenians then living in Paris. Among them was another person also from New Julfa next to Isfahan and also a Catholic priest, namely our very own Asateur Vardapet. The two men appear to have been close friends in the French capital and more than likely also knew the other Armenians or Easterners quite well. In fact, six months after moving to Marseille, Corose had approached Ange Cotta the senior priest at the main cathedral in Marseille with the request that set in motion the proceedings resulting in the notarial document under observation here. Corose informed the priest “that the said Assatur [sic] wants to prove that he is a priest and has assumed the functions thereof in various places of Christian Europe since the time he left the said city of Isfahan where he had also performed the functions of a priest, since being promoted to the priesthood, as he is prepared to prove.”<sup>32</sup> By gathering together “credible witnesses from his country,” writes Cotta, Corosse “requested from us that we con-

duct an investigation on the subject of this prince [Asateur also known as Dieudat] and to deliver to the latter a suitable certificate, that he will know how to use reasonably.”<sup>33</sup>

That the request for a certificate was first made by Asateur while in Paris suggests at least two possible things. First, that as an Eastern Christian professing to be a Catholic priest and saying Mass in order to presumably collect alms in various churches across his journeys through Europe, Asateur might have aroused suspicion at some point about his true identity as a Catholic missionary from the East and therefore wanted his credentials validated by a recognized authority. This certainly makes sense in light of our discussion above about the “crisis of recognizability” and heightened fears of imposture and dissimulation prompted by an upsurge of mobility, especially by Eastern Christians plying their trade in alms-collecting. Second, Asateur may in fact have been required by the Holy Office or the *De Propaganda Fide* in Rome to travel with proper papers before embarking on any alms-collection journeys. Either of these possibilities seem quite reasonable in light of negative stereotypes of early modern Eastern Christian alms-collectors and bishops in Europe. Consider for instance, the example of an unusually crafty and deceitful Maronite priest in Aleppo named Sergius Gamerius discussed in the travel account of French Consul in Aleppo, Chevalier D’Arvieux. Despite being unqualified to the office of priesthood, Gamerius had found a way of getting himself appointed bishop in Aleppo and soon afterwards set his sights on going to Europe to raise alms and enrich himself. According to D’Arvieux,

31 On naturalization in early modern France, see Peter Sahlin, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

32 Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, “*Extrait des Régistres de Levesché de Marseille.*”

33 Ibid.



soon, he took the road to Europe to accomplish there his goals on which he counted to establish his family. France became his cash cow [*sa Vache à lait*]. He knew so well how to feign [*se contrefaire*] and display the poverty of his patriarch and the Christians of Mount Lebanon and other places in the country that he collected huge sums; moreover, he made several trips there and always very usefully.”<sup>34</sup>

In the case of the Syrian Catholic priest from Mardin (in today’s eastern Turkey) named Athanasius Safar, alms collecting in the Americas had also paid off handsomely resulting in a whopping sum of 46,000 pieces of eight (*pesos de ocho*) in Spanish dollars.<sup>35</sup> We know from the work of Bernard Heyberger, the pioneer scholar of Eastern Christian relations with early modern Europe, that suspicions of dissimulation among eastern Christians and Maronites in particular had crested so dramatically in the

mid-eighteenth century that rules were enforced mandating the prior certification of Eastern Christians for the purposes of alms-collection. Discussing such ordinances, Heyberger writes:

In 1753, an official text published in France aiming precisely at “the Maronite and other Eastern Christians” obliged them to come into the country complete with certificates provided by the consul of the French nation and legalized by the aldermen and delegates of the Trade in Marseille on pain of imprisonment and being treated as tramps and disreputable people.<sup>36</sup>

Such certification may not have been as rigidly applied in the century before, but it was certainly around. According to Cesare Santus, “indeed, already in the seventeenth century, Eastern Christians were required to show licenses to collect alms, as well as certificates of Catholicity and letters of recommendation.” Such papers were either issued at the alms-collector’s point of origin in the East (a local European Consul or bishop) or acquired in Europe from the Roman Curia. “Without this kind of paperwork,” Santus adds, “it would have been very difficult not only to beg and ask for alms, but also to circulate and receive accommodation in the different places - this was especially true for wandering monks and travelers heading to far countries...” The reasons behind such certification and regulation had to do with what D’Arvieux called “feigning” (*se contrefaire*) and dissimulation, on the one hand, and the authorities’ difficulty in managing such cases of imposture, on the other. In fact, beginning from the 1670s and especially in the following century, the Roman Curia attempted with ever increasing energy to stop the alms-collecting tours of the

<sup>34</sup> Chevalier D’Arvieux, *Memoires du Chevalier D’Arvieux, Envoye extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte, Consul d’Aleppo, d’Alger, de Tripoli, & autres Echelles du Levant...* Tome second (Paris, 1735), 369. “Il le fit à la fin, & aussi-tôt il prit le chemin d’Europe pour y faire les quêtes sur lesquelles il comptoit pour l’établissement de sa famille. La France devint sa Vache à lait. Il sut si bien se contrefaire & exposer la misère de son Patriarche & des Chrétiens des Montagnes du Liban & autres Lieux du Païs, qu’il en tira des très grosses sommes; aussi y fit il plusieurs voyages, & toujours très-utilement.” See also, Bernard Heyberger, “Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection: A Long History,” *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges*, edited by Andreas Schmoller (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2018), 23-43 (26).

<sup>35</sup> Bernard Heyberger, “Migration of Middle Eastern Christians and European Protection,” 26, and Bernard Heyberger, “Chrétiens orientaux dans l’Europe catholique, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles,” in Bernard Heyberger and Chantal Verdeil, eds., *Hommes de l’entre-deux, Parcours individuels et portraits de groupes sur la frontière de la Méditerranée, XVIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2009), 63.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 28.

Eastern Christians, especially those whose orthodoxy was suspicious, granting licenses more grudgingly and only after conducting a rigorous investigation into the merits of each itinerant priest.<sup>37</sup> Not only were Catholic authorities either in Rome or its diocese abroad like the bishopric of Marseille in charge of regulating alms-collecting on the part of Eastern Christians, but so were state authorities. For instance, in his fascinating micro-historical study of a global missionary and alms-collector from the East, the Syriac Priest and intrepid traveler to the new world, Ilias al-Mausuli of Mosul, Ghobrial notes how Eastern Christian alms-collectors in the New World were already “on the radars” of Spanish authorities. Eastern Christians were indeed singled out for their “unacceptable behavior” (*malos modos*) in a chapter on alms collecting in the *Laws of the Indies* of 1681. Furthermore, a prohibition on the alms-collecting activities of Greeks and Armenians was also pronounced in a Spanish Royal decree of 1675.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 3: "Certificate of Catholicity for Astu-atsatur Shadanēnts', 1682," Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A.

In light of this larger context, it is reasonable to conjecture that logical concerns with avoiding potential barriers to his alms-collecting had led Asateur to reach out to his countryman in Paris Pierre de Corose to solicit a notarized certificate from the archbishopric of Marseille in 1689. Interestingly, merely seven years earlier Asateur had received his first known certificate of Catholicity from Cardinal Alderanus Cybo, the “protector of Armenians and Indians.” According to this certificate carefully preserved among Asateur’s papers (see figure 3), Asateur also known as “Deodatus Vartabiet son of Stefanus of the city of Guilfa, 38 years of age,” had left his hometown on a pilgrimage to Rome (the “threshold of the Apostles”—“*ad Limina Apostolorum*”) and had made a formal confession to the Catholic Faith. The Cardinal had then vouched for Asateur’s credentials stating “we have given these letters, through which we diligently commend him in the Lord to all Archbishops, Bishops, and other Christians, and we ask of them that they receive him kindly, and to take care for the safety of his journey, and that they offer him all the duties of Christian charity, which will be both greatly worthy of his piety and most pleasing to us. Given at Rome, where there is no plague or suspicion of any contagious disease, on the 22nd of February 1682.”<sup>39</sup>

Back in Marseille, Ange Cotta and the city’s notary public also faced a task similar to that of Cardinal Cybo: they had to assess Asateur’s credentials as a genuine Catholic preacher and validate that he was indeed who he claimed to be. The most expedient way of doing this was to rely on trustworthy witnesses who

37 Santus, “Wandering Lives: Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Travelers” (forthcoming) has an excellent discussion.

38 John-Paul Ghobrial, “The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory,” *Past and Present* (February 2014): 51-93 (63).

39 Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, “*Extrait des Registres de l’evêché de Marseille.*”

knew the plaintiff in person and could vouch for him.<sup>40</sup> The five witnesses called to appear were (1) Pierre de Corosse about whom we have already discussed, (2) Jean archevesque de Chamiran, (3) Aviet di Asateur, (4) Panous son of Malibaba (resident, merchant—1688-1689), and (5) Baba di Sultanum (merchant and resident, 1675-1677, 1688-1689). Every one of them was in some way “typical” of the early modern Armenian diaspora and of the early modern world in general. Each embodied the traits of being highly mobile (whether as merchants or as bishops) and of juggling multiple identities and self-fashioning as a result of exposure to multiple cultures and lands. At least one (Jean archevesque de Chamiran) may have even aroused strong suspicions of being a religious dissimulator (secretly an Armenian Apostolic) who was also an alms-collector. Given the uncanny similarities between his life and that of the priest and alms-collector on whose behalf he was testifying, a brief look into his background will be useful for a proper understanding of Asateur’s own microhistory.

