



“Wings on their Feet and on their Heads”

Reflections on Port Armenians and Five Centuries of Global Armenian Print Culture



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From its origins in Venice in 1512, the history of early modern (1500–1800) Armenian print culture was closely entangled with that of port cities, initially in Europe and subsequently in Asia. In fact, virtually every Armenian printing press before 1800 was established either in or close to port cities, and the few

that were not owed their existence to on-going relations with port locations. Yet, despite the obvious relationship between ports and printers, their synergetic relationship has thus far largely eluded scholarly attention. As Armenians across the world celebrate the quincentenary of Hakob Meghapat's printing of the first Armenian book in Venice, it will be useful for us to pause and reflect on the intimate relationship between port cities and printers in the rich history of Armenian print culture and the history of the early modern Armenian book referred to in Armenian scholarship as *hnatib girk'ë*. In the process, it will also be important to meditate on the connecting link or hinge between ports and printers, namely what I will call, following the tradition of scholars of Sephardic Jewish history, the figure of the “port Armenian.”

An Aquacentric View of Early Modern Armenian History¹

Armenian historiography and especially Armenian “historical memory” seem to be fixated on the figure of the Armenian as rooted in his or her ancestral homeland. Land, for good or for ill, has been taken as the ideal and often only matrix for Armenian history. While there are good reasons for this unexamined assumption

in Armenian historical writing (Armenia’s mostly landlocked geographical terrain and the historical bond between statehood and territorial sovereignty not being the least of which) this “terracentric” view of Armenian history does not correspond to some basic realities of the Armenian past, especially during the crucial years between 1500 and 1800 C.E., that I have come to label as the “early modern” period in Armenian history.² During this period, arguably the most momentous changes in Armenian history, including but not limited to Armenians’ early openness to and adoption of print technology, did not take place on the rugged terrain of the Armenian plateau, where perpetual wars between the two gunpowder empires of the Ottomans and Safavids had destroyed much of the region’s populations and local economies. Rather they unfolded across the slippery





surface of the world's major bodies of water and through the port cities dotting their shorelines. More particularly, the pulsating center of Armenian history during the early modern period and beyond seems to have shifted almost entirely to the port cities of the Indian Ocean rim and, to a lesser degree, the Mediterranean basin. Consider for instance the location of the first Armenian printing press in Venice in 1512 followed by a string of presses operating from the Most Serene republic (*La Serenissima*) for several centuries and the establishment of the Mkhitarist Congregation of erudite Catholic Armenian monks, a little over two centuries after Hakob Meghapart's press, in San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon. It would be almost impossible for us today to imagine what is often called the "Armenian renaissance" without the learned monks who followed in the footsteps of the Congregation's founder, Abbot Mkhitar, not to mention the printing press that enabled these monks to preserve, classify, and in fact give form to the canon of Armenian literature. The same can be said of the Indian Ocean basin and its archipelago of port cities such as Surat, Madras, and Calcutta, to name a few, where the bulk of and certainly the wealthiest among port Armenians lived. What would the history of Armenian journalism be without *Azdarar*, published for two consecutive years by Harout'wn Shmavonian in Madras from the 1794 to 1796? What of Armenian political thought and modern constitutional thinking without Shahamir Shahamirian's *Girk' anuaneal vorogayt parats* (Book called Snare of Glory), the first republican constitution of a future state of Armenia that saw the light of day not in Armenia but Madras around 1787? The same may be said of the first printed Armenian play in the world ("The Physiognomist of Duplicity," Calcutta, 1823) and arguably the first novel in vernacular Armenian (Mesrob Taghياتians's *Vep Varsenkan*, 1847). All of these achievements shared three things in common. First, their existence was made possible by the modern technology of the printing press and its mechanical (re)production of books through movable metal type. True, we should withstand the temptation to exaggerate the "revolutionary" nature of the shift from manuscript to print and the latter's impact on Armenian societies across the world as has sometimes been done by those who see print technology as causing a "communications revolution." However, the recent push back to represent the appearance of the printed codex as a "blip" or "hiccup"³ of continuity in the *longue durée* of the history of the book should also be avoided.⁴ Second, they all occurred either in or near port cities or were facilitated by maritime connections to such cities. The third commonality among these accomplishments is that their very existence was predicated on the support, both intellectual and financial, of "port Armenians."⁵ Who or what were these port Armenians and how did they differ from the run-of-the-mill Armenians who did not live in or near port cities? Are there any attributes that distinguished them, and if so what are they?

