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JULFA I. SAFAVID PERIOD

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i. Safavid Period

Origin, settlement, and population

The original Julfa (Arm. *ǰuła*) is a very old village in the province of Nakhijevan (Naḵjavān), in historical Armenia (see ARMENIA AND IRAN). This village was established on a rocky strip of land, between the river Aras (see ARAXES) on the south and a steep mountain range on the north. Julfa is located on the river's left bank, about 20 miles to the southeast of the city of Nakhijevan. In 1921, a treaty between the Soviet Union and Turkey separated the province of Nakhijevan from Armenia, declaring it an autonomous territory of Azarbaijan.

Until 1500 little is known about this Armenian village, which in the 16th century became a mercantile center for the Levantine trade of raw silk (Herzig, 1996). Julfa's rise followed the political turmoil of the 14th and 15th centuries, when Mongols and Turkmens controlled Armenia and the country became physically and economically devastated. The remnants of the old Armenian principalities were gradually confiscated by Muslim tribal lords, and so the Armenian landlords lost their ancestral lands and suffered oppression. Most Armenians were forced to flee to safer areas, and some settled along trade routes to try their chances in commerce (P'ap'azyan, 1972, pp. 247-48). Since Julfa was ideally located near an international trade route that connected Tabriz, Erevan, Erzurum, and Tiflis, the old Armenian village

attracted large numbers of new settlers. Julfa's demographic growth between the late 15th and the the end of the 16th century is documented by epigraphic evidence from its cemetery, where in the early 20th century most of the dated tombstones (Arm. sing. *xačʿkʿar*; PLATE I) were from the 16th century (Baltrušaitis, p. 20). The English preacher John Cartwright (pp. 35-36) passed through Julfa in 1600 (cf. GREAT BRITAIN vi. BRITISH TRAVELERS TO PERSIA) and estimated that there were around 10,000 people living in about 2,000 houses.

Julfa's 16th-century prosperity was closely related to Europe's growing demand for raw silk (see ABRIŠAM), which in turn drove the expansion of the Levantine silk trade. Julfa is close to the silk-producing regions of Karabakh (Qarabāḡ), Shirvan (Širvān), Gilān, and Māzandarān. Armenians became heavily involved in the traffic of raw silk to Aleppo and Bursa, the most important silk markets of the 16th century, where European merchants purchased raw silk with coin or silver bullion (Baibourtian, 2004, pp. 19-27). By the end of the 16th-century, Julfa's merchants had established trade contacts with Europe, as is indicated by documents in the Venetian archives (Alishan, 1896, p. 160). Julfa's rise is also remarkable within the context of 16th-century politics. The Safavid dynasty took control of Persia in 1501, and its rulers fought 11 wars with the Ottoman empire, from the famous battle of Chaldiran (Čālderān, See also OTTOMAN-PERSIAN RELATIONS i) in 1514 to the treaty of Zohāb in 1639 (also known as the peace accord of Qaṣr-e Širin). Armenia was divided between these two enemies and served as their battleground for the greater part of the 16th century. Both the Safavids and the Ottomans often adopted a scorched-earth policy, devastating many Armenian towns and villages (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 21-22). Yet there is little evidence that Julfa's population suffered physical hardship. Unlike other Armenian cities, Julfa was largely spared looting and destruction (see the colophon of a 1595 manuscript cited by Tēr-Avetisean, I, p. 271). It is unknown, however, whether Julfa was spared because the city was too far removed form the actual battlefields or because its citizens could afford to pay large ransoms.

A decree (see FARMĀN), issued by Shah Ṭahmāsp (r. 1524-76) and dated 1545, states that the city of Julfa was an endowment (*waqf)* of the nearby St. Stephen's Monastery. Julfa enjoyed the privileged status of a crown domain (*ḵāṣṣa*) and so its citizens paid their taxes directly to royal treasury, and not to the administration (*divān*). An especially appointed *ḵāṣṣadār* was responsible for the separate collection of the crown domain taxes, and it seems that in

Julfa, as was common practice in other crown domains, the right to tax collection was leased to a local headman or wealthy merchant (Ghougassian, 2000, pp. 205). Julfa's citizens were thus protected against the arbitrary intervention of regular state tax collectors.

In the fall of 1603, Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 1587-1629) launched his first military campaign against the Ottomans to recapture the lands he had ceded to them in 1589-90. He captured Tabriz and Nakhijevan, and before advancing to Erevan, he passed through Julfa, where for three days he enjoyed the hospitality of the Armenian merchants. The shah captured Erevan in June 1604 and advanced towards Kars. But, faced with a strong Ottoman counter-offensive, the shah decided to retreat, adopting a scorched-earth policy to deny supplies to the advancing Ottoman enemy (Matthee, pp. 84-85). The shah ordered the deportation of the population of the province of Chukhuri Saʿd to Iran and the destruction of crops and pastures. In a matter of days all the towns and villages on the path of the retreating Safavid army were destroyed, and more than 400,000 people were deported to Iran. Julfa was completely demolished, and its entire population was forced to cross the river Aras into Iran (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 24-32). The city's cemetery, renowned for its thousands of artistically carved funerary monuments (Arm. sing. *xačʻkʻar*), survived this destruction and remained until the end of the 20th century the most visible material evidence for Julfa's glorious Armenian past, only to suffer vandalism and complete destruction, beginning in 1998 and 2002, when the army of Azarbaijan converted it into a shooting range (Hakhnazaryan, pp. 7-15),, and systematically completed in late 2005 [see Comment].

