



Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond

Experiences Since the Middle Ages



Edited by

Christopher H. Johnson,
David Warren Sabean,
Simon Teuscher,
and
Francesca Trivellato



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Marriage, Commercial Capital, and Business Agency

*Transregional Sephardic (and Armenian)
Families in the Seventeenth- and
Eighteenth-Century Mediterranean*



Francesca Trivellato

Historical studies of trading diasporas have grown in number and sophistication in the last two decades, especially with regard to the early modern period.¹ Almost without fail, this literature refers to the importance of transregional family ties. Typically, such ties are seen as a key factor for the commercial success enjoyed by small but proactive ethnoreligious communities of merchants scattered across space. Yet these studies rarely examine how specific kinship structures, inheritance practices, and dowry systems influenced the business organization of trading diasporas. This omission leaves us without a description of the specific social and economic mechanisms that allowed family firms to operate effectively in the increasingly competitive and militarized arena of long-distance trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also has the paradoxical—if unintended—consequence of undermining a primary goal of most studies of early modern trading diasporas, which implicitly or explicitly stress the continued significance of stateless commercial formations and their impact on European commercial

expansion. Without a detailed, even microanalytical examination of the ways in which family members raised, managed, and transmitted capital across a diaspora, we risk reinforcing the characterization of merchant communities as weak and archaic business organizations rather than developing a nuanced understanding of them.

This chapter begins to redress such a lacuna by looking closely at the marriage, dowry, and inheritance customs prevalent among Sephardic Jews in Livorno and Venice during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In so doing, it moves beyond generic invocations of the transregional family's importance in the commercial and financial activities of Sephardic merchants. It also offers a brief but, I hope, revealing comparison between Sephardic and Armenian family firms with the aim of showing how transregional kinship systems varied from one trading diaspora to the next and how these differences affected the working of business networks.²

The relationship between family and European capitalism has long been subject to a thorny debate among historians and social scientists, and has generated too large a literature to review here. Suffice it to say that among the issues at stake are the chronology of the demise of family firms and the rise of new forms of contractual agreements that allowed for more impersonal business associations. More precisely, economic historians since Max Weber debate whether family firms ceased to be the prevailing practitioners of long-distance commerce in the late Middle Ages or in the seventeenth century, although some concede that the influence of family businesses over Western capitalism may extend even further in time. The date of this transition toward more impersonal business forms, however, should not be our sole concern. As generations of anthropologists have taught us, "family" means different things not only across time and space, but also among different communities who live side by side. My interest here is less in tracing transformations of family firms over time than in examining how particular kinship structures and devolutionary practices help us explain the different ways in which transregional Sephardic and Armenian families operated in Europe and the Mediterranean during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I thus suggest some potential advantages of comparing trading diasporas rather than studying them in isolation, as is most commonly done.

European Commercial Partnerships in the Early Modern Mediterranean

The commodities exchanged between Europe and the Ottoman Empire were highly heterogeneous. As a result, Mediterranean trade required

great flexibility in adjusting to supply and demand, favored the role of intermediaries, and demanded that individual merchants had access to credit. After all, no European state or trading company in the Mediterranean ever came close to exerting the control over the production process, price setting, or the transport system that the Dutch did in parts of Southeast Asia or that various European powers did in the New World. With the exception of the English Levant Company (1581–1825), few European chartered and monopolistic companies operated in the Mediterranean until the French *Compagnie Royale d'Afrique* was created (1741–93); and even then, the *Compagnie* only controlled exchanges with North Africa.³ The European commercial presence in the early modern Mediterranean, in sum, involved only a minimal development of large, state-chartered joint-stock companies of the kind that was launched in the Indian Ocean, notably the English and the Dutch East Indian Companies (established in 1600 and 1602, respectively), and their less-effective counterparts in the Atlantic.

Countless private partnerships plied the Mediterranean. Most, though not all, were formed by merchants of the same religious or national group. The early modern Mediterranean is thus an ideal place and time in which to compare the roles of different family firms in transregional commerce. However, it would be wrong to portray the Mediterranean as simply lagging behind in the path toward modern European commercial structures. In spite of the rise of new financial institutions, including the first European stock markets, kinship ties in fact continued to play an important role in the management of long-distance trade and other large, private investments in Amsterdam and London as well.⁴ A focus on the Mediterranean may therefore disclose structural comparisons that can also prove useful in the study of other regions.

Among the ethnoreligious communities that were engaged in long-distance commerce in the early modern Mediterranean, Sephardic merchants, and especially those based in Livorno, were particularly influential from the mid-seventeenth to the third quarter of the eighteenth century. There was a significant difference between the private partnerships of Christian and Sephardic merchants in the Mediterranean. Both frequently selected their associates and overseas agents from among relatives, but Venetian, English, French, and Dutch merchants also sealed medium-term, limited-liability agreements with non-kin in order to raise additional capital and sometimes hired salaried employees ("factors") to serve overseas.⁵ In contrast, Sephardic merchants based in Livorno and Venice routinely used the most traditional model of family firm: the general partnership. Unlike limited liability partnerships, general partnerships had no expiration date, and all their members shared mutual agency with full liability.

Max Weber famously lamented the backward nature of general partnerships. For him, capitalism in its *uniquely Occidental* form was born when distinctions between business employees and household members and between the company's and household's debts emerged in the limited liability partnerships of late medieval Tuscany.⁶ In what follows, I will show that as late as the eighteenth century, the use of a traditional business model such as the general partnership should not be immediately associated with a precapitalist mentality or a closed, inward-looking "coalition" of merchants.⁷ In fact, Sephardic merchants were able to expand their market niches by working in general partnerships with their overseas relatives while also hiring commission agents from among Jews and non-Jews alike.

General partnerships came with concrete advantages (reciprocal agency) and considerable risks (unlimited liability). I argue that positive incentives (the strong informal commitments generated by marriage) and external conditions (social discrimination) rather than a passive adherence to custom and tradition led Sephardim to adopt such partnerships. In Livorno, where records of limited liability partnerships are preserved more systematically than in Venice, we find that Sephardic merchants did not enter into long- or even medium-term partnerships with non-Jews until the late eighteenth century. Even then, they did so sporadically. Social and cultural barriers rather than legal impediments explain the infrequency of joint Jewish-Christian commercial ventures. A purely institutional recapitulation of the available business contracts would therefore overlook the impact that social and cultural norms had on the Sephardim's choice of types of commercial association. I thus turn to the specific kinship structures prevalent among Sephardim and their differences from those emerging as dominant in southern Europe at the time in order to account for the preference for general partnerships among most Sephardim.

Marriage, Dowry, and Inheritance among the Sephardim of Livorno and Venice

Whereas canon law and Protestant ecclesiastical law in continental Europe prohibited marriages within third and second cousins, respectively, and rarely granted dispensations, Sephardim encouraged marriages among close kin.⁸ Marriages between uncles and nieces as well as among parallel first cousins were so frequent in the Sephardic communities of Venice and Livorno that those who wished to avoid them had to leave special instructions for their progeny. For reasons that he did not disclose, in

1640 one Sephardic patriarch, Abraham Camis, alias Lopo de Fonseca, threatened to disinherit his son if he married a cousin.⁹ Nevertheless, Jewish endogamy was the norm and, in the absence of geographical limitations, it favored the formation of transregional families.

