

## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 6 (2009)

The Relevance of the History of Modern Greek Society and Culture for Comparative and International History



**Entrepreneurship and Relational Capital in a Levantine Context: Bartolomew Edward Abbott, the "Father of the Levant Company" in Thessaloniki (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)**

*Despina Vlami*

doi: [10.12681/hr.242](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.242)

### To cite this article:

Vlami, D. (2010). Entrepreneurship and Relational Capital in a Levantine Context: Bartolomew Edward Abbott, the "Father of the Levant Company" in Thessaloniki (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries). *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 6, 129–164. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.242>

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND RELATIONAL CAPITAL IN A LEVANTINE CONTEXT:

BARTHOLOMEW EDWARD ABBOTT,

THE “FATHER OF THE LEVANT COMPANY” IN THESSALONIKI

(EIGHTEENTH-NINETEENTH CENTURIES)

*Despina Vlami*

---

**ABSTRACT:** The paper explores the entrepreneurial strategy and tactics of a British merchant who traded in the port of Thessaloniki from the late eighteenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth. Bartholomew Edward Abbott was a Levant Company's Freeman who was also involved in the Company's internal affairs as an appointed interim Consul at the Company's factory in Thessaloniki. Abbott's strategy intertwined with his family life and relatives and with his rights, duties and commitments as a Freeman. The origin and performance of his relational capital – comprising family, kin, Freeman and local businessmen – shows how his activity was sustained by overlapping and, at times, opposing identities. His case allows us to get another glimpse inside a great chartered trade company and examine, even briefly, its operation and corporate identity. It also allows us to get an idea of the barriers distinguishing the activity of a Freeman from that of an independent entrepreneur, the aspirations of a merchant from those of an officeholder of the Company.

---

### *Introduction*

In 1715 the English Levant Company opened an agency/factory in the Ottoman port of Thessaloniki and sent Richard Kemble, an English merchant from Smyrna, to represent it, taking the post of resident English Consul.<sup>1</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this article was presented at the Conference of the European Business History Association in Bergen, 2008. For the history of the Levant Company see A. C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, London: Frank Cass, 2006. Also G. Ambrose, *The Levant Company, 1640-1753*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1935, and M. Epstein, *Early History of the Levant Company*, London 1908. E. Lipson also refers to the Levant Company and its organisation in E. Lipson, *Economic History of England: The Age of Mercantilism*, Vol. II, London: A. & C. Black, 1931, pp. 335-344, while David Goffman presents an early history of Anglo-Ottoman relations since the sixteenth century in D. Goffman, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642-1660*, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1998. For the history of the Levant Company's agencies/factories in Aleppo see R. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Routledge, 1967; in Smyrna, Sonia P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey: Paul Rycaut at Smyrna, 1667-1678*, Oxford 1989 and E. Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700-1820)*, Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992; in Cyprus, Sir H. C. T. Luke, *Cyprus under the Turks 1571-*

Thessaloniki factory operated until 1825 when the Levant Company dissolved and all the British consulates in the Ottoman Empire were put under the authority of the British Foreign Office.<sup>2</sup> Although it never surpassed in number of factors or volume of transactions the Constantinople, the Smyrna or the Aleppo factories, it remained, throughout its history, an important link in the system of representations set up by the Company on the coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this paper is to investigate the entrepreneurial strategy and tactics of the British merchant and Levant Company member (Freeman) Bartholomew Edward Abbott, who lived and operated in Thessaloniki from the late eighteenth century until his death in 1817.<sup>4</sup> Founder of a rich and famous merchant family that held a prominent position in the economic and social life of the Ottoman port from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth,<sup>5</sup> Abbott was one of the longest