First, unlike their agrarian counterparts, who for the most part lived far away from the great shorelines of the world and eked out a living by tilling the land as peasants or as small-time local merchants and artisans, port Armenians were predominantly if not almost exclusively long-distance merchants whose livelihood and

identity were largely shaped by their relationship to the sea. They made a living as long-distance merchants involved in the global trade of silk, spices, South Asian textiles, and precious stones. Constantly in motion across bodies of water to conduct what world historians call "cross-cultural trade," port Armenians, as their name implies, resided for the most part in great port cities of their age such as Amsterdam, Venice, Marseille, Saint Petersburg, Astrakhan, Madras, and Calcutta—all locations for Armenian printing presses.

From *Khwaja Nahapet Gulnazar Aguletsi, Parzabanur'wn hogenuag Saghmosatsn Davr'i Margarein (Venice, 1687)*, 2–3.



Second, as long-distance merchants betrothed to the sea and its many ports, port Armenians, like their Sephardic counterparts in Jewish history, embodied many of the traits associated with Mercurius, the Roman god of merchants, often portrayed with "wings on his feet and head."⁶ Mercurius's winged sandals and winged hat have come to symbolize the principal attributes of the "port Jew" according to historians Lois Dubin and David Sorkin who coined the concept of "port Jew" a little over a decade ago to distinguish mostly Sephardic Jews engaged in long-distance maritime trade from their counterparts working in European courts, often known as "court Jews." The symbolism of Mercurius's winged nature was not lost on Dubin and Sorkin, both of whom identified it with movement and flight, attributes they found present in the figure of the port Jew. The latter, because of his

