

THE EARLY ARRIVAL OF PRINT IN SAFAVID IRAN:
NEW LIGHT ON THE FIRST ARMENIAN PRINTING PRESS IN NEW JULFA,
ISFAHAN (1636-1650, 1686-1693)

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In the summer of 1628, a caravan with Carmelite missionaries Fathers Dominic of Christ and Matthew of the Cross slowly traversed the perilous long stretch of desert extending from Aleppo to Baghdad and gradually wound its way to the Safavid capital of Isfahan. Among the pilgrims, missionaries, merchants, and the variety of commodities that no doubt accompanied the camels was an unusual object: a wooden printing press with “349 Arabic letter sorts as well as two instruments to set up the type.”¹ The con-

traption was so cumbersome and heavy to carry, remarked Father Dominic in a letter from Baghdad, “that one camel could hardly bring it.”² When the print-

Floor, Dickran Kouymjian, and Marc Mamigonian for reading an earlier draft of this essay and offering helpful comments and to Thierry O’harera for helping to ensure the accuracy of my translations from seventeenth-century French. I thank Albert S. Khochapum for drawing the map. My greatest debt, as usual, goes to Dr. Hourii Berberian for commenting on an earlier draft and for helping me think through my initial ideas and test their soundness. All shortcomings in this paper are, of course, my own.

* I would like to express my deep gratitude to Nile Green for deepening my appreciation of print history and especially for encouraging me first to think more historically about the larger question of the divergence of Armenian and Perso-Arabic histories of print. The extent of my debt to his work will be apparent in the footnotes that follow. Afshin Matin Asgari, Nile Green, Rahim Shahegan, and James Russell patiently responded to lexical queries and helped with some technical vocabulary in Persian and Turkish relating to the printing press. I am also grateful to Meliné Pehlivanian for sharing with me her unpublished essay on Julfa print. Meroujan Karapetyan was generous in first bringing to my attention the letters of Stepanos Vardapet discussed in detail and translated for the first time in the last section of this essay; though I had long discovered the collection of papers from the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF) from which these letters hailed, I first became aware of the print-related contents of the documents in question thanks to Dr. Karapetyan, and for that, as well as for useful suggestions on this essay, I am deeply grateful to him. My thanks also go to Edmund Herzig, Willem

- 1 Jonathan Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 221.
- 2 This fleeting episode is captured in a correspondence belonging to Carmelite missionaries in Iran. See H. Chick. Ed. *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, volume 1 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), 305. The idea of importing a printing press with Arabic-script movable type into Iran appears to have been the brainchild of Carmelite missionary Father John Thaddeus who “acquainted” Shah ‘Abbas I with the art of printing during a visit to the court in Qazvin in 1618. Father Thaddeus records in one of his letters how he “presented to the king an alphabet in Arabic, and acquainted him with printing of Arabic and Persian letters, about which he showed much interest and expressed a wish to introduce it into his own country.” After describing this incident, father Thaddeus adds the following note to his superiors in Rome: “If we could have one [set of type] and introduce it here, it would be of great advantage to our Religion and the spreading of it: The Shah has even charged me to procure it; so that my visit to his Maj-

ing machine safely arrived in Isfahan in December of 1628 or January of 1629, it marked the first appearance of Gutenberg's revolutionary technology of printing in Iran.

The fate of this first printing press with Arabic characters remains unknown. No books appear to have been printed on it, or if there were any they have not survived in any known collection. As Nile Green has pointed out, it would not be until the post-Gutenberg, industrial era of the early nineteenth century, 1818 to be more precise, with the introduction of lighter and more portable Stanhope printing machines that printing in Arabic script appears to have set roots in Iran and, soon afterwards, elsewhere in the Islamic world.³ In light of the late nineteenth-century origins of Perso-Arabic print culture in Iran, the earlier episode of the Carmelite press has recently attracted the attention of a few scholars. According to H. Chick who first brought to light the printing press of 1629, "The fact remains – the Carmelites were the

introducers of the printing of oriental script – or any kind of script – into Iran."⁴

This essay explores the little-known history of another printing press during the Safavid era that unlike the Carmelite one actually is known to have published at least eight separate titles at different intervals during the seventeenth century. The press in question was a Gutenberg-era wooden handpress for the printing of books in Armenian characters, built in 1636 *in situ* in the Armenian mercantile suburb of Isfahan known as New Julfa. That a printing press was established in this spot acting as a central hub of a global network of Armenian trade settlements established by the township's long-distance silk merchants should perhaps come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the remarkable history of this mercantile suburb. Shortly after the township's founding in 1605, following a violent act of uprooting and displacement, its long-distance merchants established a vibrant network of mercantile communities that extended across and incorporated many of the world's leading port cities from London, Amsterdam, and Cádiz on the Atlantic seaboard to Venice, Livorno, Marseille, and Genoa in the Mediterranean, and Surat, Madras, Calcutta, Canton, and Manila in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. As I have pointed out elsewhere, these "port Armenians" were indispensable in shoring up the nascent craft of printing for the Armenians during the early modern period predating the Stanhope revolution of the nineteenth century when

esty was not a fruitless one."(233) For reasons that remain mysterious, it took almost ten years for the printing press to arrive in Isfahan. On this little-explored episode in Iranian history, see Willem Floor, "The First Printing-Press in Iran," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (1980), 361-371.

3 For the "Stanhope revolution" in printing and its role in Iran, see the important set of publications by Nile Green, especially "Persian Print and the Stanhope Revolution: Industrialization, Evangelicalism, and the Birth of Print in Early Qajar Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 30, 3 (2010): 473-490; and "Journeymen, Middlemen: Trans-culture, Travel, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, 2 (2009): 203-224.

4 Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 306.

Arabic script printing first developed.⁵ They supported Armenian printers who mostly hailed from the upper echelons of the literati of the Armenian Church for several reasons and through various means that I will summarize below. The synergistic relationship between port cities, port Armenians, and printers, the “PPP connection,” as I have called it in another study, was pivotal for the functioning and even existence of early modern Armenian print culture. Given that New Julfa was located in the interior of Safavid Iran and was therefore far from the port city locations in the Mediterranean, which served as early cradles of print technology, the question arises as to whether the larger “PPP” paradigm that holds in almost every other case of early modern Armenian printing enterprise is also valid for Armenian printing in the central hub of the network in New Julfa.

This paper will address the latter question by exploring the place of merchant involvement and the pivotal role of relations with port city locations and their mercantile Armenian communities in the establishment of the printing press in Julfa during the seventeenth century. With the exception of the first press set up in the township in 1636 by Khachatur Kesarats'i, under circumstances that remain far from fully ex-

plored, I argue that the other two presses founded in the township in the wake of Kesarats'i were heavily dependent on assistance from port Armenians living in port cities. After providing a critical overview of the establishment of the early printing press by Khachatur Kesarats'i in 1636 followed by that of his disciple Hovhannes Jughayets'i (also known as Ktrshents) in 1646, the essay will discuss the reopening of the press in Julfa in 1686 under the guidance of primate Stepanos Jughayets'i. In this connection, after a critical discussion of the 1686 press and its closure in 1693, I will introduce and analyze several pieces of previously unpublished and largely unknown epistolary correspondence from a special collection of Armenian and mostly Julfan mercantile papers stored at the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*. These “letters of benediction” dating from the 1680s and from the pen of Stepanos Vardapet are addressed to wealthy Julfan merchants (port Armenians) residing in Venice, Livorno, and Genoa, at first, asking them – then ordering them – to purchase technical equipment, engravings, new fonts, and paper, to be sent to the township for use in improving the old printing press, which Bishop Stepanos had reactivated in 1686. When properly analyzed, these documents, I contend, furnish evidence that the “PPP connection” is also valid for printing at the central hub of the network in New Julfa. As it turns out, for reasons that still remain imprecise, the merchants did not respond to the plea for help on this occasion and the printing press was shut down in 1693 only to be reopened in 1863, when a Julfan merchant from Jakarta in the

5 Sebouh D. Aslanian, “‘Wings on their Feet and Wings on their Heads’: Reflections on Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print,” *Armenian Weekly* (August 28, 2012). See also idem, “Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Early Modern Global Armenian Print,” *Book History* 17, 1 (2014): 51-93, and idem, “Reader Response and the Circulation of Mkhitarist Books Across the Early Modern Indian Ocean,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22, 1 (2013): 33-72.

Dutch East Indies donated a modern printing press to the township's cathedral. This development itself points to the essential role of port Armenians and port cities without whose sustained assistance the seventeenth-century press would probably not have ceased operation only to be restarted through the donation of another port Armenian in the nineteenth century.

Before launching into a full discussion of print culture in Safavid Julfa, let us first examine the early divergence of Armenian and Islamic printing trajectories. Doing so will require us first to look briefly at the larger history of the development of early modern Armenian print culture and how this phenomenon was largely shaped by maritime waterways and port cities. An examination, albeit brief, of Armenian and Arabic-script divergence in print history helps us understand the rather early development of Armenian print in comparison to Arabic print, indubitably the dominant script of the wider Islamicate/Islamic world inhabited by the much smaller in number and politically less powerful Armenians.

The Early Divergence between Islamic and Armenian Print Traditions and the Importance of Port Cities:

Echoing what must have been a larger European impression of the "Orient," Antoine Galland, the French orientalist and translator of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, noted the "general lack of enthusiasm"⁶ among

Muslims for the "printing revolution" then well underway in Europe in the wake of Gutenberg's epochal discovery of printing with movable metal type:

The Arabs, Persians, and the Turks, cannot appreciate printing and any benefit they may derive from it... preferring instead to read books in their own languages that are written in a poor handwriting than to read them printed, as well-printed as they may be.⁷

By 1697, when Galland's comments first appeared in print, approximately 170 separate titles in Armenian script were already printed in printing presses operating from Armenian diaspora settlements from Venice, where the first Armenian printed book appeared in 1512 scarcely a generation after Gutenberg's own printing activities, to Amsterdam, the principal center of Armenian print culture in the second half of the seventeenth century, and even in Constantinople/Istanbul, where the center of Armenian printing activity was already gravitating. From the date of its first appearance in 1512 to the early nineteenth century, Armenian printing establishments were set up in approximately nineteen cities, producing a little over a thousand separate titles and close to a million volumes of print.⁸ For reasons that we will briefly

Boogert, Bart Westerweel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 265.

6 Maurits H. van den Boogert, "The Sultan's Answer to the Medici Press? Ibrahim Muteferrika's Printing House in Istanbul," in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, edited by Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den

7 "Les Arabes, les Persans et les Turcs ne peuvent goûter l'impression, quelque avantage que l'on tire, et ... aiment mieux lire les livres de leurs langages, écrits d'une écriture médiocre, que les lire imprimés, quelques bien imprimez qu'ils puissent estre." Quoted in van den Boogert, "The Sultan's answer to the Medici Press?" 265.

8 Elizabet Tajiryan, "Amsterdami hay t'pagrut'yunē: Tipabanakan Verlutsut'yun [The Ar-

examine below, nearly all these printing locations were in or near port cities, the majority in the Mediterranean and Atlantic seaboard but a significant number as well in the Indian Ocean. The few that were not owed their existence to ongoing relations with port locations. The only major exceptions to this larger pattern were the press in New Julfa (1636-), which will be examined in detail below, and that in Lvov, Poland, (1618) and Ejmiatsin near Yerevan (1771), which we will touch upon.

This early period of Armenian printing overlaps almost perfectly with the “early modern period” (1500-1800) in world history as well as roughly the same period in the history of print (c. 1450-1800) when the basic technology of printing, represented by the Gutenberg wooden handpress, remained essentially unchanged.⁹ Although the cradle of Armenian printing during the sixteenth century was confined to the largely European port city locations in the Mediterranean such as Venice, Livorno, Marseille, and to a lesser extent Rome, as well as in Amsterdam on the Atlantic seaboard, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Armenians were printing in all three Muslim “Gunpowder” Empires in Asia where the majority of Armenians resided and where their merchant elite also worked. In the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires, Armenian workshops were producing printed books as early as

1576, 1638, and 1772, respectively, that is, well before the printing of Arabic script works in those same empires. The first Persian-language book in Iran, as noted above, was printed in 1818, nearly two hundred years after Khachatur Kesarats'i printed his book of *Psalms* in Armenian in New Julfa. In the neighboring Ottoman empire, the first Arabic script books in Ottoman Turkish were printed by İbrâhîm Müteferrika, a Hungarian convert to Islam, who imported a press from Paris and printed seventeen works, including dictionaries, maps, works on medicine and other secular topics from 1729 to 1742 when his press ceased to publish works in a sustained manner probably due to “an apparent lack of enthusiasm for printed books in Ottoman society.”¹⁰ After Müteferrika's death in 1745, printing of books in Arabic script was at best sporadic due to lack of demand until the nineteenth century, when, as with the rest of the Muslim world, radical changes in print technology entrenched the place of print culture in Ottoman society.¹¹

In contrast to the relatively late and modest output of Müteferrika

menian Printing of Amsterdam: A Typological Analysis], paper presented at the conference on “Port Cities and Printers: Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print,” November 9-11, 2012. I thank Dr. Tajirian for permission to refer to her illuminating paper.

9 See Sebouh D. Aslanian, “Port Cities and Printers,” 73-74.

10 Günay Alpay Kut, “Matba‘a.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 800. “The reason for the Muslims’ aversion from [sic!] printing doubtless included motives of religious conservatism but also the vested social and economic interests of the professions of calligraphers [...] book illustrators, binders, etc.; and when printing eventually was established in the 18th [sic] century, only small numbers of books were produced and demand remained at a low level.”

11 On Müteferrika, see also Niyazi Berkes, “İbrâhîm Müteferrika,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online, 2013. and W. J. Watson, “İbrâhîm Müteferrika and Turkish Incunabula,” in *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, 3 (1968): 435-41.

press, Armenian printing in Istanbul had begun in 1567, when an Armenian printer from Tokat named Abgar Dpir, who had learned printing in Venice and Rome, shipped a press and new Armenian fonts he had cast in Venice to the Ottoman capital and printed five books from 1568 to 1569.¹² During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Ottoman capital, home to the largest number of urban Armenians in the world, became the gravitational center of Armenian printing with more than twenty separate Armenian printing establishments operating in the city and printing books in both Classical Armenian as well as in Armeno-Turkish, that is, Ottoman Turkish written in Armenian script.¹³ This precocious and peculiar nature of early modern Armenian print and the much later nineteenth-century development of Perso-Arabic print invites us to explore the question of an early divergence between these two traditions. The ques-

tion may be posed thus: Why is it, in fact, that there was no “printing revolution” in the early modern Islamic world, whereas such a revolution did in fact exist among Armenians? A comparison between Armenian and Perso-Arabic trajectories that a response to this question entails will help clarify in sharper contrast the peculiarities of the history of early modern Armenian print culture and help us develop a better understanding of the Armenian press in Julfa, Isfahan, during the seventeenth century.

In his *Paper Before Print*, Jonathan Bloom discusses several explanations for the Islamic world’s “reluctance” to embrace printing technology during the Gutenberg era and for why, consequently, printing had to wait till the onset of the nineteenth century to become rooted in Muslim societies of the Middle East and North Africa. The most practical explanation, according to Bloom, has to do with the peculiarities of the Arabic script used as the basis of writing in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, the dominant languages of the world of Islam. Unlike other scripts, Arabic, as Bloom points out, is characterized by “joins between most letters in a word, as well as by different initial, medial, final, and free-standing forms for many letters.”¹⁴ It does not lend itself to writing in separate disconnected characters, as is the case with Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Armenian scripts.

The Arabic script therefore presents typographical problems quite unlike those presented by other alphabets or even by Chinese with its thousands

12 Günay Alpay Kut (op. cit.) states that Abgar printed six books until 1569, but this is surely a mistake. The colophons, titles, and dates to these books may be found in Ninel Oskanyan, K’narik Korkotyan, and Ant’aram, Savalyan, eds. *Hay Girk’ē, 1512–1800 tvakannerin: hay hnatip grk’i matenagitut’yun* [The Armenian book in the years 1512–1800 [A bibliography of old Armenian Books]. (Erevan: Al. Myasnikyani Anvan HSSH Petakan Gradaran, 1988), 10–12. A good survey, albeit with a somewhat insular treatment of the topic, of Armenian printing in Istanbul is K’narik Korkotyan, *Hay tbagir girk’ē Konstantnopolsum, 1567–1850* [The Armenian Printed Book in Constantinople, 1567–1850] (Yerevan, 1964).

13 Meliné Pehlivanian, “Mesrop’s Heirs: The Early Armenian Book Printers,” *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-cultural Encounter*, eds. E. Hanebutt-Benz, D. Glass, G. Roper. (Westhofen: WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002), 57.

14 Bloom, *Paper Before Print*, 218.

of discrete characters. Arabic type requires an extremely high level of skill in punch cutting to imitate calligraphic norms. A complete font of Arabic texts, including vowel marks required for Koranic and other vocalized texts, can easily run to more than six hundred sorts, or individual characters, plus huge quantities of leads and quadrats to be placed between vowel marks and lines.¹⁵

The difficulties of the script, of course, only made it relatively difficult but not impossible for books to appear in Arabic before the nineteenth century, as the recently rediscovered 1538/9 first printed edition of the Koran by Alessandro Paganino in Venice as well as other publications carried out in Europe mostly by Italian printers make clear.¹⁶

Bloom suggests that a second reason for the “delayed” appearance of print in Arabic script has to do with social conventions and more particularly the veneration with which Muslims and members of the religious class of the *‘ulama* held the hand-written word. In addition, strong opposition to printing also came from the powerful and well-organized guild of copyists who made a living from copying manuscripts and stood most to lose from the

introduction of printing technology. In Istanbul alone, there appears to have been an estimated eighty thousand scribes or copyists employed during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and their (logical) opposition to print technology must figure among the reasons for the absence of a robust early modern “printing revolution” among Muslims whether in the Ottoman empire or in the other great Muslim empires of the period.¹⁷ Given the number of people employed in copying or writing manuscripts in Istanbul alone, it would stand to reason that the new technology would generate serious opposition in Muslim societies since it would “have caused [devastating] unemployment among the educated population.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See Angela Nuovo, “A Lost Arabic Koran Recently Rediscovered,” *The Library* 12, 4 (1990): 273-294. For earlier works, see Miroslav Krek, “The Enigma of the First Arabic Book Printed from Movable Type,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 38, 3 (1979): 203-212. The argument that the difficulty of the script is not entirely convincing as an explanation of the delayed nature of Perso-Arabic printing is made by Francis Robinson in his influential essay, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 1 (1993): 229-259.