---

1878. *A Record based on the Archives of the English Consulate in Cyprus under the Levant Company and After*, Oxford 1921, reprinted London 1969. For the history of the Levant Company in Thessaloniki see D. Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο και διπλωματία στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. Η Levant Company στη Θεσσαλονίκη, 1792-1825” [British trade and diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Levant Company in Thessaloniki, 1792-1825], *Μεσαιωνικά και Νέα Ελληνικά* 9 (2008), pp. 143-268.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> With the exception of a few periods in its history, the Thessaloniki factory comprised five to six steady members. This was a poor number in comparison with the number of factors operating in other major factories. In 1661 the Smyrna factory counted 49 members, 36 in 1704, 6 in 1794, 8 in 1813 and up to 25 in 1821. The factory in Constantinople comprised around 25 members in the seventeenth century, five in 1794, and five to six in the period 1806-1813 (Wood, *Levant Company*, passim). 50 factors were established in Aleppo in 1662 and only two in 1780 (Davis, *Aleppo*, pp. 88-89). In 1804 Francis Charnaud, Peter Chasseaud, Bartholomew Edward Abbott, John Pyburn and George Frederic Abbott signed a letter to the Levant Company in London presenting themselves as “...His Sacred Majesty’s most loyal subjects residents in the city of Salonica...”. See Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο”, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> Bartholomew Edward Abbott was born in 1738. He was the son of Peter Abbott (1698-1768) and brother of Jasper, Robert, George and John Abbott. In 1778 Bartholomew Edward married Sarah Anartary, the widow of the merchant Gabriel Chasseaud and mother of Peter Chasseaud. Bartholomew and Sarah had three children: George Frederic (1776), Annetta (1789) and Maria Canella (1791). He died in Thessaloniki in 1817 and Sarah died a year after. For the Abbott family see A. B. Metallinou, *Παλαιά Θεσσαλονίκη* [Old Thessaloniki], Vol. I, Thessaloniki 1939, pp. 46, 170-172; A. Vakalopoulos, “Ιστορικά στοιχεία για την οικογένεια Abbott της Θεσσαλονίκης...” [Historical evidence of the Abbot family of Thessaloniki], *Makedonika* 22 (1982), pp. 22, 214-221; C. A. Vakalopoulos, “Contribution à l’histoire de la colonie européenne de Thessalonique vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle”, *Makedonika* 12 (1972), pp. 12, 183-200.

<sup>5</sup> The family’s economic and social rise in the mid-nineteenth century has been attributed to Jackie Abbott, grandson of Bartholomew Edward. Jackie was British by

servicing and most committed members of the Levant Company's factory in the city. Considered the "father of the Levant Company" in Thessaloniki by his contemporary traveller Daniel Edward Clarke,<sup>6</sup> Abbott was admitted into the Company only in the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

In the next paragraphs a brief review of the Levant Company's organisation is presented together with a short reference to the Ottoman port's economic development during the period investigated. We then consider Abbott's entrepreneurship<sup>8</sup> and relational capital<sup>9</sup> utilising information provided by documents kept in the Levant Company's archive. The implication of the

---

nationality and Greek Orthodox in religion. He became one of Thessaloniki's major money lenders and the chief local banker of Mahmut Sadik Pasha, one of the city's famous governors in the second half of the nineteenth century. See M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, New York: Harper Collins, 2004, pp. 155-158.

<sup>6</sup> D. E. Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. Part the Second, Greece, Egypt and the Holy Land, Section the First*, London 1812, p. 364.

<sup>7</sup> In 1794 (7 and 26 August) Francis Charnaud, British Consul in Thessaloniki, informed the Levant Company that he had "administered the Oath of a Freeman to Mr. Bartholomew Edward Abbott constituting him a Member of the Company". The Company replied to him that according to the formal procedure, a Consul was only delegated to administer the Oath to people resident abroad in order to "qualify them to be considered" by the Company as future members following a petition presented in London by their "friends" (London, National Archives of the United Kingdom [NA], State Papers [SP], 105/121, pp. 514-515, London, 14 October 1794).