“The most illustrious and most reverend John the archbishop of Chamiran [sic] in Armenia” (*Illustrissime et révérendissime Jean archevesque de chamiran en armenie*) was none other than Hovhannes the Armenian archbishop of Shamiramakert or Van in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. He was by all accounts one of the most well-travelled men of his era. A seasoned alms-collector, missionary, adventurer,

and a man with shadowy political ambitions, Hovhannes had a storied career as a missionary plying his trade on the roads of Europe and beyond. Not surprisingly, he claimed to have known Asateur for “approximately twenty-two years.” He swore that he had seen him “in Poland, Constantinople, Rome, Livorno, Florence, and in Lucca, and in the said places having known him as a priest who was promoted to the priesthood and who was a priest in Armenia.” He also testified to have “seen him often celebrate the holy Mass in the Armenian language and according to the Armenian rite in the said city of Rome as well as Livorno, Florence, and Lucca.”<sup>41</sup> But who was this witness and was he trustworthy to provide this testimony?

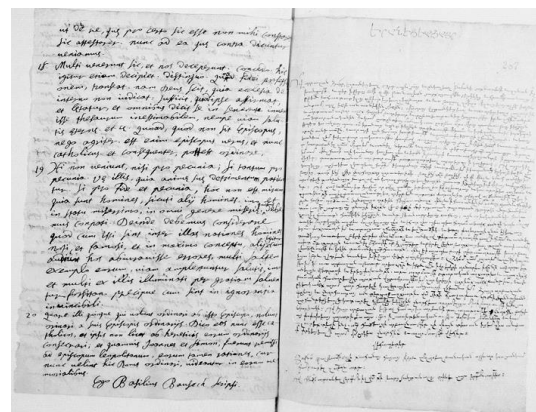


Figure 4: “Attestatis de Joanne Episcopo Semiramensis Armeno qui cognominatur Tutungi, idest tabaconius,” ASPF, SC Armeni 3, folios 285r-286v. (286v-287r)

This Armenian priest nicknamed “Tutunju,” “Tutungu,” or “Tutungi” (tobacco-seller or lover of tobacco) had begun his career as a monk belonging to the monastery of Vaspurakan near Lake Van (see figure 4).<sup>42</sup> In 1650, he was sent by

40 For a fascinating case of imposture in Mughal India where eyewitness testimony is also relied upon, see Jorge Flores and Sanjay Subrahmanyan, “The Shadow Sultan: Succession and Imposture in the Mughal Empire, 1628-1640,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 1 (2004): 80-121.

41 Ibid.

42 “He is called Tutungi, because he has often preached against the consumption of tobacco,” writes Rome’s official Armenian interpreter and informant, Basilio Barsegh in his important report, “Attestatis de Joanne Episcopo Semira-

the Catholicos of Ejmiatsin (Philippos Aghbakets'i, r. 1633-1655) as an envoy or legate to Poland presumably to collect money for the Catholicosate. Hovhannes used the funds he had raised in Poland for personal gain and purchased the post of Patriarch in the sprawling Ottoman capital of Istanbul, by bribing Ottoman grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmet Pasha (1635-1676). In 1663, he succeeded in his design by unseating patriarch Lazarus or Ghazar Sebastats'i (1660-1663) and declaring himself Patriarch. Hovhannes was deposed in 1664 and regained his post in 1665 only to be removed by Catholicos Hakob Jughayets'i in 1667.<sup>43</sup>

We do not know much about Hovhannes's activities in the years following his loss of the patriarchal office. About a decade later, he reappears again this time in Egypt about to embark on a long voyage to Abyssinia or Ethiopia, which he did on September 17, 1127 of the Armenian Calendar or 1678 C.E. After spending more than a year living at the Ethiopian court of Gondar or Dambia as a guest of Emperor Yohannes I, during which he successfully became the first foreigner to identify and write about the source of the Blue Nile, Hovhannes returned to Egypt exactly two years and ten days after his first departure.<sup>44</sup> On

September 27, 1129 (1680), Hovhannes travelled by sea to Aligorna or Livorno and thence to Rome where he made a formal profession of the Catholic faith and presumably received the customary certificate of Catholicity most likely from the same Cardinal Cybo.<sup>45</sup> His precise movements afterwards are far from clear; unlike the Ethiopian leg of his journeys, Hovhannes does not appear to have maintained a log of his travels after his return from Africa. For the next few years, we need to rely on the tender mercies of notaries in Europe as well as the observations of European travelers. On September 25 1682, a certain "Mon-sig[nor]e Giovanni Tutungi Arcivescovo

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Astgh Tparan, 1946). For a critical account with an English translation of another redaction, see Appendix III "The Armenian Bishop Yohannes and Ethiopia," in E. Van Donzel, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia, 1642-1700: Documents Referring to the Journeys of Khodja Murat* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1979), 177-185.

- <sup>45</sup> Van Donzel, 183. See also Basilio Barsegh's report, "Attestatis de Joanne Episcopo Semiramis Armeno qui cognominatur Tutungi, idest tabaconius" [Attestation concerning Hovannes Bishop of Shemiramakert (Van), nicknamed Tutungi, that is the Tobaconist," ASPF, SC Armeni 3, folios 285r-286v. Barsegh writes that "since upon his return [from Abyssinia] he heard about the death of that man [Hakob Catholicos], he sailed from Egypt to Liburnum [Livorno] and came to Rome, so that he might at last, alone, fulfill his vow and desire. And here, with the truth of his Catholic faith sufficiently known in Poland, as he also said he had known about for a long time already, he made a profession." "Cum autem nunc venerit Romam, et a [?] dicit, se voluisse venire Romam cum Jacobo patriarcha et cum iter versus mesopotamiam faceret, auferit, eum fuisse detentum a Turcis Constantinopoli, idem ivisse in Ethiopiam ad Abissinos. inde reversus cum audierit mortem eiusdem, ab egypto liburnum navigans, Romam venit, ut saltem solus voto et desiderio suo satisfaciat. et hic sufficienter cognita fidei catholicae veritate, quam etiam ut dicit se iam a multo tempore cognovisse, in polonia, fecit professionem"

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misis Armeno qui cognominatur Tutungi, idest tabaconius" [Attestation concerning Hovannes Bishop of Shemiramakert (Van), nicknamed Tutungi, that is the Tobaconist," ASPF, SC Armeni 3, folios 285r-286v. (285r) "Vocatur Tutungi, quia contra Tabachi sumptionem saepe predicabat."

- <sup>43</sup> See Hakob Anasyan, *XVII dari azatagrakan sharzhumnern arevmtyan hayastanum*, [XVII century liberation movements in Western Armenia] (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakut'yun, 1961), 180-181.

- <sup>44</sup> His travel diary has several redactions. For one version, see Arshak Alboyadjian, *Arakelut'iwn i Habeshistan: Patmakan Nshmar*, (Mission to Abyssinia: A Historical Glimpse (Cairo: Nor



di Albania [sic] in Armenia,” appears before a notary in Venice as having converted to Roman Catholicism and then ordained a priest from Isfahan, New Julfa, named Don David Caradar who was presumably being considered by the Patriarchal office in Venice for service at the city’s Armenian Catholic Church of *Santa Croce* which was then being renovated and readied for opening in 1688.<sup>46</sup> The fact that “Giovanni Tutungi” was accredited by the representatives of the Vatican in Venice as the converter and teacher of Don David Caradar in the Catholic rite is revealing of allegations by others that the bishop of Shamiram or Chamiram was indeed a convert to Catholicism as the Ethiopian monks in Gondar had suspected.<sup>47</sup> In 1683, Hovhannes appears at the court of Versailles visiting no less a monarch than the Sun King himself, Louis XIV.<sup>48</sup> On 17 August, 1689, as the notarial document under examination here makes clear, he was before the Vatican’s protonotary in Marseille, Ange Cotta, testifying on behalf of his fellow traveler, priest, and eastern Christian alms-collector in Eu-

rope, Asateur or Dieudat of New Julfa. At this point, as the record notes, Hovhannes offered his sworn testimony, “happening to be in this city for the past three months, returning from Spain and lodging at the Saint John quarter near the corner of [Order] of Humility aged approximately seventy years old.” This means that between 1683, when he was in Versailles, and his testimony in Marseille, Hovhannes had also visited not only Venice but also Spain. What was Hovhannes doing there?