¹⁷ Berkes, “Ibrāhīm Müteferrika,” notes: “The alleged opposition to the opening of the printing press does not seem to have been motivated by religion but rather by the economic interests of copyists and calligraphers. Ibrāhīm’s major interest in printing was still in line with his political and diplomatic career as well as with his interest in Islamic reform.”

¹⁸ See “Maṭba‘a.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online, 2013. Reference. University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). 26 June 2013 http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/matbaa-COM_0705 Discussing Müteferrika’s press, Stanford Shaw’s comments seem sensible: “There was considerable opposition to the plan from the scribes, who feared the loss of their jobs and position in the Ruling Class.” A “compromise” was then reached through the *şehulislam*, according to Shaw, “agreeing to allow the printing of books on all but the traditional religious subjects, thus preserving for the scribes their most lucrative source of income and leaving Müteferrika free to print whatever he wanted in history, languages, mathematics, geography, and the sciences.” Stanford Shaw, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern*

Lack of adequate print-quality paper in most Muslim lands as well as the high costs involved in purchasing paper may also be considered another crucial inhibiting factor for development of early modern print in the Islamic world. The absence of oil-based inks that “would evenly cover the metallic letters and produce readable and durable text on the page”¹⁹ was also a serious obstacle for printing in the Islamic world as we will see below when we look at Julfan print in Isfahan.

Perhaps the most compelling explanation for why Arabic-script printing presses run by Muslims did not develop during the Gutenberg era of the wooden handpress and had to wait for the nineteenth century has to do with the actual technology of the press itself. This, in fact, is one of the arguments made by Nile Green in a series of sophisticated and highly original studies of the technologically predicated global dissemination of print culture in nineteenth-century Iran, South Asia, and the rest of the Islamic world. Green focuses on the “Stanhope revolution” in the globalization of print culture during the industrial revolution and points out, rather compellingly, that geography, economy, and technology conspired to initiate global movements in the circulation of print technology to large parts of the Islamic world *only* after the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.²⁰

Invented in London in 1800 by Lord Stanhope and continuously improved upon during the following decades (owing largely to the absence of a copyright), the Stanhope iron handpress had several advantages that made it possible to usher in a truly global era in the spread of print technology not possible before the industrial revolution. In addition to being significantly cheaper due to economies of scale, “the Stanhope was ...the smallest handpress of the period, standing at about forty inches...”²¹ Its size and portability were pivotal, as Green contends, in expanding the global reach of print technology to beyond a limited number of port cities outside of print’s European cradle where printing presses existed. “The basic logistics of transporting presses,” writes Green, “were clearly a major problem, particularly in inland and mountainous areas.”²² According to Green’s analysis, the earlier Gutenberg era wooden handpresses did not lend themselves to easy transportation, especially to areas away from the shorelines of the world’s great oceans and seas. This was because the wooden handpress technology was “cumbersome,” unusually heavy, and came in different parts that required complex assembly at arrival, a problem that the Carmelite fathers who imported the first press into Iran were painfully aware of as we have seen. These factors created a logistical barrier for the early dissemination of global print culture during the wooden handpress era of

Turkey, volume 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 236.

19 Nicole Howard, *The Book: The Life History of a Technology* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 38.

20 Nile Green, “Persian Print and the Stanhope Revolution: Industrialization, Evangelica-

lism, and the Birth of Persian Print in Qajar Iran,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 30, 3 (2010).

21 *Ibid.*, 483.

22 *Ibid.*

print. More important perhaps is the fact that the industrialization of print in the early nineteenth century for the first time made the printed book an affordable commodity with which it became impossible for manuscripts produced by scribes in the Islamic world, whether in the Ottoman, Iranian, or South Asian contexts, to compete. Green sums up these arguments rather neatly:

Before 1800, the argument that the spread of printing was delayed by the hold of bazaar copyists over the book market, and the relative cheapness of their product compared with the initial capital required to set up a printing press and sell a large enough number of copies to turn the enterprise to profit, holds some merit. This, after all, seems to have been the reason for the abandonment of Parekh's Devanagari Press. When indigenous printing did eventually develop in Indian and other Islamic settings, in economic terms the key (if long unrecognized) enabling factor was the invention in 1800 of the mass-produced iron handpress.²³

The Armenian case presents a number of striking peculiarities when compared to the Perso-Arabic print that may help explain why, unlike its Muslim counterpart, it was already flourishing during the Gutenberg era. First, unlike Arabic script, Armenian is a script with thirty-six letters and more

importantly can be and was indeed printed without being cursive and with separate letters without the extensive use of ligatures as was the case with Arabic. This meant that font casters in Europe and later elsewhere could design and punch Armenian type with considerably less difficulty than they would have with Arabic script. Second, unlike printing in Arabic script even when a firman was issued by the Sultan allowing Müteferrika to print books for the first time in Arabic script but limited such printing to books of a non-religious nature, Armenian printing was from the outset spearheaded by the highest echelons of the Armenian Church. In other words, unlike the case with Arabic-script printing, Armenian-script print culture was fostered by the religious establishment as opposed to the latter being either indifferent to its use or even at times hostile as was the case with printing in the Islamic world before the nineteenth century. In effect, Armenian print culture was a creature of the church. It arose in an environment when Armenian manuscript production had reached an all-time low ebb during the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries when scriptoria where scribes either copied or wrote manuscripts were largely destroyed or interrupted as a result of chronic warfare between Ottoman and Safavid empires where the overwhelming majority of the Armenian population lived and where manuscript production centers were largely clustered. The crucial decline in the supply of manuscripts and particularly of religious works like Bibles and Psalters was the principal motive force stimulating members of the Armenian Church hierarchy to send their literati,

23 Nile Green, "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal Takiyya: Persianate Knowledge Between Person and Paper" *Modern Asian Studies* 44, 2 (2010), 242. On the fascinating case of the Devanagari press in Surat, which has potential parallels to printing in Julfa, see J. B. Primrose, "A London Printer's Visit to India in the Seventeenth Century," *The Library* 4, 20 (1939): 100–104.

such as Abgar Dpir of Tokat in the 1560s to European cities to learn the craft of printing and fill the demand for books fueled by the religious class as well as the rising group of long-distance merchants who were largely also pious and literate. Unlike the world of Islam as well, and notwithstanding the partial exception of Julfa in 1650 (see below), there was, on the whole, little if any opposition by Armenian copyists to the new technology of mechanical reproduction. The fact that scribal centers, along with their scribal communities, appear to have been devastated during the long century of Ottoman-Safavid warfare in the 1500s did not help organize concerted scribal opposition to the intrusion of the new technology. The opposite, in fact, was more likely the case.

The third and arguably most important way in which the Islamic and Armenian print histories diverged has to do with geography and long-distance trade. Though the Armenians were very limited in number, scattered, and politically powerless in the Islamicate world of Eurasia, they did have certain advantages that came with being dispersed. As we have seen already, largely as a result of chronic warfare between the two gunpowder empires of the Ottomans and Safavids, a large number of several hundred thousand Armenians, including a small elite group of silk merchants, were forcibly resettled by Shah 'Abbas I in Safavid Iran at the start of the seventeenth century. Of these refugees and displaced persons, those settled by 'Abbas I in Julfa, on the outskirts of Isfahan, and accorded special privileges as "royal" merchants, soon succeeded to estab-

lish a remarkably versatile and extensive network of trade diaspora settlements in nearly all the major port cities of the early modern world from London to Manila. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, it was initially through these trade settlements in the Mediterranean port cities, that Armenians first became acquainted with Gutenberg's radical technology.²⁴ These port cities attracted Armenian printers from early on for multifarious reasons and, in essence, enabled Armenian print culture to flourish in the Gutenberg era well before geographic, technological, and economies-of-scale conditions in the nineteenth century conspired to enable the spread of print technology to the Muslim world. The following factors were crucial in creating what I have called the nexus between port cities, port Armenians, and printers or the "PPP connection." First, Armenian port city settlements especially in Venice, Livorno, Marseille, and Amsterdam, provided a welcoming infrastructure for printers who were attracted to port cities in Europe not only because these places were the leading centers for print technology in Europe complete with specialists such as font casters, compositors, and paper manufacturers but also because port cities with port Armenian communities provided a ready-made diasporic infrastructure that supported those individuals who were later to become printers, many of whom were Armenian priests. Port Armenians also assisted printers by directly bankrolling their printing presses. This was the case with a string of Armenian printing presses that were

24 See Aslanian, "Port Cities and Printers."

set up in the largely Julfan-dominated Armenian community of Amsterdam where Armenian printers mostly of New Julfan origin ran printing presses uninterruptedly from 1660 to 1717. In cases where they did not invest in or own printing presses, port Armenians often commissioned printed books, provided a much-needed consumer base of readers, or acted as valuable contacts who helped Armenian printers by locating and purchasing useful technical equipment like fonts or actual hand-presses, as well as paper supplies. On occasion, they also shipped these items to Armenian printers operating from locations far from port locations. As we shall see this was the case with the establishment of the first Armenian press in Ejmiatsin (near Yerevan) where the supplies were shipped by a port Armenian residing in Madras and Pondicherry in India. In sum, the general pattern for early modern Armenian printing presses seems to have been one where printers were attracted to setting up their printing activities in port cities, primarily in the Mediterranean basin that served as the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cradle for Armenian printing, where the printers were supported in multifarious ways by port Armenians. In the case of Armenian printing presses in Madras and Calcutta in India, the fact that they were port cities and European outposts enabled the port Armenians who were also operating as printers to have their printing presses and most importantly newly designed Armenian type to be shipped directly from Europe, thus avoiding the problems posed to Muslim printers in inland locations in Iran by the cumbersome nature of

the pre-Stanhope wooden handpress. Given that New Julfa, Isfahan is far from any coastline and clearly seems to be an exception to this larger pattern raises the question of how it became a site of early printing in Iran.

Khachatur Kesarats'i and the Printing Press of 1636

An acute shortage of manuscripts, especially of the Bible, led Armenian Church leaders, beginning in 1585, to petition Rome for help in printing the Bible in Armenian but to no avail.²⁵

²⁵ For one of the earliest treatments of the subject and transcription of original correspondence between Armenian Church leaders and Rome, see Aghetsandr V. Palchean, *Patmut'iwn Kathoghikē vardapetut'ean i Hays ev miut'ean nots'a ėnt hromeakan ekeghets'ioy i florentean siwnhodosi* [History of Catholic missionary work among the Armenians and union of the latter with the Church of Rome at the Synod of Florence] (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1878). Catholicos Azaria of the Armenians was the first to request the printing of an Armenian Bible in Rome. In his letter to Pope Gregory XIII, dated April 10, 1585, the Catholicos thanks the Pope for having had a new book printed in Armenian («տուեր եւ շինել նոր պատմագիր գեղեցիկ ի հայոց լեզու») (Palchean, 310) and informs the pontiff that he is sending a manuscript of an Armenian bible for the Pope to have it printed in Rome. He explains his motivation for getting the Bible printed in the following way: “for among the entirety of the Armenian nation, who are many, a total of 20 manuscript bibles can barely be found and that after much effort and at the cost of 200 or 300 Florins.” The Catholicos also points out that the Bible in Armenian is “very much needed for Vardapets, Hayrapets and for Deacons” (311). See also the discussion in Nerses V. Akinean, *Mouses G. Tat'evats'i hayots' katoghikosn yev ir zhamanakē* [Moses Catholicos of the Armenians and his Times] (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1936), 390-401. A description of the original letter by Catholicos Azaria stored at the Vatican archives is available in Eugène Tisserant, *Codices armeni Bybliothecae vaticanae Bor-*

Nearly a half-century later, in 1630, another appeal was made to get the Armenian Bible printed in Rome. This time, the initiative was made by Julfan merchants who, with the support by the township's church hierarchy and the involvement of the Catholicosate in Ejmiatsin, petitioned Rome "for the creation of a separate press ... that could meet their broad educational needs."²⁶ In particular, the merchants requested assistance for the printing of the Armenian Bible under the auspices of the newly created *Propaganda Fide*. As the scholar Nerses Akinian noted in 1936, "when negotiations with the Holy Office broke down, the Julfans undertook an audacious attempt to open in Julfa the same printing press through their own efforts."²⁷

The task of creating the first functioning printing press in Iran fell to the newly appointed primate of the township, Khachatur Kesarats'i (1590-1646), under whose able leadership New Julfa had become one of the leading cultural and educational centers among the Armenians almost immediately after the suburb had been settled by deported refugees and merchants from the old country.²⁸ By the time the new primate set about to establish a printing press in Julfa, Khachatur had already trav-

eled across a broad swath of the Armenian diaspora, having been sent by his mentor, Catholicos Movses Tat'evats'i to the Armenian community of Lvov, Poland, to mediate in a conflict between the community and its religious head, Archbishop Nicol Torosovicz, who had threatened to convert to Catholicism, with the active support of Lvov's Carmelite mission.²⁹ Khachatur also appears to have had cordial relations with New Julfa's gradually increasing Catholic missionaries who were dispatched there from Rome and other places in Europe to proselytize among the Armenians. There is evidence, in fact, that Khachatur even knew the Carmelite missionary, Father John Thaddeus, who, as we saw earlier, had first planned to import a printing press into Isfahan to print books in Arabic script as early as 1618. Whether through his visit to Lvov, where several Armenian books were printed as early as 1618, or through his continuing interactions with the missionaries in Isfahan, Bishop Khachatur must have been exposed to the "Gutenberg galaxy" of printed books both in European languages and, to a much lesser extent, in Armenian.³⁰ It was this exposure to the world of print and the many advantages that the new technology placed at the service of ushering in an early modern "communications revolution" that

giani, Vaticani, Barberiniani, Chisiani, schedis Frederici Cornwallis Conybeare adhibitis recensuit Eugenius Tisserant, Bibliothecae vaticanae scriptor (Rome, Typis polyglottis vaticanis, 1927), 202ff.

²⁶ Akinian, *Movses G. Tat'evatsi*, 403.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 406.

²⁸ For a discussion of Julfa's role as a cultural and educational center during Khachatur's tenure, see Vazken Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese in New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1998), chapter nine.

²⁹ See Akinian, *Movses G. Tat'evatsi*, 259-269.

³⁰ The term "Gutenberg Galaxy" is, of course, the title of the iconic book by Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1962). For the short-lived Armenian press of Lviv/Lvov, Poland, see Y. Dachkevitch, "L'imprimerie arménienne à Lvov (Ukraine) au XVII^e siècle," *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S. (1969), 355-371.

seems to have catalyzed Khachatur to undertake the difficult task of installing a printing press in Julfa. The Vatican's refusal to print the Armenian Bible in Rome only helped to strengthen the Bishop's resolve to engage in an early variety of "import substitution." That this was the case is indicated in the colophon of the fourth book, *A Book of Hours* (*Zhamagirk*), printed in 1642 on the press Khachatur helped build. The colophon makes it clear that Khachatur "through whose efforts and labor this printing was carried out in the Armenian nation, [...] would day after day see this [art of] printing among the Latin nations [i.e., Europeans] and always desired that it also existed among the Armenians"³¹ (See figure 1 for colophon) What is remarkable about the establishment of this press is not solely the fact that it was founded in the heart of Safavid Iran at such an early date, but that, unlike the Carmelite press transported from Rome via a camel caravan only a few years earlier, it appears to have been built entirely from local resources and with no apparent outside help.

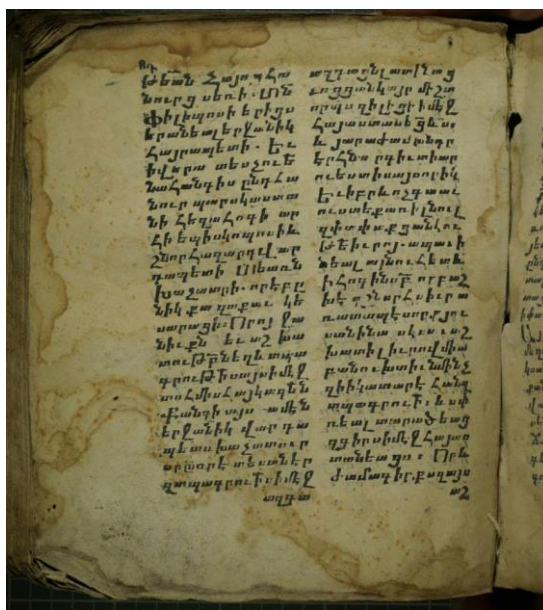


Figure 1 Cophon of Khachatur Kesarats'i, *A Book of Hours* (*Zhamagirk*), 1642.

The colophon of the first book published on this press in 1638, a *Psalter* or *Psalms of David* (*Saghmosaran i Davit*), describes how the press was established.

This printing was accomplished in the days of the [Catholicos Ter Philipos] in the city of Shosh at the convent of Julfa in the year 1087 (1638) by my own hands, the humble Khachatur Vardapet of Ceasarea (Kesarats'i), who relentlessly worked night and day for a year and five months along with monks of this order, *for we have not learned this craft from any master nor do we have an instructor* save for the Holy Spirit and our spiritual desires and prayers that have gone to our holy father, the Lord. And my spiritual children, master [varpet] Hakob Jan and deacon Ter Hovannes, as well as Ter Mikayel and Hovsep have assisted in our labors. On account of all this remember in your pure prayers the humble Khachatur Vardapet and my assisting brothers and may you be

31 Ninel Oskanyan, K'narik Korkotyan, and Ant'aram, Savalyan, eds. *Hay girk'ē, 1512–1800 tvakannerin*, 26. «.... Կեսարացի: որոյ ջանիւքն եւ աշխատութեամբն եղեւ տպագրութիւնս այս ի մէջ տոհմիս հայկազեան քանզի այս ամէնըջանիկ վարդապետս Խաչատուր օր ըստ օրէ տեսանէր զտպագրութիւնս այս ի մէջ ազգացն լատինացւոց ցանկայր միշտ որպէսզի լիցի ի մէջ Հայաստանեաց եւս»: See also the colophons in Raymond H. Kevorkian, *Catalogue des 'incunables' arméniens (1511–1695) ou chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1986). The latter often has more accurate transcriptions of the colophons.

remembered in Christ our God who is blessed forever Amen....³²

The impression provided in this colophon, and repeated elsewhere, of local ingenuity and knowledge as the main wellsprings for New Julfa's press at first runs counter to another, more well-known account provided by the French Huguenot traveler, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. Tavernier claims in his *Les six voyages* that an "ingenious Armenian" craftsman who had been to Europe around that time had introduced the art of printing into Julfa. Since the French traveler's widely cited passages on the history of the Armenian press in Julfa have probably obfuscated more than clarified the complex

history in question, it is important to revisit what Tavernier actually wrote in the French original of his travels where he discusses the various crafts and arts in Iran.