<sup>8</sup> For a theory on entrepreneurship see M. Casson and A. Godley, "Entrepreneurship and Historical Explanation" in *Entrepreneurship: Country Studies: A Historical Perspective*, ed. Y. Cassis and I. Peplassis Minoglou, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 12-13, and M. Casson, *The Entrepreneur: An Economic Theory*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Relational capital has been defined as all relationships – market relationships, power relationships and cooperation – established between firms, institutions and people, which stem from a strong sense of belonging and a highly developed capacity for cooperation typically of culturally similar people and institutions; see R. Capello and A. Faggian, "Collective Learning and Relational Capital in Local Innovation Processes", *Regional Studies* 39 (2005), pp. 75-87. It is a category of Intellectual Capital or Intangible Assets that is created and maintained by having, nurturing and managing good relationships with clients, suppliers, employees, governments, other stakeholders and even competitors. Elements can include the value of such things as: the networks that an organisation is part of; the strategic alliances, joint ventures, coalitions a firm has formed; relationships with government agencies and other stakeholders. The value of relational capital is based on both the sheer presence of certain relationships and on the capability to handle and manage the relationships well; see also *12 Manage Dictionary* ([http://www.12manage.com/description\\_relational\\_capital.html](http://www.12manage.com/description_relational_capital.html)).

Abbott family in business is discussed together with the type and variety of trade operations Bartholomew Edward Abbott engaged in. In a subsequent part of the paper, an attempt is made to sketch Abbott's relational capital studying the system of overlapping circles of relatives, associates, and social and economic acquaintances in which he participated. Abbott was connected through binding relations of kin, interdependence and sociability to Thessaloniki's local merchant society. As a Levant Company Freeman and a committed member of the factory in Thessaloniki, he also belonged to a distinguished group of Levant merchants identified as "friends" through exclusive admission, mutual scope and priorities, and similar rights and duties. In the last part of the paper, his ambiguous connection to the Levant Company is depicted; his joining in a power game for profit and eminence, taking place inside the Company, is also explored.

### *The Levant Company*

The Levant Company was founded to provide a permanent machinery for securing the observance of the Capitulations granted to the English by the Ottoman state in 1580.<sup>10</sup> It also obtained from the English crown the right to trade exclusively in the Ottoman Empire. The Capitulations fixed lists of customs duties on imported and exported commodities and gave guarantees that no other taxes at all would be imposed on the English.<sup>11</sup> They also assured freedom of movement of Englishmen and their goods without molestation, permitted judgment of disputes among themselves by their own Consuls rather than by Ottoman courts and provided that cases involving Englishmen which did come under Ottoman law should be handled at Constantinople rather than by provincial officials.<sup>12</sup> Organised as a regulated chartered company since the late sixteenth century,<sup>13</sup> the Levant Company allowed its Freeman to operate as independent traders with their own capital, bounded only by the general rules and principles described in its charter.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ambrose, *Levant Company*; Epstein, *Early History*; Wood, *Levant Company*.

<sup>11</sup> M. H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beraths in the 18th Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2005; P. M. Kondoyiannis, "Οι Προστατευόμενοι" [The protégés], *Αθηνά* 29 (1917), pp. 1-160.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, *Aleppo*, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 127-128. On the organisation of early modern chartered companies see A. M. Carlos and S. Nicholas, "Giants of an Earlier Capitalism: The Chartered Companies as Modern Multinationals", *The Business History Review* 62/3 (1988), pp. 398-419.

<sup>14</sup> To become a Freeman, a merchant had to pay an admission fee to the Levant Company. In 1661 London citizenship or residence within 20 miles from the city was

Each Freeman gave an oath not to send any merchandise to the Levant except on his own account and not to consign it to any but the Company's agents and factors. The Company had the right to tax British trade in the Levant, imposing consular duties, fees and fines. Freeman paid in London a rate of 2% on the value of their transactions in the Levant (imports and exports as well). Their agents and factors, sent to the Ottoman ports to pursue business, paid to the Company's representatives in the Levant another 2% on the value of commodities sold and purchased.<sup>15</sup> Freeman could evade rules and collaborate with independent merchants and foreigners as long as they paid a fine – or broke – of 20% on the value of their transactions.<sup>16</sup>