In 1684, the Armenian censor appointed by the Holy Office to oversee the publication of works at Marseille’s Armenian printing press, Thomas Herabiet, includes the following in his letter to the Cardinals in Rome. “The bishop of Semiramis [Hovhannes Tutungu] has passed through this city, and under the guise of a Capuchin he has collected alms throughout the province. ...He uses many lies to collect alms and cares little for the Catholic faith, always associating with Armenian heretics. He joined Zaccaria vardapet<sup>49</sup> and a certain woman who col-

46 See “Liti e controversi parrocchia di San Zulian—Armeni” [Disputes and controversies of the parish of San Zulian], Archivio Patriarchale o Diocesano di Venezia (APDV)

47 Ibid., “il Reverendo Don David Caradar della citta d’Ispaan nella Persia ordinato Sacerdote da Monsig[nor]e Giovanni Tutungi Arcivescovo di Albania in Armenia, e nelle sue mani ha fatto solenne Professione della Religione Cattolica Romana, abiurando tutte l’eresie, che sono condannate dalla medesima Chiesa.” The reverend Don David Caradar of the city of Isfahan was ordained a priest by Monsignor Giovanni Tutungi Archbishop of Albania in Greater Armenia and has made a profession of the Roman Catholic faith, forsaking all heresies which are condemned by the same [Roman Catholic] church.”

48 See Anasian, *XVII dari azatagrakan* for a detailed discussion.

49 This Zaccaria vardapet is Zaccaria Agam (1611-1688), a former student of the Collegio Urbano who studied with the great Catholic savant Clemente Galano. As the passage above indicates, Zaccaria too resorted to alms-collecting to eke out a living in Europe, often alternating between collecting alms and translation work for the Holy Office. He died destitute at the Armenian hospice and church in Rome, Santa Maria Egiziaca in 1688.

DOM  
ZACCHARIAE FILIO AGAM  
DE PROVINCIA SISIAN EX OPPIDO  
PINUNIS  
IN ARMENIA MAIORI  
VIRO LINGUARUM ERUDITIONI VERSATO  
MISSIONARIO APOSTOLICO AD ARMENOS  
HUIUS ECCLESIAE ET NATIONIS CON-  
FESSARIO LIBRORUMQUE ARMENORUM  
IN COLLEGIO DE PROPAGANDA FIDE  
CORRECTORI HAEC ECCLESIA EX TESTA-  
MENTO HAERES

lects alms to go to Portugal. He had already boarded the ship with them, but then he came back to the port and the ship left with the other two, so he will go to Lusitania with another ship.”<sup>50</sup> If true, this suggests that Hovhannes used Marseille and the region of Provence as the central node in his alms-collecting circuit

POSVIT ANNO DMDCXXXXVIII

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ՅԻՇԱՏԱԿ ՉԱՔԱՐԵԱՅ ՎԱՐԴԱՊԵՏԻ ՈՐԴԻՆՅ  
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ՅԱՅՈՅ ԱՉԳԻ ԳՐԵԱՆՅ ՅԱՅԿԱԿԱՆԱՅ Ի  
ՏՊԱՐԱՆԻ ՍՐԲՈՅ ԺՈՂՈՎՈՅՆ ՍՈՒՐԲԱԳՐՈՂԷ  
ՈՐ ԼՅԵԱԼ ԱՌՈՒՐԲԷ ՅԷ ԱՄԱՅ ՎԱՃԱՐԵՅ  
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ԱՂԵԱՄԲ ԵՒ ԱՇԽԱՏԱՆՕՔ ԹՈՂԵԼՈՎ ՉԻՆՉՍ  
ԵՒ ՉՍՏԱՅԵԱԼՍ ԴԻՐՈ ԱՅՍՍ ԵԿԵՂԵՑԻՈՅ Ի ԺԵ  
ՕԳՈՍՏՈՍԻ ՅԱՄԻ ՏԵԱՌՆ ՈՈՅԸ՞ [1688] ԵՒ  
ՅԱՅՈՅ ՈՃԼԷ (1137)

“In memory of Zaccaria Vardapet, son of Agam from the canton of Sisian and the village of Pinun in Armenia Major, a man expert and erudite in many languages, a missionary and preacher to the Armenians. A father confessor in this church and a corrector of books from the Press of the Holy Congregation, he completed his life of 77 years and passed on to the Lord filled with Justice and [good] works, leaving his belongings to this church on 15 August in the year of our Lord 1688 and of the Armenian calendar of 1137.”

For a detailed study of his life, see Merujan Karapetian, “Zaccaria Agam, 1611-1688,” [in Armenian] forthcoming in *Bazmavep*. I thank Mr. Karapetian for sharing his essay with me.

<sup>50</sup> ASPF SC Armeni, vol. 3, folios 403-404.

“Transivit per hanc Urbem Episcopus Simiram qui sub veste Capucini per totam provinciam mendicavit... Multis utitur mendaciis ad colligendas elemosinas, et parum curat catholicam fidem, semper cum Armenis haereticis conversans. Coniunxerat se cum Zacharia Vertabiet et quadam muliere hispana quae elemosinas quaerit ut iniret Portugalliam. Iam navem cum illis considerat sed eo in portum reverso navis abiit cum duobus aliis, et ille alia nave abiturus est Lusitaniam.” I am grateful to Cesare Santus for help in transcribing and translating this passage.

in Europe. It also suggests that his conversion to Catholicism may have been motivated by instrumentalist factors having more to do with income than doctrine. What is more, he is reported as traveling in the company of another alms-collector Zaccaria of Agam in an alms-collecting tour of the Western Mediterranean which included Spain. Hovhannes, as it turned out, did not embark to Lisbon from Marseille with Zaccaria and most likely lingered in Marseille till the next year when he joined another Armenian alms-collector and bishop, the erudite printer and publisher Thomas Vardapet of Vanand. In fact, in a strange case of certification in Madrid in 1687 (or two years before Asateur’s own certification in Marseille) of the same Thomas Vardapet, we learn that Hovhannes was among fifteen witnesses called forth before a notary in Seville or Cádiz. He is recorded as “D. Juan Bautista, de la Orden de San Francisco, Arçobispo de Semiramis, en Mesopotamia, y Patriarca de Constantinopla, de edad de mas 70 años.”<sup>51</sup> (See figure 5) What is interesting to note here is that Hovhannes’s traveling companion, Thomas Vardapet from Vanand in the region of the South Caucasus, like Hovhannes and many other Armenian mendicants, had embarked on an alms-collecting journey across Europe between the years 1677 and 1695 travelling the same roads and roving through the more or less same Catholic charity networks as Hovhannes. Thomas almost certainly traveled from

<sup>51</sup> *Memorial que el arzobispo de Sta. Cruz del Reyno de Armenia, Don Thomas Bardapiet de Banand, por sí, y por su hermano D. Andres Quarto Nieto del Rey Aladulo, ultimo Rey de Armenia, y por Patriarcas, Arzobispos, y Obispos, y de los Armenios Catolicos Christianos, pone en las manos del gran Monarca Don Carlos Segundo, Rey de las Espanas*, (Madrid Imp. Real. 1691), 7v.

Marseille to Lisbon and thence to Cádiz in the company of Hovhannes and might have even met up with our very own Asateur at some point. This seems like a distinct possibility as the practice of Maronite alms-collectors in Europe around the same time, according to Bernard Heyberger, was to travel in pairs. In fact, Heyberger has identified no less than eight such pairs of Maronite monks who crisscrossed Europe in quest for alms.<sup>52</sup> How much money did these alms-collectors raise and why did they choose some networks over others?

In Thomas Vardapet's case, the collection of alms and charity must have amounted to a small fortune since he used the funds in 1695 to purchase a printing press and print some of the finest books in classical Armenian that we have from the early modern period.<sup>53</sup> As for Asateur we will probably never know how much he succeeded in collecting. However, we know that he does not appear to have travelled to the western

Mediterranean circuit of alms-collecting that included the loop from Marseille to Lisbon and Cádiz-Madrid that seems to have been profitable for Thomas Vardapet, Zaccaria Agam, and Hovhannes Tuntungu. Instead, as Hovhannes's testimony on his behalf seems to make clear, Asateur focused his activities on the northern circuit of France and the southern one of Italy. Lyon and Paris in particular seem to have been regular haunts for our missionary and alms-collector Asateur, as the third witness, an Armenian merchant residing in Marseille for two years and probably also originating in New Julfa, testified.

52 Bernard Heyberger, "Chrétien orientaux dans l'Europe catholique, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles," in Bernard Heyberger and Chantal Verdeil, eds., *Hommes de l'entre-deux, Parcours individuels et portraits de groupes sur la frontière de la Méditerranée, XVIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2009) 65. "Ces derniers, qui vont souvent par deux, sont généralement venus en Europe pour quêter: nous avons ainsi relevé huit de ces couples, qui sillonnèrent les pays catholiques pour rassembler des aumônes."

53 I have elaborated on Thomas Vardapet's life and travel's as an alms collector and printer in "The 'Quintessential Locus of Brokerage': Letters of Recommendation, Networks, and Mobility in the Life of Thomas Vanandets'i, an Armenian Printer in Amsterdam, 1677-1708," *Journal of World History* (forthcoming) and *Reverendissimi in Christo Patris: Handsnanarakan Namakner, tsantser, ew sharzhunakut'iwn T'omas Vanandets'i keankin mej, 1677-1707,* [Reverendissimi in Christo Patris: Letters of Recommendation, Networks, and Mobility in the life of Thomas Vardapet of Vanand, 1677-1707], *Handes Amsoarea* 1-12 (2018): 103-159. (In Armenian).