I come now to the most noble of arts, and I shall begin with handwriting [l'Ecriture] that serves [in Iran] in place of the printing press, of which the Persians do not yet have the usage. All of their books are written by hand and that is why they make an institution out of this art. I have pointed out earlier that a very ingenious Armenian who had been to Europe had established a printing press in Ispahan and that this was during the year 1641. They had already printed, in Armenian, the Epistles of Saint Paul, the Seven Penitential Psalms, and books of prayer, and they proceeded afterward with the goal of printing the entire Bible. However, besides the fact that the impressions were too light, that *they never quite managed to make good ink*, they had to interrupt everything in order to avoid the unpleasant consequences that this new invention was going to cause. Because, on the one hand, the children no longer wanted to learn how to write, saying that they were committed to that art only to memorize the Bible or New Testament on their own, while, on the other hand, this printing press would have deprived bread from many who earned a living through handwriting [i.e., copying].³³

32 Oskanian et als. *Hay girk'ē*, 24a. (emphasis added). «Եւ յաւորս սորա (Տէր Փիլիպոս) եղև տպագրութիւնս ի քաղաքն Ծօշ. Յանապատն Զուղայոյ. ի թվին ՌՁԷ Է [1087+551=1638]. Զեռամբ Նուաստ Խաչատուր Վարդապետի Կեսարացոյս որ տարի մի է եւ հինգ ամիս. որ զցալգ եւ զցերեկ անդադար աշխատիմք հանդերձ միաբան ուխտիս զի ոչ ենք տեսեալ ի վարպետէ եւ ոչ ունիմք ուսուցիչ. բայց միայն զհոգին սուրբ եւ զիղծս եւ զկենդանի աղոթս հոգեւոր հօրն մերոյ զմացելոյ առ տէր եւ [sic] են ձեռնտու եւ օծանդակ գործոյս հոգեւոր որդեակքն իմ վարպետ Յակոբեանն. եւ տէր Յովհաննէս քահանայն եւ տէր Միքայէլն եւ Յովսէփն: Վասնորոյ յիշեցէք ի մաքրափայլ աղօթս ձեր զնուաստ Խաչատուր վարդապետս եւ ձեռնտու եղբայրսն իմ եւ դուք յիշեալ յիշիք ի Քրիստոսէ աստուծոյ մերոյ որ է արհմեալ յաիտեանս ամէն: Հայր մեր որ յեր...Փառք ապէմիսզ Տեսնոմ որ ետ կարողութիւն անհմաստ արանցս հասանել յաւարտ երգարանիս Դատի ի թուին ՌՁԷ որում առք յաիտեանս. In other notes appended to the volume, Kesarats'i reiterates the pivotal role of his assistants, specially of "master Hakob Jan" and monks of this convent" in preparing the volume for publication: Սաղմոս ի Դատի Սւգնեալ սուրբ հոգի հասանել յաւարտ... Զաշխատողս ի սմա զնուաստ Խաչատուր վարդապետս եւ զվարպետ Յակոբեանն եւ զյանապատիս միաբանքն, որ բազում աշխատութեամբ հազիւ կարացաք զայս չափս ի յայտ բերել թվին ՌՁԷ [1087=1638]»: (Ibid., 24b)

33 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Ecuyer Baron D'Audobonne, en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes* (Paris, 1682), 671-672. Emphasis added. "Je viens aux Arts les plus nobles, & je commenceray par l'Ecriture qui tient lieu d'Imprimerie, dont les Persans n'ont pas encore l'usage. Tous leurs livres sont écrits à la main, & c'est pourquoi ils font beaucoup d'es-

Tavernier elsewhere identifies the “ingenious Armenian” mentioned in this passage as having brought the art of printing along with an actual printing press from Europe as a craftsman named “Jacob Jan” who was “the head of the guild of carpenters” (“Chef des Minuiseurs”) whom Tavernier describes “as an Armenian of Julfa and the greatest mechanical genius of all of Persia.”³⁴ According to the French traveler, this Jacob Jan “was the author of several beautiful inventions and during a voyage he made to Europe he learned the art of printing and established a printing press in Ispahan, and he himself made the matrices.”³⁵ Tavernier’s testimony does not necessarily disprove the information given by Khachatur Kesarats’i in the colophon cited above of the first printed

tat de cét art. J’ay remarqué plus haut qu’un Arménien fort ingénieux qui avoit esté en Europe, avoit dressé une Imprimerie à Ispahan, ce qui fut en l’année 1641. On avoit déjà imprimé en Arménien les Epîtres de saint Paul, les sept Pseaumes Penitentiaux, & des livres de prières, & l’on se mit ensuite en devoir d’imprimer la Bible entière. Mais outre que l’impression estoit trop blanche, & qu’on ne peut jamais bien venir à bout de composer l’ancre, il falut tout rompre pour éviter de fâcheuses suites que cette nouvelle invention alloit causer. Car d’un costé les enfans ne vouloient plus apprendre à écrire, disant qu’ils ne s’adonnoient à cét art que pour laisser en leur mémoire une Bible ou un Nouveau Testament de leur propre main, & de l’autre cette Imprimerie ôtoit le pain à bien des gens qui gagnoient leur vie à l’écriture.”

34 Ibid., 656.

35 Ibid., 656. “Jacob Jan Armenien de Zulpha, & c’est le plus grand genie pour la Mechanique de toute la Perse. Il est auteur de plusieurs belles inventions, & dans un voyage qu’il fit en Europe il mit si bien dans son esprit l’art de l’Imprimerie qu’il en dressa une à Ispahan.”

Armenian book in Julfa. Rather, the Frenchman appears to be confounding or rather conflating two separate traditions connected to the history of the printing press in Julfa. The first is the account of the *indigenous* development of the art of printing by Khachatur Kesarats’i in 1636 through the assistance of his fellow priests in the monastery and especially, as Khachatur himself points out on several occasions, “master Hakob Jan,” [*varpet Hakob jan*] who in all likelihood was the same “Jacob Jan” identified by Tavernier as the “Chef des Minuiseurs.” The second account is that of a student of Khachatur Kesarats’i named Hovannes Ktrshents Jughayetsi, who was sent by his master to Europe in 1639 (not 1641 as Tavernier states) to master the art of printing and to bring back with him to Julfa a printing press. As we shall see below, a printing press from Europe was indeed brought back to Julfa around the time Tavernier points out, but the person responsible for this was not “one ‘Jacob Jan’, an Armenian from Julfa, who being an able instrument maker had gone to Europe and learned the craft of casting letter types there,”³⁶ as some scholars following Tavernier’s confused account have suggested, but a priest named Hovannes.³⁷ The Jacob Jan singled out by both Tavernier and thanked by Khachatur Kesarats’i was

36 Willem Floor, “The First Printing Press in Iran,” 369. Floor rectifies this mistake in his later publication on “Čāp,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, accessed May 25, 2013. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cap-print-printing-a-persian-word-probably-derived-from-hindi-chap-na-to-print-see-turner-no

37 See Floor, “The First Printing Press” and Vazken Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese in New Julfa*, 174–175.

in all likelihood a master craftsman in Julfa who helped the primate in designing, “punching,” and casting Armenian movable type for the press founded in 1636, though there is reason to believe that the type designed was not of lead, but rather of wood, copper, and iron – materials that were less than optimal for printing.³⁸

In the colophon of the second book published on his press in 1641, a 705-page hagiographical text on the lives of (Armenian) Church fathers entitled *Harants' Vark'* [Life of the Fathers], Bishop Khachatur once again apologizes to his readers for the various defects of his work, writing that “after much toil and with the collaboration of other monks in the Order, we were barely able to accomplish this much. For we did not learn [this craft] from anyone, and we did not see it carried out by a master. Rather [we accomplished this] through the help of the Holy Spirit and our prayers to our Heavenly father.”³⁹

After thanking a long list of his religious brethren for their assistance in various matters, “many of them, small and great” [bazumk metsametsk ev p'ok'unk'], Kesarats'i writes,

all of them were helpful in this labor, some in the *making of paper, for even the paper was made domestically*, and on account of the difficulty of finding the proper material, this is all we were able to achieve; do not blame us for the time being, perhaps

with more tries it will further improve. And some [were helpful] in creating letter types, others in proof-reading...”⁴⁰

Despite the truly remarkable achievement of printing five books on a hand press where all the parts including the fonts, the matrices, even the paper and probably the ink (though of very poor quality) appear to have been homemade with local resources as opposed to being shipped from Europe, Bishop Khachatur realized quite early that his endeavor would not meet with total success if he did not appeal to the technological savvy and mercantile support found in the Mediterranean port cities of his age, especially those in Italy, where port Armenians (many of whom were from his own township of Julfa) had already settled and founded thriving trade diaspora communities. In a recently discovered document by Francis Richard, we learn, indeed, that simultaneously to his appeal to Julfan merchant support in the Mediterranean port cities, Khachatur had also appealed to a local Capuchin father in Isfahan, Father Blaise, for technical help relating to printing; he had particularly asked the good father for punches for casting lead letter types for Armenian as well as a specialist from Europe who could help him make good paper and ink. These were precisely the

38 Floor, entry on “Čāp.”

39 See Ninel Osganyan, et als. *Hay Girk'e, 1512-1800*, 24. «Որ բազում աշխատութեամբ հանդերձ միաբան ուխտիւս հազիւ կարացաք այս չափս ի յայտ բերել. զի ոչ ուսաք յումեքէ, եւ ոչ տեսեալ ի վարպետէ, այլ ի տեսչութենէ հոգոյն: եւ աղօթիւք հոգեւոր Հօրն մերոյ.»

40 Ibid., Emphasis added. «ոմն ի թղթի շինութեան. զի թողթսն եւս ի տանէ եմք շինեալ. բայց միւթի լաւագոյնն դժուարագիւտ լինելոյ սակս. Այսպէս ձեռն ետ այժմոս ամենդարկի լերուք: Թերեւս յառաջանալով լաւ եւս լիցի: Ոմն ի կազմութիւն գրոցս. Ոմն ի սրբագրութիւն. եւ այլք այլ իմն գործս. Զոր հատուցանողն բարեաց ըստ իւրաքանչիւր ջանի եւ վաստակոյ. Հատուցէ բազմապատիկ. աստ եւ հանդերձելունն...»

kinds of technical obstacles Khachatur had not succeeded in surmounting on his own (he “had no lead type and used letters made of wood, copper, and iron”⁴¹). As we will see below, these particular technical problems would continue to vex Khachatur’s heirs during the late seventeenth century, compelling them as they did Khachatur in his interactions with Father Blaise to find succor in the port cities of the Mediterranean. The Capuchin father’s account of the Bishop’s “persistent technical problems,” contained in a letter of 25 February 1640, is revealing, especially given how central these technical difficulties were for any kind of printing in Safavid Iran at this early period:

The Bishop of the Armenians of this city has been striving for the past three years to have [books/materials] printed in the Armenian language. Having notified R. P. Joseph [of Paris] of this, he commissioned us to visit him [the Armenian bishop] on his behalf and to offer him all kinds of assistance for the fulfillment of this work, which we did. He [the Armenian bishop] has found this offer very nice and has begged us to have someone brought here who is experienced in printing Armenian [letters] and would know well how to make good ink for printing because they are not succeeding [in making good ink]. If Your Reverence offers this assistance to this good bishop, it will please much and could serve us a means of making him our friend, which might be very advantageous to us. He [the Bishop] has also asked us for letter punches of all sorts for Armenian. I most humbly beg you to inform us quickly if we can count on Your Rev-

erence for this kindness, in order for us to give him a response.⁴²

Even without help from the Capuchins, Khachatur continued to print with the limited resources at hand, producing as we have seen a 705-page hagiographical treatise in 1741 (*Harants’ Vark’*) as well as two more works afterwards. But the limitations were pressing enough for Khachatur to resolve sending someone to Europe to bring back help even before he had come around to asking the Capuchin Father Blaise. To this end, hardly had his first book, the *Psalter* of 1638, come hot off his press, when Khachatur sent to Europe one of his own disciples with the purpose of mastering the art of printing and returning to Julfa with new metal types and a Gutenberg hand press to perfect the work he had started with local efforts. The man he chose for this mission was his protégé, Hovanness Ktrshents’ Jughayets’i, the person

42 Francis Richard, “Un témoignage sur les débuts de l’imprimerie à Nor Julfa,” *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S. (1980): 483-484. “L’Evesque des Arméniens de cette Ville, depuis trois ans, s’emploie à faire imprimer l’arménien. Ayant donné avis de cela au R. P. Joseph [de Paris], il nous en chargea de le visiter de sa part, et lui offrir toute sorte d’assistance pour l’accomplissement de cette oeuvre, ce que nous avons fait. Il a eu très agréable cette offre, et nous a prié de faire venir icy quelq(u)’un expérimenté en l’impression de l’arménien e qui sache bien faire l’encre pour imprimer car il(s) ne réussissent pas. Si V(otre) R(évéré)nce donne cette assistance à ce bon Evesque, elle l’obligera beaucoup, et nous pourra servir de moyen pour le rendre notre amy, qui seroit un grand avantage pour nous. Il nous a aussi demandé des poinçons de lettre arméniennes de toute sorte. Je vous supplie très humblement nous mander au plus tost s’il doit espérer de V(otre) Révérence cette charité, afin que nous lui rendions réponse” (483).

41 Willem Floor, “Čāp,” entry on printing in Iran in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

whom Tavernier probably confused with “Jacob Jan.”

The Sojourns of Hovannes Ktrshents Jughayets'i in Italian Port Cities

Only five years after he left his hometown in search of technical and financial support on the shores of Italy, Hovannes Jughayets'i succeeded in printing the first book in Livorno.⁴³ In the “Preface” to the *Psalter* he printed in the Tuscan port city in 1644, Hovannes addresses his master Khachatur Kesarats'i and explains how this work came about:

Now, according to the commandment and will of my holy father and the providence of the Lord, I left the convent [in Julfa] and traveled to the West on December 1, 1088 (=1639) for the purpose of perfecting this printing. And after one year had elapsed, crossing the sea and land⁴⁴ I reached the shores of Italy in the beautiful city and port of Venice, and after understanding every aspect of the work of printing, I went to Rome, where I initiated the newest letters and types, and completing a part of my work, I traveled to Livorno taking

with me craftsmen (*arhestawors*) and in that place I completed this printing by laboring with great effort and good intentions night and day ceaselessly. My entire work extended for three years and six months without the one year that we spent on traveling.⁴⁵

Hovannes resided in Venice for four months in the spring of 1641, where he probably lodged at the hospice attached to the city's *Santa Croce degli Armeni* Church in the parish of San Zulian (behind the maze-like streets near Saint Mark's Square) like most traveling Armenians who set foot in the “City of Lions.” During his stay, he tried, often unsuccessfully, to cultivate relations with the city's Armenian merchants to raise money for his ambitious plans. With much care and effort, he set himself to the task of establishing a printing press in the city of Doges but to no avail. “I decided to create new letters and printing types, in order to increase further the beauty of our printing,” he writes in a colophon of his book printed in Livorno. “However, since there were no suitable craftsmen in Venice, I departed for Rome.”⁴⁶

43 Guido Chiappini, “Il primo tipografo di Livorno fu un sacerdote armeno.” *Liburni Civitas* (1937) 15: 33-47. Also translated into Armenian and annotated by Eghia P. Pechik'ian, in *Bazmavep* 95, 227-237.

44 Hovannes does not describe what route he took for his travels from New Julfa to Venice. We can, however, speculate that he followed one of two routes to Venice, including one that extended over land from New Julfa to Evtokia/Tokat in Asia Minor and thence to Smyrna/Izmir by caravan, before continuing by ship to Venice in the northwestern armpit of the Adriatic. The other route would have led overland from New Julfa to Aleppo in the Levant and thence, by ship, from the nearby port of Alexandretta/Iskenderun to Venice. See figure 7 at end of the essay for map.

45 The colophon is reproduced in Sahak Jemjemian, *Hay tpagrut'iwnē ew Hrom* (ZhĒ.dar) [Armenian printing and Rome in the seventeenth century]. (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1989), 77. Jemjemian's truly trailblazing work has the most accurate and comprehensive account of Hovannes Jughayets'i's role as a printer. In large measure, this is because his account is the result of painstaking spadework in the Propaganda Fide archives and on reports of missionaries that allow Jemjemian to reconstruct, from the bottom up, the complicated movement and activities of Hovannes as well as many other Armenian printers.

46 Jemjemian, *Hay tpagrut'iwnē ew Hrom*, 77.



Figure 3 Colophon of Hovannes Jughayets'i *Girk' ev Saghmos Davt'i*, Livorno 1644.

In Rome, Hovannes's first order of business appears to have been a visit to "Via del Fico," the residence of a German craftsman named Joannes Hermanchircher, Rome's resident expert font designer, engraver, and cutter.⁴⁷ Hovannes then seems to have departed rather hastily for Genoa to meet with fellow Julfan merchants and raise more funds than he was able to collect in Venice. The reports at the *Propaganda Fide* Archives indicate that he returned for a second stint in Rome in December of 1641 with 400 "reales" of funds courtesy of Genoa's generous port Armenian community.⁴⁸ With his purchasing power augmented thanks to the patronage of Julfan merchants, Hovannes was ready to get down to business; he entered into an agreement with the German to have new Armenian fonts cut for the purpose of printing and in fact persuaded the German to agree to travel with him to Livorno where he hoped to begin printing away from the tentacular reach of the Vatican's censors. Unbeknownst to the Armenian priest-printer was the fact that the German font cutter had already agreed

with his masters at the Office of the Sacred Congregation to spy on the Armenian.

Thanks to Sahak Jemjemian's detective-like work in reading Hermanchircher's "spy reports" in the *Propaganda Fide* archives, we can recreate Hovannes's activities in Livorno in the spring of 1644 with remarkable clarity. The German reports to his superiors that the Julfan priest-printer has confided in him that he has plans to return to his home in Julfa and eventually to establish a printing press for printing in Arabic script as well. In fact, the German writes, Hovannes has expressed a desire to have the German eventually cast Arabic font as well. He also states that Hovannes has already purchased a handpress and is quietly printing a book (Psalter) in the room of his home in Livorno.⁴⁹ On 10 May 1644, our peripatetic monk had completed his assignment of successfully printing a book (See figure 3 colophon with his insignia). In the Preface of his *Psalter*, addressing his mentor and spiritual master in Julfa, Khachatur Kesarats'i, Hovannes writes: "And as a trial, we printed this in great haste and hurry on account of inconsolable grief; for in the course of 80 days, we completed this having published 1,050 copies altogether, alone and without the help of anyone."⁵⁰

49 Ibid., 70.

50 Ibid., 77. «Եւ իբրեւ զփորձ տպեցաք զսա յոյժ ըշտապմամբ, եւ փոյթ ընդ փոյթ, վասն անմխիթար նեղութեանցս, զի յաւորս ձ աւարտեցաք զսա, ու եւ ծ հատ թոյով ի միասին, միայն եւ ստանց ուրոյք ձեռնառի:» How exactly Hovannes was able to operate a wooden hand press alone is not clear.