Moreover, while primogeniture became widespread among the elites of southern Europe after the sixteenth century, including in Venice and Tuscany, Jewish families customarily divided their estates equally among all sons and required them to live on and manage their father's estate together.¹⁰ The latter provision curbed the risk that partible inheritance would parcel family assets into smaller and smaller fractions in each successive generation. In 1752, for example, Salomon Aghib reminded his three sons that the family patrimony would be ruined if they parted ways and implored them to remain united at the very least until the youngest of them reached the age of thirty.¹¹ However, testaments allowed for occasional corrections of this prevalent norm when tradition threatened to supersede economic efficiency. We thus encounter instances in which one brother was favored over the other when commercial talent was unevenly distributed among siblings. We also find a few Sephardic merchants who bound part of their assets to an entail.¹² But overall, brothers inherited and administered the estate, and especially commercial capital, jointly, which explains their preference for general partnerships.

With differences in marriage and devolution practices also came a unique dotal system. After the late Middle Ages, the groom's contribution, or dower, increasingly disappeared from Christian marriages in southern Europe.¹³ Daughters were excluded from any claims on their family's estate in addition to the dowry that the bride's family paid to the groom and received back at the husband's death or in the event of his insolvency. With the exponential inflation of women's dowries in early modern Italy and the progressive retreat of the upper classes from active commerce, moreover, fathers and brothers increasingly paid their daughters' and sisters' dowries in real estate rather than movable assets—a phenomenon that was far less pronounced among Sephardic families, although Jews in Livorno were entitled to own real estate.

According to Jewish law and custom, marriage contracts comprised two main payments—a dowry (*nedynya*) and a dower (*tosefet*)—and an additional small sum (*mohar*) that varied with the bride's status as a virgin, on the one hand, or a divorcee or widow, on the other. Among the Sephardim in Venice and Livorno, the *tosefet* normally amounted to 50 percent of the *nedynya*. The two sums merged to form a totality of assets managed by the husband. If the wife died before the husband, both the dowry and the dower passed to him. At the husband's death or insolvency, a widow was entitled to the restitution of the dowry paid

by her family as well as the entire dower (or at least half of it if she was childless). The fact that dower and dowry were generally indivisible after the marriage generated an added advantage to the preservation of commercial capital in the Tuscan context because both Jewish law and local statutes shielded dotal assets (in this case both dower and dowry) from creditors' claims when a partnership went bankrupt.¹⁴ The same norm applied both to Jewish and Christian merchants. But intergenerational endogamy assured Jewish families that commercial capital in the form of dowries and dowers rarely threatened the patriarchal line. Christian merchants, in contrast, conceived dowries as eroding the family patrimony.

An additional custom, levirate marriage, helped Sephardim contain the risk that large dowries jeopardized the integrity of the groom's family patrimony. In principle, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Sephardim continued to abide by the halakhic prescription of levirate marriage (*yibbum*), according to which a childless widow had to marry the oldest brother of her deceased husband and a widower had to marry his late brother's widow. In practice, however, many among the wealthiest Sephardim sought to contain levirate unions and avoid bigamy in order to conform to the precepts and moral conventions of Catholic society. Some well-to-do Sephardic women stipulated in their dowry contracts that their husbands would not be allowed to take a second wife. Thus, when Sarah Baruch Carvaglio moved from Venice to Livorno to marry Moses Attias in 1667, the marriage contract included a provision against her future husband's right to take a second wife. The provision was particularly important considering that Sarah brought with her the unparalleled dowry of 17,000 Venetian ducats.¹⁵ In 1721 Rebecca Francia added a similar clause to her marriage contract, prohibiting her groom, Moses Alvares Vega, from marrying a second wife. When seven years into the marriage Moses violated this clause, the Jewish tribunal forced him to divorce Rebecca in partial fulfillment of the nuptial agreement, and a belated *halizah* ceremony was performed.¹⁶

Available sources do not allow us to assess the frequency of levirate marriages in Livorno and Venice, but Jewish authorities in Livorno were sufficiently concerned about Catholic disapproval of bigamy that they actively discouraged such unions in the 1660s and 1670s.¹⁷ Nevertheless, levirate marriages did not disappear. In fact, they even spread among those who married into a Sephardic family. When Salomon Gallico, an Italian Jew of lesser means, married Miriam Pegna (a Sephardic woman) as his second wife in 1753, two arbiters determined that his first wife, Sarah Vigevano (an Italian Jewess), was required to live with them.¹⁸

The two traditional ways of avoiding levirate marriages included performing a ceremony (*halizah*) or drafting a document (*setar halizah*)

that freed the brother-in-law from this duty or issuing a divorce. The obligation to perform *halizah* was a serious injunction and not taken lightly. In 1754, a widow traveled from Amsterdam all the way across the Atlantic to meet her brother-in-law, risking her very life in the harsh journey in order to fulfill this precept.¹⁹ Levirate marriage was not required if the deceased husband had previously divorced his wife. This is why in November 1746, on the brink of death, Moses Ergas divorced his wife Rachel in Livorno.²⁰

These specific devolution and marriage practices—large dowries resulting from the 50 percent supplement combined with consanguineal marriages and occasional levirate unions—helped Sephardim keep commercial capital circulating within an interlocking group of endogamic families and ensured its intergenerational transfer. As a result, Sephardim rarely availed themselves of the contracts (including limited liability partnerships) that would have allowed them to raise liquid capital for their commercial enterprises from non-kin. This choice, however, did not prevent them from remaining competitive in several commercial niches.

General and Limited Liability Partnerships

After the sixteenth century, general partnerships became increasingly less frequent in Europe and the Mediterranean.²¹ In Tuscany, already in the fifteenth century, we observe the rise of two types of contracts, *acomandita* (known in French as *société en accomandite*) and *compagnia*, which limited the risks of full mutual liability. The former was a more sophisticated version of the medieval bilateral *commenda* by which a sedentary partner contributed his capital to a traveling merchant. *Accomandite* always included a clause limiting the responsibility of each investor and normally established that profits be shared in proportion to the monetary and work contributions. They usually had an initial duration of three or four years, although they could be renewed. These contracts became tools through which Tuscan merchants raised capital among noblemen as well as a broader spectrum of investors who shunned direct involvement in distasteful commercial ventures in hopes of advancing their aristocratic pretensions.²²

In Tuscany, Jews were not forbidden from adopting these types of associations in Livorno.²³ However, the minority who did, mostly Jews of Italian origin, used *accomandite* to run shops or small trades in Florence, Pisa, and other Tuscan towns. Jewish merchants based in Livorno who were involved in long-distance trade rarely resorted to these stipula-

tions. The few who did sign *accomandite* were normally not related by kinship ties and only invested small amounts in these ventures. Note that the frequency with which Jews sealed these contracts in Livorno intensified in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Sephardic hegemony in the Jewish community of the Tuscan port city was waning and marriage alliances likely became less endogamic because of the need to build ties to new North African and Italian Jewish families. Eventually, *accomandite* between Jews and Christians began to appear in the 1770s, but remained rare. Further research is necessary to determine how frequent associations between Jews and non-Jews were in Amsterdam and London and what types of contracts sealed them. The situation in Livorno, however, suggests that social rather than legal discrimination worked against Sephardim using *accomandite*.²⁴