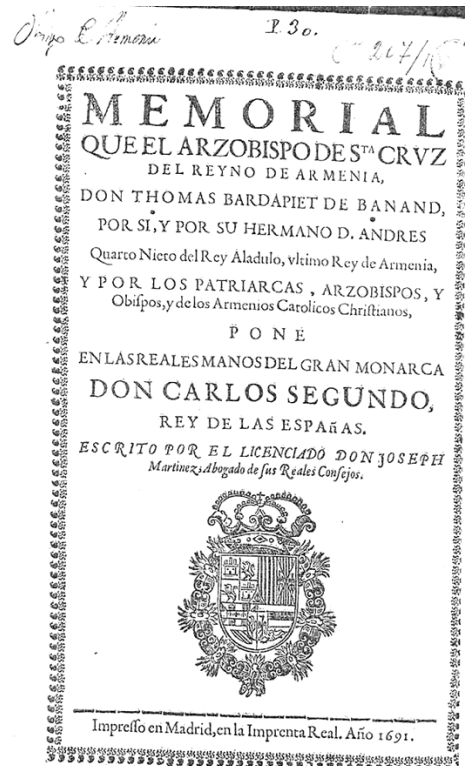


Figure 5: *Memorial que el arzobispo de Sta. Cruz del Reyno de Armenia, Don Thomas Bardapiet de Banand*, (Biblioteca Nacional de España VE/207/1)

Aviet di Asateur, a thirty-two year-old businessman testifying for Asateur went further by declaring that he "met the deponent [Asateur] in the city of Lion

[sic] about eighteen months ago on the occasion of the business they had together [de leur négoce qu'ils ont] between that city [Lyon] and Paris and had seen and heard him celebrate the holy Mass according to the Armenian rite of the said Asatuer [Asateur], priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil in the church of Saint Paul of the said Lyon."<sup>54</sup> The fact that a priest was both alms-collecting and engaging in side business is also an interesting fact that deserves to be pursued further. Given how destitute, forlorn, and subaltern some of these alms-collectors were, it is no surprise that a few, such as Zaccaria and Asateur as we shall see below, resorted to "business" on the side.<sup>55</sup> Also interesting is that Asateur is identified as saying Mass in the Armenian rite always at the same church of Saint Paul in Lyon, a fact attested to by both the fourth and fifth witnesses, Panous di Malibaba and "Papa Janna fils de Soultanon" (Babajan di Sultanum), both Armenian merchants from Asateur's home town of New Julfa.

The latter witness Babajan son of Sultanum like everyone else gathered in the boardroom of Marseille's Grand Cathedral was well-traveled, cosmopolitan, and lived in multiple centers within the global Armenian diaspora. Though not an alms-collector but a wealthy merchant with a transcontinental lifestyle, Babajan's career nonetheless deserves a brief detour because of the relevance of mobility in the life of Asateur as well as other Armenian alms-collectors.

Known more commonly as Coji Baba di Sultan or Sultanum or simply as Baba, this merchant's spectral presence, or the

trace his life left in this world through odd references in archives across Europe and Asia, can be followed across multiple collections in Asia and Europe. One stumbles across Baba in London and Oxford (the High Court of Admiralty at the National Archives has a record of him from 1702 and Bodleian manuscript collection has several items on his stay in London during a sensational trial of circa 1700-1702),<sup>56</sup> Amsterdam (where Baba was an active member of the Dutch-Armenian community and the principal patron of the city's Armenian church of Spirito Santo or *Surb Hogi* built in 1714),<sup>57</sup> Marseille and Paris (Baba was a witness in the trial of a well-known Catholic-Armenian diamond merchant from Julfa and also relative of our Asateur known as Raphael de Ruply in the late 1670s<sup>58</sup>) and Venice (where Baba

56 The National Archives, Kew Gardens, HCA 24-127 and Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Ms. Rawlinson B. 383, folios 548r, 550r, 550v, 642r, 643r-643v.

57 This is confirmed in a notarial act from 7 May 1715, when forty Armenian merchants testified before notary public, Gerrit van der Groe that they ratified the purchase of the property in question and its transformation into a church. See Notarial Archives of the Municipal Archive of Amsterdam (henceforth NAA) G. Van der Groe inv 6626, 7.5.1715. I am grateful to Robert Post and Willem Floor for transcribing and translating the Dutch-language document for me. For background, see René Arthur Bekius, "The Armenian Colony in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Armenian Merchants from Julfa before and after the Fall of the Safavid Empire," *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 260-261.

58 "Certificat de Baba de Sultanon, & autres Marchands Armeniens, du 28 Decembre 1678," *Memoires Servans A L'eclaircissement des faits inserez en la plainte présentée a Sa Majesté par Le Sieur Raphael Ruply Negociant Armenien de la Ville d'Hispan, Demandeur & Accusateur....* [Nd. 1678], folios 8-9. In a letter addressed to Asateur by Mattos di Abro Chelebi from Smyrna/Izmir on March 10, 1140

54 Santa Croce Archives busta 2A, "Extrait des Registres de L'évesché de Marseille."

55 On Zaccaria's business dealings, see Karapetian, "Zaccaria Agam."



appears as a principal witness in a case involving an Armenian Catholic priest whose papers from the Papal nuncio's office in Marseille are stored in the Santa Croce archives in Venice). In short, Baba Sultanum is and was everywhere. In a 1716 document, we find Baba in London having just returned from India on an English East India Company ship with a consignment of garnets and Cornelian stones.<sup>59</sup> Evidently, he was an agent (*commenda* factor) for the wealthy Catholic Armenian family of Sceriman/Shahrimanian, one of whose members Pietro Sceriman from Livorno had arrived in London that same year to claim Baba's consignment of gems. The Company appears to have impounded them on account of Baba's "bankruptcy" and inability to pay freight charges. As late as 1724/5, we find Baba still residing in London. He had probably cleared his name by then and appears to have moved in high society circles. A letter stored in a Sloane manuscript at the British Library indicates that he either knew Hans Sloane (1660-1753, 1st Baronet, Royal physician and president of the Royal Society, collector of plants and manuscripts, and founder of the British Library) or wished to meet him.<sup>60</sup> Baba and Sloane appear to have frequented the same café in London, the Grecian Coffee House in

Devereux Court where our merchant used to spend his evenings.<sup>61</sup>

Aged thirty-five in his deposition on behalf of Asateur in Marseille in 1689, Baba testified that he knew our itinerant alms-collector and priest quite well, in fact for no less than "approximately the last twenty years in the quality of a priest or monk of the order of Saint Basil." What is more, he swore to have "seen and heard [the said Asateur] celebrate the Holy Mass according to the Armenian rite on several occasions in the city of Isfahan and in his convent and has even heard him say the Mass in the city of Lyon about eighteen months ago at the church of Saint Paul where the deponent happened to be in the company of other Armenian merchants who were going to Paris for their trade."<sup>62</sup>

With one exception, the sworn testimonies of the five witnesses validating Asateur's identity as a "legitimate" member of the Roman Catholic clergy were provided by individuals who all belonged to the same network of Armenian merchants hailing from the suburb of New Julfa, Isfahan. A close reading of them provides several clues about Asateur's life as a preacher and alms collector in addition to shedding important light on the larger history of the Armenian diaspora in this crucial period in global history. First, the testimonies suggest that priests and alms-collectors often travelled through the same networks as did merchants. This was important not only because alms-collecting priests sometime and perhaps even often resorted to trade

[1140+552=1692], Asateur is described as "a relative [or cousin] of the deceased Rupli," որորմած հոգի ըրուպլին ազգական տէր աստուածատուրին." See Santa Croce Archives busta 2A.

59 "Petition of Peter Sceriman of Venice &C relating to the Garnets &C consigned to Coja Baba Sultanum read in Court 13th February 1716 vide minutes" BL, IOR I/1/7 and I/1/8, folios 44, 47, and "The Memorial of Babaw di Sultanum, Armenian Merchant," in IOR E/1/4, folios 259-260.

60 On Sloane's life, see James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: The Life and Curiosity of Hans Sloan* London: Penguin Books, 2017)

61 French letter by Baba Sultanum to Hans Sloan (23 February 1724/5) concerning the medicinal virtues of a cure he had devised, British Library, Sloan Ms. 4047, folio 321.