By the time the Thessaloniki factory opened, the Company was already represented in various commercial centres and ports in the Eastern Mediterranean, while its major factories operated in Constantinople, Smyrna and Aleppo.<sup>17</sup> Appointed Consuls, Vice-Consuls, agents, treasurers and chancellors, all merchants in career, constituted an administrative apparatus entrusted with the observance of the Capitulations and the representation of the Company and its Freeman to the Ottoman authorities. Consuls acted as judges, protectors and guides exercising control over all the inner affairs of the

---

introduced as another necessary condition for membership; see Davis, *Aleppo*, pp. 67-74. It was only in 1753 that all restrictions to free admission of members were abolished, and for the first time officially British subjects of Jewish origin were also admitted to the Company. Captains of British vessels and foreigners who had received British protection were also allowed to trade in the Levant as Licensees; see Anderson, *Paul Rycaut*, pp. 67-74.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Paul Rycaut*, pp. 117-130.

<sup>16</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 205-228.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, p. 15; Anderson, *Paul Rycaut*; Frangakis-Syrett, *Smyrna*, pp. 76-85; and Davis, *Aleppo*. Another operational centre of the Company was established in Patras when the Levant Company organised a separate joint-stock company to undertake the valuable currant trade. This "company inside the Company" dissolved in the seventeenth century, but a British consulate general of the Peloponnese operated in the city-port until the nineteenth century; see Wood, *Levant Company*, p. 71; M. Fusaro, "Commercial Networks of Cooperation in the Venetian Mediterranean: The English and the Greeks, a Case Study" in *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World*, ed. D. R. Curto and A. Molho, Florence: EUI Working Paper, HEC No. 2, 2002, pp. 63-70, describes the trade operations of the English merchants in the area of the Ionian Islands and the Peloponnese and the long-lasting rivalry between the English and the Venetians. From the mid-seventeenth century, vice-consulates of the Company were also founded on many Greek islands, in Larnaca in Cyprus, in Athens and in Arta. Until the nineteenth century the Company was also represented in various ports on the coast of Syria and also in the Dardanelles, Bucharest and Adrianople; see Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 122-123, 164, 196, 213.

factories: they were responsible for the maintenance of good order among their countrymen, and for the decision of all disputes among them. All employees of the Company appointed in the Levant operated under the authority of the Company's elected administration (the Governor, the deputy Governor and an 18-member body of Assistants), which together with the Company's Freemen formed the General Court. The Court had extensive executive, legislative and judicial powers over Freemen and officials and met regularly.<sup>18</sup>

*Thessaloniki and the British Factory (Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries)*

The delayed addition of Thessaloniki to the constellation of the Levant Company's representations was due, first, to the Company's policy to check the excessive expansion of its transactions and contain enterprise to specific geographical areas, and second, to the opposition of the English merchants of Smyrna, who feared the consequences that the establishment of an English factory in Thessaloniki might have on their turnover. These reasons were, apparently, not sufficient to put off English business interests in the port for long, and in 1715 the Thessaloniki settlement was established.<sup>19</sup>

One of the key ports of the South-East Mediterranean and the principal port to the Balkans, Thessaloniki had a long urban history and one of the most varied societies in Europe.<sup>20</sup> In his recent book Mark Mazower depicts the city's multicultural distinctiveness through the centuries: the Byzantine capital city, the Ottoman administrative and commercial centre, the Greek port, destination of people from all over the Balkans and place of residence of one of the biggest communities of Sephardic Jews in the Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 205-228. The General Court worked out the Company's by-laws, ratified and published orders and decrees, fixed taxes, duties and fees charged upon Freemen, appointed and dismissed officers, and imposed penalties and fines to Freemen, Licensees and officials who violated rules.

<sup>19</sup> Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", pp. 166-167; Wood, *Levant Company*, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> A. Vakalopoulos, *A History of Thessaloniki*, Thessaloniki 1972; also C. D. Mertzios, *Μνημεία μακεδονικής ιστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian history], Thessaloniki 1947. For eighteenth-century Thessaloniki see N. Svoronos, *Το εμπόριο της Θεσσαλονίκης τον 18ο αιώνα* [The commerce of Thessaloniki in the 18th century], Athens 1996, pp. 51-56.