47 Ibid., 70.

48 Ibid., 61.



Figure 4 Colophon of Hovannes Jughayets'i *Girk' tumarats' or ev parzatumar kochi* (1647, Julfa, Isfahan).

Jemjemian's superb research also enables us to reconstruct Hovannes's last steps after printing 1,050 copies of the *Psalms of David*. After completing six years of backbreaking work in Italy under adverse circumstances, in the first half of February 1645, the Vardapet departed from Livorno, taking with him his fonts, matrices, a press, and a thousand copies of his *Psalter* (fifty copies were confiscated from him by the Propaganda Fide's officials probably to make sure that the book in question did not contain "schismatic" teachings deemed contrary to Catholic doctrine). He sailed for Smyrna (by way of Messina) where he stayed till August of that year before leaving, once again by ship, for Jerusalem. We do not have any information on the last leg of his journey, but it would not be far-fetched to imagine him, much like the Carmelite missionaries about fifteen years earlier, loading his cumbersome printing press and its various parts onto a camel and joining an overland caravan on its long road back to Isfahan.⁵¹

⁵¹ For the expert reconstruction of the trip, see Jemjemian, *Hay tbagrut' iwn ev Hrom*, 74-75.

When he finally returned to Julfa, it was already 1646. He found his master, Khachatur Kesarats'i, already deceased and his labors and dedication to improve upon the work of his predecessor not only unappreciated but evidently opposed by some who, as Tavernier alluded to earlier, probably found the press a threat to their livelihood as copyists. In 1647, Hovannes managed to publish a short work on "his own press which he transported from the West to the Holy Convent of All Savior's," entitled *Girk' tumarats' or ev parzatumar kochi* [Book of Calendars which is also called a Simplified Calendar], a rather modest output (84 pages in all)⁵² given the long years of investment he had made and the indignities he had suffered. The Colophon of this work captures the pathos, melancholy, and disappointment experienced by this lone printer:

After nine years of our labor conducted in Italy, in the course of which we acquired this printing press, we transported the latter with great grief to Armenia,⁵³ expecting to be regaled with great gratitude and gifts. Alas, it did not turn out the way we had hoped, since, it happened to us as it sometimes occurred to our holy orators. For as they had traveled to Athens upon the orders of the Holy Translators, and with great effort received an education and returned

⁵² For a brief discussion, see Nersessian, "Introduction" to *Catalogue of Early Armenian Books*, 24.

⁵³ Strangely enough, in this passage Hovannes refers to his home town, the township of New Julfa, as "Armenia," perhaps indicating that already a few decades after being forcibly resettled on the outskirts of the Safavid capital of Iran, the Julfans were already coming to see themselves at home in exile.

home to Armenia to find the holy fathers deceased and themselves unwelcomed by others, on account of which they were struck with grief. In the same fashion, we too with much work brought this art [of printing] from the East to the West [it should read from the West to the East] following the orders of our holy father, Khachatur Vardapet, only to find him deceased. And our labors became unacceptable to others, afflicting us with sorrow and filling us with lament, as was once with the poets of old.⁵⁴

Of Hovannes's publications, only the *Girk' tumarats' or ev parzatumar kochi* printed in 1647 is known to have survived (See figure 4 for colophon of this work). However, both Tavernier and an Armenian historian named Khachatur Jughayets'i, writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, attest that Hovannes printed several books including the *Epistle of Paul*, and even made an attempt to print the Bible, no specimens of which are known to have come down to us.⁵⁵ Hovannes

left Julfa and his press behind in 1650 to take up a new post as the senior priest in Old Julfa where he was tragically killed shortly after his arrival.⁵⁶ Not much if anything is known about the fate of the press Hovannes had transported with great labor from Livorno. Most scholars appear to be of the opinion that the press was abandoned and left derelict after Hovannes's speedy departure from Julfa in 1650 only to be reactivated by Julfa's new primate, Stepanos Jughayets'i.

Stepanos Vardapet and the Press of 1686

In a letter addressed to prominent Julfan merchants residing in Venice written in the fall of 1686, Stepanos Vardapet, who had assumed the post of spiritual head or primate of the township only two years earlier, and as such had inherited the mantle of Khachatur Kesarats'i, informs the merchants that he had decided recently "to reopen the printing press, that is to say the workshop [*karkhane*] of the stampa, which had remained from [the time of] the luminous soul, Khachatur Vardapet."

54 Զկնի եւ Թ [9] ամի աշխատութեան մերոյ որ Խտալիայ առեալ զգործարան տպագրութեան բազում մեղութեամբ ածաք ջի Հայաստան: ակն ունելով մեծի շնորհակալութեան, եւ պարգեւաց. այլ ոչ եղեւ այնպէս որպէս յուսալաքն. քանզի պատահեաց մեզ որպէս պատահեցաւ երբեմն եւ սրբոց թերթողացն ... Վասնզի որպէս մոքայ հրամանաւ սրբոց թարգմանչացն, դիմեցին 'ի յԱթէնս. եւ մեծաւ ջանօք ստացեալ զգիտութիւնս, դարձան 'ի Հայս. եւ գտին մեռեալ ըզսուրբ հայրապետս, եւ ի յայլոցն ոչ եղեն ընդունելիք. որոյ վասն եւ տրտմեցան յոյժ: Եւ մեք հրամանաւ սուրբ հօրն մերոյ Խաչատուր վարդապետին բազում աշխատութեամբ զարհեստս զայս ածեալ 'ի յարեւելից 'ի յարեւմուտս. [sic] գտի զգնա վախճանեալ. եւ եղեն անընդունելիք աշխատութիւնք մեր յայլոց: Վասնորոյ եւ աղիկիզել ապաշաւեմ յոյժ որպէս եւ այնժամ քերթողքն:

55 Writing about Hovannes Jughayets'i, the historian Khachatur writes: "where, along

the many books that they printed, they also began to print the Bible, but on account of our sins it remained incomplete, and has survived [in that incomplete state] among us till today." Khachatur Jughayets'i, *Khachatur abeghayi Jughayets'woh patmut'wn Parsits'* [History of the Persia by Deacon Khachatur of Julfa] (Vagharshapat: Holy Ejmiatsin Press, 1905), 121. Also cited in Levon Minasian, *Nor Jughayi tparann u ir tbagrats grk'erē* [The Printing Press of New Julfa and its Printed Books] (New Julfa: All Savior's Monastery Press, 1972), 44.

56 Minasian, *Nor Jughayi tparann u ir tbagrats grk'erē*, 50-51.

The date he provides for this event is 5 July 1686.⁵⁷

The opening of the press at this time was one of the defining events of Stepanos Vardapet's volatile and ill-fated tenure as primate of Julfa. It was intimately connected to the other significant development that came to mark his time in office, namely the rise of intense proselytizing work in Julfa by Catholic missionaries from Rome. The latter had begun to establish roots in Julfa and neighboring Isfahan during the first half of the seventeenth century and had become numerous and more audacious in the 1680s, thus pro-

voking a strong reaction and bellicose backlash from Stepanos Vardapet.⁵⁸ In his missives to Julfan merchants in Italy as well as in other writings, Stepanos makes it clear that the primary purpose of reactivating the dormant press was to combat missionary work in Julfa and the "heretical" doctrine of duophysitism, which the Armenian Church held to be anathema. In the colophon of one of his works published in 1688 and entitled *Davanut'iwn Hayots' ev neratsut'iwn anughits'* or *Smbolum Armeniorum et Introductio de di directam*, Stepanos gives a lengthy explanation of how and why he began to reactivate Julfa's old press to print books as the century drew to a close:

Let it be known to you my dear ones that the reason for our printing is the following. We searched and found many useful and luminous books, written by some of the former blessed fathers of our church. But what profit and use is it to the ordinary person if these books are kept here and there but are not commonly known or utilized? Therefore, seeking the protec-

57 See "Letter of Stepanos Vardapet, September 27, 1686," in Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASFi) "Acquisti e Donni", Busta 123 (See figure 5). To my knowledge, this is the only direct mention of the exact date when Stepanos started using the press. Both Minasian and Ghougassian, not having access to this letter, provide the inaccurate date of 1687. Raphael Ishkhanyan asserts that Stepanos restarted the printing press in 1684 and closed it in 1688. See Ishkhanyan, *Hay girkē: 1512-1922* [The Armenian Book, 1512-1922] (Yerevan: SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1981), 52. Vrej Nersessian follows Ishkhanyan's incorrect dating. See Nersessian, "Introduction" to *Catalogue of Early Armenian Books* (London: British Library, 1980), 24. Jonathan Bloom also has the incorrect date for when the press was reopened in the late seventeenth century, providing the date of 1687 and then asserting that "nine books" instead of the commonly known three were printed on it. Jonathan Bloom, *Paper Before Print*, 221. This and the following letters discussed below were first addressed, albeit briefly, in an excellent study by Meroujan Karapetyan and Elizabet Tajiryan ("Ejer XVII dari verji nor Jughayi patmut'yunits" [Pages from the late seventeenth-century history of New Julfa]. *Banber Yerevani hamalsarani hasarakakan gitut'yunner* 2, 95 (1998): 80-96) where the authors base their study on copies of this and other letters stored in the ASFi collection kept in a manuscript in San Lazzaro (Venice).

58 One of the first measures Stepanos took even before assuming his post as primate was to pass a ban on Catholic-Apostolic marriages in New Julfa in 1681. This was the first of many anti-Catholic measures taken by the fiery-tempered Stepanos. See Chick, *Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, vol. 1, 456, Meroujan Karapetyan and Eliz Tajiryan, "Ejer XVII dari verji nor Jughayi patmut'yunits," and Vazken Ghougassian, "Stepanos Katoghikos Jughayetsi" in *Hask hayagitakan handes*, N.S. vols II-III, 322. For background on the missionary orders in Iran, see H. Chick, *The Chronicle* vol. 1, "Intro." For a reliable treatment of their confrontation with Bishop Stepanos see Vazken Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese in New Julfa*, and especially idem., "Stepanos Katoghikos Jughayetsi," passim.

tion of the Holy Spirit, we reopened the printing house in order to publish the old holy books, which we will soon print and send to you, as we will print letters as well as books against the duophysites.....

And since there was no printing house among our nation,⁵⁹ it was not possible to multiply these works through print and to spread them in the abode of the Armenians [i tuns hayots']. And as we have seen, one can only disseminate so little by relying on manuscripts. And sending these works to get them printed in the land of the Franks [i.e., in Europe] was improbable and not possible, since our works are opposed to theirs on account of which they do not wish nor do they allow the multiplication of the works of our holy doctors of theology. Now, because a printing press has been prepared and ready to print books, henceforth we will fearlessly and without a doubt print all the works of our holy doctors of theology. We have already indeed begun doing so and have disseminated some works in [print-runs] of five hundred copies each among ordinary Armenians who belong to the Church of the Illuminator and are orthodox, for these were trials of our printing press... after which we will print larger [print-runs] and with more perfection.⁶⁰

59 By using the expression “our nation” here, it appears that Stepanos is referring to the Armenian community in Iran.

60 A transcription of the original colophon is available in L. Minasian, *Nor Jughaytbarann*, 57-58 as well as in V. Ghougassian, “Stepanos Jughayetsi,” 323-324. My translation varies significantly from Ghougassian’s partial rendering into English in *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese*, 176. «Գիտութիւն լիցի ձեզ սիրելեացդ, զի զպատճառ տպագրութեանս մեր է այս, հետագօտ եղաք ներկայիս զի յովկք գիրք գոյր անյայտ յումեք է ի մե-

As we will soon see, Stepanos’s assurances of “fearlessly” and “doubtlessly” printing more books and in “greater print-runs” and “more perfection” proved to be empty promises; not only did the primate *not* print more books,⁶¹ but

րայնոց նախնեաց սրբոց վարդապետաց, մանաւանդ պիտանիք հարկատրք եւ լուսատրք եւ թէ ուրեք առ այս. եւ այն գտանի, զի՞նչ շահ եւ օգուտ հասարակին, վասն որոյ ապաւինեալ ի յոյսն ամենից սուրբ հոգին. սկսաք ի յոյս ամէլ զտպագրատունս. առ ի տպել զվաղեմի սուրբ գրեանքս, զոր յետ սուղ ժամանակի տպեալ առաքելոց ենք առ ձեզ, այլ ներկայիս եւ թուղթք որ եւ գիրք եւս. վասն ընդդիմութեան երկաբնակաց: Թէ ո՞ր եւ ո՞վ ոք աշխատասիրութեամբ ճնշեալ տքնութեամբ ժողովեալ եւ մեկնեալ հոգովն սրբով աստուածաշունչ գրոց:[...]

Արդ որովհետեւ ոչ գոյր յազգին մերոյ տպագրատուն. Եթէ տպեալ յովկեցոցեալ սփռեալ էին ի տունս հայոց եւ ձեռագրով հազիւ այսպէս եւ այսքան լինի որպէս տեսանէ՞ք, եւ յղել տալ տպել լերկիրն ֆռանկաց. անմարթ էր եւ անկար: Զի մերս գիրք ինքեանց գրոցն է ներհակ, վասն որոյ ոչ կամին. եւ ոչ թոյլ տան առ ի բազմանալ, մերայնոց սրբոց վարդապետաց գրեցելոցն: Այժմ որովհետեւ պատրաստեալ եղեւ ի միջի մերում գործարան տպագրութեանս աշտուհետեւ անախ եւ անկասկած տպելոց ենք զամենայն զգրեանս սրբոց վարդապետաց որ եւ զրաւ եւ կատարումն իսկ եղեւ. հինգ հինգ հարիւրով, սփռեցաք առ ամենայն լուսատրչաճնունդ եւ ողապիտ հասարակ հայտ, զի են տքա փորձ գործարանիս եւ գրչութեան... Զկնի որոյ զմեծամեծսն կատարեալսն ենք տպելոց:»

61 In 1693, the press appears to have printed at least two one-page leaflets of 200-print-runs each, very few specimens of which have survived. Interestingly, these were printed not to wage struggle against the missionaries but against the enemy “from within,” namely the Armenian Catholicos Nahapet Edesats’i (1690-1705) who was suspected for his pro-Roman leanings and whom Stepanos succeeded in getting overthrown and imprisoned in 1696 with the help of the Safavid court, only to be overthrown and imprisoned himself after a year of occupying the Catholicos throne in 1698. After “being bastinadoed and thrown into a tower” on countercharges by Nahapet, Stepanos died in prison that same year (Chick, *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, 481). It appears that the leaflets he printed in 1693 contained charges of corruption against Catholicos Nahapet and could ac-

his press was shut down a few years later in 1693 under circumstances that remain to be fully explored, and he himself died in prison in 1698 after serving a brief term as Catholicos or the supreme religious leader of all the Armenians and falling victim to a counter-coup orchestrated by his rivals.

To begin to fathom why Stepanos failed in his grandiose plans, we need first to pay close attention to how he planned to resume printing and why he might have felt confident enough, even exhibiting a bit of hubris, to proclaim in the colophon of what turned out to be his last book in 1688 that he had ambitions to print many more books in better quality and in bigger numbers. We know from his admission in the letter he sent to Venice in 1686, quoted above, that the press he had reactivated was “old, worn out, and no longer of much use, and only able to work with great difficulty.” How then did Stepanos Vardapet intend to overcome these technical problems? Did he choose to follow the path of Khachatur Kesarats'i and try to resort to home-made remedies to technical obstacles such as old and worn-out machine parts, or did he opt for the method pursued by Kesarats'i's student, the brilliant but ill-fated Hovannes, and appeal for help in the port cities of the Mediterranean?

commodate several dozen seals and signatures of signatories asking for the overthrow of the Catholicos. For background on the leaflets and their facsimile reproduction, see H. Mirzoyan, “Arteok Eghel en hakahakobyan zhoghovner?” [Were there ever any anti-Jacobean gatherings?] in *Banber Yerevani Hamalsarani* (2013): 14-46.

Five unusually valuable letters bearing Stepanos Vardapet's neat cursive script and signature and preserved in the state archives of Florence in *Acquisti e Donni* (busta 123), contain details and heretofore-unpublished information on the path chosen by Bishop Stepanos. All five letters date back to the period between September 1686 and April of 1690 and were written by the bishop when he was at the height of his tenure as the fiery-tempered and rather bellicose primate of Julfa. They are addressed to a small elite group of extremely affluent “port Armenians” residing in Venice, Livorno, and Genoa, all with lineage to New Julfa.

The first letter sent to Venice in September 1686, shortly after Stepanos had reactivated the old press in Julfa, sets the tone for the others. The letter begins by introducing the author, Stepanos Vardapet, as “the servant of Jesus Christ and primate of the Christ-protected township of Julfa and of the imperial capital of Isfahan” and proceeds to offer “benediction and protection, apostolic grace, and the multitudinous blessings of God” to eight “Christ-Loving Julfan merchants residing in Venice.” Of these distinguished port Armenians from Venice, the most important seems to be Paron Agha di Matus. Though he is often described with the sobriquet “of Tabriz,” Agha di Matus was possibly from New Julfa as his inclusion in this list of “Christ-loving Julfan merchants residing in Venice” indicates. At any rate, his social and business network consisted mostly of Julfan merchants and associates. As a diamond and gem merchant who worked from humble beginnings in 1679 as a *commenda* agent

plying the trade routes between the gem-trading markets of Gujarat and other parts of India and the consumption and polishing centers of Venice, Livorno, Naples, and Rome, Agha di Matus worked for one of Julfa's most prominent merchant families, the Khwaja Minasians.⁶² He appears to

stand out from the list of merchants addressed in this letter certainly not because he was the wealthiest Julfan in Venice at the time; in fact, in 1686, when Stepanos's first letter was mailed, he was still a fifty-one year old, relatively humble junior agent or factor (though he himself probably employed half a dozen agents on his own account⁶³) and was about twenty years

62 Agha di Matus's accounting ledger for diamonds and precious stones, preserved in the archives of the Museo Correr in Venice and first discovered by the present author, gives us a pretty good idea of his activities between the years 1679 and the late 1680s. The document in question is a leather-bound book with sixteen folded pages containing what Julfans called a *tomar* (roll) that provides a succinct summary of detailed commercial transactions recorded by a *commenda* agent for his master in Julfa in a *roozlama*, or accounting ledger (Julfan dialect for the original Persian term, *ruznama*). According to the contract, Agha di Matus received a consignment of diamonds of various grades in Surat in 1679 and was ordered to take it to Izmir/Smyrna, Istanbul/Constantinople, and thence to "Frank'stan" (i.e., Europe and in particular the Mediterranean) where he was to sell his merchandise. We are fortunate to have hundreds of pages of very long and previously unstudied private epistolary correspondence between Agha and members of the Khwaja Minasian family in Julfa dating back to the early 1680s and now stored in the state archives of Florence (ASFi, *Acquisti e Donni*, B. 123 and 124) where the correspondence of Stepanos Vardapet is also stored. The provenance of these papers is not entirely clear, but they appear to have once belonged to the Armenian church of *San Gregorio degli Armeni* in Livorno that was opened in 1714 and built largely through the expenses paid for by Agha di Matus. The church was destroyed by Allied bombing during World War II (only the façade survives today), but fortunately, an Armenian priest connected to the church sold the documents in question to the newly opened Archivio di Stato di Firenze in around 1860, thus safeguarding them for posterity. For a short discussion on Agha di Matus's role in the building of the church, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 262, fn. 67 and 73-74.