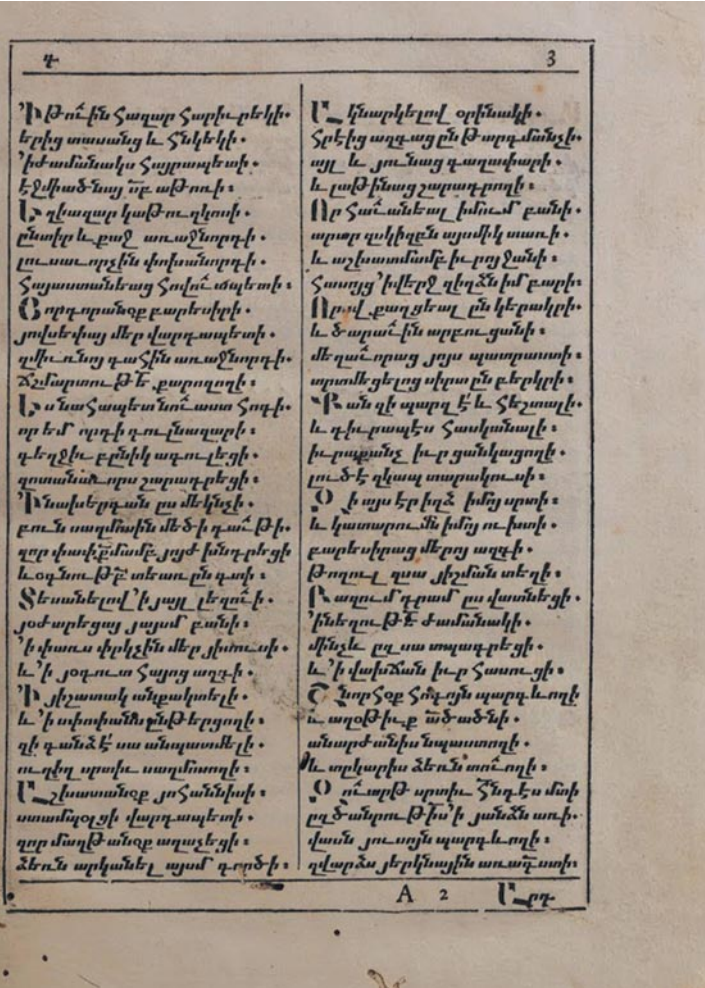


association with port cities and long-distance commerce, was a quintessential “border-crosser” who moved swiftly through and across diverse cultural zones and was no less swift, adventurous, and cosmopolitan in the flights of his imagination and thoughts. The relationship with commerce on the seas for the port Jew and, as we shall see, for the port Armenian is therefore an integral part of his identity as a “social type.” Generally speaking, individuals whose location and vocation are in ports are more likely to be open to the world around

Third, with the exception of a small minority from the mercantile town of Agulis in the Caucasus,⁷ the overwhelming majority of these port Armenians traced their ancestry to the township of New Julfa, the prosperous suburb of the Iranian Safavid imperial capital of Isfahan where their forebears were relocated by Shah ‘Abbas I in 1604–1605 in the course of the Ottoman-Safavid wars.⁸ Their original homeland, the town of Old Julfa in what is today the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan, was probably the last place in the world to be associated with oceans and seas. Its land-locked position and inhospitable environment were traits that had caught the attention of more than one European traveler who passed through the town before its destruction in the early years of the seventeenth century. The French traveler and writer Jean Chardin, for instance, remarked “that it is not possible to find another town situated in a place that is more dry and more rocky.”⁹ It was Shah ‘Abbas I’s razing of the town to the ground and the brutal relocation of its mercantile denizens to his newly-built capital of Isfahan that altered the future trajectory of Armenian history. The Shah’s granting of a royal protection and quasi monopoly of the Crown’s silk trade to the Julfians (1619) and subsequent unlocking of the gates of the Indian Ocean in 1622, when the fort of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf fell from Portuguese to Iranian control, prized open the wide watery world of the Indian Ocean to merchants from New Julfa and helped transform the Julfians into port Armenians. Like some of their counterparts who had settled or were in the process of settling in the port cities of the Mediterranean world (Venice, Livorno, Marseille, Smyrna/Izmir, and Constantinople/Istanbul as well as on the Atlantic seaboard in Amsterdam), they did not take long to establish mercantile communities in most of the ocean’s important port cities. Most settled in port cities under the rule of the English East India Company such as Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay, followed by Singapore and Dutch-controlled Batavia in the nineteenth century; others resided in French and Portuguese outposts, such as Pondicherry in Southern India and Macao/Canton in China whence they plied a lucrative trade with Manila exchanging Indian textiles and spices as well as Chinese porcelain and silk for New World silver that arrived each year from Acapulco on Spanish convoys known as the Manila Galleon. But what could these port Armenians have to do with the history of the Armenian book and the printing press, which after all was almost entirely confined to its European cradle from 1512 to the late 1600s when it began to gravitate slowly to the East? This brings us to the fourth and final attribute of port Armenians, their active patronage of the arts and culture in general and of the new craft of printing in particular.

The PPP Link: Port Armenians, Ports, and Printers

The bonds that connected ports and port Armenians to printers across the oceans and occasionally over land were complex. First and foremost, the location of the printing establishment was crucial. Most Armenian printers in the early modern period, with a few exceptions, were members of the literati belonging to the clerical hierarchy of the Armenian Church. They usually set up their presses in the port cities in Europe that already had a substantial



them, probably more likely to experiment with the cultural practices they encounter among the peoples with whom they come into contact, and thus are likely to have cultural identities that are hybrid and enriched through sustained contact and intermingling with others from across the oceans. Also, largely as a function of their location in port cities, themselves some of the greatest hubs of information in the globally connected world that came to take shape during the early modern period, port Armenians were exposed to a greater volume and more diverse varieties of information than their land-locked counterparts. This meant that new technologies such as the printing press or inventions associated with it, such as novel papermaking techniques and so on, would be more easily accessible to port Armenians than their landlubbing counterparts.