In Venice, too, most Sephardic merchants ran general partnerships rather than limited liability partnerships. There, they could draw up a local type of contract, called *fraterna*, which provided for joint liability among brothers. After resettling in Venice from Portugal, brothers Isaac and Moses Baruch Carvaglio established such a general partnership (*fraterna e compagnia*) that yielded high profits from the 1650s to the 1690s.²⁵ Special arrangements were only stipulated when brothers wanted to split unevenly the burden of running a family partnership. Thus at their father's death in 1642, Salomon and Joseph Franco de Almeida (alias Antonio and Simon Mendes) agreed before a notary to run a *fraterna* to which they contributed 60 and 40 percent, respectively. Their business fared well, and in 1672 Salomon made bequests to his sons for 30,000 ducats that were deposited in the public debt.²⁶

Less common among the business agreements of the Livornese and Venetian Jews was a contract known in Italian as *compagnia*. This was a more stable type of association than the *accomandita*; it appeared in the fourteenth century and could be more or less centralized.²⁷ After a series of failures of Florentine international banks in the 1340s, the *compagnia* emerged as a new business form that linked together multiple autonomous entities under the guidance of one person (as in the case of Francesco Datini, c. 1335–1410) or one family (as in the case of the Medici bank, 1397–1494). This organization has been compared to the modern holding company because it subsumed a network of interconnected branches (some directed by salaried employees and others by junior partners, with varying degrees of independence) under the main house's control. Even this modular organization, however, did not eliminate the risks stemming from unreliable or inept representatives. Fraudulent and incompetent branch managers eventually weakened the Medici bank, for example.²⁸ Yet the *compagnia* struck a balance between

centralization and limited liability, and was adopted by many influential sixteenth-century European merchants, including the Ruiz of Medina del Campo in Spain, the Flemish della Faille, and the Fugger and Welser in southern Germany.²⁹

Why did most Sephardim in Livorno and Venice choose to run general partnerships when more secure and centralized business forms were readily available to them? Institutional and cultural inertia may have played a role, but more positive incentives did too. The marriage, dowry, and inheritance customs that we just reviewed allowed Sephardim to diminish several weaknesses of general partnerships and exploit the latter's advantages. For instance, *accomandite* helped merchants raise capital, but unlike family firms, they did not count on extraeconomic motivations for renewing investments. They certainly protected investors from imprudent or poor decisions made by partners, but *accomandite* were ill suited to finance activities that required a long-term turn over and the ability to make fast and independent decisions in face of slow communication.³⁰ *Compagnie* also had benefits and drawbacks, although they were perhaps the most effective of the three types of association for large-scale overseas trade.

Because they entailed full mutual liability, general partnerships had considerable advantages that could potentially outweigh their inherent risks. Their duration was unlimited and they provided for the ability to delegate decisions to an overseas partner—two unbeatable advantages if the partner was capable and trustworthy. Of course, anyone involved in long-distance trade had to weigh the pros and cons of these contracts and determine whether they could gain from general partnerships while also keeping such dangers in check.

Rarely did Sephardic partnerships include a contract that defined the partners' rights and obligations. Rather, marriage contracts substituted for partnership contracts: dowries and dower merged together and were registered in the partnership's account books.³¹ Nor did Sephardic general partnerships include a separate fund to which partners and external investors contributed to the partnership's capital assets in return for a fixed interest rate.³² In other European port cities as well, Sephardic merchants and financiers operated on the basis of implicit contracts with relatives and kin. The successful New Christian banker Gabriel de Silva (c. 1683–1763) in Bordeaux, for example, never drew up a formal contract with which to establish his family business.³³ Further research is necessary, but it appears that Dutch Sephardim also avoided notaries when stipulating partnership contracts with their own kin, although they constantly drafted a whole variety of notary deeds (for freight contracts, maritime insurance, powers of attorney, short-term credit agree-

ments, certifications to be used in future litigation, purchases and sales, and other types of transactions) when dealing with both Jews and non-Jews.³⁴

Chains of endogamic marriage alliances ensured the effectiveness of the implicit agreements that governed general partnerships. Additionally, the absence of a notarized contract did not make a general partnership any less real or liable toward third parties. Roman law, commercial customs, and the *lex mercatoria* jurisprudence recognized the use of a corporate name, such as "Ergas & Silvera" or "Moses Franco and Company," in business letters, bills of lading, and other such records, as evidence of a partnership's liability toward its creditors. Any one partner in a general partnership could thus sign a business letter or have a notary draft a deed in the name of the company at large. In the terminology of the time, all members of a general partnership were *socii in solidum* and *ad infinitum*, that is to say, they were all liable for the total amount of any debts incurred by another associate or contracted in the company's name until the dissolution of their association.³⁵ After they established a branch of their general partnership in Aleppo in 1704, the Ergas and Silvera families in Livorno promised a Christian merchant in Venice that he could count on the punctual and satisfactory business of their partners in the Syrian city.³⁶ Bound *in solidum* to their relatives in Aleppo, the Livorno branch of Ergas & Silvera could even commit to third parties on their behalf.³⁷

Of course, mutual liability had its risks because family members were not always competent and could even become intentionally harmful. As we have already mentioned, the dowry, inheritance, and marriage patterns prevalent among Sephardim helped contain these risks. Such practices also allowed Sephardic merchants to enjoy the advantages of mutual agency in a world in which slow transportation and communication continued to hamper merchants' decision-making abilities. The autonomy of each branch of Sephardic general partnerships operating in, say, Livorno and Aleppo meant that they could act more swiftly than their European competitors. While it is true that the representatives of English limited partnerships in the Levant could count on the influx of broadcloth, an item that was in high demand there, they faced a major limitation that Sephardim did not. As the correspondence of the Radcliffe company of London from the 1730s to the 1760s testifies, the agent of the subsidiary branch had to receive written permission from London in order to make his purchase and was thus constrained in his ability to seize short-term opportunities.³⁸ Most French partnerships in the Mediterranean also depended on the orders issued by their principals (*régisseurs*) in Marseille, although they sometimes took some leeway for themselves.³⁹

Here it is crucial to emphasize that the ample recourse to general partnerships among Sephardic merchants did not inhibit them from building opportunistic alliances with non-Jews, sometimes even for extended periods of time. In fact, Sephardim combined a very traditional form of partnership at the core of their business model with a very flexible type of contract: commission agency. A commission agent was paid a percentage of the value of goods and services that he negotiated on behalf of a third party (percentages varied usually between 1 and 7 percent, depending on the agent and the type of service and goods that were negotiated). He also assumed full legal responsibility for his services. A combination of legal and reputation mechanisms monitored the good behavior of commission agents. The commission agents of Ergas & Silvera included Christians in European and Mediterranean ports and Hindus in Goa, the capital of Portuguese India.⁴⁰ Thus, while trans-regional families were glued by traditional marriage and partnership arrangements, they were nevertheless able to expand their commercial networks in spite of their infrequent engagement with limited-liability types of partnerships.