The Armenian historiographer Aṙakʻel of Tabriz (d. 1670) recorded that the deportation occurred between 21 October and 19 November 1604 (that is, the month of Navasard 1054 of the Armenian calendar; Aṙakʻel, I, p. 38). The sudden deportation of about 400,000 people, who were moving before the retreating Safavid army during the cold and rainy weather on muddy roads, caused general confusion, and the Armenian refugees suffered great hardship. Having crossed the river Aras, they were forced to continue their way through the Qaradāḡ Mountains to reach shelter for the winter in Ḵalḵāl, Ahar, and Meškin. The following spring the Armenians were moved again and distributed in large numbers mainly to Gilān, Māzandarān, and the rural areas between Isfahan, Shiraz, and Hamadān. Select groups of artisans from Erevan, Nakhijevan, Dašd, and other Armenian cities were brought to Isfahan, where they settled in the quarters of Taḵt-e Qaraja, Bāḡāt, Šamsābād, Torskān,

and Šayḵ Šaʿbān (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 25-47).

Shah ʿAbbās I treated the mercantile community of Julfa in general better than other deportees. Before their deportation, they were given three days' notice and received permission to take their moveable wealth. The Julfa deportees were provided with reasonable means of transportation and wintered in Tabriz. In early summer of 1605, the Julfa deportees were given temporary shelter in Isfahan, and they began with the building of New Julfa on *ḵāṣṣa* land, on the right bank of the Zāyandarud (Figure 1; for the area and its development, see Karapetian, pp. 46-50 and figs. 1-9a). Thanks to their rescued moveable possessions, the Armenians were able to build within a few years large houses, mansions, and churches. The Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652) visited Isfahan between 1617 and 1619, around 12 years after the deportation to Iran, and he observed that in New Julfa (Arm. *Nor ǰuła*; Pers. *Jolfā*) the Armenians had already built 10 churches (Della Valle, III, p. 102; *Chronicle*, I, p. 245; PLATE II), while in the city of Isfahan 6 new churches had been erected (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 291-92). In 1619, Shah ʿAbbās I granted the lands of New Julfa to its Armenian settlers (for details about the decree, see Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 208-10). The widely traveled French merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-89) thought that, compared to other Christian communities under Muslim rule, the Armenians of New Julfa were in a privileged position, since they were allowed to own land and other forms of property (Tavernier, 1684, I, p. 159).

For the first decades after its foundation, New Julfa was exclusively populated by Armenians from Old Julfa. The Christian community was isolated from its Muslim neighbors in the surrounding areas, and foreign travelers estimated that approximately 10,000 people (Herbert, p. 169) were living as about 2,000 families (*Chronicle*, I, p. 130) in a settlement of about 160 hectares, or 395 acres. But in the city of Isfahan, more than 1,000 families of Armenian artisans were settled among Muslims, and the coexistence was very difficult because of religious conflicts and differences in lifestyle and social habits. Muslims felt offended that the Armenians built churches, rang church-bells, and produced wine, and so they started to complain to the Safavid court. After decades of Muslim complaints, Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1642-66) expelled the Armenians from Isfahan, and between 1655 and 1659 they were gradually moved to the southwestern borders of New Julfa (Arakʿel, II, pp. 336-46). New Julfa grew by 7 new quarters, which were named Tabriz, Gavrābād, Šamsābād, Gask, Kʿočʿēr, Łaragel (which was the site of the Muslim village Qeynun), and Erevan

(de Bruyn, pp. 225-26).

Contemporary Armenian sources do not provide numbers for the total population of New Julfa in the 17th century. Between 1666 and 1676 the Huguenot jeweler John Chardin (1643-1712 or 1713) traveled three times to Isfahan, where he lived for a few years. Chardin (II, p. 107) believed that between 3,400 and 3,500 families, comprising about 30,000 people, lived in New Julfa. The English traveler John Fryer (d. 1733; II, pp. 252-53) visited New Julfa in 1677, and estimated a population of more than 6,000 families. In 1974 K. Karapetian published an architectural study of 13 17th-century houses in New Julfa. The ground floor area of 9 extant houses has an average surface area of 300 square meters, and estimating that 35 percent of a given parcel of land was used for construction, each house would have occupied 875 square meters of land. If one were to assume further that the surveyed structures were mostly large houses, the size of an average parcel of land would be reduced to 650 square meters, and New Julfa's total area of 233 hectares could be divided into about 3,580 units of 650 square meters (for the assumption that 17th-century New Julfa covered about 233 hectares, see Giuseppe Zander in Karapetian, p. xxiv). This calculation would confirm Chardin's estimates for the time when New Julfa had reached its demographic peak.

Society and administration

The 17th-century evidence for the Armenian community of New Julfa comprise Armenian historiography and Western travelogues, as well as the documentary records of manuscript colophons, patriarchal encyclicals, and general correspondence in the archives of New Julfa's All Savior's Monastery (PLATE III). These written sources are supplemented with the epigraphic evidence from New Julfa's churches and cemetery. Since the evidence provides only a fragmentary reflection of the community's social composition and internal administration, these aspects of New Julfa's history remain to be adequately studied, but it is possible to distinguish five groups who formed the upper and the lower classes.

The upper class was two-tiered. The first tier comprised the religious hierarchy, the nobility, and the wealthy. The religious hierarchy included the Archbishop of New Julfa, bishops, monks, and senior priests (Arm. sing. *avagerec*ʿ). The nobility were members of approximately 20 prominent families (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 47-48, 247-58), whose men were distinguished by titles, including prince (Arm. *išxān*), lord (*malek*; *beg*), sir (Arm. *paron*; Pers.

āqā) and ranks, such as gentry (Arm. *azat*). H. Pʻapʻazyan (1972, pp. 247-48) has argued that the New Julfan nobility were the descendents of old princely houses who in the late 15th and early 16th century had settled in Old Julfa to engage in the silk trade. The wealthy (Arm. *dowlatavorkʻ*) owned an abundance of possessions (Arm. *goyiwkʻ zełoun*), and its members were from the nobility and great merchant families.Most owned large family trade firms and employed hundreds of traders or factors.They were commonly addressed with the Persian honorific *k̲ʰāja* (plate iv) a title of men distinguished by wealth, services, virtues, and intellect (Bedik, p. 546).