62 Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, "Extrait des Registres de L'evêché de Marseille."

on the side to supplement their meager income and support themselves as Asateur's case reveals but also because traveling in the company of merchants provided them with a useful network of associates and could therefore ease the travails and anxieties of traveling to unknown lands and cultures. Second, the testimonial record analyzed above, implies that fraud and religious dissimulation probably existed among Armenian as with other Eastern Christian alms-collectors. The motivation of each alms-collector or pilgrim from the East was far from clear to the Roman Curia. Many eastern Christians came to raise sums while professing to be sincere Catholics and being sent on a mission from their remote communities in the East for the sake alleviating the misery, poverty, and oppression suffered by their co-religionists at the hands of "Muslim oppressors." The reality, was however that enough of them had other agendas in mind. As the Armenian censor, translator, and local informant, Don Basilio Barsegh, noted in his report on Hovhannes Tutungu in 1683, "Many have come here and have deceived us."<sup>63</sup> Barsegh concluded his estimation of Hovhannes by adding "Therefore, here he will also deceive." As we have seen above, this fear or anxiety of being deceived by some form of deceit and imposture was so prevalent in early modern Europe that authorities developed a regime of certification and paperwork to curb cases of undesirable circulation and mobility.

63 "Attestatis de Joanne Episcopo Semiramisis Armeno qui cognominatur Tutungi, idest tabaconius" [Attestation concerning Hovhannes Bishop of Shemiramakert (Van), nicknamed Tutungi, that is the Tobaconist," ASPF, SC Armeni 3, folio 286v. "Multi venerunt sic, et nos deceperunt. Concedo. hic igitur etiam decipiet. Distinguo."

### Eastern Christians and Alms-Collecting Networks Across Early Modern Europe

In his *A Description of the Present State of Samos, Nicaria, Patmos, and Mount Athos*, Joseph Georgirenes, a Greek archbishop residing in London during the seventeenth century, notes that alms-collecting was vital for the maintenance of these eastern Christian religious centers and usually used to subvent the payment of the head tax ("harach"/*kharaq*) to Ottoman authorities. According to the Archbishop, "every year they select some of their *caloires* to go abroad, and beg the Charity of Christian People, towards the relief of the respective Monastery. And the Monastries agree before-hand to what particular places they will send their respective Emissaries, who continue ordinarily two or three years in their perambulation. At their coming home, the Money is delivered to the *shenaphylax*, or the Steward of the Monastery; for it is against the Rule of their Order, to meddle with Money."<sup>64</sup>

Georgirenes's account of how Eastern Christian alms-collectors operated and why they took to the roads of Europe to collect funds resonates with a larger world of Eastern Christian bishops whose presence in Europe and the New World is only now becoming known to scholars. Heyberger, Ghobrial, and Santus have noted how beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, if not earlier, Armenians, Maronites, Copts, Melkite and Syriac Christians, all began to appear with regular frequency in Rome and beyond. Heyberger's long years of archival work in the *De Propaganda Fide*'s volu-

64 Joseph Georgirenes, *A Description of the Present State of Samos, Nicaria, Patmos, and Mount Athos*, (London, 1677), 99. For a brief discussion of Georgirenes, see Ghobrial, "Migration from Within and Without," 162 and 168.

minous records has unearthed a total of 178 names of Eastern Christians in Rome alone between 1690 and 1779. These numbers appear quite limited and in need of significant augmentation given that Heyberger's focus is restricted to Christians hailing from the region of Ottoman Greater Syria (Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine) and residing in or passing through Rome. They also exclude individuals working for the Vatican or for that matter Armenians from the eastern provinces of Ottoman Asia Minor or Safavid Iran. What is more, they only consider those individuals who somehow fell afoul of the law or raised enough suspicion or curiosity to appear in the archival record. Ghobrial on the other hand, has noted that the real figure of Eastern Christians circulating in early modern Europe is probably somewhere between a thousand and two thousand separate individuals from Eastern Christian communities, not all of them clergy, who were in Europe in the early modern period.<sup>65</sup> Relying on an exceptional document till now neglected by scholars, Santus has offered a healthy corrective. According to him "several thousands of Eastern Christians visited Rome, something which suggests that the overall movement of Orientals in Early Modern Europe was much higher than previously thought." In fact, through a rigorous search in the registers of "Professions of Faith" (*Professiones Fidei*) preserved in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (direct heir to the Roman Inquisition), Santus has unearthed the signatures and biographical information of at least 3,000 individuals from the East who made a profession of the faith from 1655

to 1807.<sup>66</sup> Of those who were religious officials, the motivations for their arrival in Europe were mixed, but both Heyberger and Santus have noted that alms collection was an important reason for the presence of eastern clergy in early modern Europe.<sup>67</sup>

We do not have any reliable figures for the Armenian population in early modern Europe, but if a tally were made of the total permanent residents of all the small Armenian communities in the early modern European diaspora—including those in Venice, Livorno, Rome, Trieste, Marseille, Amsterdam, Paris, Cádiz, and London—the number would be about four hundred residents at any given time, with another hundred coming and going. A small fraction, or possibly 10 percent, of these belonged to the clergy, and not all were in Europe for fundraising purposes. Some like Zaccaria Agam, Don Basilio Barsegh, and Marseille's firebrand Armenian censor Thomas Hera-bied (mentioned earlier) were students at the *De Propaganda Fide's* schools like the *Collegio Urbano* or the short-lived *Collegio Armeno* managed by Clemente Galano. Others like Thomas Vardapet of Vanand, Oscan Yerevants'i, and Matteos of Ts'ar were sent to Europe by the Catholicos of all Armenians at Ejmiatsin with the goal of setting up printing presses and printing books in Armenian.<sup>68</sup> In a few cases, men like Arakel Ye-

65 Ghobrial, "Migration from Within and Without," 161.

66 Santus, "Wandering Lives."

67 Heyberger, "Chrétiens orientaux dans l'Europe catholique," 65.

68 On these printers, see Sahak Djemjemian, *Haytbagrut'iwn ew Hrom, XVII dar* (Armenian Printing and Rome, XVII Century) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1989), and Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*. In addition to printers or publishers, some Armenians journeying through early modern Europe included "ambassadors" or envoys sent to appeal to Catholic authorities

revants<sup>i</sup> whose life has been examined recently by Merujan Karapetian, were in Europe on their own mostly to acquire a certificate of Catholicity from Rome and subsequently to raise money through alms-collecting. In Arakel's case as in others, the sincerity of his confession to the Catholic faith and tales of "Muslim oppression" at home were part of the larger repertoire of techniques of self-presentation both encouraged by the authorities in Rome and simultaneously feared on account of incentivizing fraudulent behavior for personal gain. Not surprisingly, Arakel raised alarm and suspicion wherever he blazed a path (Rome, Livorno, Venice, Warsaw, and Lvov) for being a fraud or trickster.<sup>69</sup> His case is eerily similar to Archbishop Thomas of Vanand in the sense that both men visited virtually the same places (including Anglican London) frequenting the same networks and equipped with certificates of Catholicity and recommendation letters from the same or virtually same letter writers, including Cardinal Cybo of Rome, who also issued a certificate of Catholicity to our own Asateur Vardapet of Isfahan. In both cases, the story told was a familiar one of Muslim spoliation of Armenian churches back in the East, a story that rang with a tone of familiarity to dozens of Maronite and Copt alms-collectors who also embroidered tales of Muslim oppression they knew the Catholic authorities wanted to hear.

In some cases, alms-collecting was mixed up with the other categories mentioned above. Thomas Vardapet of Vanand, for instance, was first sent to

Europe by Catholicos Hakob Jughayets<sup>i</sup> (r. 1655-1680) in 1772 to join his fellow priest and printer Oscan Yerevants<sup>i</sup>. He returned about five years later with his two nephews whom he dropped off at Rome's Collegio Urbano. After making the requisite profession of the faith, he secured a certificate of Catholicity from Cardinal Cybo. As a traveling pilgrim from a distant land he was ostensibly raising alms and money for the benefit of his Christian flock living under "Muslim tyranny" back home in Vanand. In addition to a story about rebuilding his church destroyed by Muslims in his native land of Ghoghtan in the South Caucasus, Thomas claimed his own brother was imprisoned by the Persian Shah. At the court of Charles II of Spain where he had arrived with his two nephews in the early 1690s, he told the Spanish monarch that "they had left [their homeland] to look all over the world, from the supreme pontiff to prelates, princes, and the Christian Catholic kings [of Aragon and Castile], for support, succor, and alms to support his pilgrimage and travails that he is undertaking beseeching for the emancipation of his brother and for the rebuilding of his cathedral church so he may return to his archbishopric and raise it and reintegrate the [teachings of] the Holy Catholic faith of our redeemer..."<sup>70</sup> In reality, of course, every penny Thomas

for political alliances against this or that Muslim polity. See Santus, "Wandering Lives."

69 Merujan Karapetian, "Arak'el Ark'episkopos Yerevani yev Arak'ek Ark'episkopos shorotets'i," *Handes Amsorea* 1-12 (2018): 159-274, esp. 175-185.