<sup>21</sup> During the Ottoman period the city's Muslim and Jewish population grew. When the Ottoman authorities invited the Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain to Thessaloniki, the city became the outpost of one of the largest and most enterprising Jewish communities in the Mediterranean for at least two centuries; it was even called the "Mother of Israel". For the history of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki see J. Nehamas, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique, iii: L'âge d'or du Séfaradisme salonicien (1536-1593)*, Thessaloniki 1936. See also Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 221-227; Mazower, *Salonica*, pp. 46-65.

in other words, a Christian, Muslim and Jewish city that was Balkan and Mediterranean at the same time.

Thessaloniki had been an important maritime and commercial centre since the beginning of the Ottoman period: it was an intermediary station in the complex network of commodity transport routes that interwove the Ottoman Empire linking the Middle East with Rumelia, the Balkans, the Black Sea and North Africa, a *dépot* of the agricultural production grown in its vast fertile hinterland and, most importantly, a maritime city directly linked with Central Europe.<sup>22</sup> Although it never surpassed Smyrna, the major Ottoman emporium, in terms of bulk of activity,<sup>23</sup> Thessaloniki retained its position as an important port of call for both long-distance and coastal trade.<sup>24</sup> The French and Dutch were established in the city since the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Until the late eighteenth century, Venice, Ragusa, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Spain and Prussia were also represented there.<sup>26</sup> As one of the favourite outposts of French trade in the Mediterranean, Thessaloniki became a frequent stopover for Western European vessels loaded with textiles, luxury goods and colonial products that were exchanged for grains, cotton, tobacco, silk and wax.<sup>27</sup> French business and ways outshined all other Western European presence in the city particularly during the eighteenth century, when it seems that the port caught English attention. The first English merchants who are known to have had business transactions in the port operated under the protection of the French Consul.<sup>28</sup> The establishment of a Levant Company settlement in the city in the early eighteenth century brought to the port English traders and gave a significant boost to English trade: English merchants and vessels arrived at the port in increasing numbers, while the value of the goods transacted by the English augmented significantly. According to the astonished French Consul De Boismond,

---

<sup>22</sup> C. A. Vakalopoulos, "Contribution"; *id.*, "Le commerce de Salonique 1796-1840 d'après les rapports inédits des Consuls européens", *Makedonika* 16 (1976), pp. 73-173.

<sup>23</sup> For the commercial relations between Thessaloniki and Smyrna in the eighteenth century see Svoronos, *Commerce*, p. 244; Frangakis-Syrett, *Smyrna*, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*; E. Themopoulou, *Salonique, 1800-1875. Conjoncture économique et mouvement commercial*, Ph.D. Thesis, Université de Paris I, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 170, 210.

<sup>26</sup> S. Lambros, "Το εν Θεσσαλονίκην Βενετικόν προξενείον και το μετά της Μακεδονίας εμπόριον των Βενετών" [The Consulate of Venice in Thessaloniki...], *Μακεδονικόν Ημερολόγιον* (1912), pp. 227-241; Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 167-239.

<sup>27</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 336-338.

<sup>28</sup> M. Lascaris, *Salonique à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Athens 1939, p. 11; Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 195-198.