The second tier comprised ordinary merchants (e.g., PLATE IV) and skilled craftsmen and artisans.The merchants were independent traders or factors of the great merchants, commonly praised in patriarchal encyclicals as wise (Arm. *imastun*), prudent (Arm. *xohem*), and ingenious (Arm. *hančareł*).The skilled craftsmen and artisans were usually called master (Arm. *varpet*; Pers. *ostā* short for *ostād*) and were described as fine craftsmen (Arm. *vayelčʻagorc*) or practitioners of fine arts (Arm. *gełecʻkarar*).They were, for example, master painters, sculptors, manuscript illuminators, scribes, teachers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, or watchmakers.Some were employed in the Safavid workshops, while others were independent or affiliated with large workshops in New Julfa.

The lower class consisted of ordinary artisans (Arm. *arhestavorkʻ*), common laborers, and servants (Arm. *cara*; Pers. *ḡoll*).The group that comprised the artisans had originally settled in Isfahan, and they were among those whom Shah ʿAbbās II moved between 1655 and 1659 to New Julfa.They were, for example, tailors, shoemakers, stonecutters, masons, carpenters, painters, candle makers, or blacksmiths.Thousands of tombstones at the cemetery of New Julfa depict by word or illustrations the deceased's occupation, documenting the variety of crafts practiced by the Armenians.

The group of common laborers included gardeners, warehouse workers, guards, porters, and peddlers.Unlike the agricultural workers in rural areas, they were not tied to living and working on the properties of the same employer for the duration of their lives.

At the bottom of society was a small group of servants, which included slaves (*arcatʻagin caraykʻ*) of Armenian, Georgian, Circassian, or Iranian origins.Wealthy families normally owned slaves whom they had purchased as youngsters from other regions.In the two versions of his will, dated 1652 and

1659 respectively, Ḵᵛāja Połos Veliǰaneancʿ inventoried his wealth, including houses, vineyards, shops, and 6 servants, and the text indicates that these servants could be freed only after his death (Tēr-Yovhaneancʿ, I, pp. 130-32).In a will dated 1697, Ḵᵛāja Minas bequeathed 3 tomans (for the monetary unit, see Album, pp. 29, 30) to each of his 3 servants (*ḡoll*) and granted them freedom after his death (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 48-50).

Unlike hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees scattered throughout Persia, the mercantile community of New Julfa was a privileged society, because Shah ʿAbbās I and his immediate successors Shah Ṣafi (r. 1629-42) and Shah ʿAbbās II appreciated their economic talents and made every effort to secure their involvement in the economic development of the Safavid state.The Armenians of New Julfa were reasonably well treated, because they were granted freedom in religious, economic, and internal community affairs.According to Aṙakʿel, Shah ʿAbbās I was criticized by Muslim teachers and leaders for his favorable treatment of the Julfan Armenians, and he responded with this justification: “I have brought them by force to our land. I have spent much money, effort, and tricks, not for their benefit, but for ours. They shall benefit our land and shall increase our population” (I, p. 55).

The Islamic law regulated that, as Christians, the Armenians of Iran were recognized as a non-Muslim, monotheistic minority (*ahl al-ketāb*).They were considered a protected group (*ahl al-ḏemma*; *ḏemma* lit. “obligation”), whose public and personal rights, extending to their freedom of worship, were protected by law as long as they were loyal to the Muslim rulers and paid a poll tax (*jezya*).Under the Safavids, this legal protection was applied not only to the Armenian community of New Julfa, but to the Armenian subjects in Persia at large (*Taḏkerat*, p. 180; cf. Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 56-76).John Chardin (II, p. 109) reported that under Shah ʿAbbās I 180 tomans were the annual poll taxes of New Julfa.This amount increased during the reign of Shah Ṣafī to 260 tomans (ibid.), and reached in 1664, during the last years of the reign of Shah ʿAbbās II, 500 tomans (Thévenot, II, p. 111). A decree, issued by Shah Solaymān (r. 1666-94) in 1683, set the annual poll taxes of New Julfa at 580 tomans (*Taḏkerat*, p. 180).

New Julfa, as mentioned above, was built on a crown domain, and the shah’s mother was entitled to all its taxes as part of her annual stipend (Bruyn, II, p. 109; Fryer, II, p. 258; cf. Chardin, II, p. 109).It is an interesting coincidence that the taxes of Old Julfa, when under Ottoman occupation in the last decade of the 16th century, had been the property of the sultan’s mother (Alishan, 1893,

p. 411).In Isfahan the Julfa merchants had established shops and warehouses in a large caravansary, which had been built by the shah's mother; this connection gave the Armenian community easy access to the Safavid court.

New Julfa was constructed on a plan that reflected its communal organization (Figure 2).The main avenue crossed the town from east to west, and was named after Ḵᵛāja Nazar, the second man to serve as the community's mayor (*kalāntar*) from 1618 to 1636.This was the only street with a name (Tēr-Yovhaneanc‘, I, pp. 40-42; for a partial Eng. tr., see Karapetian, p. 48, n. 1).Nine parallel streets crossed Nazar Avenue from north to south, forming 20 wards (Arm. *tasnak*) for 20 noble families.Each ward was identified by the name of the family who had settled there with their followers. A member of the respective family served as the ward's headman (Arm. *tanutēr*) or warden (Arm. *tasnakawag*).Each ward had a main gate, which was closed at night.

New Julfa's mayor was elected by the wards' 20 headmen and confirmed in his office by an official Safavid *raqam* (see FARMĀN). He served as liaison between the Safavid court and his community, and was responsible for the timely collection and transfer of taxes to the royal treasury.The mayor also served as the chief judge of the community's civilian matters (Tavernier, 1684, I, p. 159), as head of the council of wardens, and had an important role in assessing the tax obligation of each ward.The office was not hereditary, although between 1605 and 1660 the position was held by members of the same family: the four mayors Safar, Nazar, Šafraz, and Haikaz were sons and grandchildren of Ḵᵛāja Xač‘ik, the last mayor of Old Julfa, whose family was known as Sarfrazenk‘ or Šahixasenk‘.