70 *Memorial que el arzobispo de Sta. Cruz del Reyno de Armenia, Don Thomas Bardapiet*, (Madrid 1694), f. 4. "Para este efecto, se partieron a buscar, por todo el mu[n]do al Sumo Pontifice, Prelados, Principes, y Reyes Catolicos Christianos, favor Socorros, y limosnas para su peregrinacion, y trabajos, en que se halla, pidiendo para el rescate de su hermano, reedificar su Iglesia Catedral, bolver à su Arçobispado à levantarla, reintegrar la Santa Fè Catolica de Christo nuestro redemptor... como la, con la ayuda de Dios, Prelados, Reyes, y Principes Catolicos Christianos, che Dios les premiara, como lo confia de su Divina Providencia."



collected was funneled into financing his printing endeavors in Amsterdam where he relocated in 1695 as far away from Catholic censors as one could go in Europe. Thomas and his nephews were not alone in mixing fundraising through Christian charity networks with other activities. Alumni of the *Collegio Urbano* also resorted to alms-collecting to supplement their meager incomes from the Holy Office and to eke out a living. This was surely the case of Zaccaria Agam, who in some ways most resembles our wandering Asateur. Embroidering and exaggerating the extent of Muslim persecution was common to many Eastern Christian alms-collectors most likely because, as Ghobrial notes, it “found a sympathetic audience among Europeans.”<sup>71</sup> Not all claims of persecution were feigned however, and fraud and imposture were by no means the norm. However, there were enough cases of blatant rogues to warrant suspicion all round.

Consider, for instance, the fascinating case from 1685 involving the appearance in Rome of an Armenian impostor from Isfahan named “Arisdaches” (Արիսդաքս). His case was discussed in one of the weekly meetings of the *De Propaganda Fide*.<sup>72</sup> This colorful personality and well-known rogue petitioned Cardinal Cybo informing him that he had come to the “threshold of the Apostles” not for personal gain but for the “liberation of all the Christian nations both in spirit and in body.”<sup>73</sup> He then offered a proposal or “plan” for this liberation which included the printing in Rome of spiritual books in

Armenian, Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. In exchange, for liberating Eastern Christians from the Muslim yoke, the impostor asked for the entrusting to him (Arisdaches) in Rome of the Santa Maria Egiziaca Armenian hospice and church for him to look after as well as an official certificate of Catholicity or letter of recommendation with which he could wonder the streets of Europe in quest of alms for the maintenance of the hospice, of course!<sup>74</sup>

The only problem for this fraud was that the *De Propaganda Fide* and its Armenian interpreter had kept a record on this person and were able to immediately figure out that he was a repeat offender and an impostor. In his report to the Cardinal, the anonymous Armenian translator notes that the man calling himself Arisdaches and “pretending to be an Armenian bishop” is a fraud. According to the translator, not only is Arisdaches “supremely ignorant (somamente ignorante) but “has always been a vagabond, and on another occasion when he came to Rome, brought letters from the Patriarch Jacob [Hacob Jughayets'i] that were known to be false, and he himself then confessed it to Don Basilio, not considering this a serious matter.” The translator also notes the impostor “has even changed his own name, that of his father, and of the country, now calling himself Arisdaches son of Giovanni [Hovhannes] from the city of Diarbekir [whereas] it is known that his father was

71 Ghobrial, *Migration ...*, 165.

72 ASPF, S.C. Armeni, vol. 3, folios 419r-420v

73 Ibid., 421r. «արգ լինի, իոր եւ արիստագէս վարդապետս եկի 'ի րոմս, ոչ իմ օգտին, եւ շահին, այլ վասն ամենայն ազգի քրիստոնէից րոգւոյն եւ մարմնոյն ազատութեան»:

74 Ibid., «որ սուրբ մարիամ եգիպտացոցն եկեղեցին եւ վանքն ինձ տայք, որ եւ գնա պահեմ եւ զարդարեմ եւ ձեզմից ըստակ եւ փող չեմ ուզել...միայն թէ ինձ վկայական թուխթ մի տայք եւ կարենամ ամենայն տեղաց ողորմութիւն հաւաքել եւ աստուծով մեծ բան կու լինի: “non voglio denaro delli loro Signori ma solamente li prego che mi concedino una lettera di raccomandatione con la quale io puosi camminare i paesi e ricevere l'elemosine per mantenimento della detta chiesa.” (419r)

Xason [Hasan] and he [Arisdaches] was called Avedis at home [in Julfa].” Lastly, the report concludes that “one must guard against this fraudulent hermit Avedis who in Isfahan had become a renegade and converted to Islam [havea rinegato e fattosi Turco] which was confirmed by a letter written from Venice by an Armenian student who had recently left this college.”<sup>75</sup>

The above case involving the impostor Arisdaches or Avedis is instructive for the case of Asateur Vardapet under examination here on many levels. In terms of the problem of early modern impostors and mobility with which we dealt above, this case study demonstrates that not all was hopeless in the early modern age. Despite the information overload and the rise of a “society of strangers” dissolving trust and familiarity and making it difficult for authorities to tell fraudulence from authenticity, state and religious au-

thorities could still rely on traditional and time-tested means of authenticating or recognizing individuals and verifying their “true” identities. In this case, as in the case of Asateur’s notarial record from Marseille with sworn affidavits, good record keeping and eyewitness testimony (from a former student from the *Collegio Urbano* originally from New Julfa) were crucial in exposing the fraud that was Arisdaches, formerly Avedis.

What then of our Asateur Vardapet Shadanēnts? He was surely not a brazen fraud like Arisdaches; yet, precisely because individuals like Arisdaches and Hovhannes of Shamiramakert populated the social imaginary of many Europeans and were circulating in Europe, even “real” or “sincere” converts to Catholicism like our Asateur Shadanēnts’ needed to have proper identification and paperwork with them all the time. In fact, it is largely thanks to this paperwork that Asateur has left a spectral presence in the archives.

Even if Asateur was no “vagabond” or shape-shifter like Arisdaches, Hovhannes, or to some extent Arakel Yerevants’i, we must still ask ourselves where in the gallery of Eastern Christian and Armenian alms-collectors can we situate a man who wandered across the frontiers of early modern Europe? He does not seem to have been a student at the *Collegio Urbano* like Zaccaria Agam and many Armenians wayfarers traveling for alms in Europe were. As with virtually every other alms-collector from the East, however, Asateur had obtained a certificate of Catholicity from Rome’s official “protector of Armenians and Indians” Cardinal Cybo in 1682. This certificate was necessary for him because it enabled him not only to preach and say Mass according to the Armenian rite in churches like Saint

75 Ibid., folios 420r and v. “È capitato in Roma un tale Arisdaches, che si spaccia per Vescovo Armeno, di cui si può dubitare non solo se sia Vescovo, né meno sacerdote. Le ragioni di dubitare sono le seguenti:

1. Perché è sommamente ignorante, fu sempre vagabondo, et un’altra volta che venne a Roma portò lettere del Patriarca Jacob che furno conosciute per false, et egli medesimo lo ha hora confessato a D. Basilio, tenendola per cosa di poco momento.

2. Perché si è mutato il nome suo proprio, quello del padre, e della patria, chiamandosi hora Arisdaches figlio di Giovanni della città di Diarbeker, et è noto che suo Padre fosse Xason d’Ispahan, et esso in Patria si è nominato Avedis.

3. Perché sino dall’altra volta, che questo venne in Roma, fu avvisato D. Basilio da mons. Arcivescovo Arachiel ultimamente qui defunto a Santa Maria Egittica, che dovesse guardarsi dal falso Eremita Avedis che in Ispahan havea rinegato, e fattosi Turco, il che vien confermato da una lettera scritta da Venetia da un alunno Armeno ultimamente partito da questo Collegio.” I thank Cesare Santus for correcting some minor errors in my transcription.

Paul in Lyon as well as in Paris, Rome, Lucca, Venice, and elsewhere. We can only presume that he was, like his contemporaries, raising alms after celebrating Mass. Like many of his fellow travelers moving through early modern Europe's "fundraising circuits," Asateur seems to have been constantly in search of employment to supplement his meager income. His story resonates with those of others such as Zaccaria Agam's with whom he may have met up and possibly even accompanied. By 1702, when he had already tramped across Europe saying Mass and collecting alms, Asateur was in Venice and evidently looking for employment as a priest. We can surmise this because of the letter he received on 19 February 1701 from Azaria Catholicos in Rome informing him that a new position for a local parish priest at the Armenian church of Santa Maria Egiziaca had opened up.

And along with our blessings, let it be known to our dear one that there is no father confessor at our Armenian church here. If you wish to come to reside here and serve as a father confessor let me know. Immediately respond to this letter that I am sending you now so that I may speak to the caretaker here so he can write a letter to the monsignor in charge of our church for you to come here.

Azaria even informed him what the position paid. Three scudi per month to hear confessions and an equal number for Mass.<sup>76</sup>

Asateur appears to have turned down the offer because a year later we find him equipped with a power of attorney from a Julfa merchant in Venice named Aghamir son of Avetik to travel to his birthplace in New Julfa, Isfahan and to receive 2,320 Ducats corrente from a certain Paron Karapet son of Khwaja Zaccar.<sup>77</sup> He does not seem to have gone because the same folder containing his paperwork has a promissory note dated 4 February 1704 in Venice indicating that Asateur had loaned the same merchant Aghamir son of Avetik a substantial sum of 2,600 corrente ducats at 6 percent interest per annum.<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusion:

Like dozens perhaps even hundreds of other wandering Armenian monks and missionaries, the life of Asateur Vardapet would have been lost to history had it not been for the fact that he was welcomed into the monastery of Abbot Mkhit'ar barely five years after the Mkhit'arists had settled there. Thanks to his residence on San Lazzaro, Asateur's correspondence and many other documents relating to him have been carefully preserved among the Congregation's other papers thus enabling us to reconstruct from fragments a life lived mostly on the road and in the pursuit of preaching and alms-collecting.