as soon as the English Consul arrived in Thessaloniki he collected at once the amount of 4000 pounds sterling in duties paid by three English ships; the cargo of only one among them was worth 200,000 pounds sterling: “an extraordinary wealth”, the French Consul added in amazement. And yet the factory was never large in numbers: in 1743 it comprised the Consul and five merchants.<sup>29</sup> The merchants Kemble, Stevenson, Horowell, Lisle, Paradise, Olifer, Moore and Charnaud are known to have served as British Consuls representing the Levant Company until 1825, while Bartholomew Edward Abbott, John Pyburn, George Frederic Abbott and Peter Chasseaud – who for some time was British Vice-Consul in the near-by port of Kavalla – were some of the factory’s steady members, constantly referred to in the consular correspondence. Cloth, linens, muslins, tin, lead, raw and wrought iron, clocks and watches were sold in Thessaloniki by the British, who bought in exchange cotton, tobacco and carpets.<sup>30</sup> However, according to the French sources, textiles were the primary commodity imported to Thessaloniki via Livorno by British houses. In this important trade, operated between Italy and the Ottoman Empire, the British Consul in Thessaloniki and a group of Greek Ottoman and British merchants played a leading part, while many French, Jewish Livornese and Greek commercial houses participated as well.<sup>31</sup> For British traders Thessaloniki was also important as an intermediate maritime station in the complex network of maritime and inland routes that developed through and around Smyrna. It was therefore a frequent stopover for British vessels directed to Smyrna from London and Malta, while vessels leaving Smyrna often completed their cargo in Thessaloniki before heading to Britain.<sup>32</sup> Another interesting picture of British trade in Thessaloniki in the late eighteenth century is provided by the French diplomat Felix de Beaujour in his *Tableau du commerce de la Grèce formé d’après une année moyenne, depuis 1787 jusqu’en 1797*. According to Beaujour, in the late eighteenth century two British factors had settled in the port importing textiles (mostly woollen *londres* and mohair, cashmeres, linen, and muslins), lead, tin plates, watches, jewellery and colonial goods, such as sugar, coffee, indigo, pepper and ginger.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, p. 164.

<sup>31</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>32</sup> Frangakis-Syrett, *Smyrna*, pp. 155-189.

<sup>33</sup> F. de Beaujour, *Tableau du commerce de la Grèce*, transl. Eleni Garidi, Athens 1974, pp. 168-189. Beaujour’s report contains a disapproving comment on the Levant Company’s operation, maintaining that its organisation and monopoly held back free

In the late eighteenth century war between Britain and France checked transports in the Mediterranean, necessitating the rerouting of goods to Continental Europe: on that occasion Thessaloniki became a regular stopover for European vessels.<sup>34</sup> During the last phase of the Napoleonic Wars and throughout the Continental Blockade, Thessaloniki became a major trade junction in the London-Malta-Vienna itinerary. The hitherto undersized factory became the focal point of an intense commercial activity operated by its members together with independent British, Greek, Jewish, French and Italian commercial houses; the occasion that was described by a Levant Company official as “...the great Trade carried through Salonica...” augmented significantly the Levant Company’s revenues in the form of duties and fees paid by British merchants and captains to the local British consulate.<sup>35</sup>

The return of peace in Europe restored the conditions of safe and free transport in the Mediterranean and opened the Italian and French ports to all European vessels. Thessaloniki’s advantage as a free gateway for European and British merchandise headed for Central Europe was annulled and the conditions of trade returned to their pre-war levels. The political turmoil caused by the Greek Revolution breaking out in 1821 affected deeply the city’s economy, as in many other areas of the Ottoman Empire. Commerce was brought to a standstill and transports were hindered, forcing many international operators to transfer capital and expertise elsewhere. Crisis hit Thessaloniki and the British factory as well, and in 1824 in one of his last letters addressed to the British Consul Francis Charnaud<sup>36</sup> the Company’s Secretary George Liddell referred to the “almost total absence of Trade at Salonica...”<sup>37</sup>

### *The Abbott Enterprise in Thessaloniki: Transactions and Interactions*

#### A Family Trade Business

In 1777 Bartholomew Edward Abbott of B. E. Abbott & Co. received from London 20 bales of cotton loaded on the vessel *Resolution* of Captain Currie.<sup>38</sup>

---

trade. Interestingly, many British of his time shared this opinion, and it was ideas of free trade that ultimately brought about the dissolution of the Levant Company in 1825; see Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο”, p. 163.

<sup>34</sup> Svoronos, *Commerce*, p. 195; Themopoulou, *Conjuncture*, pp. 135-143; Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο”, pp. 193-218.

<sup>35</sup> See also below, p. 140.

<sup>36</sup> Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο”, pp. 168, 171.

<sup>37</sup> NA, SP 105/125, pp. 147-150.

<sup>38</sup> NA, SP 105/137, pp. 205-205a.