The Council of Wardens represented the collective lay leadership of New Julfa.The council acted as the judiciary that decided civilian and trade disputes between community members, and was responsible for the community's internal peace and security.The council had great influence on all church affairs and played a leading role in the economy of New Julfa.Each headman was individually responsible for the collection and payment of his ward's taxes.In the 17th-century patriarchal encyclicals, the headmen are praised as truth-loving (Arm. *iravasēr*) and just (Arm. *ardaradat*).A petition submitted to the Russian Court by Grigor Lusikov in 1671 is signed by New Julfa's mayor and the heads of 22 trade companies, comprising all 20 wardens and the head of the craftsmen (*ostā-bāši*) Yakobǰan Erevanc‘i, who worked in the first Armenian printing press and afterwards served for 20 years as the chief painter (*naqqāš-bāši*) at the court of Shah ʿAbbās II.

New Julfa's overall security was the responsibility of a Muslim police chief (*dārugā*).His main duties were to receive the *ḵāṣṣa* taxes and to maintain law and order.He was in charge of criminal cases and all disputes between Armenians and Muslims.There is not any evidence that New Julfa had its own *dārugā*, and the *dārugā* of Isfahan was most probably also responsible for New Julfa (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 63-66).Even after the Safavid period, the Armenian community petitioned Nāder Shah (r. 1736-47) against the appointment of a *dārugā*.In 1741, the shah issued an order to the city governor (*ḥākem*) of Isfahan not to appoint a new *dārugā* for New Julfa, since the community had never had one, and instead to add its judicial cases to his docket.

Between 1605 and 1667, during the reigns of ʿAbbās I, Ṣafi, and ʿAbbās II, the community of New Julfa enjoyed social, religious, economic, and cultural prosperity.But under Shah Solaymān and Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn (r. 1694-1722), the situation changed drastically.The Armenian community experienced religious, social, and economic pressures, and the merchants began to gradually move their trade companies and families out of Iran and to settle abroad.The final blow came with the Afghan invasion of Isfahan in 1722.The Afghan occupation devastated New Julfa, and caused a mass exodus.Bishop Davitʿ, the primate of New Julfa between 1725 and 1728, reported that by 1725 156 families from the parishes of the Church of the Holy Spirit and St. John's Church, which were just 2 out of a total of 24 parish churches in New Julfa, had fled the city and abandoned their houses (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 157-65).

Commerce

The name Julfa symbolizes the international Armenian trade between the 16th and 18th centuries, because the great number of Julfa merchants and their far-reaching mercantile network, which connected Iran and Central Asia with the Far East, North Africa, Russia, all of Europe, and even America (*yengiduni Erkirn* lit. "New World"), ensured the enormous commercial success of their international trade (Ghougassian, 1998, p. 68).The destruction of Old Julfa in Armenia and establishment of New Julfa near the Safavid capital Isfahan was part of the economic plans of Shah ʿAbbās I.He had realized that the Julfan Armenians, who were already very experienced with the Levantine silk trade, would be instrumental for the development of Iran's international trade, if they were settled under his direct control.Their business ventures would increase the state revenue, while their profits would be channeled back to Iran, where the community was based.After 1605, when the Armenian

community of Old Julfa reconstituted itself in New Julfa, the protection of the Safavid rulers encouraged the Julfan merchants to expand the scope of their trade activities and to dominate Iran's international trade.

In 1587, when Shah ʿAbbās I ascended to the Safavid throne at age 18, Iranian society was rife with internal divisions and insecurity, while facing the external military threats of the Ottomans, Uzbeks, and Mughals.In 1589, the shah ceded large territories to the Ottomans to secure a temporary peace.He then devoted more than 10 years to the restoration of internal security and to the reorganization of his army (Savory, pp. 77-85).Before moving to regain Safavid territories from the Ottomans, ʿAbbās I also attempted to form military and economic alliances with the European powers who were hostile to the Ottomans and had economic interests in the East (ibid., pp. 109-10).Throughout his reign, the shah systematically pursued policies in order to develop and expand the Persian economy.He reorganized the customs services, created a special security system (*rahdāri*) for the safety of Iran's trade roads (Pʿapʿazyan, 1986, p. 160), and built caravanserais and bridges (Chardin, III, p. 55).Between 1602 and 1622, ʿAbbās I established full control over the sea-borne trade between India, the Persian Gulf and Europe through occupying Bahrain, capturing the Portuguese fort Gomru at Šahru (see BANDAR-E ʿABBĀS), and expelled with the help of the British navy the Portuguese from Hormoz (Savory, pp. 115-17).

In the 17th century the trade of raw silk was the core of Iranian economy, and the most important regions for the production and export to the west were Gilān, Māzandarān, Qarabāḡ, and Širvān, on the southern and western shores of the Caspian Sea.In 1592, Shah ʿAbbās I had declared the province of Gilān a crown domain to obtain, with the help of the Julfan Armenians, control of the production and the sale of raw silk (Herzig, 1990, p. 82).In February 1593, through a decree (dated Jomādā I 1001), Shah ʿAbbās I granted Ḵᵛāja Nazar, a merchant from Old Julfa, full freedom of trade and protection against governors, tax collectors, inspectors, customs officials, and other state officials at large (Tēr-Yovhaneancʿ, I, p. 158-59).In 1619, the shah declared the export of silk a crown monopoly, increased the prices, and played the Armenian merchants of New Julfa against the British East India Company.The shah had granted economic privileges to the East India Company in exchange for the British Navy's military assistance against the Portuguese, and yet the Armenians had received the right of exporting Iranian raw silk to Europe (Bayani, p. 223; Baibourtian, 1966, p. 220; Herzig, 1990, pp. 82-83).Della Valle

compared the Armenian merchants to the Genoese merchants who served the Spanish crown, and described their mutual dependence: the merchants could not survive without the king who could not manage without them (Baibourtian, 2008, p. 48).