Armenian Family Firms and *Commenda* Agents

A comparison between Sephardic and Armenian mercantile organizations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries highlights how family firms could generate very different types of commercial networks. This comparison is relevant because Armenians dominated the export of raw silk from Persia to Europe from about 1620 and 1720 and were active in the gem trade. Thus, Armenians were occupied in some of the same regions and commodity specializations as Sephardim. Overall, however, Sephardim appear to have been more prone than Armenians to hire commission agents from outside of their own communities—a tendency that likely gave them a competitive advantage over Armenians.

Shah Abbas I forcibly resettled a large Armenian population living near the Iranian border with the Ottoman Empire to the neighborhood of New Julfa in the Safavid capital, Isfahan, in 1604–05. After violently uprooting this population, however, the shah gave it commercial and administrative advantages that allowed the wealthiest Armenian families to acquire a near monopoly in the export of Iranian silk. They sustained their commercial and financial activities until political events led to the destruction of New Julfa between 1722 and 1747.⁴¹

The family firm was at the heart of the commercial organization of this successful segment of the Armenian diaspora. Armenian and Sep-

hardic family firms shared many similarities. Whether the family patrimony was divided equally among all male and female siblings (as prescribed by customary laws) or inherited by the oldest surviving son, the wealthy commercial clans of New Julfa were pressured into living under the same roof. In these extended patriarchal families, brothers (and sometimes brothers-in-law) worked together with complete mutual responsibility after their father's death. Thus they could trade on their own account or take up obligations on behalf of the family partnership at large. These customs often ensured the preservation of a family firm over generations.⁴²

Unlike Sephardim, however, Julfa Armenians relied more on traveling agents than on commissioned ones.⁴³ Traveling agents were normally selected from a pool of young men who lacked their own capital and undertook long voyages sponsored by the commercial elite in New Julfa. A *commenda* contract stipulated the terms according to which the sedentary partner financed the goods transported and part of the expenses incurred by the traveling agent, who received a proportion of any profit in return for his services. A recent study has found that Iranian Armenian traveling agents were invariably chosen from a closed "coalition" of Julfa families, most belonging to the Armenian Church but some to the Catholic Church as well.⁴⁴

Several reasons account for Iranian Armenians' more insular business organization—some reasons were specific to their respective kinship organization, while others depended on the general political, economic, and religious conditions in the regions of migration. One factor played an especially critical role in the different commercial organization of Armenians and Sephardim: the gender balance in the diaspora. While many Sephardic women traveled from one port to the other in order to marry, most Armenian merchants returned to New Julfa in order to set up their own family after having spent their youth on the road. Alternatively, they remained abroad and sometimes married local women outside of their ethnic group. This pattern is visible among those Armenians who converted to Catholicism and settled in Livorno and Venice, but can also be observed in India and the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵

Numerically, Armenians and Sephardim were roughly comparable. Sephardic men and women in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the New World numbered a total of about 15,000, although only a fraction was active in commerce and finance. The Spanish and Portuguese Jewish synagogue of Amsterdam may have enlisted as many as 4,500 members in the 1680s, and possibly more around 1735.⁴⁶ The ghetto of Venice reached its zenith of 3,000 before the plague of 1630–31, and then declined steadily.⁴⁷ The Jews of Livorno, most though not all of Iberian

origin, grew steadily from just 134 in 1601 to 4,327 in 1784.⁴⁸ A recent estimate puts the overall number of Iranian Armenians involved in long-distance trade at about 1,000–1,500.⁴⁹ While this figure may have been analogous to the total number of active Sephardic merchants during this time, Armenian settlements in western Europe and the Mediterranean were numerically smaller and were comprised essentially of men. In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Armenian men never exceeded a hundred at a time.⁵⁰ In Venice, it is unlikely that they ever reached that figure.⁵¹ Even though the rise of Livorno attracted growing numbers of Armenian merchants, only a handful settled there on more than a temporary basis.⁵² Armenian colonies were much larger in the Levant. An Armenian traveler passing by Aleppo in 1613 counted three hundred households of his people, and a hundred in Smyrna.⁵³ However, we should note that Ottoman Armenians were not as commercially active as were Julfa Armenians, just as European Sephardim were more involved in long-distance trade than Ottoman Jews.

Armenian networks, in sum, were more centralized (with a nodal point in New Julfa) and their settlements in Europe smaller. This migratory structure explains why in order to oversee *commenda* and other contracts sealed with relatives, couriers, and traveling merchants, Iranian Armenians formed a corporate governance body called the Assembly of Merchants, which was based in New Julfa and functioned as their central clearing house. The Assembly of Merchants acted with ample administrative and jurisdictional power conferred upon them by the Safavid rulers to deter malfeasance, although punishment came mostly in the form of reputational sanctions. To members of the Julfa "coalition," the Assembly of Merchants and its representatives in the diaspora (who worked as judges of "portable courts") offered an effective, well-coordinated, semiformal arbitration institution. In addition, when necessary or convenient, Armenian merchants brought their lawsuits against fellow Armenians before the British court in India and perhaps before other local courts as well.⁵⁴ Surviving documentation, however, indicates that the Assembly of Merchants did not monitor dealings between Julfans and Ottoman Armenians, or any other strangers for that matter. Indeed, business letters by Julfa Armenians do not include grants of powers of attorney or commission agency to outsiders of their "coalition."⁵⁵

In truth, little is known about business relations between Armenians and non-Armenians. Scattered evidence indicates that time and again Armenians entered into agreements with Hindus, Muslims, and other Christians but usually on a temporary basis and only for the collection of short-term credit.⁵⁶ Ergas and Silvera bought and sold a few commodities with Armenians in Livorno and traded on their behalf over-

seas several times, but all told, they had limited interactions with the Armenians.⁵⁷ Abraham and Jacob Franco in London shipped coral and diamonds to and from Madras on account of David Sceriman, likely the richest Armenian in Livorno, in the 1740s.⁵⁸ Still more, the Amsterdam notary archives contain numerous deeds showing that Armenians sold Persian silk to Dutch merchants and bought local textiles from them. Some even used bottomry loans (a mixture of bills of exchange and insurance policies) to transfer goods and credit between Moscow and the Netherlands.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether and how often commission agency developed between Armenians and non-Armenians, and if it did, how the parties involved protected themselves from opportunism.

While the global reach of Iranian Armenians is impressive if we consider that they relied almost exclusively on traveling merchants, their spotty presence in European and Atlantic ports compared to that of the Sephardim likely undermined their ability to engage in prolonged commission agency with strangers.

Conclusion

Historians and social scientists interested in the cultural and institutional bases of capitalism have drawn attention to a variety of past and contemporary groups sometimes referred to as "middleman minorities." Geographical dispersion, with transregional family ties in particular, is a strategic feature of such groups. Consistently tending toward abstraction and generalizations, however, the sociological literature has done little to illuminate the variations in kinship organization across different middleman minorities.⁶⁰ Historians, on the other hand, generally prone to detail and particularities, have proven surprisingly ready to assume the importance of family ties in the working of trading diasporas but show little patience for description and comparison.⁶¹ Partly for this reason, the scholarship on early modern trading diasporas has also offered a feeble response to the prevailing tendency among economic historians to emphasize long-term changes rather than synchronic heterogeneity in forms of business organization. This is particularly so in the transition from family firms to limited liability partnerships, to joint-stock chartered companies, and eventually to modern corporations. By comparing the family structures of Sephardim and Armenians, we can do more than reassert the centrality of the family in long-distance trade. We can begin to explain the plurality of business forms that coexisted in the

early modern period and the particular strengths and weaknesses of each trading diaspora.