In 1780 he imported a load of the valuable and exclusive violet wood (St Martha's wood) to Thessaloniki, a quality that, at the time, was not even rated in the British Tariff applied to British imports and exports in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>39</sup> In the following years Abbott associated with his step-son Peter Chasseaud.<sup>40</sup> The Abbott documentation kept in the Levant Company archive contains interesting information on the organisation and the affairs of the Abbott enterprises.<sup>41</sup> An inventory of the Abbott house catalogued by the British chancellor in Thessaloniki some time after the death of Bartholomew Edward's wife Sarah (1818) is of major interest as it represents a unique source of information on the type and quality of goods and commodities traded by the British merchant. In the lists of duties (Manifests) paid to the factory officials by British merchants and captains in the period 1813-1816, we also find some information on Abbott's transactions.<sup>42</sup> The internal affairs of B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud are also revealed in a petition of Peter Chasseaud against Abbott filed in the Austrian consulate in Thessaloniki (28 November 1811)<sup>43</sup> and a liquidation plan of B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud signed by the two partners on 31 December 1816.<sup>44</sup> Additional information on the organisation of the company is provided by the records of a dispute on the liquidation of Abbott's assets implicating his heirs soon after his passing away.

B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud was probably set up in the late eighteenth century. The company participated in joint ventures with G. F. Abbott &

---

<sup>39</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 210-212. The Tariffs defined the rates of taxes advanced by the British merchants on imported and exported goods and were negotiated between the British and the Ottoman authorities (Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", pp. 199-200). In the 1801 Tariff, a quintal of violet wood was taxed with the relatively high duty of 72 aspers. T. MacGill, *Travels in Turkey, Italy and Russia during the Years 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806: With an Account*, London 1808, Appendix I.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Chasseaud was the son of Abbott's wife Sarah from her first marriage to Gabriel Chasseaud, a well-known British merchant living in Smyrna. It is not possible to identify the exact date that this association was initiated: probably after 1778, when Bartholomew Edward's marriage to Sarah took place.

<sup>41</sup> This is a series of documents concerning the life, activity and assets of the British merchant held in an individual file under the heading "Various Documents relative to Disputes between Mr. Consul Charnaud of Salonica and the Heirs of the late Mr. Abbott. Held at the disposal of Mr. Charnaud. His letter answered 6 May 1819" in NA, SP 105/137, ff. 148<sup>r</sup>-306<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> The Manifests are kept in the NA, SP 105/134, ff. 31<sup>r</sup>-58<sup>r</sup>, SP 105/136, ff. 119<sup>r</sup>-121<sup>v</sup> and SP 105/137, ff. 102<sup>r</sup>-107<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 160<sup>r</sup>-163<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 255<sup>r</sup>.

Co., the company set up by Abbott's son George Frederic and the Greeks Theodore Choidas, Niccola Zade and Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou.<sup>45</sup> Abbott & Chasseaud also had business transactions with Lee & Brant of London and Smyrna, Roux Frères & Cie of Marseille, Edward Hayes & Co.,<sup>46</sup> Fletcher & Co.,<sup>47</sup> M. Flitoker and J. L. Gout of Malta.<sup>48</sup>

The account of all the furniture, effects and goods that were found in the Abbott house in 1818 following the death of Sarah Abbott represents an unexpected as much as invaluable source of information about the commodities imported by the Abbotts to Thessaloniki. The detailed inventory of the house catalogued by the British chancellor in Thessaloniki, James Charnaud, proves that part of the wares kept in the house was probably intended to be distributed in various markets, in Thessaloniki or elsewhere, at a later stage.<sup>49</sup> The existence of special areas inside or close to the family house, utilised as stock rooms (*magazzini*) where merchandise and commodities were stocked and piled, was a common feature of merchant houses. In the Abbott house a significant number of pieces of furniture were used for storing and piling up wares: 15 large trunks, 11 closets, various lockers and chests, all made of wood, and, finally, one large cabinet contained a sometimes astonishing number and variety goods. Among the commodities indexed we find 267 pairs of cotton socks (*alla inglese*), 100 pieces of lining material (*fodre*) and 38 shawls of various types, cotton (*Indiane*), woollen or silk, with silk and satin borders, linings and fringes, 33 silver sauce boats and 20 salt boxes, 263 glasses of different types and design, 132 table knives,

---

<sup>45</sup> Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou was one of the most enterprising and powerful Greek Ottoman merchants in Thessaloniki during this period. His life, family and operation have been studied by E. Hekimoglou, "Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou", *Grigorios Palamas* 758 (1995), pp. 407-464, who presents interesting parts of the merchant's will.