After the death of Shah ʿAbbās I in 1629, the crown monopoly of silk's production and export was largely diminished.Released from the shah's patronage, the Armenian merchants could purchase raw silk at a lower price directly from the silk-producing peasantry, and gradually increased the volume of their export to Europe.Simultaneously they expanded their international commercial networks throughout Iran, India, Russian, Italy, the Netherlands, France, Britain, and several other European countries (Ferrier, 1973, pp. 41-44).Chardin observed that "In Turkey the Christians and Jews carry on the main foreign trade, and in Persia the Christian and Indian Gentiles.As to the Persians, they trade with their own countrymen, one province with another, and most of them trade with the Indians. The Armenians manage alone the whole European trade" (Chardin, III, p. 122).

The politically and economically favorable conditions lasted until the death of Shah ʿAbbās II in 1666.They triggered an enormous boost to the Armenian trade, because the Julfan merchants had both a strong community and the Old Julfan capital resources. In the 17th century, a very large number of the adult male population of New Julfa were involved in local or international trade.Fryer was a physician in the service of the British East India Company, and his travelogue provides the best description of New Julfa's merchant community:

They improved the Glory of *Spahaun* by their unwearied Industry, there being many of them Credible Merchants at this time, accounted worth an Hundred thousand *Thomand* (each *Thomand* being Three Pounds and a Noble); so mightily do they increase under this Umbrage, in Riches and Freedom; for whilst they sit lazily at Home, their Factors abroad in all parts of the Earth return to their Hives laden with Honey; to which Exercise, after they themselves have been brought up, they train their Children under the safe Conduct of Experienced Tutors, who instruct them first to Labor for a Livelihood, before they are permitted to Expend. (Fryer, p. 268)

Fryer observed that, after decades of trading, the senior members of merchant families had accumulated great wealth.These men would hardly leave Isfahan, except for an official mission or very important business.But the junior

members of their families extensively traveled in the course of their commercial training or for the sake of new ventures (Ghougassian, 2007, p. 57).The family enterprise was organized as a trade company, headed by the father or, in his absence, the eldest brother, and each male member of the family owned a specific share of the company.As long as the company existed, the profits were accumulated on the capital, and all family members received an annual income to cover their living expenses.Although individual family members were allowed to invest part of their own savings independently, their complete separation from the family business was unusual and not accepted favorably (Khach'ikyan, 1988, pp. 81-100).

One of the great assets of the wealthy trade companies was their large network of factors, mostly recruited from their kith and kin.In order to qualify as a factor, the man had to first prove himself as a trustworthy and hardworking individual, with some training and experience in trade.The status of a factor's family was essential for evaluating his trustworthiness, because his family had to vouch for his obligations towards his masters.In the 17th and early 18th centuries, most of the hundreds of Julfan Armenians who ventured into international trade served for many years as factors.Entrusted by their creditors with cash or merchandise, they crisscrossed Asia and Europe in the pursuit of business opportunities.When they returned to New Julfa after several years abroad, they settled their accounts with their creditors, usually earning 25-30 percent of the total profit.Successful factors could accumulate the capital necessary for establishing themselves as independent merchants (Ghougassian, 2007, pp. 51-61; Herzig, 2007, pp. 63-81).

From the early 17th century the trade companies of the British, the Dutch (see DUTCH-PERSIAN RELATIONS), and the French (see EAST INDIA COMPANY (THE FRENCH)) maintained agencies in several urban centers on the trade routes between Europe and India.They were in fierce competition, vying for dominance in the international markets.The Julfan Armenians, trading in the same markets and facing similar competition (Ferrier, 1973, p. 44), not only survived the economic challenge of the great European trade companies, but flourished tremendously.Fryer was impressed by the success of the Armenian merchants:

The *Armenians* being skill'd in all the Intricacies and Subtilities of trade at home, and traveling with these into the remote Kingdoms, become by their own Industry, and by being Factors of their own Kindreds Honesty, the Wealthiest Men, being expert at Bargains wherever they come, evading

thereby Brokeridge; and studying all the Arts of Thrift, will travel for Fifty Shillings, where we cannot for fifty *Thomands*. (Fryer, p. 263)

The Armenian merchants reached the most remote countries of the world.In the 17th century, the lay educator Kostand Varžapet run a business school in New Julfa.He compiled its curriculum, which he called *Ašxarhažołov* (General collection or Encyclopedia), summarizing the basic rules of trade and providing information about the currencies, weights, and measures used in different countries.His curriculum also surveyed the places where the merchants of New Julfa used to trade.The list includes more than 100 cities in different countries of the Far East, Central Asia, Russia, the Near East, North Africa, Europe, and America (Tēr-Yovhaneancʿ, I, pp. 159-60).

The Julfan merchants traded a broad range of commodities.From Persia they exported raw silk, rosewater, woven carpets, dried fruits, gold- and silver-woven cloths, dyes, salt, precious stones, cotton and silk fabrics, dyed cloths, and fine wool.From India and the Far East they imported white and dyed fabric, rice, sugar, coffee, tea, spices, ivory, coconut oil, red and white sandalwood, porcelain ware, indigo, and jewels.From Europe they imported mirrors, glassware, crystal, chandeliers, watches, cotton fabric, woolen cloths, as well as gold and silver coinages (Bayani, pp. 47-49).

Within their community, the Armenian merchants of New Julfa followed an unwritten system of customary law, which, in the 18th century, was largely incorporated in *Datastanagirkʿ Astraxani Hayocʿ* (Lawbook of the Armenians of Astrakhan).A tribunal of community leaders arbitrated disputes to insure compliance with contracts and penalized defaulters (Ghougassian, 2007, pp. 51-61; Herzig, 2007, pp. 63-81).