No legal prohibition existed in Venice and Livorno against the formation of partnerships between Jews and non-Jews, but the absence of Jewish-Christian intermarriage and the social distance between the two groups made such partnerships nearly inconceivable. Most Sephardim in Livorno and Venice worked on the basis of implicit contracts with kin and in-laws to form general partnerships. Social incentives and deterrents both influenced this choice. *Accomandite* shielded investors from reckless partners but were not ideal to sustain long-term and complex investments.⁶² At the same time, the matrimonial practices prevalent among Sephardim offset large portions of the risk that a general partnership entailed. Consanguineal marriages, the merging of dowry and dower, and levirate unions facilitated the circulation of commercial capital within small endogamic circles. Mutual agency permitted family partnerships to act promptly in a world where slow communication could be lethal to striking a good bargain. Furthermore, the greater longevity that family partnerships enjoyed over *commenda* agreements allowed them to overcome short-term crises and strengthen their credit and reputation over time. All in all, these advantages seem to have been sufficiently attractive to compensate for the perennial risk that one dishonest or inexperienced partner would bring down all the others.

The modern theory of the business firm assumes that a firm's boundaries are chosen in order to provide the optimal allocation with respect to the parties involved in a transaction; it may, for example, be more convenient to subcontract in some areas and work in partnership in others.⁶³ Sephardic merchants did not have this freedom to choose. Social conditions discouraged them from forming even limited liability partnerships with non-Jews, and strongly encouraged them to rely on blood relatives and in-laws. Sephardic patriarchs were no innovators when it came to family firms. They reproduced social norms that happened to serve them well, for they could use their daughters to expand their networks as well as secure their commercial capital. The persistence of kinship structures that we readily label as traditional, however, did not automatically restrict the undertakings of Sephardic merchants to a small pool of kin and coreligionists. Many Sephardim, it turns out, did hire non-Jews as commission agents, even if they would not seal partnerships with them. In so doing, they expanded their activities to locales where coreligionists did not reside or did not hold a strong position in the market.

The same conclusion does not seem to hold for Armenians. Overall, both Sephardim and Armenians relied amply on extended patriarchal

families to operate general partnerships. But Julfa Armenians preferred to hire traveling agents from their immediate circles by means of *com-menda* contracts and did not seem to have relied consistently on commission agents selected from among other groups. The migratory patterns of the two trading diasporas as well as their legal and religious status in Europe help explain the different governance institutions that each used to monitor their respective agents. Armenians relied heavily on the Assembly of Merchants in Isfahan because the Safavid rulers granted it considerable autonomy and because many Armenian merchants maintained their basis in New Julfa. In contrast, in Christian Europe, where suspicion against Jews extended to the most acculturated Sephardim, no government would have allowed the creation of even a semiformal Sephardic tribunal with jurisdiction over the entire diaspora. Sephardim lived in different sovereign territories, and each community negotiated the terms and reach of its own jurisdictional autonomy with local political authorities, whether in Livorno, Venice, Hamburg, Amsterdam, London, or elsewhere. At same time, the larger population of each Sephardic community, the constant movement of people and information from one community to the other, and the circulation of women across the diaspora ensured the emergence of distinctive transregional networks. These networks, in turn, enacted multilateral channels of reputational control that worked both within and beyond the Sephardic diaspora.

If the comparison that I offered is correct, it shows that the Sephardim were the less formalized and less centralized of the two diasporas, and yet relied on non-kin and strangers more than the Armenians, who had a centralized, semiformal adjudication system. That Julfa Armenians were more insular than Sephardim in their business dealings is also at odds with the fact that as Christians they enjoyed several advantages in Europe unavailable to Sephardim. This apparent paradox may reflect the absence of secondary literature on the effect of intermarriage between Armenians and non-Armenians on this trading diaspora's business strategies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At any rate, a comparison with the Sephardim suggests that the limited circulation of women across the Armenian diaspora contributed to its greater business insularity because it reinforced the centrality of New Julfa, on the one hand, and accelerated the assimilation of Armenian men of the diaspora, on the other. Most settlements of Armenian merchants were too spotty and too small to enforce efficient informal oversight over non-Armenian commercial partners. In order to understand the business organization of Sephardim and Armenians, in sum, we need to consider not only the types of legal contracts that they used, but also the subtle differences in their kinship systems and how transregional families adapted to internal

and external conditions, including geographical location, demographic consistency, and religious identity. Transregional families could take many forms and generate different models of business organization with which to contend in the competitive arena of long-distance trade.

Notes

1. This chapter draws from my *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT, 2009).
2. By "Sephardim," I mean the descendents of those Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 or forced to convert to Catholicism in Portugal in 1497 who later formed stable communities in Europe (with principal settlements in Venice, Livorno, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London) and the Caribbean. By the seventeenth century, this segment of the Sephardic diaspora was collectively distinct from Ottoman Sephardim, that is, those descendents of Iberian Jews who settled in the Ottoman Empire. After 1630, Livorno was the largest Sephardic settlement in Europe after Amsterdam, and it surpassed Venice in population and economic influence. In this chapter, I will only discuss Iranian Armenians, who were the branch of the Armenian diaspora most involved in long-distance trade in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.
3. The Dutch Levant Company (1625–1826) was an organization of private merchants that did not receive a patent from the state. For a comparison between the Dutch and the English presence in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as on their cooperation and rivalry, see Alastair Hamilston, Alexander H. de Groot, and Mauritius H. van den Boogert, eds., *Friends and Rivals in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 2000).
4. On seventeenth-century Amsterdam, see W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw* (Assen, 1965); W. Klein and J. W. Veluwenkamp, "The Role of the Entrepreneur in the Economic Expansion of the Dutch Republic," in *The Dutch Economy in the Golden Age: Nine Studies*, ed. Karel Davids and Leo Noordegraaf (Amsterdam, 1993), 27–53; Clé Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf, eds., *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchant and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market* (Den Haag, 1995); Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 2005). On the importance of family partnerships in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic, see Jacob M. Price, "The Great Quaker Business Families of Eighteenth-Century London: The Rise and Fall of a Sectarian Patriciate," in *The World of William Penn*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn (Philadelphia, 1986), 363–99; Jacob M. Price, "Transaction Costs: A Note on Merchant Credit and the Organization of Private Trade," in *The Political Economy of Merchants Empires*, ed. James Tracy (Cambridge, 1991), 276–97; Jacob M. Price, *Perry of London: A Family and a Firm on the Seaborne Frontier, 1615–1753* (Cambridge, 1992); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 105–6; David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Organization of the Atlantic Market, 1640–1815* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 141–50, 188–90. Admittedly, Jacob Price, Kenneth Morgan, and others also found that after 1685—and particularly