The Florence archives contain a legal paper drafted by Agha di Matus testifying that he had taken a loan of 600 rupees from Hovannes son of Malum in Gujarat on Shems 1, 1128 (1679). This document suggests that Agha di Matus as a *commenda* agent for Khwaja Minas was certainly doing business in Gujarat and probably in other parts of India as well. See ASFi, "Acquisti e Donni", B. 123, doc. 40. For background on Agha di Matus, see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 74-75, Ghevont Alishan, *Sisakan*, (Venice: Mkhitari Press, 1893), 452, Meroujan Karapetyan and Eliz Tajiryan, "Ejer XVII dari verji nor Jughayi patmut'yunits'," 80, and Mesrop Vardapet Ughurlian, *Patmut'iwn hayots gaghtakanut'ean ev shinut'ean ekeghets'woh notsa i Livorno* (Venice: Mkhitari Press, 1891), 64-84 passim. Finally, there is also a previously unstudied printed "stampa" booklet containing much useful biographical and commercial information on this merchant and stored in the Propaganda Fide Archives. Printed in 1749 on the occasion of litigation by his heirs over Agha di Matus's estate, this 150-page legal brief bears the following title: "Sommario di Diversi Documenti citati nelle Osservazioni del dottore Jacopo Ciocca alla Liburnen Fabricae con alcune Annotazioni del medesimo per gl' Illustrissimi Signori Eredi Aga di Matus Nella Causa contro l'illustrissima Nazione Armena di Livorno In Lucca MDCCXLIX (1749) nella stamperia di Filippo Maria Benedini, Con Licenza de' Superiori." See Archivio Storico, Congregazione per l'evangelizzazione dei popoli o "de Propaganda Fide," Fondo S.C. Armeni, vol. 11, folios 900-968.

63 See Prop Fide, fondo S.C. Armeni, vol. 11, "Sommario di Diversi Documenti," folios 928r-929v for a "partial" list of Agha di Matus's *commenda* agents with a few of their

away from becoming the sophisticated “prince of princes” [հշխանաց հշխան] or “Il Signor Cavagliere Agha de Mathos Conte Palatino”⁶⁴ that he was known as in the latter years of his life. Despite his junior standing in 1686, it seems that Agha was important to Stepanos because he worked directly for Khwaja Minas, one of Stepanos’s most trusted sources of support in Julfa, who could be counted on to order Agha to carry out the primate’s requests in case he had his own reasons to ignore the pleas from Isfahan. That is probably why Agha was consistently addressed in all of Stepanos’s letters pertaining to the printing press in Julfa and singled out by the Bishop to carry out the request he was making. Soon after the introductory formalities full of the usual religious hyperbole, Stepanos gets right to the point of his letter. He informs the merchants that on July 5 of that year (1686), he “undertook and initiated again” the “stampa” workshop that had remained from the days of Khachatur Kesarats’i (presumably from the 1630s and early 1640s and *not* from the more recent days of Hovannes Jughayets’i as has been commonly as-

sumed⁶⁵). Stepanos then points out the obvious, that this “stampa” machine was too old and decrepit:

However, there are a few deficiencies with respect to the functioning of the [printing] workshop⁶⁶, since it is old, worn out, and is no longer of much use, and is able to work with great difficulty. Consequently my dear ones, for the sake of Christ and your parents’ souls, you are obliged to be of assistance to us with a few things. And it is evident to you that it has been a while now since we bothered you for anything and that this work is divine and spiritual, because of which we wish to share with you in good works especially since what we are asking of you is so small and little for you, but for us [it means] so much and [is] so useful for this [printing] workshop and for this nation.⁶⁷

commenda contracts translated from Julfa dialect to Italian.

64 ASFi “Acquisti e Donni,” b. 123, doc. 56. Letter sent on May 30 1156 (1708) by Yeghia Episkopos from the Saint James Armenian Cathedral in Jerusalem. Agha di Matus was murdered by one of his own employees in 1709 and was buried inside the Armenian church of San Gregorio Illuminatore in Livorno that he helped build. His tombstone inscription is reproduced in Mesrop kahana Ughurlian, *Patmut’iwn hayots’ gaghtakanut’ean ev shinut’ean*, 102. He was seventy-four years old when he died, which means that he was born in 1635.

65 Both Ghougassian and Minasian assume that the reactivated press in question was that of Hovannes’s as opposed to the one belonging to Kesarats’i.

66 Karkhanē<P. کارخانه *kār-khāna*: A shop, workshop, manufactory.

Unless otherwise stated, this and all other definitions for Persian and Arabic-derived terminology in Julfa dialect is derived from Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be Met with in Persian Literature* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1892).

67 ASFi, Acquisti e Donni, 123, “Documenti Armeni, Inserto No. 1, 1-38” document dated September 26, 1686.

«Բայց սակաւ ինչ պակասութիւն գոյ քարխանին գործեաց կողմանէ, այսինքն անկազի, քանզի է ինչ որ վաղէմի է եւ հնացեալ եւ չէ ինչ պիտանացու եւ է ինչ որ նոր հոգացեալ է մեր եւ դժուարաւ գործի: Վասնորոյ սիրելիք մեր, պարտիք եւ դուք սակաւ ինչ իրօք ձեռնառու եւ օգնական լինել մեզ վասն յուսոյն Քրիստոսի եւ ձեր ծնողաց հոգոյն: Ձեզ եւս յալտնի է, որ այսքան ժամանակ է մեք իքսիցի կողմանէ ձեզ դարտասար չեմք տուած, ապա աւ գործս աստուածային է եւ հոգեւոր, վասն այն կամինք

What were the “few things” that Stepanos needed from this group of distinguished port Armenians?

And what we are asking for is this: One composing stick⁶⁸ seven letters in length and five in width, with its own press-screw and steel wheel⁶⁹ and the wooden frame⁷⁰ wherein the letters are set and the book page and size is held⁷¹, as well as the frame [charchu] where the paper is kept, 2 large letters/types, 1, 2, 4, small letters, 10 large and small font-casting matrices⁷² made of steel [poghpat] or chlik [<T. çelik: steel], two or three varieties of quadrats⁷³ [dast khardots], 2 more times tana/taneh of quadrats [khardots] It is known to

զձեզ հաղորդ լինել բարոյ, մանաւան խնդրեալն մեր ի ձեզն առ ձեզ փոքր է եւ սակաւ, բայց առ մեզ բազում է եւ օգտակար քարխանիս եւ ազգիս:»

68 Blit <P. buluk: block?

69 Charkh <P. Charkh: A wheel.

70 Charchu <P. *chār chūb*: A frame.

71 Martyn Lyons provides the following description of how the early printers operated that will help in better understanding Stepanos's description here: “When the correct number of pages had been composed, the galleys were laid face up in a frame or ‘forme’ on a flat stone or marble surface. A rail allowed the printer to slide the stone and the forme back and forth like a trolley, so that new pages could quickly replace the already printed. Ink was then applied to the characters by hand with a leather ink-ball, and a sheet of dampened paper was laid over the forme. The paper was held in a hinged frame called a ‘tympan’ and secured with a ‘frisket’, a second frame made of parchment, which also protected the margins of the paper from ink stains.” Martyn Lyons, *Books: A Living History* (Los Angeles: The John Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 60.

72 Ghalub <A/P. قالب *qālab*, *qālib*: A form, model, mould; anything in which, or from which, another is made; the body, bust, shape, figure.

73 “A quad; a blank metal block used to fill space in lines of type.” The technical term in Classical Armenian is “khardots” which means files, usually made of metal.

you that the paper of this place is not good for printing, so please send us a few loads of paper as well with the latter items. Let the paper be of two varieties [babat],⁷⁴ so we can print small books on the small paper and with the big one a lectionary and Synaxarium (*Haysmavurk*), which we have even begun to prepare.⁷⁵

After making this astonishing request for technical material he needed to improve his printing performance in Julfa and beat back the advances made by the missionaries, Stepanos ends his letter with more instructions:

My dear ones, for the sake of God carry out in haste what we have asked of you. When Paron Agha of Tabriz is about to send Paron Minas's shipment of merchandise,⁷⁶ you shall

74 The Julfa dialect term “babat” means variety, sort, or type according to Khachikyan and Papazyan's glossary. Levon Khachikyan and Hakob Papazyan, *Hovhannes Ter Davtyan Jughayets'u Hashvetumarē* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakchutyun, 1984), 366. See also the excellent glossary in the unpublished dissertation of Edmund Herzig, *The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa: A Study in Premodern Trade* (Oxford: 1991), 398.

75 Ibid. «Եւ զոր խնդրեմքս այս է՝ մէկ բլիթ, է (7) գրէ ձիգն, Ե (5) գրէ լայնքն, իր պողոսակովն եւ չարխովն, երկաթէ չարչուն եւ փայտէ որ գրերն մէջն կու շարեն եւ գրքի էջն եւ չափն կու բռնեն. նաեւ թուղթ պահող չարչուն, Բ (2) մեծ գիր Ա (1), Գ (3), Դ (4) մանր ձեռաց գիրա, Ժ (10) գիր թափելէ դալուր մեծ փոքր, պողվատէ կամ չիկէ, Բ (2), Գ (3) դաստ խարտոց, Բ (2) դանայ այլ լայն խարտոց, Ա (1) գրէ կէս լէքսն լինի, մին չարէք ձիգնս լինի: Զեզ լայտնի է, որ տեղոյս թուղթն պասմա տալ ոչ լինի, քանի մի բեռն այլ թուղթ հոգացեալ՝ ընդ նոսին առաքեցէք: Բ բարաթ լինի թուղթն, քանզի փոքր վարադովն փոքր գրեանք տպեմք եւ մեծովն՝ զմաշու գիրք եւ զԱսմատուրքն կամիմ տալ, զոր եւ սկսեալ իսկ ենք:»

76 Barkhana < A/P. بارخانه *bār-khāna*, A tent, or cloth stretched upon poles, under which goods and baggage are kept from rain, when halting upon a journey; a sack; dorsers or

send it with that and not with this shipment. And you all shall be blessed in Christ the Lord, Amen.⁷⁷

Three letters and four years later, Stepanos's requests were still unanswered, when the Bishop felt compelled to write one final letter that has come down to us. This time, he addressed his letter of April 24, 1690 directly to Paron Agha di Matus then residing more or less permanently in Livorno where he was one of the pillars of the Tuscan port city's tiny Armenian community as well as the future founder of its Armenian Church of *San Gregorio Illuminatore* to which these letters probably once belonged until they were sold by an unknown person to the newly opened Archivio di Stato of Florence in 1861. Barely able to restrain himself, Stepanos did not mince his words. Rather, instead of asking or beseeching gently as he had done in his previous letters, he made no efforts to disguise the fact that he was irate and fuming at the fact that he had been snubbed by all the members of his chosen elite corps of port Armenians upon whom he had pinned his hopes for printing.

And through this blessing may you be notified of the following, dear brother, Paron Agha. Since there were some things [bazi massaleh] and equipment⁷⁸ missing after we

commenced printing here, we wrote letters of blessing twice and even three times to you and to [other] Julfan merchants residing in that place [i.e., Venice, Livorno, and Genoa] and not only did you not take care of our problem but you did not even find our pleas worthy of the shortest letter of response. May you remain healthy, Paron Agha. I understand that the others did not [wish to] look after our needs. But I wrote you a special letter and why did you also not care, Paron Agha? It seems that you were truly lacking in honor⁷⁹ on account of which you were not mindful of our request. Is it not evident to you [zahir che] that there is no separation [judayi] between myself and Paron Minas? Perhaps if you had been mindful of our request and agreed to send the goods, we might not have consented [ghabul cheink' anum] to it. May the good Lord forgive your sins. Behold, now I am writing a new a letter to you and with Paron Minas's knowledge. [I am asking you to] buy paper worth up to three hundred marchils, so long as the paper is good and uniform [mi-akerp] in appearance like this sugar paper here, so that by God [we shall use it to print] the Synaxarium [haysmavurk']. Moreover, you should tally the sum spent on our bars and bolts that Joseph (Husepn) has brought and take care of the [requests] written below. If you accrue additional expenses I will pay the sum along with the above-mentioned 300 marchils to Paron Minas here. What we want is this: One large "blit" with its works; let the size be that of Oscan Yerevants'i's Bible.

pack-saddles for beasts of burden, upon which loads are placed; baggage, particularly such as kings and great men travel with; merchandise transported from place to place.

77 Ibid. «Սիրելիք իմ. զխնդրեալս մեր վ[աւ]ն ա[ւտուծոյ] փութով կատարեցիք. թարվզեցի պարոն Աղէն յորժամ պարոն Սիմասին բաղխանայ լինի ողորկում ընդ մնա առաքեցիք. եւ ո՛չ այս բարխանում. եւ դուք ամենեալ լիցիք ՚ի Ք[րիստո]ս ա[ւտուծոյ] ամէն:»

78 Yaraghe<P. يراق كده yarāq-kada, Armament, equipment, harness?

79 The term used here ("urdi," as in Իսկապէս ուրդի չունէիր) is of uncertain derivation. It could be a corruption of the Arabic "ard" for honor. I thank Bedross Der Matossian for suggesting this possibility to me.

What is more, we wish to have the images in the Bible that he [Oscan] had printed along with the text; send us their copy/example/sample [nora orinak] or the shape [engraving] of the images in a frame [kerpn patkerner shalupovn/charchubovn?]. Also, we need the steel and wooden frame where the letters are set and the book page and size are fastened [grki ejn ev chapn ku prnen] as well as the frame that stores the paper. [We also need] a matrix [ghalub/qalib] where one can cast ten types/fonts [?] Moreover, we need four sets [dast] of letters or types of the entire alphabet. One set of lower case letters [vayr gir?] for the Synaxarium, another for the Bible, and one more [set of] small letters for the Psalter, of which I have sent an example of each typeface with its bronze [mold?] to you. We also need two steel frames [ghambar], wherein the letters are arranged and which goes under the block frame/encasing [Blit], with different varieties of orders [Kanon?], upper case and large decorative capitals [p'afk'agir] with their floral versions, all of which you are to take care of and purchase quickly as soon as this letter reaches you and send with trustworthy people. If you spend more money on them write to me so I shall give the sum to Paron Minas here. Spend 300 Marchils alone on paper of one size and you shall receive your recompense from Christ. Also send us one letter frame where one arranges lead types; send it to us with all the letters arranged already so we can see what it looks like. My dear brother, even though you will be laboring with your body this work is spiritual in nature.⁸⁰

80 Ibid., "letter dated April 24, 1690." «Եւ Ընդ արհմութեանս ծանիր սիրելի եղբայր պ[ա]ր[ո]ն

Immediately at the conclusion of this letter, on the obverse side, there is

Աղայ. Մեք որովհետեւ այս տպագրութիւնս սկսաք բազի մասալէ եարաղէ պակասութիւն գոյր տեղս. կրկին, եւ երեքկին անգամ անհոթեան թուրթ գրեցիցաք քեզ եւ տեղոյդ ջուղալեցոց պարոնացն ոչ թէ միայն զմեր խընդիրն չհոգացիդ, այլ մատիկ թղթոյ միոյ արժան չարարիք խօշ այլվի դուք ողջ կենաք պարոն Աղայ ունեն թէ մոքա չհոգացան քեզ խով հաստուկ թուրթ եմ գրած, դու է՞ր չհոգացիր. կարծես թէ իսկապէս ուրտի չունէիր. վասն այն չես հոգացել. քեզ զայիր չէ, որ մեր, եւ պարոն Միմասին մէջն ջուտայի չկայր. թէ որ հոգայիր ուղարկէիր. միթէ մեք դաբով չէինք անում. խօշ աստուած քո մեղքն թողու: Ահա այժմ մոր գրեմ գիրս քեզ սանաստ. եւ պարոն Միմասին գիտութեամբն. մինչեւ երեք հարիւրն մառչիլ թուրթ առնու. մառչիլ թուրթն լինի որ լաւ միայ կերպ լինի դիրքն այս շաքարի վարաղիս ձեւն. որ ա[ստուծա]վ յայսմաւորքի համար. Դարձեալ մեր աղլովսներն որ Յուսէփն բերելայ ողջ ջամ կանես մերքոյ գրեալն կու հոգաս եթէ յաւելի փող խալնես, վերոյ գն [300] մառչիլն հետ ես տեղս տամ պարոն Միմասին: Մեր ուզեցածն ալսք եմ. Մէկ Մէծ բլիթ իր սարքովն. չափն ոսկան վ[ա]րդ[ա]պետի ա[ստուա]ծաշնչին լինի. Դ[ար]ձ[եալ] ա[ստուա]ծաշնչի մեջի պատկերներն որ գրին հետ մէկ տեղ տպած ալ. մօրա օրինակն. կամ թէ չարչուն կամ կերպն պատկերների դալուպովն ուղարկես: Դարձեալ Երկաթէ չարչուն եւ փայտէ չարչուն. որ գրերն մէջն կու շարեն եւ գրքի էջն եւ չափն կու բռնեն մա եւ թուրթ պահող չարչուն. Ժ գիր թափելէ դալուպ մէծ եւ փոքր:

Դարձեալ Դ դաստ գիր բոլոր Այբուբենն թամամ. Մէկն յայսմաւորքի մէկն յայսմաւորի վայր գիր. Մէկն Ա[ստուա]ծաշնչի եւ մէկն մանր սաղմոսի գրից գոր իւրաքանչիւր գրոց օրինակն եւս ուղարկեցի իւրեանց պղնձովն, եւ դալուպովն. Բ երկաթէ դամպար, որ գիրն մէջն կու շարվի, որ բլրթի տակն կու մտի այլ եւ այլ ազգի ազգի կանոն. գլխգիր. եւ փարքագիր իւրեանց ծաղկներովն, զամէնն անթերի հոգաս, առնու, եւ հաւատարիմ մարդոց հետ ուղարկես գիրս որ հասանի քեզ շուտով զամէնն հոգաս ուղարկես վերոյգրեալ իքմինն աղլիսին գնովն առնու. եւ այլ ինչ աւելի խառնես գրես որ տամ պարոն Միմասին. Գժ [300] մառչիլն միայն թուրթ առնու միաշափ եւ դու ըստ աշխատանացդ եւ ըստ վաստատոցդ վարձս Դ[ար]ձ[եալ] առնուցու հանդերձ մեքեղովք քովք ամէն: Դարձեալ մէկ գրի չարչուն որ արճիճէ գիրն մէջն կու շարեն շարած մէջն թամամ աղարկես տեսնեք թէ ինչպէս ալ: սիրելի եղբայր, թէ ողջ մարմնոյն աշխատում այս աշխատանքս հոգոյէ.»

a short note written by the hand of Khwaja Minas, Agha's *commend*a master. It contains the following notation:

Let it be known [malum] to you, Agha, from Minas that you carry out without delay what is written here and take the money from the latter [?] and send [the goods] [Seal of Khwaja Minas]⁸¹

The epistolary evidence stored in the Archivio di Stato of Florence documentation reveals several remarkable things about the problems faced by Armenian printers in Julfa during the seventeenth century. First, it suggests that Stepanos Vardapet essentially inherited the same technical obstacles faced by Khachatur Kesarats'i, when he decided to reactivate the decrepit press in the late 1680s. These include the absence of lead movable type and hence the need for new fonts of different varieties requested in the letters. That is why Stepanos goes out of his way in these letters to catalogue the different types of specialized parts for the press that he desperately sought, including, especially matrices ["ghalub" to use his term] and punch cutters for designing and casting new types *in situ* in Julfa. In addition to such missing parts that could not be substituted by homemade alternatives in Julfa such as metal composing sticks or quadrats to fill blank spaces in a block of typeset text and the woodcut engravings of images used in the first printed Armenian Bible published by Oskan Yerevants'i, a Julfan printer-priest, in the port city of Amsterdam in 1666 with financial

backing of the city's Julfan merchants, Stepanos also singled out another problem that had plagued his predecessor, Khachatur Kesarats'i, in the 1630s, namely fine quality paper. "It is known to you," Stepanos notes in his very first letter of benediction, "that *the paper of this place is not good for printing*, so please send us a few loads of paper as well with the latter items" [emphasis added]. Four years later, the bishop was asking for paper again, 300 marchils worth of it. He was even more precise in his second request. He did not want just any kind of paper; it had to be "good" and "uniform" or "consistent" in appearance and be of the "sugar" type, "like this sugar paper here," as the bishop points out, referring to the paper he had chosen to write his letter of benediction upon.