From the 1660s onwards, when the power of the Safavid rulers declined, the situation of the Julfan Armenians changed drastically.Shah Solaymān and Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn subjected the Armenian merchants to heavy taxation and trade restrictions.They also enforced a tradition (*ḥadiṯ*), traced back to Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq (d. 765) and known among Armenians as Law of Imam Jaʿfar, which stipulated that a convert to Islam (*jadid al-Eslām*) inherits all the properties of his non-Muslim relatives.Because of the increasing limitation of their economic opportunities and the growing feeling of insecurity, many Armenian merchants moved their trade capital abroad.The Afghan occupation of Isfahan from 1722 until 1729 was the final blow to the Armenian community of New Julfa.The Julfan merchants were dispersed around the

world, and they established new, albeit much smaller, settlements especially in India, Russia, and Europe (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 157-65).

Religion

The Armenians were one of several non-Muslim minorities in Persia, and the Muslim laws for the *ahl al-ḏemma*, as already mentioned, regulated the community's interactions with the Muslim state.The Armenian mercantile community of New Julfa was relatively well protected, especially under Shah ʿAbbās I and his two immediate successors.Yet working-class Armenians, including minor artisans, common laborers, and farmers, formed the absolute majority of the Iranian Armenian community.They were scattered throughout the country and faced physical, social, and economic hardship, as well as occasional religious persecutions (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 59-76).

In 1605, when Shah ʿAbbās I ordered the deportation of the Armenians, hundreds of Armenian clerics, ranging from the head of the Armenian Church (Catholicos Davitʿ Vałaršapatcʿi) and his bishops to priests and monks, were scattered in different parts of Iran.But as early as January 1607, more than 200 Armenian clerics led a traditional procession of several thousand people, including Armenian, Safavid, and foreign dignitaries, through New Julfa to celebrate the feast of Christmas and Epiphany.The fully vested clerics were displaying large crosses and singing hymns, and they performed the public ceremony of water blessing, in commemoration of the baptism of Jesus Christ, at the river Zāyandarud, which flows between Isfahan and New Julfa (Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan, I, p. 259).A decade later, as mentioned above, 10 Armenian churches had been built in New Julfa and 6 new churches in the city of Isfahan.At each church dozens of clerics formed a religious order who served their parish.For example, in 1610, the religious order of St. George's Church comprised 27 clerics (Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan, I, pp. 360-61).

Among the principal goals of Shah ʿAbbās I were Iran's economic development and the establishment of an anti-Ottoman alliance with European powers.The shah tried to please not only the Armenian merchants of New Julfa, but also the Roman Catholic church, and he permitted the establishment of Catholic missionary orders in Persia.In 1614, Shah ʿAbbās I issued a decree ordering the construction of a cathedral where both the Armenian was the Catholic clergy could hold services in Isfahan.The Cathedral of Ējmiacin (see EJMIATSIN) in Armenia was to be dismantled so that its sacred stones could be used for the new cathedral in Isfahan (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 204-7).In 1615 a first

shipment of 15 large stones, together with the sacred relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator, a manuscript Bible, and a silver cross arrived in Isfahan.But Ḵᵛāja Nazar, a prominent merchant and New Julfa's future mayor, who was close to the Safavid court, succeeded in convincing the shah to abandon his plan, and therefore the Cathedral of Ēǰmiacin was saved from total destruction (Aṙakʻel, I, pp. 149-59).Ḵᵛāja Nazar had built St. George's Church (PLATE V), where the Ēǰmiacin stones were later placed and for which the church became a popular site of pilgrimage (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 84-85; PLATE VI).

The parish churches of New Julfa formed early on a small diocese, which was headed by Archbishop Mesrop.His jurisdiction was limited to New Julfa, though it possibly extended to some quarters of the city of Isfahan.But other Armenian communities scattered throughout Iran were not under the jurisdiction of the diocese of New Julfa (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 86-87).Archbishop Mesrop served as the primate of New Julfa until 1623, and the appointment of his successor marked a turning point for the diocese.

The new primate of New Julfa was Xačʻatur Vardapet Kesaracʻi (d. 1646), a young, energetic, highly educated, and saintly figure who enjoyed the moral and financial support of the community.During the first six years of his tenure, Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi founded a school of higher education at his seat of All Savior's Monastery in New Julfa and opened religious schools at five parish churches.The primate established the St. Catherine's Nunnery and introduced new rules and orders for both celibate and married clergy.He also supervised the construction of St. Bethlehem (PLATE VII), the largest and the most beautiful and richly decorated church of New Julfa (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 89-91).

In 1629 the primate's tenure was interrupted, because Catholicos Movsēs Tatʻevacʻi sent Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi to Lemberg (Lwów, Ukraine) to settle a dispute between Nikol Tʻorosovičʻ, the young and controversial Armenian Bishop of Poland, and his congregation.After his return from Poland in late 1631, the catholicos elevated Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi to the rank of archbishop and reappointed him to the See of New Julfa.The catholicos also extended the reach of the diocese, and the primate of New Julfa was now responsible for all Armenian communities in central Persia, including the provinces of Isfahan, Gilān and Māzandarān and the cities of Shiraz, Hamadān, and Qazvin.This diocese had several dozen established parish churches and hundreds of clerics, and during the tenure of Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi a senior pastor (*avagerecʻ*) was assigned to each parish church to supervise its junior pastors.Lay trustees

(*eresp'ox*) were selected among the well-respected parishioners to manage their parish's buildings and financial affairs.The celibate clergy of bishops and monks were accommodated at All Savior's Monastery (Hakobyan and Hovhannisyan, II, pp. 106, 562; cf. Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 91-94).

During the tenure of Xač'atur Kesarac'i, New Julfa in general and the All Savior's Monastery in particular became a center of higher learning, literature, book production, and painting.Xač'atur Kesarac'i saw All Savior's Monastery as a "convent for celibate philologists" (Oskanyan, p. 26).Simeon Jułayec'i, the senior disciple of Kesarac'i, headed the monastery's school and transformed it into the most important Armenian center of higher education in the 17th century.The school was also referred to as "university" (jułayec'i, p. 116), and its curriculum included grammar, philosophy, rhetoric, natural sciences, geometry, music, theology, and biblical studies (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 170-71).