- after the mid-eighteenth century—specialization and trade in partnerships increased significantly in British Atlantic commerce; Jacob Price and Paul G. E. Clemens, "A Revolution of Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675–1775," *Journal of Economic History* 47 (1987): 1–43, and Kenneth Morgan, "Business Networks in the British Export Trade to North America, 1750–1800," in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge, 2000), 36–62.
5. Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and the Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1967); Charles Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII^e siècle: Contribution à l'étude des économies maritimes* (Marseille, 1973); Richard Grassby, *The English Gentleman in Trade: The Life and Works of Sir Dudley North, 1641–1691* (Oxford, 1994).
 6. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA, 1978), 378–79 (emphasis in the original). See also Max Weber, *The History of Commercial Partnerships in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lutz Kaelber (Lanham, MD, 2003). Note that Sylvia Yanagisako points out that Weber mistook the legal and accounting separation of household and commercial capital, which was born out of the desire to limit the financial liability of family members, for evidence of actual separation between family and business relations; Sylvia J. Yanagisako, "Bringing it All Back Home: Kinship Theory in Anthropology," in *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-Term Developments (1300–1900)*, ed. David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher, and Jon Mathieu (New York, 2007), 42.
 7. Here and throughout this essay I refer to the definition of "coalition" given by Avner Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge, 2006), 58–59.
 8. On the rules of exogamy in Christian Europe during the early modern period, see David Warren Sabean, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge, 1998), 63–89. Wherever Jews were permitted to reside in early modern Italy, including in Venice and Livorno, Jewish law prevailed in matters of marriage; Vittorio Colorni, *Legge ebraica e leggi locali: Ricerche sull'ambito d'applicazione del diritto ebraico in Italia dall'epoca romana al secolo XIX* (Milan, 1945), 185–87.
 9. Archivio di Stato, Venice (henceforth ASV), *Notarile testamenti* (henceforth NT), Giovanni Piccini, 756.21. Two generations later, in 1702, Samuel Camis reiterated the injunction to his nieces; ASV, NT, Luca Calzavara, 247.115.
 10. Primogeniture is often linked, among other things, to the rise of entail and declining investments in liquid assets in both Venice and Florence. On Venice, see James C. Davis, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class* (Baltimore, 1962), 68–72; Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago, 1999), 42–50; Jean-François Chauvard, *La circulation des biens à Venise: Stratégies patrimoniales et marché immobilier (1600–1750)* (Rome, 2005), 323–31. On Florence, see R. Burr Litchfield, "Demographic Characteristics of Florentine Patrician Families from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," in *Journal of Economic History* 29 (1969): 191–205; Stefano Calonaci, *Dietro lo scudo crociato: I fedecommissi di famiglia e il trionfo della borghesia fiorentina (1400 ca-1750)* (Florence, 2005).
 11. The age of thirty was likely chosen as it marked the moment when a merchant had established his autonomy (whether successfully or not). Archivio di Stato, Florence (henceforth ASF), *Notarile Moderno: Protocolli, Testamenti* (henceforth NMT), Giovanni Battista Gargani, 26286, fols. 19r–22r, no. 12. In Venice in 1701, Moses Baruch Carvaglio left special instructions in the undesirable event that his sons decided to part ways (ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 518, fols. 234v–240v).

12. Abraham Attais was probably the first Jew in Livorno to stipulate an entail (*fidei-commisum*) in 1694; Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, "Proprietà e insediamento ebraici a Livorno dalla fine del Cinquecento alla seconda metà del Settecento," *Quaderni storici* 54 (1983): 884. Moses Ergas also established "a sort of fideicommissum" in 1747 (ASF, *Magistrato Supremo*, 4045, letter E, no. 2). Examples from Venice are in ASV, NT, Giuseppe Uccelli, 1123.74; ASV, NT, Carlo Gabrieli, 516.166 (note that when Grazia Baruch Carvaglio created a *fidei commisum* for her 6,000 ducats invested in the Venetian public debt, she bequeathed it equally to all four sons).
13. Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," *Journal of Family History* 3 (1978): 262–96.
14. Lorenzo Cantini, *Legislazione toscana raccolta e illustrata* (Florence, 1800–32), 2:178–79, 22:131–36; Umberto Santarelli, *Per la storia del fallimento nelle legislazioni italiane dell'età intermedia* (Padua, 1964), 147–52, 245–47, 284.
15. Archivio di Stato, Livorno, *Captiano poi Governatore poi Auditore: Atti civili*, 429, no. 203.
16. ASF, *Notarile Moderno Protocolli* (henceforth NMP), Giovanni Giuseppe Mazzanti, 23703, fols. 170r–175v, no. 36. The dowry of five thousand pieces and a 50 percent dower exchanged between Moses and Rebecca indicate a union between a man and a woman from the middle-upper stratum of Sephardic society.
17. Renzo Toaff, *La nazione ebraica a Livorno e Pisa (1591–1700)* (Florence, 1990), 574, 586, 612. On bigamy among the Livorno Jews in the seventeenth century, see Cristina Galasso, *Alle origini di una comunità: Ebrei ed ebrei a Livorno nel Seicento* (Florence, 2002), 27–41.
18. ASF, NMP, Nicolò Mazzinghi, 27112, fols. 70v–71v, no. 129.
19. Evelyne Oliel-Grausz, "Networks and Communication in the Sephardi Diaspora: An Added Dimension to the Concept of Port Jews and Port Jewries," in *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*, ed. David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (London, 2006), 63.
20. ASF, NMP, Roberto Micheli, 27236, fols. 177v–179r.
21. Henri Lévy-Bruhl, *Histoire juridique des sociétés de commerce en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1938), 30; Henri Lapeyre, *Une famille des marchands: Les Ruiz* (Paris, 1955), 145–52; Wilfrid Brulez, *De Firma della Faille en de internationale handel van Vlaamse firma's in de 16^e eeuw* (Brussels, 1959), 35–123; Klein, *De Trippen*, 224–25, 379–88, 418–21.
22. Maurice Carmona, "Aspects du capitalisme toscan aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles: Les sociétés en commandite à Florence et à Lucques," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 11 (1964): 81–108; R. Burr Litchfield, "Les investissements commerciaux des patriciens florentins au XVIII^e siècle," in *Annales ESC* 24 (1969): 685–721; Jordan Goodman, "Financing Pre-Modern Industry: An Example from Florence, 1580–1660," *Journal of European Economic History* 10 (1981): 415–35; Franco Bertini, "Le società di accomandita a Firenze e Livorno tra Ferdinando III e il regno d'Etruria," in *Istituzioni e società in Toscana nell'età moderna (Atti delle giornate di studio dedicate a Giuseppe Pansini)* (Rome, 1994), 538–63; Paolo Malanima, "I commerci del mondo del 1674 visti da Amsterdam e da Livorno," in *Ricerche di storia moderna in onore di Mario Mirri*, ed. Giuliana Biagioli (Pisa, 1995), 153–80.
23. What follows is based on the examination of the copies of Tuscan *accomandite* registered in the merchant court of Florence from 1632 to 1777; ASF, *Mercanzia*, 10841–59.
24. Partnership between Jews and non-Jews among merchants involved in the Anglo-Indian diamond trade in the eighteenth century are mentioned in Gedalia Yogeve,

- Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester, UK, 1978), 146–48, although with no reference to the specific terms of these agreements.
25. ASV, NT, Cristoforo Brambilla, 167.281. On the Baruch Carvaglios, see Federica Ruspio, *La Nazione Portoghese: Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia* (Torino, 2007), 180–85. On the Venetian *fraterne*, see Frederic C. Lane, “Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic,” *Journal of Economic History* 4 (1944): 178–96.
 26. ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11062, fols. 27r–29r; ASV, NT, Andrea Calzavara, 260.830.
 27. One of the difficulties of identifying these types of agreement among the papers of Jewish merchants is that the term *compagnia* had both a specific meaning and a generic one. In the latter case, it could refer to any type of commercial partnership, as did the expressions *compagnia di negozio* or the even more common *società* (from the Latin *societas*). Note, for example, that the Baruch Carvaglio called their business based in Venice a *fraterna e compagnia* (see above in the text). The agreement signed by Solomon Enriques and Joseph Franchetti in 1782 seems to establish a *compagnia* in the strict sense of term to operate in Tunis, Livorno, and Smyrna. For a transcription of the contract, see Jean-Pierre Filippini, “Gli ebrei e le attività economiche nell’area nord africana (XVII–XVIII secolo),” *Nuovi studi livornesi* 7 (1999): 143–44.
 28. Raymond de Roover, *Money, Banking and Credit in Medieval Bruges: Italian Merchant-Bankers, Lombards and Money-Changers; A Study in the Origins of Banking* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), 31–34; Raymond de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397–1494* (Cambridge, MA, 1963); Raymond de Roover, “The Organization of Trade,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. 3, *Economic Organization and Policies in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan, E. E. Rich and Edward Miller (Cambridge, 1963), 42–118; John F. Padgett and Paul D. McLean, “Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation: The Birth of Partnership Systems in Renaissance Florence,” *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (2006): 1463–568.
 29. Lapeyre, *Une famille des marchands*; Wilfrid, *De Firma della Faille*; Pierre Jeannin, *Les marchands au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1967).
 30. In modern legal scholarship, this point is emphasized by Henry Hansmann, Reinier Kraakman, and Richard Squire, “Law and the Rise of the Firm,” *Harvard Law Review* 119 (2006): 1372–74.
 31. As the two brothers Jacob and Daniel Navarro stated when they dissolved their partnership in Venice in 1661, they had to “purify their accounts of the dowries” before they could divide the remaining assets among themselves; ASV, NA, Angelo Maria Piccini, 11068, fol. 162v. When Lazzaro Racanati married his cousin in 1750, it was established that both the dowry and the dower would be registered in the account books of his partnership, although the capital was only transferred there nine years later (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25273, fols. 80r–81r, no. 80, and 25277, fols. 162r–163r, no. 416). The same provision had been recorded in 1718 at the marriage of Salvatore Recanati (ASF, NMP, Giovanni Battista Gamera, 25271, fols. 3r–4v, no. 3). Other examples from the account books of Ergas & Silvera are in ASF, *Libri di commercio e di famiglia* (henceforth LCF), 1933 (11 September 1730; 22 October 1730); ASF, LCF, 1946 (22 August 1735); ASF, LCF, 1954 (21 March 1741).
 32. Medieval Italian family firms had long introduced the use of such a fund (called *souvraccorpo*): Weber, *History of Commercial Partnerships*, 162–66; de Roover, “Organization of Trade,” 77.

33. José do Nascimento Raposo, “Don Gabriel de Silva: A Portuguese-Jewish Banker in Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux” (PhD diss., York University, Toronto, 1989), 172. Gabriel de Silva lived his life as a New Christian, but in 1763 was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Bordeaux (290).
34. See the documents published in the section called “Notarial Records Relating to the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam up to 1639,” which appears in most issues of the journal *Studia Rosenthaliana* beginning in 1967. More evidence surfaces in Cátia Antunes’s current work (“Atlantic Entrepreneurship: Cross-cultural Business Networks, 1580–1776,” paper presented at the European Social Science History Conference, Ghent, Belgium, 13 April 2010).
35. On the general partnership as an institution of Roman law, see Reinhard Zimmermann, *The Law of Obligations: Roman Foundations of the Civil Traditions* (Oxford, 1996), 466–72.
36. ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Stefano Ceccato in Venice (20 January 1708).
37. Examples in ASF, LCF, 1931, letter to Zuanelli and Iolotta in Venice (15 March 1705); ASF, LCF, 1935, letter to Lazzaro Sacerdoti in Genoa (15 February 1715).
38. Davis, *Aleppo*, 147–48. On the obsolete information that English principals dispatched to Aleppo, see also Grassby, *English Gentleman*, 45, 47.
39. Edhem Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1999), 208–9. In eighteenth-century Marseille, merchants had the habit of drafting detailed contracts to stipulate their individual and family obligations; Carrière, *Négociants marseillais*, 879–81.
40. For a full illustration of the range of commission agents used in Europe and Portuguese India by the Ergas & Silvera of Livorno, and the systems through which these agents were monitored, see my *Familiarity of Strangers*, chapters 7, 8, 9.
41. Edmund Herzig, “The Iranian Silk Trade and European Manufacture in the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries,” *Journal of European Economic History* 19 (1990): 73–89; Edmund Herzig, “The Volume of Iranian Raw Silk Exports in the Safavid Period,” *Iranian Studies* 25 (1992): 61–79; Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver 1600–1730* (Cambridge, 1999); Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley, CA, 2011).
42. Edmund Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan: A Study in Pre-modern Trade” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1991), 160–73, 223–30; Edmund Herzig, “The Family Firm in the Commercial Organization of the Julfa Armenians,” in *Études Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris-Louvain, 1993), 287–304; Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 147–48; Sebouh Aslanian, “The Circulation of Men and Credit: The Role of the Commenda and the Family Firm in Julfan Society,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 5 (2007): 149–50.
43. Herzig, *Armenian Merchants of New Julfa*, 231.
44. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 157–58; Aslanian, “Circulation of Men and Credit,” 237–52, 280–83. For the accounts kept by a *commenda* agent traveling to Central Asia, see Levon Khachikian, “The Ledger of the Merchant Hovhannes Joughayetsi,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 8 (1966): 153–86. Bhaswati Bhattacharya shows that in practice some traveling agents gained autonomy by working away from home for long periods of time and sometimes accumulated capital of their own; see her “The ‘Book of Will’ of Petrus Woskan (1680–1751): Some Insights into the Global Commercial Networks of the Armenians in the Indian Ocean,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51 (2008): 76.