Stepanos's fixation on ordering Italian paper illuminates one of the obstacles that impeded the earlier development of printing in Safavid Iran or in the Islamic world in general: the absence of print-quality paper. This is an important fact that has not been passed over by modern scholars. As Jonathan Bloom notes in his celebrated book, "the finish on Iranian book paper was unsuitable for receiving impressions."⁸² Nor did the problematic nexus between Iranian or Middle Eastern paper in general and the absence of an early indigenous printing tradition go

81 Մինասէ մ[ա]լ[ու]մ լինի Աղայիդ որ գրեալսն անյապաղ կատարես որ գնովն փողն վերէն բառնաս ող[ո]րկես: [Seal of Minas]

82 Bloom, *Paper Before Print*, 221. Surprisingly, Bloom has little else to say about the obstacles posed by poor quality paper in Iran as far as printing was concerned. He also does not seem to have consulted Chardin's *Voyages* anywhere in his book. For outlines of a history of paper in Iran, see entry for "Paper and Papermaking" by Willem Floor in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online.

unnoticed by European contemporaries, at least those who paid close attention. Jean Chardin, for instance, notes this in volume 8 of his classic *Voyages en Perse* where he ponders on the absence of a printing tradition in Safavid Iran:

The Persians, no more than any other Oriental people, have not the excellent art of printing. It is even said that they could not conveniently use [such an art], on account of the dry air of their climate, *and because their paper is too brittle*. This is the reason as to why they are reduced to transcribe all their books by hand and have none other than manuscripts.⁸³

The low-quality and brittle nature of Iranian paper and conversely the superior quality of European and especially the Italian variety was one of the reasons why Chardin, reiterating similar concerns raised by other observers such as Galland and Tavernier, noted in his travelogue that the Persians used a lot of paper imported from Europe.⁸⁴

Chardin's assessment of Iranian paper and its shortcomings in relation to printing deserve reiteration here:

They make paper everywhere in their country, composing it as we do of small rags of cotton or silk; however, as their fabrics are often painted

with oil, and their cotton lacks force or body, their paper is less white than ours and it breaks when folded. When their paper is done, they run soap over it and then they make it smooth with a glass polisher, as do our laundresses; this is done with the purpose of making the ink run better on them. Also, their paper is softer than satin. They use a lot of paper from Europe after having it prepared this way. But for this, they only take the biggest, finest, and particularly the one from Genoa, which lacks consistency. Their fine paper comes from Central Asia (Tartarie Mineure), from the cities of Balkh, Bukhara, and Samarkand.⁸⁵

Elsewhere, discussing the Iranian penchant for writing their commercial accounts on scrolls as opposed to books or codexes as in Europe, Chardin once again turns to the fragile quality of paper in Iran: "The Orientals roll their paper, whereas we fold it," he writes, "because their paper is brittle (*cassant*), and it will turn into pieces when it is folded."⁸⁶

83 Jean Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*, ed. L. Langles (Paris: Le Normant, Imprimeur-Librairie, 1811), vol. 8, 89-90. Emphasis added. "Les Persans, non plus que tous les autres peuple orientaux, n'ont point l'excellent art de l'imprimerie. On dit même qu'ils ne pourraient commodément s'en servir, à cause de la sécheresse d'air de leur climat, *et à cause que leur papier est trop cassant*; cela fait qu'ils sont réduits à transcrire tous leurs livres à la main, et à n'en avoir point d'autres que de manuscrits."

84 Ibid., 87.

85 Ibid., "Il font du papier partout en leur Pays, le composant, comme nous, de guenillons de coton et de soie; mais comme leurs toiles sont la plupart peintes à l'huile, et que le coton n'a pas de force ou de corps, leur papier est moins blanc que le notre, et il se rompt quant on le ploie. Quand leur papier est fait, ils passent du savon dessus, et puis ils le lissent avec des polissoirs de verre, comme ceux dont nos blanchisseuses se servent; c'est afin que l'encre coule mieux dessus; aussi leur papier est plus doux qu'un satin. Ils emploient beaucoup de papier d'Europe, après l'avoir ainsi préparé; mais il ne prennent pour cela que du plus gros, le fin, et particulièrement celui de Genes, n'ayant pas assez de consistance. Leur beau papier vient de la Tartarie mineure, des villes de Balk, de Bocora et de Samarcande."

86 "Les Orientaux roulent leur papier, au lieu que nous le plions, parce que leur papier est

The unsuitability of Iranian paper for printing is, of course, one of the refrains that runs through Stepanos's missives to his merchant-backers in Italy. These letters are not only fascinating on account of their detailed information on paper and technical parts of a printing press the bishop needed in Isfahan; they are also and especially of interest to historians of early modern world history and the history of print in the Middle East because they demonstrate, with force and persuasiveness, the importance of port city locations for the successful undertaking of printing ventures outside of Europe in the early modern period. As I pointed out early on in the essay, nearly all Armenian printing presses in the early modern period were located in port cities where port Armenians resided. The few exceptions to this rule, such as Hovhannes Jughayets'i's press in Julfa in the 1640s as well as the much later press of 1771 at the Armenian Catholicosate of Ejmiatsin proved the rule in so far as they were established through the patronage networks and support by port Armenians. A quick outline of the 1771 press in landlocked and relative cultural backwater of Ejmiatsin will help us better understand what was at stake for Stepanos Jughayets'i and why his venture ultimately ended in failure. A good place to begin understanding the press in Ejmiatsin is in the far-away port city of Madras.

An Armenian Catholic missionary visiting Fort Saint George (Madras) in 1772 wrote back to his superior in San Lazzaro in Venice informing him that

cassant, et qu'il se met en pièce quand il est plié." Chardin, *Voyages*, volume 5, 450.

"during these days, a certain Armenian who lives here gave Ejmiatsin 18,000 rupees, so that in segments of six thousand [rupees], they may hastily construct a belfry, a school and a printing press; and he has compelled them to print immediately books and gather children."⁸⁷ The donor alluded to in this letter was Mikayel Khojajanian (also known as Grigor Agha Chekikents), a wealthy Armenian merchant residing in Madras and, like most port Armenians of his time, with roots stretching back to the township of New Julfa. In addition to donating a significant sum to Catholicos Simeon Yerevants'i for the construction, among other things, of a printing press in the compound of the Armenian Catholicosate, Khojajanian also took another significant step to circumvent one of the key impediments to printing in the Middle East during the early modern period. He paid for the establishment of a European-style paper mill on the grounds of the Holy See in 1776. What is more, through a friend and contact working for the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* in southern India, he responded to the plea for help by Catholicos Simeon Yerevants'i in Ejmiatsin by arranging, through a French contact in India named Alexandre Delarche, for French paper specialists to travel from the trading outpost of Pondicherry in India to Ejmiatsin to assist the Catholicos in the preparation of paper and the printing of books.⁸⁸ Had it not been for the

87 Letter of Father Manuel Emirzian to Abbot Stepanos Melkonian, Madras, February 6, 1771, stored in the Archives of the Mkhitarist Congregation on San Lazzaro, Venice (ASL).

88 In his Colophon, Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi identifies Khojajanian's European contact

as a “Monsieur Alexandre DeLache [Մուսիս Ալեքսանդր Դլաշ] in the city of Pondicherry,” to whom the Catholicos sent a letter of gratitude, “for he was the one who sent me the two French paper-makers, as per the request of Chekigents Grigor Agha [i.e., Grigor Khojajanian].” The Colophon also recounts that the Catholicos sent the aforementioned a “letter and a holy insignia which he placed in his letter to Grigor Agha so that he shall have it [i.e., the letter] translated, and along with the holy insignia, deliver it to him [i.e., Monsieur Delache].” See G. Aghaneants, *Divan hayots patmut'ean* [Archive of Armenian History], vol. 8, (Tiflis, 1894), 417-418. Interestingly, the Armenian gem merchant and traveler, Hovhannes Tovmachean, who traveled to Madras in 1768-1769, met the same “Monsieur Delache, a certain French merchant in Madras” in the company of the city’s local Armenian merchants. Tovmachean describes the Frenchman as a merchant working for the French *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* headquartered in Pondicherry. See the unpublished manuscript of his travels. *Vark ew patmut'iwn Tovmachean Mahtesi Tēr Hovhannisi Konstannupolisets'voy oroy ēnd eresun tērut'iwns shrjeal vacharakanut'eamb ew husk hetoy verstin darts ara-real i bnik k'aghak' iwr konstannupolis dseñnadri and kahanay hIgnatios yepiskoposē yotanasnerord ami hasaki iwroy apa ekeal dadarē i vans rabunapeti metsi Mkhitaray abbay Hōr i Venetik*. [The life and history of Mahdesi Ter Hovhannes Tovmachean of Constantinople who, after wondering through thirty states conducting commerce, once again returns to his native city of Constantinople where he is anointed a celibate priest by Bishop Ignatius at the age of seventy and then comes to repose at the monastery of the great master, Abbot Mkhitar, in Venice], Manuscript no. 1688, folio 255-257.

A Monsieur “Henry Alexandre Delarche” is indeed identified as an official of the French Company in Pondichery who was incidentally married to a Madelaine Elias, the daughter of Pondichery’s richest Armenian merchant, Coja Elias di Isaac, who was decorated in the 1720s as a “chevalier d'eperon” in gratitude for his role as philanthropist in the French colonial outpost. See Alfred Martineau, *Résumé des Actes de l'État civil de Pondichéry. Tome II, De 1736 à 1760. 1919-1920* (p.64)

technical support and especially the financial patronage provided by this port Armenian residing in the port city of Madras and making use of the latest technical knowledge, we can be confident that Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi in Ejmiatsin would not have succeeded in establishing a printing press in his compound and printing close to half a dozen books in Armenian to combat what he, much like Stepanos Vardapet of Julfa almost a century earlier, perceived as a Catholic missionary threat to his flock. Likewise, we can also conjecture that had Agha di Matus and the other port Armenians in northern Italy answered Stepanos’s call for help, like Khojajanian had done at a later period, and dispatched the paper and necessary printing parts to “upgrade” Julfa’s decrepit homemade press in the late 1680s, Stepanos would possibly not have been forced to shut down his printing enterprise in 1693. This is simply counterfactual speculation, of course, but it provides a useful platform from which to look at Stepanos’s shortcomings and also at the impediments Armenian and other printers in locations away from port cities faced in the early modern period. While we stand on this platform and fix our gaze at Stepanos’s Julfa at about the time he closed down his printing press, we must be mindful of the fact that the available archival evidence stored among Agha di Matus’s private papers in Florence is

“27 mai [1743] Delarche (Henry Alexandre) age de 24 ans, née à Pondichéry, employe de la Compagnie, et Jeanne Madelaine Elias, agée de 15 ans, née à Pondichéry. Madelaine passed away at age 20 in 1748 (Ibid., 204) her father Elias died five years later in 1753. See “Morts 1753: Issac (Coja Elias) age de 76 ans, arménien, negociant à Pondichéry (189).

quite fragmentary and does not indicate whether Agha or the other merchants, in fact, purposefully turned a deaf ear to the bishop's requests. What we do know with certainty is that in 1693 the press appears to have printed two one-page leaflets and then quietly shut down leaving Julfa with no printing press until 1863 when an American-made compact and Stanhope-like iron handpress donated by a Julfan merchant residing in Batavia began to be used.

Scholars who have looked at Stepanos's printing activities have been somewhat puzzled about the sudden and abrupt nature of the closing down of his press in 1693. Referring to historian Khachatur Jughayets'i's account, Ghougassian points out that Shah Sulaiman may have forced the closure of the press after Catholic missionaries accused Stepanos of printing "anti-Koran" books.⁸⁹ The nineteenth century historian of the township, Harutiwn Ter Hovhaneants, also pointed in the same direction.⁹⁰ To these political and religious explanations, we may now add a technological dimension. It is entirely plausible and even probable that Stepanos was forced to shut down his press and renege on his promise to print more and better-quality books because his pleas for technical support from the port cities of the Mediterranean went unanswered. In the absence of adequate documentation, we can only speculate that Agha di Matus was re-

luctant to provide aid to the firebrand bishop in Julfa, his master Khwaja Minas di Panos's directives notwithstanding, because he feared reprisal from the Holy Office of the Propaganda Fide with whom he was then negotiating and was on the cusp of receiving permission to build an Armenian church in Livorno.⁹¹

Conclusion

The introduction of Arabic-script printing into Iran occurred in 1818 when Mirza Zayn al-'Abidin established a press in Tabriz after his return from St. Petersburg where he had traveled "to learn the art of printing."⁹² A year later, a second printing press was founded when another Iranian notable,

91 Agha di Matus was involved in negotiations beginning in the early 1690s with both the Grand Duke of Tuscany (Cosimo II) and the Propaganda Fide to receive permission to open an Armenian Church in Livorno. This coincided with Stepanos Vardapet's launching of a violent campaign of persecution against the Propaganda Fide's missionaries in Julfa and simultaneously his request that Agha di Matus comply to his orders and assist him in his anti-Catholic campaigns by supplying him with printing parts. It is therefore not too far-fetched to surmise that Agha di Matus was likely indifferent to Stepanos's requests because he did not wish to jeopardize the construction of his church, which was completed in 1714, five years after Agha was murdered by one of his servants. Agha's astute behavior vis a vis the Vatican seems to have paid off because he was granted full citizenship in Rome in 1698 and awarded with numerous titles included "Prince of the Order of the Cross" and Count of the Laterans. See Ughurlian, *Patmut'iwn hayots' gakhakanut'ean*, 64-94, and notes in Alessandro Orengo, *Storia della colonia armena di Livorno e della costruzione della sua chiesa (con appendici)*. Trans. Alessandro Orengo (Livorno: Tipographia O.Debatte, 1991).

92 Green, "The Stanhope Revolution," 480.

89 Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese*, 176-177.

90 Harutiwn Ter Hovhaneants, *Patmut'iwn Nor Jughayu or yHspahan* [History of New Julfa which is at Isfahan] (New Julfa: All Savior's Monastery Press, 1880), vol. 2, 32-33.

Mirza Salih Shirazi returned from several years of travels in Britain where he was sent by the modernizing Qajar crown prince 'Abbas Mirza (1789-1833) to master the technology of print and introduce it to his countrymen upon completion of his studies.

The voyages of these two would-be printers to the leading technological centers of the craft of printing are reminiscent of the much earlier trip of Hovhannes Jughayets'i who was sent to the Italian port cities of Venice and Livorno in 1639 by a "modernizing" primate of the township of New Julfa, Khachatur Kesarats'i, to learn the craft of printing and to return home swiftly to aid his master in continuing his work of introducing this revolutionary "new method of duplicating handwriting – an *ars artificialiter scribendi*"⁹³ to the Armenians of New Julfa. A little more than two centuries separate the travels of these kindred spirits. In both cases, the voyages started in Iran and culminated in the adoption of print technology through the physical transportation of printing machines and their requisite parts, including fonts and matrices. Yet we must also remember that these two sets of voyages leading to Persian and Armenian printing revolutions, respectively, were separated by a technological gulf represented by the transition from the Gutenberg to Stanhope revolutions in print culture. As Green's recent studies have suggested, the Perso-Arabic printing revolution was not part of the earlier Gutenberg revolution in print that

encompassed the whole of the early modern period in world history:

Aside from the Armenians of Julfa, already connected to Europe through the reach of their merchant diaspora, Iran did not partake in the Gutenberg revolution, which was effectively confined to Europe and European settler communities in the Americas and Asia. Instead, like the pioneers of indigenous printing in Egypt and India at the same time, Iran's first printers of Persian took part in the later and larger Stanhope revolution, which, unlike its more provincial predecessor, was truly global in scale.⁹⁴

Leaving aside the question of whether the Gutenberg revolution was actually "provincial" in nature and "effectively confined" to Europe and its settler communities abroad, Green's findings pose both a challenge and invitation to explain the peculiar trajectory of Armenian print culture. Unlike Arabic-script print culture that joined the global history of print with the onset of Industrial revolution of the nineteenth century and the creation of cheaper and more portable Stanhope printing presses, the Armenian counterpart, as we have seen, participated in the first wave of the printing revolution associated with the technology of the Gutenberg era hand-press. Why was Armenian print history "exceptional" in relation to its Islamic counterpart?