New Julfa became one of the most important centers of Armenian book production in the 17th century.Scribes and miniaturists were producing illustrated manuscripts at All Savior's Monastery, as well as at parish churches and independent scriptoria, for churches and wealthy families.In the 18th century hundreds of manuscripts were destroyed or looted during invasions, but more than 680 manuscripts copied in New Julfa are today extant in manuscript collections worldwide (Minasean, pp. 77-121).Xač'atur Kesarac'i was also a pioneer in introducing European letterpress technology to Persia, since in 1636 he set up the first printing press in All Savior's Monastery.While letterpress technology was not pursued by Muslim rulers, the primate realized the potential value of mass-manufactured books to improve literacy and education among the Armenians (Pehlivanian, 2002; 2006).Xač'atur Kesarac'i had been exposed to printed books during his stay in Poland, and in New Julfa, his Armenian congregation was confronted with Roman Catholic missionary literature, whose imprints were distributed for free.The colophon of the books, published by the archbishop's press, indicate that their paper and ink were also manufactured at All Savior's Monastery (Oskanyan, pp. 21-27).Among the works selected for printing were important liturgical and historical texts: Psalms (*Sałmos Davt'i*, 1638), lives of the Church Fathers (*Haranc' Vark'*, 1641), missal (*Xorhrdatetr*, 1641), and breviary (*Žamagirk'Ateni*, 1642).

The primate employed Yakobǰan Erevanc'i, a very talented young man in his workshop.Tavernier (1930, p. 225) was impressed with Yakobǰan's work and considered him a genius in the mechanical arts, responsible for many

technical inventions improving the printing processes.Yakobǰan cut the letters for the casts, and he later became a famous painter in the court workshop of Shah ʿAbbās II.In 1639 Kesaracʿi sent his disciple Yovhannēs Vardapet Kʿtʿršencʿ to Europe to master the art of printing.In 1646, only a few months after the archbishop's death, Kʿtʿršencʿ returned to New Julfa with a printing press, new fonts, and engraved plates depicting biblical scenes.The following year he published the *Book of Calendars* (*Girkʿ Tumaracʿ or ev parzatumar Kočʿi*) and embarked on the first printing of the Armenian Bible.But the death of the primate Xačʿatur Kesaracʿi had created a leadership vacuum at the monastery, and the archbishop's press faced strong opposition from the scribes who were making a living by copying manuscripts.Kʿtʿršencʿ was forced to abandon the printing press of All Savior's Monastery and move to Armenia, where soon thereafter he met a tragic death.In 1687, after a 40-year pause, the New Julfa printing press resumed its work, but already in 1693 Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn ordered it to be permanently closed (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 173-77).

The visual arts occupied an important place in the religious life of the New Julfa community in the 17th century.The Armenian merchants returned from their travels in Europe with an interest in painting and became highly motivated to redecorate both their churches and their homes.European paintings on canvas were imported, and Armenians like Varpet Minas (ca. 1600-1670; see iv, below), the most important painter from New Julfa, were trained by European artists living in Aleppo (Aṙakʿel, II, p. 305).

The architecture of the churches of New Julfa combined Armenian and Safavid elements.The most important Safavid element was the onion-shaped dome, and its integration into Armenian church buildings may have been stipulated by the Safavid court to assuage Muslim suspicions of an ostentatiously Christian architecture.Brick-building techniques were employed for the dome construction (see iv, below), and the interior was covered with plaster coating.These plaster surfaces provided ample space to emphasize the building's Christian character with didactic and decorative paintings.

The death of Xačʿatur Kesaracʿi in 1646 revealed internal divisions at All Savior's Monastery, and the leadership challenge was finally resolved in 1652, when Davitʿ ǰułayecʿi was installed as the next primate of New Julfa (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 98-100).Davitʿ started his tenure by selecting a new generation of more than 40 monks for education and training at All Savior's Monastery (J̌ułayecʿi, p. 220).In the following decades these men played

important roles in the life of the Armenian church at large.Simultaneously the primate enlarged and renovated the monastery and its cathedral, and built a new monastery in the village of Hazārjarib (Arm. *Hazarǰarib*), in the district of Faridan (Arm. *Pʻeria*).These construction efforts coincided with the abovementioned deportation of the Armenians from the city of Isfahan.Their resettlement in New Julfa doubled the town's population, and 6 new churches were erected between 1658 and 1666 so that the overall number of Armenian churches in New Julfa increased to 24.Today 13 of these churches are still standing (Ghougassian, 1998, p. 291).

By the late 1650s, the see of the bishop of New Julfa had reached the peak of its religious, cultural, and economic prosperity and was one of the most important and influential centers of the Armenian church.The diocese's enormous growth reflected the Safavids' favorable treatment of the Julfan Armenians, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the unflagging financial support of wealthy Armenian merchants and a new generation of young and educated clergy.The great leadership of Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi and Davitʻ ǰułayecʻi established a successful cooperation of their see with the Holy See of Ējmiacin in Armenia.But in the early 1660s, at the turn of the second decade of Davitʻ's tenure, the situation had changed, and the Julfan diocese faced external and internal challenges.The economic sanctions of Shah Solaymān and Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn were compounded by internal conflicts with Catholicos Yakob ǰułayecʻi (d. 1680), over-zealous Roman Catholic missionaries, and growing anti-Christian bias among the Muslim population at large.