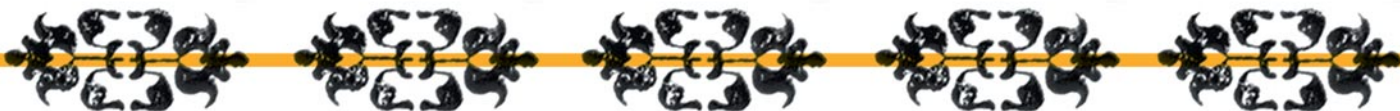


presence of port Armenians with ties to New Julfa. The port city location was preferred for several reasons. For reasons alluded to above port cities were the most dynamic nodes of the world economy during the early modern period and therefore leading loci of technological innovation. As far as printers were concerned, port cities offered access to paper manufacturers, font casters, engravers, as well as compositors and press operators. In addition, the fact that they usually contained a substantial presence of port Armenians willing to patronize and shore up new printing presses meant that Armenian port settlements already came equipped with a diasporic community infrastructure including churches and other community institutions. Most important perhaps, port cities afforded printers with relatively cheap and efficient access to transportation. In an age when transportation by water was almost always cheaper, safer, and faster than its overland counterpart, location in a port city meant that a printer could load his newly printed commodity (books) and have it shipped to the nearest markets of consumption. In the eighteenth century, the major reading market for Armenian books was Constantinople/Istanbul, home to the largest urban population of Armenians. The city's close to 80,000 Armenians by the second half of the eighteenth century was the prized destination for printed Armenian books that were shipped there either directly to its bustling port with its minaret-studded skyline or by caravan routes once the books were unloaded in the port of Smyrna/Istanbul in the south.¹⁰ A few examples of Armenian port city presses will suffice to clarify what has been said thus far.

Amsterdam, where an Armenian press was installed in 1660, and where Armenian printers were active until the second decade of the eighteenth century, was an important Armenian port city with a significant presence of Julfan merchants and two successive churches: *Surb Karapet* in 1663/64 followed by *Surb Hogi* in 1713.¹¹ In the second half of the seventeenth century, the city had clearly taken the lead as the most dynamic printing center in the world with over forty printing houses publishing in multiple languages, including Armenian and Hebrew. Partly as a result of this reputation, it attracted Armenian printers beginning with the most famous of them, Oskan Yerevantsi (originally from New Julfa) who, with the active financial support of several Julfan merchants in Livorno, printed the first Armenian bible in Amsterdam in 1666.¹² After Yerevantsi moved to Livorno and Marseille with his press, his place was eventually filled by members of the illustrious family of *savants* and printers, the Vanandets'is from the region of Ghoghthn in Nakhijevan, who actively published first-rate books from their settlement in the Dutch capital from 1694 to 1717, when their press was shut down due to financial troubles.¹³ As Rene Bekius has pointed out in an insightful essay, another reason for Amsterdam's lure was its reputation for being a haven for persecuted minorities such as Sephardic Jews expelled from Iberian Peninsula and Huguenots from France as well as Armenian printers keen to avoid the tentacular reach of the censors of the *Propaganda Fide*, an organization founded by the Catholic Church in 1622 to spread Christianity in new areas and to combat the effects of the reformation and presence of what it regarded as "heresy."¹⁴ In addition to having lax censorship laws and being relatively free of censors