76 Archives of San Lazzaro, Santa Croce documents, busta 2A, "Letter of Azaria Catholicos to Astuatsatur Shadanents", 19 February 1701. «Եւ ընդ ամենութեան մերոյ ծանիր սիրելի մեր տեղս այժմ մեր հայոց եկեղեցին հաստատ խոստովանաբայր չկայ թէ կամենաս գալ տեղս կենալու եւ մեր հայոց եկեղեցուն խօստովանաբայր լինելու ինձ իմաց արայ այսմ գիրս քեզ որ կու հասանի շուտով ինձ պատասխան ողարկէ որ ես տեղս խօսիմ խնամածովն որ ինքն գիր գրէ որ գաս այն մօմսինեօրն

որ մեր եկեղեցուն վերակացու է մայր գրէ եւ թէ հարցանես ամսէն ինչ կու տան գ [3] ըսկութ խոստովանութեան համար գ [3] ըսկութ պատարաքի որ է ամսէն գ ըսկութ թէ քեզ սարքայ կանէ գրէ ինձ որ ես այս բանն տեղիս հոցամ եւ այլ մեզ հարցանողաց ամենեցուն բազում աւ[ր]հնութիւն եւ յողջոյն մատուցանես կատարողք հրամանոց մերոց աւ[ր]հնես ի Աստուծոյ մայ եւ ի մենջն ամէն:

Գրեցաւ թիվն փրկչին 1702 փետրվարի ամսոյ ժրումն ի Հոռոմ:

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

Through a close microhistorical reading of the faint traces Asateur left behind in the archives, this essay has sought to piece together a semblance of a lived life of an otherwise not notable wandering and mobile Armenian monk in the early modern period. On the basis of subjecting to scrutiny a notarial certificate from 1689 produced in Marseille for Asateur, the essay has also argued for the existence of a close link between increased mobility in the early modern period, the proliferation of impostors, and the rise of a “regime of certification” in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. As I have demonstrated above, this certification was deployed by Catholic Church officials to reduce cases of imposture and to curb and monitor undesirable circulation of alms-collectors from the East.

As the chronicler of San Lazzaro noted in his entry for the year 1722, as part of his arrangement to live out his days among Abbot Mkhit'ar's monks Asateur had agreed “to deposit his belongings in the treasury of Venice and to make us the sole beneficiary of his estate if we were to keep him with us till the fruition of his life.”<sup>79</sup> In fact, true to his word, on 25 September 1722, Asateur met with the Venetian notary Emilio Velano to draft his will and bequeath his life's savings, presumably from several decades of alms-collecting, to “our Armenian monks who belong to the order of saint Anthony and live on San Lazzaro

degli Armeni under the most reverend father their Abbot.”<sup>80</sup>

### Appendix:

#### Extrait des Registres de L'evesché de Marseille

Par devant nous ange Cotta prestre docteur en S[ain]te theologie et es droits protonotere du S[ain]t siege chanoine theolodal de Lesglise cathedrale maieur de cette ville de marseille vicaire et official general substitué du dioceze dudit marseille le siege vacant est compareu s[ieu]r Pierre Decorose gentilhomme persan naturalisé francois residant ordinairement a Paris et se trouvant de presant en cette d[itt]e ville depuis environ huict mois aagé d'environ quarante six ans logé ches le s[ieu]r perier m[estr]e confisseur sur Le port de cette d[itt]e ville proche les grands augustins pour et au nom du nommé deasateur autremant Dieudat prestre et religieux de lordre de saint Bazille natif de la ville Dispan capitale du royaume de perse residant a presant dans la ville de paris nous a representé que ledit deasateur a Intherest de Justiffier qu'il est prestre et quil en a fait Les fonctions en divers Lieux de L'europe chrestienne depuis le temps qu'il est sorti de la ditte ville Dispan ou il en avoit aussi fait les fonctions depuis quil avoit esté promeu a lordre de prestrise ainsin quil est prest à justiffier [Page break]

Par de temoins de son pais dignes de foy nous requérant audit nom de vouloir faire Enqueste sur ce sujet pour icelle prinse luy deslivrer le certifficat convenable ainsin quil sera a faire par raison et iest soubsigné P. Decorosse ainsin signé a l'original. Et nous dict vicaire et official general en concedant acte audit decorosse audit nom avons ordonné Lenqueste requize et

79 Matteos Evdokiats'i, *Ժամանակագրությունը սրբազան կարգի միաձայնը Հայոց* [Chronicle of the Sacred Congregation of Armenians belonging to the Sacred Order of...], folio 297.

80 “Last Will and Testament of Astuats'atur Shadanents', September 25, 1722,” in ASV, Notarile Testamento, 1009b, Emilio Veleno.

attandu que les témoins qu'on nous doit administrer sont armeniens avons prins pour interprete d'office simon di George qui entand ladicte langue et qui nous la peut donner entandue en francois apres luy avoir fait prester le serement en tel cas requis fait a marseille le dix-sept aoust mil six cens quatre vingt neuf, cotta chan[oine] theol[ogue] vic[aire] gen[eral] ]et official general vic et official gen aisin signé a Loriginal.

#### Dudit Jour

Est compareu par devant nous Illustrissime et révérendissime Jean archevesque de chamiran en armenie cy devant patriarche de Constantinople se trouvant en cette ville depuis trois mois revenant despagne et logé au cartier S[aint]] Jean proche le coin de l'humilité aagé denviron septante ans témoins produit aux fins dudit comparant lequel apres avoir déclaré nestre parant ny allié dudit deasateur moyenant serement par luy presté adjectus [??] a Dit quil cognoit Ledit deasateur depuis environ vingt deux ans layant veu et cogneu en pologne, a constantinople, à Rome, à Livourne, à florance et à Luques et auxdits lieux ayant cogneu evesque qui avoit promeu à la prestrise Led[it] deasateur qui estoit Evesque en armenie dit de plus quil la veu souvent cellebrer La sainte messe en langue armenienne et suivant le rit armenien tant en ladicte ville de rome qu'à livourne florance et Luques ainsin que ledit sieur archevesque nous a certiffié et plus n'a dit lecture faite y a percisté et c'est sousigné avec ledit Interprete Jean archevesque armenien simon georgy cotta chan[oine] theol[ogue] vic[aire] gen[eral] ]et official general. sossin greffier tous ainsin à l'original.

#### Dudit Jour

Est compareu avite [Avet?] di Asateur marchand arménien demeurant en cette ville depuis environ deux ans proche la place de linche aagé denviron trante deux

ans autre témoin a nous produit lequel apres avoir déclaré nestre parant ni partie touiours par lorgane dudit Simon george qui a pareillement servy de truchement audit sieur archevesque moyennant serement.

A dit que sestant rencontré luy deposant dans la ville de Lion il y a d'environ dix huit mois a loccasion de leur négoce quil ont de cette ville a paris auroit veu et entandu cellebrer [Page break] la s[ain]te messe en riet armenien audit deasateur prestre religieux de lordre de saint bazille et c'est dans lesglise saint paul dudit Lion et plus n'a dit lecture faite y a percisté et c'est sousigné avec led[it] interprete aviete di Asateur simon george cotta chan[noine] theol[ogue] vic[aire] et official gen[eral] soub sossin gréffier tous ainsi signeés a loriginal.

#### Dudi Jour

Est compareu Pancouse fils de malibaba autre armenien témoin produit aux fins dudit comparant habitant en cette ville depuis environ deux ans proche la place de vivaux aagé denviron quarante ans lequel apres avoir déclaré nestre parant ny allié dudit deasateu par l'organe dudit simon george moyenant serement de luy presté

A dit qu'il cognoit ledit assateur depuis environ dix a douze ans et qu'il la cogneu en qualitté de prestre dans la ville dispan et de religieux de lordre de saint Bazille l'ayant veu cellebrer la messe suivant le riet armenien dans la ville de Lion ou lui deposant se rencontra a loccasion de leur commerce dans lesglise de s[ain]t Paul et Plus na dit lecture faite. Y'a percisté et c'est sousigné avec ledit Interprete Pancouse Simon george cotta chan[noine] theol[ogue] vic[aire] et off[icial] gen[eral] sub sossin greffier tous ainsin signéz a loriginal.

#### Dudit Jour

Est aussi compareu Papa Janna fils de Soultanon au[ssi] marchand armenien [Babajan di Sultanum or Coji Baba] agé denvi-

ron trente cinq ans habitant en cette ville depuis environ deux ans demeurant a la rue francoise proche lesglise Cathedralle dans la maison du Sieur piegros [sic] au[ssi] temoin produit lequel apres avoir declaré nestre parant ni allié dudit asateur par l'organe dudit simon george interprete moyenant serement.