Catholicos Yakob ǰułayecʻi was a native of New Julfa and one of the senior disciples of Xačʻatur Kesaracʻi.When, after Kesaracʻi's death, he was not elected as primate of New Julfa, Yakob left for the Holy See of Ējmiacin, and in 1655 he was consecrated catholicos, though without the support of the New Julfa congregation.In 1658 Catholicos Yakob returned to New Julfa in order to secure financial support from his native community while obtaining the official confirmation of his pontificate from the Safavid court.The catholicos spent the next three years in New Julfa and among the Armenian communities in the rural districts of Isfahan, and realized that they were not supporting his pontificate.Yakob ǰułayecʻi decided to weaken the influence of Davitʻ ǰułayecʻi, the primate of New Julfa.In order to bring all Armenian communities of Iran under his direct spiritual authority he divided the diocese of New Julfa into smaller administrative districts headed by clerics loyal only to the catholicos.The ensuing bitter conflict between Yakob ǰułayecʻi and the

leadership of New Julfa lasted for 20 years, until the catholicos died in 1680.

The conflict over spiritual authority was reignited, and fought even more bitterly, during the tenure of Nahapet Edesacʿi (d. 1705), who was consecrated Catholicos of Ējmiacin in 1691.But under his successor, Catholicos Alexander ǰułayecʿi (d. 1714), who had previously served as primate of New Julfa, the conflict found a peaceful resolution.Catholicos Alexander restored the integrity of the diocese of New Julfa and extended its jurisdiction to include all Armenian communities in India and Java (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 105-22).The Diocese of New Julfa became thus more commonly known as the Diocese of Persia and India (*Parska-Hndkastani T ʿem*) or the Diocese of Iran and India (*Irana-Hndkastani T ʿem*).

In 1603 Portuguese missionaries from the order of St. Augustine had established the first Catholic mission in the city of Isfahan, and in 1608 Italian Carmelites followed them.The Augustinian and Carmelite missions reflected the policy of Pope Clement VIII (1592–1605) to seek political alliances against the Ottoman empire, and Shah ʿAbbās I had been praised for his benign attitude toward Christians.The diplomatic mission, however, achieved only minor, temporary successes, and the Catholic missionaries tried to draw the Armenian church into the Roman see, though such a union was rejected not only by the Armenians, but also by Shah ʿAbbās I.The Augustinians and Carmelites (see, for example, IGNATIUS OF JESUS) were followed by Capuchins in 1628, Dominicans in 1646, and Jesuits in 1652 (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 128-39).Until the arrival of the Jesuits in the 1650s, the Catholic missionaries established their residences in the city of Isfahan.

Until 1630 the relations between the Julfan Armenians and the Catholic missionaries were generally calm despite the over-zealous behavior of some missionaries.The relations gradually deteriorated after 1631, when the primate of New Julfa, Xačʿatur Kesaracʿi, had returned from Lemberg.Carmelite and Jesuit missionaries had been instrumental in converting the Armenian Bishop Nikol Torosovičʿ to Catholicism, and Xačʿatur Kesaracʿi had witnessed how, after the bishop’s conversion, Catholics occupied all Armenian churches in Poland.This bitter experience was compounded by a new and aggressive wave of missionary activity directed by the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, which had established in Rome a school to train missionaries and a multi-lingual publishing house to print missionary literature in foreign languages, including Armenian.

In 1652, when Davitʿ ǰułayecʿi was elevated to the primate's See of New Julfa, many Catholic missionaries moved into New Julfa, buying houses and embarking on the construction of Catholic churches.Dozens of Augustinians, Carmelites, Capuchins, Dominicans, and Jesuits aggressively preached on the streets of New Julfa, following their conviction that "outspoken methods should be employed to overcome the schism" of the Armenians (*Chronicle* I, p. 360).Until 1715, New Julfa was a battleground between the Armenian Christians and the Roman Catholic missionaries.While European diplomats and two prominent Armenian Catholic families supported the Catholic missionaries, the religious and lay leadership of the Armenian church rallied the Armenian community. Both sides were spending fortunes to petition the Safavid court in order to secure the shah's favor.During this period all three shahs—ʿAbbās II, Solaymān, and Solṭān-Ḥosayn—issued orders about the Catholic missionaries and decided in favor of one side or the other, depending on which side commanded greater influence at the Safavid court at a specific moment in time.Despite decades of aggressive Catholic missionary activities in New Julfa, only a handful of Armenians converted to Catholicism, and by 1715 the Catholic missionaries were so weakened that they could hardly continue to be a threat to the Armenian church (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 125-56).

During the second half of the 17th century the rising anti-Christian bias in the Muslim population at large increased the social and economic difficulties of the Armenian community.In 1671, Ḵʷāja Ałapʿiri, the mayor of New Julfa, succumbed to the offers of the Safavid court, converted to Islam, and received great honors from Shah Solaymān (Chardin, I, p. 350).In the same year, the primate Davitʿ ǰułayecʿi punished Yovhan, an unruly monk, who took refuge with the *šayḵ-al-Eslām* of Isfahan.The Armenian monk converted to Islam and made accusations against the Armenian church, so that the primate and his vicar Stepʿanos Vardapet were jailed for six months and had to pay heavy fines.Moreover, the Safavid authorities ordered the destruction of the new monastery in Hazārjarib, confiscated church treasures, and imposed an annual tax of 424 tomans upon the Armenian parishes of New Julfa.This punitive tax remained in place until the beginning of Afsharid rule in 1736 (Ghougassian, 1998, pp. 158-59).

During the reign of Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn, the Armenians were more and more subjected to public discrimination and humiliation, and the catholicoi and the primates of New Julfa repeatedly appealed, though with little success, to the Safavid court.Muslim heralds were often sent to New Julfa to publicize special

benefits for Muslim converts.Traveling merchants were forced to pay their annual *jezya* not only in their home town of New Julfa, but also in other Iranian cities.The Muslim courts enforced more systematically the so-called Law of Imam Jaʿfar, mentioned above.Yet the Armenian church and the community of New Julfa remained fairly strong and active, despite the internal and external challenges, until the calamity of the Afghan occupation of Isfahan in 1722.

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