and spies from Rome, Amsterdam with its famous stock exchange also boasted an information and transportation network second to none, as well as paper mills producing cheaper and better quality paper due to a new innovation in production techniques.¹⁵ The same was true of Marseille (1670s), Livorno (1640s), Venice (1512–1513, 1564–5, 1586, 1660s to the present), Constantinople (1567, 1660s and from 1701 to the present), Saint Petersburg (1781–), Astrakhan (1796–), and especially Madras (1772) and Calcutta (1796). All these locations were port cities with impressive communities of port Armenians. They were also connected to each other and to New Julfa through networks of circulation through which capital, commodities, printers, and merchants as well as printed books, ideas, and new technologies circulated. The establishment of a press in New Julfa as early as 1638 was in many ways an exception to the port city-printers pattern discussed above.¹⁶ However, this press could have hardly existed without the financial and technical support offered to it by the township's famous merchants residing abroad in one of their many port city settlements from Venice to Madras. For instance, when in 1686 the township's clerical hierarchy decided to reopen the press that had been shut down following an uprising in the 1640s of the suburb's scribes, if the French Huguenot traveler, Jean Baptist Tavernier's account is to be trusted, the primate of the time wrote a letter (stored at the Archivio di Stato di Firenze) to the most notable Julfan merchants residing in Venice asking them for assistance with the purchase of technical equipment (including new fonts and types).¹⁷

In addition to providing Armenian printers with an institutional or community infrastructure, port Armenians provided the capital investments necessary to shore up the printing activities of the clerical elite. They did this in several ways. They were directly involved in partnerships with printer-priests as a form of what has come to be known as "print Capitalism."¹⁸ An example of this is the partnership contract that a Julfan merchant named Paolo Alexan (Poghos ordi Aleksani?) had entered with two Armenian priests (Oannes de Ougorlou and Matheus di Hovhannes) who ran an important press in Amsterdam from 1685 to the mid-1690s. After printing 8,300 copies of Armenians books, many of them destined for Smyrna to be sold there and, one would assume, in Constantinople, the partners had had a falling out and took their dispute to a notary public.¹⁹ However, business partnerships between port Armenians and printers based exclusively on the profit motive were the exception in the history of the Armenian book, unlike its European counterpart where printing was from its origins a model of a capitalist enterprise.²⁰ The small size of the Armenian reading market, itself a function of low population numbers and even lower literacy rates, was probably the main reason why the profession of the printer was not a profitable one. Merchants were thus quick to realize that printing for capitalist motives was not a paying proposition and began supporting printing presses not necessarily with the intention of engaging in a capitalist enterprise but rather as a form of cultural patronage for both Church and "nation." They could have done this for reasons that we would today call "prestige power" or the vanity of having the names of their family members immortalized in the colophons of



the books published through their benevolence. The case of Simeon Yerevantsi's press in Ejmiatsin—the first printing press in the homeland—as far away from a port city as one could imagine—is an example of the latter. Established in 1772, this press was entirely paid for by a port Armenian residing in Madras known as Grigor Agha Chekigents (alias Mikael Khojajanian), who donated 18,000 rupees to the Catholicosate to help buy the appropriate material for casting of types and even for the establishment of a paper mill in 1775 on the grounds of the Catholicosate.²¹ Thus when technical specialists could not be procured *in situ*, a port Armenian in Madras made sure not only to raise the required capital but also to rely on his local connections in India and dispatch to the Catholicos French technical specialists from the port settlement of Pondicherry to help the monks in their enterprise of printing. Sometimes both activities (cultural patronage and entrepreneurial investment) were combined, as was the case with Oskan Yerevantsi's press in Amsterdam, which was bought with the capital investment of Oskan's brother, Avetis Ghlijents, a merchant from New Julfa. This press was later donated by Oskan to Ejmiatsin under whose name it functioned during its various peregrinations from Amsterdam to Marseille and thence to Constantinople. Merchants also stepped in to support Armenian printers through directly commissioning important works for publication.