A dit qu'il cognoit ledit asateur depuis environ vingt ans en qualitté de prebtre [sic] et religieux de lordre de s[ain]t bazille luy ayant veu et entendu cellebrer la messe diverses fois dans la ville dispan et dans son couvent en riet arménien et mesme il luy a entendu dire la messe dans la ville de lion il y a environ dix huit mois dans lesglise S[ain]t paul ou luy deposant se trouva en compagnie d'autres armeniens merchands qui alloient a paris a loccassion de leur négoce et plus na dit lecture faite y a percisté et c'est sousigné avec ledit Interprete Papa Janna [page break] Simon george cotta chan[noine] theol vi gen et offic gen sossin greffier signé a Loriginal

Seu le Comparant a nous présenté ce Jourdhuy par sieur pierre decorosse pour et au nom du nommé assateur autrement dieudat prestre et religieux de l'ordre de S[ain]t bazille de la ville dispan avec nostre decret au bas portant acte et permission de faire lenqueste requise ayant fait prester de suite le serrement a simon georgy de cette ville choissi par nous doffice pour interpreter des arméniens qu'on nous a produits pour temoins, veu ensuite Lenqueste par nous requise desdits arméniens et official général du dioceze de marseille le siege vacant certifions et attestons nous avoir suffisamm[en]t appareu que le nommé assateur arménien de la ville dispan est prestre et religieux de Lordre de Saint Bazille en foy dequoy avoir signé le présant certificat pour luy servir ainsin qu'il verra bon estre et que du tout luy en sera deslivré extrait par nostre greffier fait ce marseille ce dix septième du mois daoust mil six cents quatre vingt neuf cotta chan theol. vic et office gen. ainsin sousigné a l'original.

Sossin

Nous ange cotta prestre docteur en s[ainc]<sup>te</sup> theologie et en droits protontaire du Saint siege apostolique, chanoine theolodal de l'esglise cathédrale de cette ville de Marseille vicair et official general de levesché dicelle siege vacant certifions et attestons a touts quil appartiendra que m[aistr]e sossin quy a signé le present extract est notaire royal audit marseille et greffier de l'evesché dicelle aux escritures et signatures duquel pleine et entiere foy est adjoustée tant en iugement que dehors, en foy de quoy avons signé ses presents fait apposer a icelles le sceau du chapitre de laditte esglise cathedralle, Donné a marseille le huictiesme aoust mil six cents quatre vingt neuf

Cotta Chan[oine] Theol[odal] es offic[ial]  
gen[eral]

### Translation:

#### Extract from the Registers of the Bishopric of Marseille

Appeared before us Ange Cotta, priest and doctor of Holy Theology and law protontary of the Canonical theology of the Holy See of the Major Cathedral church of this city of Marseille, Vicar and Official general and representative of the Diocese of Marseille, the sieur Pierre de Corose, Persian gentleman, naturalized Frenchman, ordinarily a resident of Paris and happening to be presently in this city since approximately eight months, at the age of about forty-six years and lodging at the house of the sieur Perier, master confectioner at the port of this city near the Great Augustinians, for and in the name of the one named Assateur otherwise [known as] Dieudat, Priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil, native of the city of Isfahan, capital of the kingdom of Persia, residing at present in the city of Paris. [Sieur Pierre Decorose] has informed us that the said Assateur wants to prove that he is a priest and has



assumed the functions thereof in various places of Christian Europe since the time he left the said city of Isfahan where he had also performed the functions of a priest, since being promoted to the priesthood, as he is prepared to prove.

Through credible witnesses from his country, the undersigned Pierre de Corosse has requested from us that we investigate on the subject of this prince [Asateur also known as Dieudat] and to deliver to the latter a suitable certificate that he will know how to use reasonably.

And we the aforementioned vicar general in granting the decree of the said Decrosse, have ordered an investigation, and understanding that the witnesses we must hear are Armenians, have requested and retained as interpreter Simon di George who comprehends the said language and who can translate for us in French after having him swear an oath required in such a case. Done in Marseille on the seventeenth of August, one thousand six hundred and eighty-nine. Cotta, theological canon and official vicar general as signed in the original.

#### On the said day

Appeared before us the most illustrious and most reverend John, archbishop of Chamiran in Armenia and formerly patriarch of Constantinople happening to be in this city for the past three months returning from Spain and lodging at the Saint John quarter near the corner of [Order] of Humility aged approximately seventy years old, witness, and called upon on behalf of the said witness [comparant], who after having declared not being related to nor an associate of the said Assateur through his oath said he has known the said Assateur for approximately twenty-two years, having seen or known the said Assateur in Poland, Constantinople, Rome, Livorno, Florence, and in Lucca, and in the said places having known him as a priest who was promoted to the priesthood and who was a priest in

Armenia. Moreover, he said that he has seen him often celebrate the holy Mass in the Armenian language and according to the Armenian rite in the said city of Rome as well as Livorno, Florence, and Lucca. The archbishop has thus established for us, and without saying anything more and having read [this document] has fixed his signature below with the said translator Simon Georgy, John the Armenian archbishop, Cotta theological canon, vicar and official general undersigned thus the original.

On the said day appeared before us Aviet di Asateur Armenian merchant residing in this city for approximately the last two years near Place de Linche aged approximately thirty-two years, another witness produced for us after having declared under oath and still through the agency of Simon george who has in the same way served as a mediator, that he is not a relative or associate of [asateur]

He stated that he met the deponent in the city of Lion about eighteen months ago on the occasion of the business they had together between that city [Lyon] and Paris and had seen and heard him celebrate [page break] the holy Mass according to the Armenian rite of the said Asatur [Asatur], priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil in the church of Saint Paul of the said Lyon. And moreover, and without saying more and having read [the document] he held on to his testimony and it is undersigned with the help of the said interpreter, Simon george, Aviet di Asateur, cotta theological canon and official vicar general all undersigned in this original document.

Appeared [before us] Panous son of Malibaba, another Armenian witness called upon on behalf of the plaintiff and residing in this city for around two years close to the Place Vivaux about forty years of age, who after having declared that he is not a relative or associate of the said Assateur said under oath that he has known the said Asatur for the last ten or twelve years and that he knew him in the capacity of a priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil in the

city of Isfahan, in which city as well as at the church of Saint Paul in Lyon he has seen him give the holy Mass according to the Armenian rite. Not saying more and having read [this document] he undersigned [this paper] with the said interpreter, Panous, Simon di George, Cotta, priest and doctor of Holy Theology and law all wrote and signed this original [paper].

Also appeared before us, Papa Janna son of Sultanon [i.e., Khwaja Baba di Sul-tanum], witness and Armenian merchant about thirty-five years of age, residing in this city for around two years and living at Rue Francoise close to the Cathedral Church at the house of Sieur Piegros who after having declared under oath that he is not a relative or associate of the said Asateur through the agency of the said interpreter Simon George stated that he has known the said Asatur for approximately the last twenty years in the quality of a priest or monk of the order of Saint Basil. [Moreover that] he has seen and heard [the said Assateur] celebrate the Holy Mass according to the Armenian rite on several occasions in the city of Isfahan and in his convent and has even heard him say the Mass in the city of Lyon about eighteen months ago at the church of Saint Paul where the deponent happened to be in the company of other Armenian merchants who were going to Paris for their trade. Not saying more and having read [this document] he undersigned [this paper] with the said interpreter, Papa Janna [Babajan], Simon di George, Cotta, priest and doctor of Holy Theology and law all wrote and signed this original [paper].

Having known the witness presented to us on this day by the Sieur Pierre decorse for and in the name of Assateur or Dieudat [Deodato or God-given] priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil from the

city of Isfahan, with our decree below bearing permission to carry out the required investigation and having right away chosen Simon de George as interpreter for the Armenians whom we called upon as witnesses, as well as having seen afterwards the investigation of the said Armenians required by us and the vacant seat of the official general of the said diocese of Marseille, we certify and attest that it has appeared sufficiently [evident] that the person named Assateur, an Armenian from the city of Isfahan, is a priest and monk of the order of Saint Basil and in good faith thereof we have signed the present [certificate] to serve him as he will see fit, and an extract [of these notarial records] will be delivered to him by our clerk. Done in Marseille, this seventeenth of the month of August, one thousand six hundred and eighty-nine, Cotta Chan theol. vic et office gen. thus undersigned on the original.

We Ange Cotta, priest, doctor of theology and law, as well as protonotary of the Holy Apostolic See, canonical theologian of the Cathedral church of this city of Marseille, vicar and official general of this bishopric of the vacant see, certify and attest to all to whom it may concern that the Master Sossin, who has signed this present extract is a royal notary of the said Marseille and clerk of this bishopric. Moreover, based on his writings and signatures and to which full faith is granted both in a court of justice and outside, we have signed these present [testimonies] and fixed the seal of the chapter [i.e., religious assembly] of the said Cathedral church [i.e., La Major]. Given at Marseille on the eighteenth day of august one thousand six hundred and eighty-nine.

Cotta Theological Canon and Vicar and Official General