As this essay has demonstrated, a number of interrelated factors help explain the divergent path taken by Armenian print culture. These range from the peculiar interplay of supply and demand on the eve of the Armenian

93 Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, revised 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119.

94 Green, "Stanhope Revolution," 490.

adoption of print technology, to the active role of the Church hierarchy and port Armenian or mercantile support for the new venture, the presence of global networks of transportation and information (much of it seaborne and maritime) that facilitated the geographic spread of Armenian printing revolution, and above all, perhaps, to the unique blend of Armenian commercial activity, port cities, and printer-priests. Our detailed examination of the early printing activities of Armenians in New Julfa, a land-locked enclave far away from ports or coastlines, suggests that this was an exception that proved the rule. Despite the initial and fleeting success of Khachatur Kesarats'i in setting up the first press in 1636 by entirely relying upon local resources, all subsequent trials of improving printing output in the township were predicated upon ongoing ties with Mediterranean port cities and hampered by the logistical difficulties of transporting Gutenberg technology to the Isfahani suburb, a factor that reinforces Green's main thesis about the importance of logistical factors in the era before the portable Stanhope printing press. In light of Green's arguments, we can now posit one additional factor to those we have already discussed for the overlapping of Armenian printing centers with port cities during the early modern period, namely the facility with which unwieldy wooden presses could circulate across maritime highways connecting port city locations and communities to each other. Thus the Armenian wooden handpress established in Madras in 1772 was probably purchased in Europe along with matrices and lead type and easily shipped to

the port of Fort Saint George.⁹⁵ As we have seen, the same cannot be said about the press in Julfa. The Carmelites were very well aware of the logistical nightmare created by transporting by camel caravan an Arabic script press in 1628/9, and everything indicates that Hovhannes Jughayets'i probably experienced great hardship in shipping his heavy press from Livorno to Smyrna then Jerusalem before mounting it on caravan for Isfahan. When Stepanos Vardapet tried to restart the printing press in New Julfa in 1686, he was forced, like Kesarats'i before him, to appeal for help to port Armenians originally from his township but residing in Venice, Livorno, and Genoa. These merchants do not seem to have responded to the primate's requests for the shipment of printing equipment without which Stepanos Vardapet was forced to shut down his press in 1693. We can also speculate and add to the merchants' apparent unwillingness to

95 Our only evidence that Shahamirian's press was imported to Madras from Europe is in a letter of rebuke to Shahamirian from Catholicos Simeon Yerevants'i where the latter writes: "So why was it necessary for you, or how was it befitting your honor, to have printing characters brought with so much labor from Europe [frankstan] to set up a press and to appoint the son of a prince [Hakob Shahamirian] as a printer, which is a profession for commoners and the meanest pauper?" The Catholicos was incensed that a merchant in Madras was publishing books that challenged his authority and wanted Shahamirian to recall and burn all copies of a book he had printed in 1773 and even ordered the closing down of his press. For details and the full version of the passage quoted above see Sebouh Aslanian, *Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation: The Role of Simeon Yerevantsi's Girk or Koci Partavchar in the 18th Century National Revival* (Venice: Bibliothèque d'arménologie «Bazmavep», 2004), 75.

respond to Stepanos's pleas an additional possible factor for the shutting down of the press. The difficulties involved in transporting a press and its steel parts from Livorno to Isfahan where the geography of the terrain may have led to the relatively early closing of Armenian printing history in the nodal center of Julfa, whereas in other centers located in or near port cities, Armenian printing continued to thrive during the early modern period.

APPENDIX

Document 1: Letter of Stepanos Vardapet, September 27, 1686

Յ[խոսու]ի Ք[րիստոս]ի ծառայ Ստեփաննոս վարդապետ՝ առաջնորդ արքայանիստ մայրաքաղաքին Իսպահանու եւ ք[րիստո]սախնամ գեօղաքաղաքին Ջուղայու:

Յորմէ ժամանեալ հասցէ գիր աւրհնութեան եւ նամակ պահպանութեան, շնորհք առաքելական եւ ա[ստուա]ծային բազմապատիկ աւրհնութիւնն ի վերայ Վէնէտիկ քաղաքի եղեալ ջողայեցի բարեպաշտ եւ ք[րիստո]սասէր վաճառականաց՝ սիրելի եւ հարազատ եղբարցդ իմոց եւ անմիջոց բարեկամացդ՝ պարոն Պետրոսիդ, պարոն Եաւրէ, Գիւանենց պարոն Յակոբջանիդ, ինձանէնց պարոն Յակոբջանիդ, պարոն Աղէ, պարոն Աղամիրէ, պարոն Աստուածատրէ եւ որդոյդ իմոյ Սամուէլիդ եւ այլոց ամենեցունց, որք այդր կան, զորոց ոչ գիտեմք զանուանսն թէ գրէաք, մանաւանդ մերայնոց ազանց յայլոց գաւառաց յայդր եղելոց ամենեցունց միջոց Տերամբ խնդալ:

Շնորհք ընդ ձեզ եւ խաղաղութիւն յԱ[ստուծո]յ հօրէ եւ Տ[եառն]է մերմէ Յ[խոսու]սէ Ք[րիստոս]է եւ ս[ուրբ] հոգոյն կենարարէ եւ յառատաճիր պարգեւատուէ եւ

շնորհաբաշխ բարերարէ եւ մարդասիրէ. ամէն: Օրհնութիւն հօր, պահպանութիւն որդոյ եւ նախախնամութիւն ամենաս[ուրբ] հոգոյն միջոց եւ հանապազ եկեացէ եւ հանգչիցի ի վ[ե]ր[այ] ձեր եւ օր ըստ օրէ լցուցէ զձեզ փառօք եւ պատուովք եւ արգասալիր ճոխութեամբ իբրեւ զորթս եւ զոտս սաղարթախիտ եւ պողալից դրախտ տնկեալ ՚ի գնացս հոգոյն վտակաց, կալ մնալ ձեզ խաղաղական կենօք եւ պարագայց ամօք. ամէն:

Ջոր աւրհնութիւն ա[ստուա]ծային եւ աղօթք ս[ուրբ] Աստուածածնին եւ Յովհաննու Կարապետին եւ ս[ուրբոյն] Գրիգորի մերոյ Լուսաւորչին եւ սրբոց Առաքելոց եւ մարգարէից եւ մարտիրոսաց, ճգնաւորաց եւ ս[ուրբ] կուսանաց, եւ ամենայն սրբոց երկնաւորաց եւ երկրաւորաց ՚ի վերայ ձեր եղիցի. ամէն:

Այլ եւ աւրհնեցէ զձեզ տ[է]ր Ա[ստուա]ծ մեր եւ զարդարեցէ հոգով եւ մարմնով, տամք եւ տեղօք, զարմօք եւ զաւակօք, ընչիւք եւ ապրանօք սիրելիօք եւ բարեկամօք, այգեստանօք եւ բուրաստանօք, տրիւք եւ վաճառօք, [ամենայն հոգեւոր] եւ մարմնական գոյականօք. ամէն:

Արեգակն արդիւնարար ծագեսցի ձեզ եւ լուսինն լրացեալ հովանացի ձեզ յամենայն առաւօտու նոր աւ[րհնութիւն] տացի ձեզ եւ յամենայն երեկոյի պահպանութիւն ի Տեառնէ եղիցի ձեզ ՚ի տուէ եւ ՚ի գիշերի, ՚ի նստեալ ՚ի տան եւ ՚ի գն[ա]լ ի ճանապարհ, ՚ի ննջեալ եւ յառնել, ի վաճառել, ՚ի յառ եւ ի տուր ՚ի նաւի եւ ի ծովու, եւ յամենայն գործս եւ զգնացս ձեր ՚ի բարին առաջնորդեցէ. ամէն:

Եւ ընդ աւ[րհնութեան]ս ծաներուք սիրելիք մեր ՚ի տեր. հրամայէ անօթն ընտրութեան եւ վարդապետն հեթանոսաց սրբազան Առաքեալն Պօղոս, թէ որք սիրենն զաստուած յամենայն ի գործակից լինեն ՚ի բարիս: Վ[ա]ս[նոր]ր[ոյ] պարտին ամեն ազգ քրիստոնէից ունինդիր լինել

բանից առաքելոյն եւ լինիլ հետեւող բարոյ եւ արդ թէպէտ բազմադիմի եւ հոգնաշաւիղք են ճանապարհք բարոյ, սակայն առաւելապէս, որ վասն գրոց լինի աշխատութիւնն, քանզի գրովք լինի շինութիւն ազգի եւ պայծառութիւն որպէս ձեզ ամենեցուն քաջայայտ է:

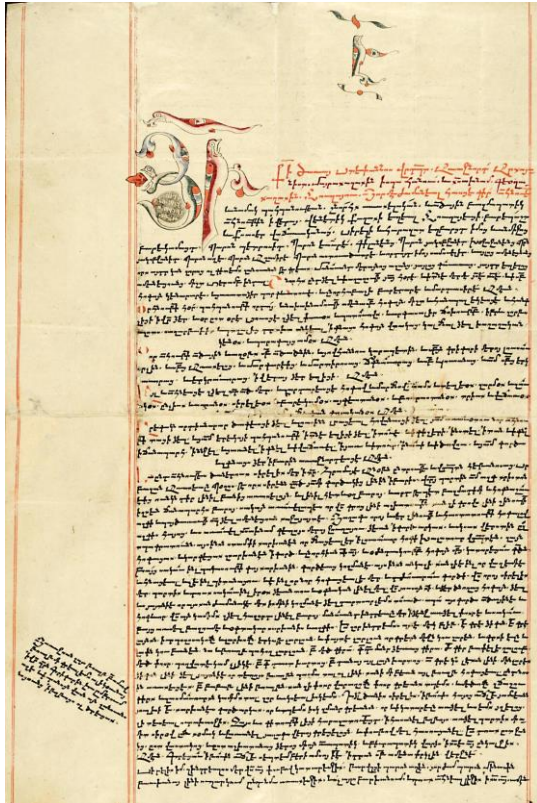


Figure 5 Letter of Stepanos Vardapet September 27, 1686. Source: Archivio di Satato di Firenze, "Acquisti e Doni", 123, Documenti Armeni, Inserto 1, 1-38.

Յաղագս որոյ եւ մեր շինութիւնն եւ հաստատութիւնն հոգալով ազգիս Հայոց, եւս առաւել քրիստոնսական գեղոյս մերոյ Զուղայու, ձեռն ի գործ արկաք եւ սկսաք վերստին գտազգրատունն, այսինքն ստամփի քարխանէն,⁹⁶ որ մնացեալ էր ի լուսաւոր հոգի խաչատուր վ[ար]-դ[ա]պետէն: Ջայն հոգացաք եւ կարգեցաք զքարխանէն ի գործ եւ շնորհիւն

96 See footnote 65 for this term.

Քրիստոնսի Ա[ստուծոյ] եւ օծանդակութեամբ Հոգոյն Ս[րբոյ] կատարեցաւ գործն:

Բայց սակաւ ինչ պակասութիւնն գոյ քարխանին գործեաց կողմանէ, այսինքն անկազի, քանզի է ինչ որ վաղէմի է եւ հնացեալ եւ չէ ինչ պիտանացու եւ է ինչ որ նոր հոգացեալ է մեր եւ դժուարաւ գործի: Վ[ա]ս[ն] որոյ, սիրելիք մեր, պարտիք եւ դուք սակաւ ինչ իրօք ձեռնտու եւ օգնական լինել մեզ վասն յուսոյն Քրիստոսի եւ ձեր ծնողաց հոգոյն: Ձեզ եւս յայտնի է, որ այսքան ժամանակ է մեք իբրինի կողմանէ ձեզ դարտասար չեմք տուած, ապա այս գործս ա[ստուա]ծային է եւ հոգեւոր, վ[ա]ս[ն] այն կամիմք զձեզ հաղորդ լինել բարոյ, մանաւանդ խնդրեալն մեր ի ձէնջ առ ձեզ փոքր է եւ սակաւ, բայց առ մեզ բազում է եւ օգտակար քարխանիս եւ ազգիս:

Եւ գոր խնդրեմքս այս է. մէկ բլիթ, է [7] գրէ ձիգսն, Ե [5] գրէ լայնքն, իւր պողոսակովն եւ չարխովն, երկաթէ չարչուն եւ փայտէ չարչուն, որ գրերն մէջն կու չարեն եւ գրքի էջն եւ չափն կու բռնեն, նաեւ թուղթ պահող չարչուն, Բ[2] մեծ գիր, Ա[1], Գ[3], Դ[4] մանր ձեռաց գիրա, Ժ[10] գիր թափելէ դալուբ⁹⁷ մեծ, փոքր, պողպատէ կամ չլիկէ⁹⁸, Բ[2]-Գ[3] դասս խարտոց, Բ[2] դանայ այլ լայն խարտոց, Ա[1] գրէ կէս լէքսն լինի, մին չարէք ձիգսն լինի: Ձեզ յայտնի է, որ տեղոյս թուղթն պասմա տալ ոչ լինի, քանի մի բեռն այլ թուղթ հոգացեալ, ընդ նոսին առաքեցէք: Բ [2] բաբաթ⁹⁹ լինի թուղթն, քանզի փոքր վարաղովն փոքր գրեանք

97 See footnote 72 for the meaning of this term.

98 The same word (steel) is written twice, once in Armenian and a second time in Ottoman Turkish. *Pokhpat* (Arm. Steel) and *ch'lik* (<T. çelik: steel. *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: SEV Matbaacılık ve yayıncılık, 1999) 246.

99 See footnote 74 for the meaning of this term.

տպեմք եւ մեծովն՝ զձաշու գիրք եւ զԱս-
մաւուրքն կամիմ տալ, զոր եւ սկսեալ իսկ
եմք:

Դարձեալ ծանիրք, սիրելիք, ի թուիս
հայոց ՌձԼԵ [1686] յամսեանն յուլիսի Ե
[5] քարխանէս գործարկաք, որ եւ տպեմք
իսկ զմանր գրեանսն, որ եւ ի կատարելն
առ ձեզ եւս եմք յղելոց, զի տեսեալ ուրա-
խասջիք: Զայս եւս գիտութիւն լիցի հա-
րազատութեանցդ, ի հասանել թղթոյս առ
ձեզ պարտիր միամիտ սիրով լամն քօմակ
եւ ջառ անել յաղագս վերոյ գրեցելոցն եւ
փութով մեզ հասուցանել: Եւ դուք ըստ
ջանից, ըստ վաստակոց եւ ըստ աշխատա-
նաց ձերոց միոյն Ռ(1000)ապատիկ եւ բիւ-
րապատիկ վարձս ի Ք[րիստոս]է Ա[ստու-
ծո]յ ընկալջիք: Ամէն:

Գրեցաւ ի թուին ՌձԼԵ [1686] սեպ-
տեմբերի ամսոյ Իէ [27] ի դրան սուրբ Ա-
մենափրկչին. վերջն է:

Սիրելիք իմ, զխնդրեալս մեր վ[ա]ս[ն]
Ա[ստուծո]յ փութով կատարեսջիք: Թարվ-
զցի պարոն Աղէն յորժամ պարոն Մինա-
սին բառխանայ¹⁰⁰ լինի, ուղարկում ընդ
նմա առաքեսջիք եւ ո՛չ այլո[յ] բարխա-
նում եւ դուք աւ[ր]հնեալ լիջիք ՚ի Ք[րիս-
տո]ս Ա[ստուծո]յ. ամէն:

On the left margin:

Յառաջ քան զայս թուղթ Բ [2] ամ-
սով թուղթ մի գրեալ եմք Ալիգօնայ ՚ի
վ[ե]ր[այ] պ[ա]ր[ո]ն Գրիգորին եւ Ըմբ-
րում աղէ եւ իւրանոցն վասն այն զա-
նուանս նոցունց ՚ի թղթոցս ոչ ծրեցաք:

Translation of Letter:

In the Name of God

From Stepanos Vardapet, the
servant of Jesus Christ and primate of
the Christ-protected township of Julfa

and of the imperial capital of Isfahan:

From whom may this letter of
blessing and protection, apostolic grace,
and the multitudinous blessings of God
reach the pious and Christ-loving
Julfan merchants residing in Venice, to
those who are dear and authentic
brothers of mine and my direct friends:
Paron Petros, Paron Yavre, Paron
Hakobjan Gilanents', Paron Akobjan
Khojajanents', Paron Agha [di Matus],
Paron Aghamir, Paron Astuatsatur,
and my son, Samuel and to all others
who are found there whose names we
do not know, especially to all those of
our nation from other regions. [...]

And along with my blessings let it
be known to my loved ones in the Lord
that the vessel of God's choice and the
bishop of the heathen, the holy apostle
Paul, commands that those who love
God are fully collaborators of the good.
On account of which, all Christian na-
tions are obliged to listen to the words
of the Apostle and be followers of the
good. And now though the paths to the
good be many, it is even better if one's
labor is devoted for the sake of books,
because as is well known to all of you, a
"nation" is built with books.

On account of which and of our
building and establishment with care
for the Armenian nation and our
Christ-protected town of Julfa, we un-
dertook and initiated again the printing
press, that is to say the workshop of
printing, which had remained from [the
time of] the luminous soul, Khachatur
Vardapet. We took care of and put to
work the workshop and with the grace
of Christ the Lord and the assistance of
the Holy Spirit, the work was realized.

100 See footnote 76 for an explication of this
term.

However, there are a few deficiencies with respect to the functioning of the [printing] workshop, since it is old, worn out, and is no longer of much use, and is able to work with great difficulty. Consequently my dear ones, for the sake of Christ and your parents' souls, you are obliged to be of assistance to us with a few things. And it is evident to you that it has been a while now since we bothered you for anything and that this work is divine and spiritual, because of which we wish to share with you in good works especially since what we are asking of you is so small and little for you, but for us [it means] so much and [is] so useful for this [printing] workshop and for this nation.

And what we are asking for is this: One composing stick seven letters in length and five in width, with its own press-screw and steel wheel, the wooden frame wherein the letters are set and the book page and size is held, as well as the frame (charchu) where the paper is kept, 2 large letters/types, 1, 2, 4, small letters, 10 large and small font casting matrices made of steel [Poghpat] or ch'lik [steel?], two or three varieties of files [dast khardots], 2 more times tana/taneh of khardots/files.... It is known to you that the paper of this place is not good for printing, so please send us a few loads of paper as well with the latter items. Let the paper be of two varieties [babat] so we can print small books on the small paper and with the big one a lectionary and Synaxarium (Haysmavurk'), which we have even begun to prepare.