The publication of several trade and language manuals useful to merchants, such as the celebrated *Gants ch'ap'oy kshroy twoy ew dramits' bolor ashkhari* [A treasury of measures, numbers, and moneys of the entire world (Amsterdam, 1699) and the first Armenian book in the vernacular, *Arhest Hamaroghut'ean, amboghj ev katareal* [The art of arithmetic, complete and perfect] (Marseille, 1675), are examples of such mercantile patronage of Armenian books. The same can be said for works of translation from foreign languages, such as Charles Rollin's *Histoire Romaine* [Patmut'iwn hrovmeakan] and William Robertson's multi-volume *History of America* [Vipasanut'iwn Amerikoy], both commissioned by Julfan merchants from Madras and printed or published by Mkhitarists in Venice and Trieste,²² respectively. In a few cases, merchants carried out the translations themselves and paid for the publication of their own works such as Marcara Shahrmanian's translation of Petis de la Croix's *Histoire du Grand Genghizcan*, [Patmut'iwn Metsin Gengizkhani arajin kayser nakhni mghulats ev tatarats, bazhaneal i chors girs] (Trieste, 1788).



Portrait of Marcara Shahrmanian, from *Patmut'iwn Metsin Gengizkhani arajin kayser nakhni mghulats ev tatarats, bazhaneal i chors girs* (Trieste, 1788).

In addition to patronizing the printing activities of priests, did port Armenians also own and operate their own printing presses? As mentioned above, the miniscule size of the Armenian reading public and the low levels of literacy made print capitalism unfeasible for port Armenians and the few cases of merchant printers were few and far in between.²³ In the seventeenth century, Armenian merchants operated at least two Armenian presses in Venice: Gaspar

Shahrmanian's press of 1687 and the press of Khwaja Nahapet Gulnazar Agulets'i, which published the *Psalms of David*, the second of only three printed Armenian books in the vernacular during the seventeenth century.²⁴ In the eighteenth century, it became more common perhaps to

find port Armenians who were also owners of their own printing presses. The most celebrated case of this was the merchant prince Shahamir Shahamirian, who established in Madras in 1772 the first Armenian printing press in India and printed a number of trailblazing books including in 1787–89 *Girk' anuaneal vorogayt' Parats* (Book called Snare of Glory), the republican proto-constitution for a future republic of Armenia.²⁵ Later this same press appears to have been used to print the first Armenian newspaper in the world, *Azdarar* (1794–1796). The press of Grigor Khojamal Khaldarian, a Julfan from India who had traveled to and resided in London in the 1770s²⁶ and later opened Russia's first Armenian printing press in the port city of Saint Petersburg in 1781 is another case in point. It is interesting to note that the first published work by an Armenian woman, Kleopatra Sarafian's *Banali Gitut'ean* (Key of knowledge) saw the light of day on Khaldarian's press in 1788.²⁷

As Armenians across the world celebrate an important milestone in Armenian history, we need to remember that many important aspects of the history of the Armenian book remain to be properly scrutinized and studied. What I have sketched above in an impressionistic way is only the maritime and mercantile underpinnings of Armenian print culture. Other scholars before me have touched upon this in more or less fruitful ways but never systematically. There are entire areas of the history of the Armenian book that remain not only untouched but whose very existence has not even been properly acknowledged and therefore examined. Important questions such as how does the study of the printed book in its multifaceted dimension—from its production site in port cities or elsewhere to its destination into the hands of readers—contribute to our understanding of the *mentalité* of any given society? In other words, how do books begin to transform the mental universe of ordinary readers once they are released into a network of circulation? Who were the principal readers among the early modern Armenians, what was the literacy rate, and how does one even begin to measure it? In addition, the “history of reading” or who read what, *how*, and where is a topic that has occupied center stage in the discipline of the history of the book in Europe and North America but remains

terra incognita in the scholarship on the Armenian book.²⁸ As the worldwide celebrations of the quincentenary continue and exhibits and conferences are convened, one hopes that scholars of the Armenian past will pause, take critical stock of what their predecessors accomplished, and while grateful for standing tall on their shoulders will forge ahead to pose new and imaginative questions of their own. As every good historian knows, the ability to pose the right kinds of questions to the evidence one has at one's disposal is among the most important skills that members of the historian's tribe cherish. One can only wish that in the wake of the quincentenary celebrations new and theoretically vigorous studies will bloom in the study of the printed Armenian book. If we are fortunate, this crop will be conceptually informed by the most recent Euroamerican scholarship in the tradition of the post-Annales *L'histoire du Livre* while simultaneously being archivally grounded in notarial and other documents. A hundred years ago at the last centenary as Armenians in Istanbul, Tiflis, and other locations prepared to celebrate the accomplishments of Hakob Meghapart in the port city of Venice, they inspired a new generation of scholars of the book, including Teotik, and the formidable Leo (Arakel Babakhanian)²⁹ to blaze new paths of scholarship that superseded the work of Garegin Zharbanalian³⁰ and others in the generation before them. May the same happen with this centenary. □