45. Already in 1629 a prosperous merchant from Isfahan married a woman from Livorno following the prescription of the Council of Trent; Frattarelli Fischer, "Insediamento degli Armeni," 29. On the marriage alliances between the business elite of Livorno and Armenians, see also Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, "Pro Armenis Unitis cum conditionibus: La costruzione della Chiesa degli Armeni a Livorno: un iter lungo e accidentato," in *Gli Armeni a Livorno: L'intercultura di una diaspora (Interventi nel Convegno "Memoria e cultura armena fra Livorno e l'oriente")*, ed. Giangiacomo Panessa and Massimo Sanacore (Livorno, 2006), 29. The Sceriman, the richest Catholic Armenian family of the diaspora, married into Venetian patrician families; Donald Maxwell White, *Zaccaria Seriman (1709–1784) and the Viaggi di Enrico Wanton: A Contribution to the Study of the Enlightenment in Italy* (Manchester, UK, 1961), 19, note 3. For Armenian women who married officers of the Dutch East India Company in Surat in the late seventeenth century, see Bhaswati Bhattacharya, "Armenian European Relationship in India, 1500–1800: No Armenian Foundation for European Empire?," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48 (2005): 306. In Smyrna, Persian Armenians married among themselves, while only a few built kinship ties to resident French merchants; see Kéram Kévonian, "Marchands Arméniens au XVII^e siècle: À propos d'un livre arménien à Amsterdam en 1699," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 16 (1975): 210; Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis, "Les arméniens catholiques de Smyrne aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles," *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporaine* 2 (1995): 38–39.
46. H. P. H. Nusteling, "The Jews in the Republic of the United Provinces: Origins, Numbers and Dispersion," in *Dutch Jewry: History and Secular Culture (1500–2000)*, ed. Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda (Leiden, 2002), 51–53. More conservative figures set the number of Sephardim at 2,800 in 1683, with a peak of 3,000 in the mid-eighteenth century (Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* [Bloomington, IN, 1997], 156, 158) or, on the basis of marriage data, to 3,275–3,475 individuals in the 1680s (Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-century Amsterdam* [Oxford, 2000], 91).
47. Giovanni Favero and Francesca Trivellato, "Gli abitanti del ghetto di Venezia in età moderna: dati e ipotesi," *Zakhor: Rivista della storia degli ebrei in Italia* 7 (2004): 9–50.
48. Elena Fasano Guarini, "La popolazione," in *Livorno e Pisa: due città e un territorio nella politica dei Medici: Livorno, progetto e storia di una città tra il 1500 e il 1600* (Pisa, 1980), 199–215; Toaff, *La nazione ebrea*, 121–23.
49. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 179. For a drastically lower figure of 300 to 400, see Bhaswati Bhattacharya, "Making Money at the Blessed Place of Manila: Armenians in the Madras-Manila Trade in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Global History* 3 (2008): 18. The same author also emphasizes the growth of Armenian mercantile settlements in India and their autonomy from New Julfa in the eighteenth century.
50. Silvio Van Rooy, "Armenian Habits as Mirrored in 17–18th Century Amsterdam Documents," *Revue des études arméniennes* 3 (1966): 347. The number of Armenians identified through Amsterdam notary records peaked at an average of 41 per year in 1701–20; René Bekius, "A Global Enterprise: Armenian Merchants in the Textile Trade in the 17th and 18th Centuries," in *Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World, 1400–1700*, ed. Jon Thompson, Daniel Shaffer, Pirjetta Mildh (Oxford, 2010), 226. See also Edmund Herzig, "Venice and the Julfa Armenian Merchants," in *Gli armeni e Venezia: Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: Il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria*, ed. Boghos Levon Zekian and Aldo Ferrari (Venice, 2004), 159–61.

51. In 1653, 73 adult men elected the new priest of the Armenian Church in Venice. In 1710, 36 Armenians were counted as being in transit through Venice and 27 as permanent residents. Some forty years later, there were 70 lay Armenians and 17 clergymen there; Giorgio Nubar Gianighian, "Segni di una presenza," in Zekian and Ferrari, *Gli armeni e Venezia*, 62.
52. Armenians began to appear in Tuscany in the mid-sixteenth century. Their presence grew slowly, to peak in the mid-seventeenth century when there were at least 47 Armenian merchants in Livorno. In 1763, there were a mere 14 Armenian heads of household. See Paolo Castignoli, *Studi di Storia: Livorno dagli archivi alla città* (Livorno, 2001), 117; Lucia Frattarelli Fischer, "Per la storia dell'insediamento degli Armeni a Livorno nel Seicento," in *Gli Armeni lungo le strade d'Italia: Atti del convegno internazionale (Torino, Genova, Livorno, 8–11 marzo 1997)*; *Giornata di studi a Livorno* (Pisa, 1998), 23, 26–30, 35. Claims that there were 120 Armenians in Livorno in the early seventeenth century and from one to two hundred in the eighteenth century seem inflated; Boghos Levon Zekian, "Le colonie armene del Medio Evo in Italia e le relazioni cultrali italo-armene," in *Atti del primo simposio internazionale di arte armena (Bergamo, 28–30 giugno 1975)* (Venice, 1978), 856; and Herzig, "Venice and Julfa Merchants," 156. Also unreliable is the report sent by the Papal Nuncio to the *Propaganda Fide* in 1669, which mentioned 300 resident Armenian merchants in Livorno; Aslanian, "Circulation of Men and Credit," 160–61, and his *From the Indian Ocean*, 73.
53. Herzig, "Venice and the Julfa," 153.
54. For India, see Bhattacharya, "The 'Book of Will'," 79–81.
55. Sebouh Aslanian, "Social Capital, 'Trust' and the Role of Networks in Julfan Trade: Informal and Semi-Formal Institutions at Work," *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 393–99, and his *From the Indian Ocean*, 164, 196–97, 199. The Assembly of Merchants was formed by a Julfan appointed representative (*kalantar*), who acted as delegate of, and intermediary with, the shah and twenty other officials. It is possible that the correspondence and other business records examined by Aslanian underestimate business cooperation between Julfa Armenians and all others because they are, for the most part, kept in a dialect that was only comprehensible to Julfa Armenians.
56. Edmund Herzig, "Borrowed Terminology and Techniques of the New Julfa Armenian Merchants: A Study in Cultural Transmission," Paper presented at the *Sixth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies* (London, 3–5 August 2006). Sparse examples in Bhattacharya, "Armenian European Relationship," 291, 293–300; Bhattacharya, "The 'Book of Will,'" 83; Bhattacharya, "Making Money," 7, 10, 14, 16. The Sceriman family possibly relied on a Hindu agent to acquire diamonds in Goa; Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 158, and "Circulation of Men and Credit," 156.
57. In 1732, they bought about 556 pieces of eight of indigo from "David di Jacoppo Armenio"; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 17 (Debts, 19 March 1732). The following year, they sold cacao to "Giovani di Gaspari Armenio"; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 4 (Credits, 24 April 1733). In 1731, Ergas & Silvera had a credit of 70 pieces of eight with "Gregorio de Pietro Armenio" to whom Touche and Jauna of Cyprus had remitted a bill of exchange; ASF, LCF, 1942, fol. 11 (Credits, 17 December 1731). Purchases made by Ergas & Silvera on account of Armenians in Livorno are mentioned in ASF, LCF, 1945, letters to Ergas & Silvera in Aleppo (6 May 1738) and Medici and Niccolini in Lisbon (3 August 1739).
58. Bhaswati Bhattacharya, e-mail communication.
59. Bekius, "A Global Enterprise."

60. Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," *American Sociological Review* 38 (1973): 583–94; Walter Zenner, *Minorities in the Middle: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (Albany, NY, 1991).
61. An important, if partial, exception is Claude Markovits's study of the Sindhi trading diaspora, although women played a minimal role in this commercial diaspora; *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge, 2000).
62. While there is compelling evidence that the *commenda* was "the single most important source of the dramatic expansion of Julfan commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," when compared to commission agency, it is not clear that it was always "the ideal means for the circulation of merchants, goods, and credit across vast distances," as maintained by Aslanian, "Circulation of Men and Credit," 125.
63. In his analysis of the internal organization, ownership, and boundaries of firms, Oliver D. Hart, unlike most economists, considers power as exogenous to the market but does not define exactly what he means by "power," nor does he contextualize its forms. See his *Firms, Contracts, and Financial Structure* (Oxford, 1995).