Let it also be known to my dear ones that on 5 July in 1135 (=1686) we began to use the printing press in order to print some small books, which we

will send to you upon completion so you may become pleased upon seeing them. Let this also be brought to your attention that upon the arrival of this letter there you must with sincere affection provide assistance [komak] and help [jar] regarding the things we have written about above and dispatch [the desired items] to us in haste. And may you receive a thousand-fold or ten thousand-fold recompense for your work from Christ the Lord Amen.

Written in the year 1135 (1686) September 27 at the gates of the All Savior's Cathedral. The end.

My dear ones, for the sake of God carry out in haste what we have asked of you. When Paron Agha of Tabriz is about to send Paron Minas's shipment of merchandize, you shall send it with that and not with this shipment. And you all shall be blessed in Christ the Lord, Amen.

On the left margin:

Two months before this letter, we wrote a missive to Embrum and Grigor Aghas and their families on account of which we have omitted their names from this letter.

Document 2: Letter of Stepanos Vardapet, April 24, 1690

Է

Յ[իսուս]ի Ք[րիստոս]ի ծառայ Ստեփաննոս վարդապետ յորմէ ժամանեալ հասցէ գիր աւրհնութե[ան] եւ նամակ պահպանութե[ան]. Շնորհք առաքելական եւ աստուածային բազմապատիկ աւրհնութիւնն եկեցէ եւ հանգիցէ 'ի վերայ քրիստոսապաշտ եւ հաւատարիմ թարվեզըցի պարոն Աղիտ եւ քոյոցդ ամենեցուն.

յոյժ 'ի տէր խնդալ ընդ երկնաւորս մեծաւ
ուրախութեամբ. ամէն:

Շնորհք ընդ քեզ եւ խաղաղութիւն/
յ[Աստուծոյ] հօրէ եւ ի Տ[եառն]է մերմէ
Յ[իսուս]է Ք[րիստոս]է եւ ի հոգւոյն սրբոյ
կենարարէ եւ յառատաձիր պարգեւատուէ
եւ շնորհաբաշխ բարերարէ եւ ամենազօր
մարդասիրէ. ամէն:

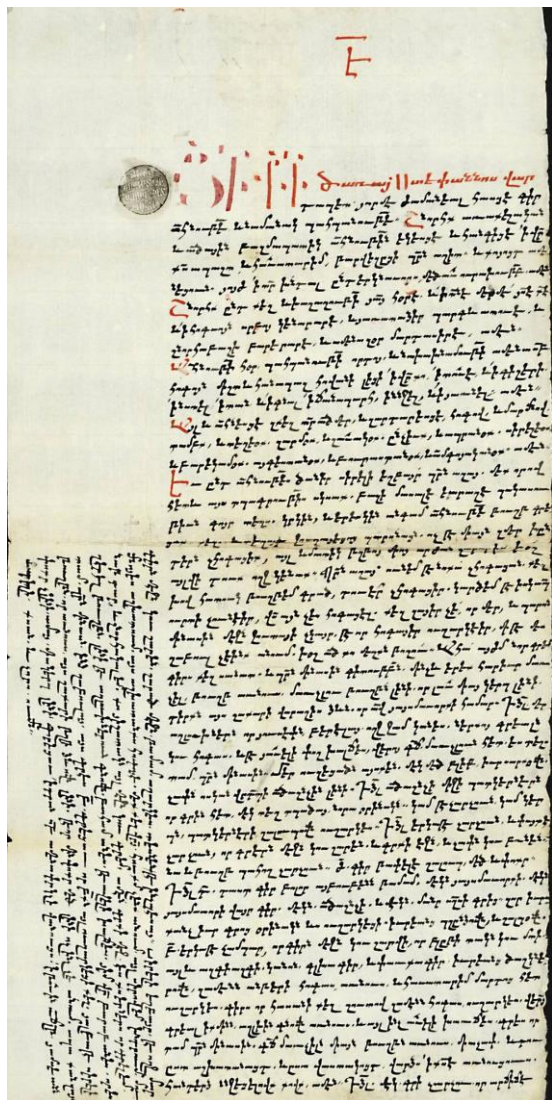


Figure 6 Letter of Stepanos Vardapet,
April 24, 1690. Source: Archivio di Stato
di Firenze, "Acquisti e Doni", 123, Docu-
menti Armeni Inserto 1, 1-38.

Աւհնութիւն հօր, պահպանութիւն/
որդոյ, եւ նախախնամութիւն/ ամե-
նասուրբ հոգոյն միշտ եւ հանապազ հո-

վանի լիցի 'ի վ[ե]ր[ա]յ քո, 'ի տուէ եւ 'ի
գիշերի 'ի նստել 'ի տան եւ 'ի գնալ 'ի ճա-
նապարհ, 'ի ննջել, եւ 'ի յառնել. ամէն:

Այլ եւ աւրհնեաց զքեզ Տէր Աս-
տուած մեր, եւ զարդարեացէ, հոգով եւ
մարմնով, տամբք եւ տեղեօք, զարմօք եւ
զաւակօք, ընչիւք, եւ ապրանօք, սիրելեօք
եւ բարեկամօք, այգեստանօք, եւ բուրաս-
տանօք եւ ամենայն գոյականօք ամէն:

Եւ ընդ աւրհնութեանս ծանիր, սիրելի
եղբայր պ[ա]ր[ո]ն Աղայ. մեք որովհետեւ
այս տպագրութիւնս սկսաք, բազի մասալէ
հարադէ¹⁰¹ պակասութիւն գոյր տեղս:
Կրկին եւ երեքկին անգամ աւրհնութեան
թուղթ գրեցաք քեզ եւ տեղոյդ ջուղայե-
ցոց պարոնացն, ոչ թէ միայն զմեր խըն-
դիրն չհոգացիր, այլ եւ մատիկ թղթոյ
միոյ արժան չարարիք. խօշ այլվի դուք
ողջ կենաք: Պարոն Աղայ, ունեմ թէ նոքա
չհոքացան, քեզ խով հատուկ թուղթ եմ
գրած, դու է՞ր չհոգացիր: Կարծեմ թէ իս-
կապէս ուրտի, չունէիր. վասն այն չես հո-
գացել: Քեզ զայիր չէ, որ մեր, եւ պարոն
Մինասին մէջն ջուղայի չկայր: Թէ որ
հոգայիր ուղարկէիր. միթէ՞ մեք զաբուլ
չէինք անուամ. խօշ Ա[ստուած]՝ քո մեղքն
թողու:

Ահա այժմ նոր գրեմ գիրս քեզ սա-
նատ. եւ պարոն Մինասին գիտութեամբն,
մինչեւ երեք հարիւր մառչիլ թուղթ առ-
նուս, մառչիլ թուղթն լինի որ լաւ
միայկերպ լինի, գիրքն այս շաքարի վա-
րաղիս ձեւն. որ Ա[ստուած]վ յայսմաւորքի
համար: Դարձեալ մեր աղլուխներն, որ
Յուսէփն բերէլ այ, ողջ ջամ կանես, ներ-
քոյ գրեալն կու հոգաս, եթէ յաւելի փող
խալճես, վերոյ Գժ [300] մառչիլն հետ,
ես տեղս տամ պարոն Մինասին: Մեր ու-
ղեցածն այսք են. մէկ մեծ բլիթ իւր սար-
քովն. չափն Ոսկան վ[ա]րդ[ա]պետի ա[ս-
տուած]աշնչին լինի. Դ[ա]րձ[եալ] ա[ս-
տուած]աշնչի մեջի պատկերներն, որ գրին

101 For this term, see footnote 78.

հետ մէկ տեղ տպած այ. նօրա օրինակն: Կամ թէ չարչուն կամ կերպն պատկերներէրի զալուպովն ուղարկես: Դարձեալ երկաթէ չարչուն եւ փայտէ չարչուն, որ գրերն մէջն կու շարեն եւ գրքի էջն եւ չափն կու բռնեն, նա եւ թուղթ պահող չարչուն: Ժ գիր թափելէ զալուպ՝ մէծ եւ փոքր:

Դարձեալ Դ [4] դաստ գիր բոլոր Այբուբենն թամամ. մէկն յայսմաւորքի, մէկն՝ յայսմաւորի վայր գիր: Մէկն Ա[ստուա]ծաշնչի եւ մէկն՝ մանր սաղմոսի գրից, զոր իւրաքանչիւր գրոց օրինակն եւս ուղարկեցի իւրեանց պրդնձովն եւ դալուպովն: Բ երկաթէ չամպար, որ գիրն մէջն կու շարվի, որ բլրթի տակն կու մտի, այլ եւ այլ ազգի ազգի կանոն, գլխագիր. եւ փառքագիր իւրեանց ծաղկներովն, զամէնն անթերի հոգաս, առնուս, եւ հաւատարիմ մարդոց հետ ուղարկես: Գիրս որ հասանի քեզ, շուտով զամէնն հոգաս ուղարկես, վերոյգրեալ իբմինն աղլխին գնովն առնուս. եւ այլ ինչ աւելի խառնես, գրես, որ տամ պարոն Մինասին: ԳՃ [300] մառչիլն միայն թուղթ առնուս միաջափ եւ դու ըստ աշխատանացդ եւ ըստ վաստատոցդ վարձս 'ի Ք[րի]ս[տոս]է առնուցուս հանդերձ ննջեցելովք քովք ամէն:

Դարձեալ մէկ գրի չարչու, որ արճիճէ գիրն մէջն կու շարեն՝ չարած մէջն թամամ աղարկես, տեսնեք թէ ինչպէս այ: Սիրելի եղբայր, թէ ողջ մարմնոյ ես աշխատում, այս աշխատանքս հոգոյ է. մեք քեզ վերայ հուլքմ¹⁰² չենք անում, այլ սիրով եմ խնդրում մոռնալ զար, եւ շնորհակալ եմ, քո յիշատակն ալ մէջն կու գրեմ: Ամէն գրքի մէջ էս քսերներս, որ գրել եմ զէրէզ թուղթն լինի, թէ աղլուխներուն գնովն, բահամ անես. թէ ալելի խալճես, յիմ վ[ե]ր[այ] բարաթ անես, որ ես տամ պ[ա]ր[ո]ն Մինասն. ինձ զաբուլայ: Այս գրէս Բ

[2] գրեցաւ, Բ[2]քն այլ ուղարկեցի քեզ, յալբաթէ սիրելի թուղթն, որ առնուս այս չաքարի թղթի ձեւովն լինի: Թէ որ մին փոքր մեծ լինի ոչինչ չէ անում, ապա քան զայս փոքր չլինի. ամայ միակերպ լինի:

Գրեցաւ 'ի դրան ս[ուր]բ Ամենափրկչի վանուցս ի թուին ՌՃԼԹ [1139=1690] յամսեանն ապրիլի քսան եւ չորս. ումն.

On reverse:

Մինասէ մ[ա]լ[ու]մ լինի Աղայիդ, որ գրեալսն անյապաղ կատարես ուր գնովն փողն վերէն բառնաս ող[ո]րկես: [Seal/կնիք]

In the Name of God

From Stepanos Vardapet, the servant of Jesus Christ from whom may this letter of blessing and protection, apostolic grace, and the multitudinous blessings of God reach the faithful and Christ-loving Paron Agha of Tabriz and all those who are close to you. May you rejoice in God in great celestial bliss, Amen.

May you have grace and peace from God the Father, from our Lord Jesus Christ, and from the Holy Spirit [.....]

And through this blessing may you be notified of the following, dear brother, Paron Agha. Since there were some things and equipment missing after we commenced printing here, we wrote letters of blessing twice and even three times to you and to [other] Julfan merchants residing in that place [i.e., Venice, Livorno, and Genoa] and not only did you not take care of our problem but you did not even find our pleas worthy of the shortest letter of response. May you remain healthy, Paron Agha. I understand that the others did not

102 Huk'm<A/P A 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎴 *hukm* (v.n.), Exercising authority, commanding; command, dominion, decree, order.

[wish to] look after our needs. But I wrote you a special letter and why did you also not care, Paron Agha? It seems that you had no honor on account of which you were not mindful of our request. Is it not evident to you that there was no separation [juda] between myself and Paron Minas? Perhaps if you had been mindful of our request and agreed to send the goods, we might not have consented [ghabul cheink' anum] to it. May the good Lord forgive your sins. Behold, now I am writing anew a letter to you and with Paron Minas's knowledge. [I am asking you to] buy paper worth up to three hundred marchils, so long as the paper is good and uniform [miakerp] in appearance like this sugar paper here, so that by God we shall use it to print the Synaxarium [haysmavurk']. Moreover, you should tally the sum spent on our bars and bolts that Joseph (Husepn) has brought and take care of the below-written [requests]. If you accrue additional expenses, I will pay the sum along with the above-mentioned 300 marchils to Paron Minas here. What we want is this: One large "blit" with its works; let the size be that of Oscan Yerevantsi's Bible. What is more, we wish to have the images in the Bible that he [Oscan] had printed along with the text; send us their copy/example/sample [nora orinak] or the shape of the images in an engraving [kerpn patkernerih ghalubovn]. Also, we need the steel and wooden frame where the letters are set and the book page and size are fastened [grki ějn ev ch'apn ku prnen] as well as the frame that stores the paper. [We also need] a matrix [ghalub/qalib] where one can cast ten types/fonts [?]

Moreover, we need four sets [dast] of letters or types of the entire alphabet. One set of lower case letters [vayr gir?] for the Synaxarium, another for the Bible, and one more [set of] small letters for the Psalter, of which I have sent an example of each typeface with its bronze [mold?] to you. We also need two steel frames [ghambar], wherein the letters are arranged and which goes under the block frame/encasing [Blit], with different varieties of orders [kanon?], upper case and large decorative capitals [p'afk'agir] with their floral versions, all of which you are to take care of and purchase quickly as soon as this letter reaches you and send with trustworthy people. If you spend more money on them write to me so I shall give the sum to Paron Minas here. Spend 300 Marchils alone on paper of one size and you shall receive your recompense from Christ. Also send us one letter frame where one arranges lead types; send it to us with all the letters arranged already so we can see what it looks like. My dear brother, even though you will be laboring with your body this work is spiritual in nature. We are not ordering¹⁰³ [hukm] you to do this; rather I am asking you with affection to be mindful of my requests. I am thankful to you and I shall inscribe a remembrance to you in each of the books....If you end up spending more money on this, write a berat on my name so I can pay it to Paron Minas; this will be agreeable to me. I wrote two [copies] of this letter and sent both to you. My dear one, let the paper you purchase be of the same variety as this sugar paper; if it is slightly larger than

103 See footnote 102 for the word.

this paper no harm will be done so long as it is not smaller and is uniform [in quality]. Written at the entrance of the All Savior's Convent [in Julfa] in the year 1139 [+551=1690] on the 24th day of the month of April.

On the reverse:

Let it be known [malum] to you, Agha, from Minas that you carry out without delay what is written here and take the money from the latter [?] and send [the goods] [Seal of Khwaja Minas.

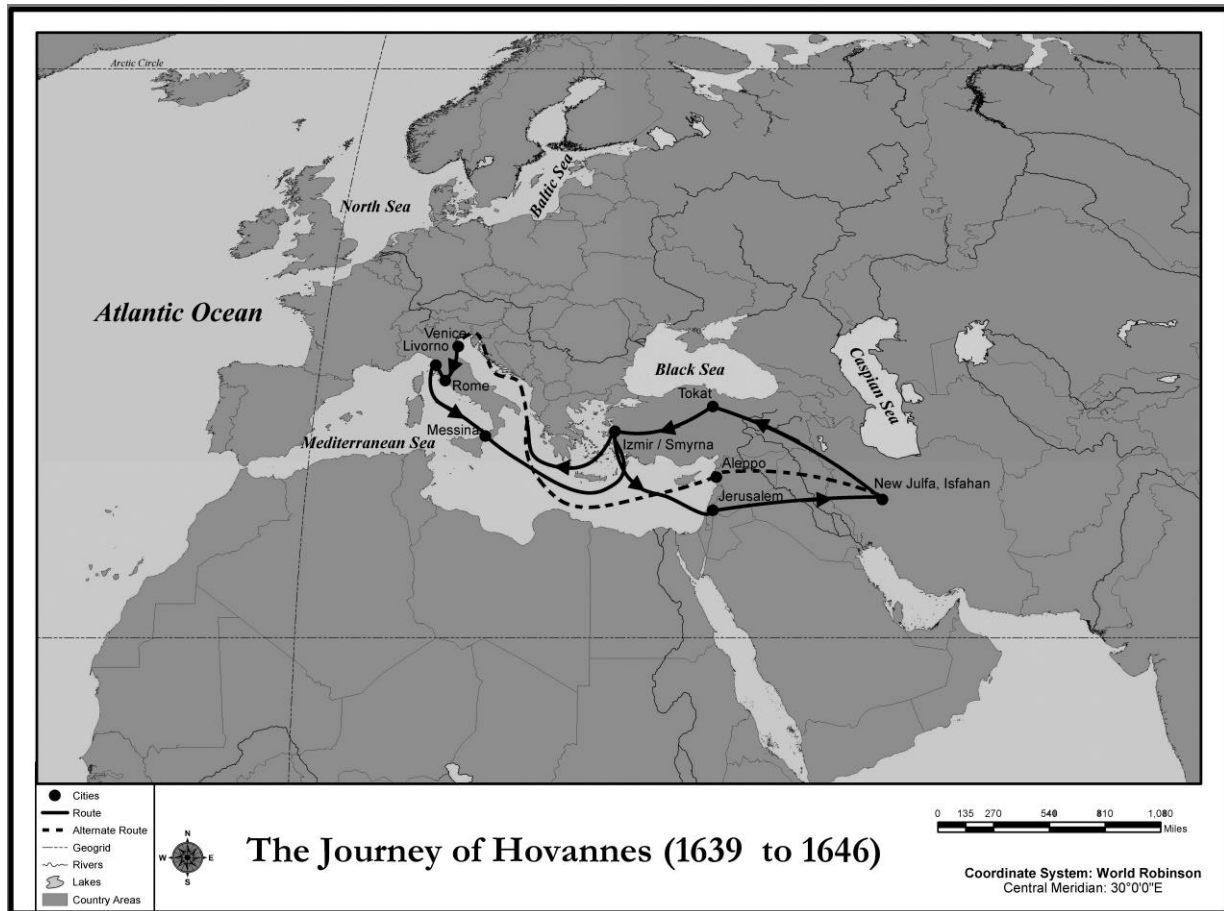


Figure 7 Map of Hovannes Jughayets' peregrinations, 1639-1646.