ENDNOTES

1. My thoughts in this section of the paper were first inspired by my reading of Jerry Bentley's "Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2, Oceans Connect (Apr., 1999), pp. 215–224; and Kären Wigen, "AHR Forum: Oceans of History, Introduction," *American Historical Review*, (June 2006): 717–721.
2. See Sebouh D. Aslanian, "Silver, Missionaries, and Print: A Global Microhistory of Early modern Armenian Networks of Circulation and the Armenian Translation of Charles Rollin's *Histoire Romaine*," unpublished paper, 2009; idem., "Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Five Centuries of Armenian Print Culture and Book History," (unpublished paper).
3. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 316. I have elaborated at length on the issue of continuity versus rupture in my "Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Five Centuries of Armenian Print Culture and Book History."
4. Thus Robert Gross writes: "The current consensus, neatly summarized by the French historian Roger Chartier, is that the change from the manuscript to the printed book was *no big deal*. In its physical design, the newcomer kept the old ways. It employed devices developed in monastic scriptoria to order the text: signatures, page numbers, columns and lines, ornaments, alphabetical tables, systematic indexes. It inherited a hierarchy of sizes, from the learned folio to the humanist quarto down to the bedside libellus. And it called upon methods of silent reading of long standing in medieval universities and popularized among aristocratic laymen in the fifteenth century. The printing press thus depended on, rather than altered, the fundamental form of the book." (Emphasis added) Robert A. Gross, "Communications Revolutions: Writing a History of the Book for an Electronic Age," *Rare Books and Manuscript Librarianship*, 13 (1998) 15.
5. My thoughts on Port Armenians have been influenced by the work of Lois Dubin and David Sorkin in Jewish Studies. See David Sorkin, "The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type," *Journal of Jewish Studies* (Cambridge, England) 50 (Spring 1999): 87–97 and Lois Dubin, "Wings on their feet" and "wings on their head": Reflections on the Study of Port Jews," in David Cesarani/ Gemma Romaine, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 14–30
6. See Dubin, "Wings on their Feet," 14–16.
7. Armenian merchants from Agulis were particularly active alongside Julfans in Mediterranean port cities such as Venice, Livorno, and Marseille.
8. For information on Julfa and its merchants, see Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa, Isfahan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

9. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Ed. L. Jangles. 10 vols. Paris: Le Normant, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1811, 2: 304.
10. For a smart discussion, see the following works by Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Catalogue des 'incunables' arméniens (1511–1965) ou chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne*. (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1986); idem., "Livres imprimés et culture écrite dans l'Arménie des XVI et XVII siècles," *Revue des études arméniennes* (1982), idem., *Les imprimés arméniens des XVI et XVII siècles* (Paris, 1987); idem., *Les imprimés arméniens 1701–1850* (Paris, 1989).
11. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 79–80.
12. For the involvement of three Julfan merchants in the printing Yerevants'is Bible, see Karapet Amatuni, *Oskan Vrd. Erevants'i ev ir Zhamanak : lusavor ej m Zh daru yekeghets'akan Patmut'enën* [Oskan Vardapet Yerevantsi and his Time: A Luminous Page from the History of 17th century Ecclesiastical History], (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1975), 150–152, and Alessandro Orenco, "Ov Dateos dow Elkeli: Le Disavventure di un Mercante Armeno Nella Livorno del XVII Secolo," [Ov Dateos dow Elkeli: The Misadventures of an Armenian Merchant in XVII century Livorno] *Gli Armeni Lungo Le Strade d'Italia*, (Livorno, 1998), 55–68.
13. Sarukhan, Arakel, *Hollandan ew Hayer* [Holland and the Armenians] (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1925); Mesrop Gregorian, *Nor Niwt'er ew Ditoghut'iwnner Hratarakich Vanantets'woh Masin* [New Materials and Observations on the Vanantetsi Family of Publishers] (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1966); and Sahak Chemchemian, *Hay Tpagrut'iwn ew Hrom (ZhE. dar)* [Armenian Printing and Rome in the Seventeenth Century], (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1989)
14. René Bekius, "Polyglot Amsterdam printing presses: a comparison between Armenian and Jewish printers," (unpublished paper).
15. See Bekius and also the excellent overview in 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, pp. 53–92.
16. The press in Lvov established in 1616 was also an exception to the port city pattern but it too was paid for by the town's Armenian merchants some of whom had maritime connections in the Black and Mediterranean Seas.
17. The document is a letter written by Primate Stepanos Jughayetsi in New Julfa and addressed to the "pious and Christ-loving Julfan Merchants residing in the city of Venice," dated September 27, 1686, New Julfa, Isfahan. See Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Acquisti e doni busta* 123, nn. 77–7. I thank my friend Meroujan Karapetyan for placing this document at my disposal.
18. For this well-known concept, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd and revised edition (London: Verso, 1991).
19. See Sarukhan, *Hollandan ew Hayerë*, 102–103 for the translation of a notarial document where the dispute between the involved parties is discussed, and Gregorian, *Nor Niwt'er ew Ditoghut'iwnner*, 48–50 for a brief discussion.
20. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, and Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*, English translation (London: Verso, 1976). This classic was originally published in French as *L'Apparition du Livre* (Paris, 1958).
21. For the Catholicosate's first printing press, see Sebouh Aslanian, *Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation: The Role of Simeon Yerevants'i's Girk' or Kochi Partavjar in the Eighteenth Century Armenian National Revival*, (Venice: Bibliothèque d'arménologie "Bazmavep," 39, 2004), 30–31.
22. The Trieste branch of the Mkhitarists was established in 1773 by Minas Gasparian and Astuatsatur Babikian (scion of a wealthy family from New Julfa) who were exiled from the mother convent in San Lazzaro following a violent quarrel with the then reigning Abbot, Stepanos Melklonian. The Trieste branch was relocated to Vienna, where it continues to exist, in 1811. See Aslanian "Silver, Missionaries, and Print" for a detailed account of their separation from San Lazzaro.
23. I thank Meroujan Karapetyan for discussions on this matter.
24. See Pehlivanian, "Mesrop's Heirs," 62 and Jean-Pierre Mahé, "The Spirit of Early Armenian Printing: Development, Evolution, and Cultural Integration," *Catalogue des 'incunables' arméniens (1511/1695), ou, Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne*, Raymond Kévorkian. (Genève: P. Cramer, 1986), xvi.
25. See Aslanian, *Dispersion History* and "Silver, Missionaries, and Print" for fuller discussion of these works.
26. For Khaldarian's stay in London, see Willem G. Kuiters, *The British in Bengal, 1756–1773: A Society in Transition Seen through the Biography of a Rebel, William Bolts (1739–1808)*. (Paris: Indes savants, 2002)
27. Pehlivanian, "Mesrop's Heirs," 75.
28. For an exploratory foray into this terrain, see Aslanian, "A Reader Responds to Joseph Emin's *Life and Adventures*: Notes Towards a 'History of Reading' in Late Eighteenth Century Madras." *Handes Amsoyrya*, (Vienna, Yerevan: 2012) 9–65.
29. Teotik, *Tip u Tar* (Type and Font) (Istanbul, 1913); Leo [Arakel Babakhanian], *Haykakan tpagrutuyun* [Armenian Printing] 2 vols. (Tiflis, 1901)
30. *Patmut'iwn Hay Tpagrut'ean* [History of Armenian Printing] (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1895).