<sup>46</sup> The company had offices in London, Malta and Smyrna. It traded oil, grain, wine, rice, currants, tobacco, soap, shawls and Indian textiles. In 1812 John Charmont was the director of the Malta office; see M. D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Malta, 1800-1824*, Milan: E. Angeli, 1990, pp. 63, 64, 75, 79.

<sup>47</sup> This was one of the most important British enterprises in Malta until 1820. Mathew Fletcher and Alexander Grant were two of the associates. The company traded carpets, wool, pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg, salted meat and even women's hats, paper flowers, books and opium. Mathew Fletcher together with Swinton C. Holland and William Higgins were associated with Holland & Co. in D'Angelo, *Mercanti*, pp. 66, 92.

<sup>48</sup> J. L. Gout arrived on Malta in 1807-1808 and remained there for some years. He traded flour. See D'Angelo, *Mercanti*, pp. 63-64, 79.

<sup>49</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 195<sup>v</sup>-197<sup>r</sup>, ff. 216<sup>v</sup>-217<sup>r</sup>. This material will be presented in a forthcoming article on "The Fashion of Life of a Levantine Merchant: Entrepreneurship and Material Culture in Early Nineteenth Century Salonika", *Μνήμων* 30 (2009).

839 plates belonging to different, all precious, dinner sets, 97 pieces of curtain fabric, 114 pieces of china in tea sets, 8 binoculars and 20 women's and men's precious fur coats. A bucket of tins containing *polvere di Dr James* – most likely ether for sale or personal use – indicates the acquaintance of Thessaloniki's upper and upper middle class with exclusive methods of recreation promoted by the popular British quack Dr James Graham in the late eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

It was therefore textiles, various fabrics and stuffs, earthenware, silverware, porcelain, clothing, and luxurious and precious accessories that were forwarded by Abbott to the markets of the Ottoman Empire. A similar picture of his trade is depicted in the Manifests of the British consulate of the period 1813-1816. During the Continental Blockade Abbott & Chasseaud and G. F. Abbott & Co. imported merchandise from Britain: textiles, cotton yarn, sugar, earthenware, silverware, and other British and colonial products and exported tobacco, sponges and grains;<sup>51</sup> they collaborated closely with British companies operating in Malta and they imported white cotton yarn through Lee & Brant of London and Smyrna. They also traded sponges and sugar in collaboration with Roux Frères & Cie in Marseille. As the Manifests indicate, Abbott participated in the sudden and coincidental growth of Thessaloniki's trade during the last phase of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. According to Charnaud, this period started in 1809 and lasted until the end of the war and a little after, when the restoration of peace in Europe returned tranquillity and safety to Mediterranean transports. Both French and British records of the period indicate the year 1812 as the year when both the value and the quantity of trade transactions in Thessaloniki reached their highest point; their data present the development of imports of specific commodities like coffee, sugar, indigo and cochineal and exports of tobacco and cotton.<sup>52</sup> In April 1813 Abbott & Chasseaud imported 19 bales of cotton yarn sent to Thessaloniki via Malta by M. Flitoker on the *St Salvador* of Captain Salvador Borg. From the same cargo 22 cases of cinnamon were sent to Abbott by Edward Hayes & Co.

---

<sup>50</sup> Dr James Graham, born in Edinburgh, was a medical-school drop out. He was a pioneer in sex therapy and is best known for his electromagnetic musical Grand State Celestial Bed. He was noted for his love of ether, which mixed with ethanol was marketed in the nineteenth century as a cure-all and recreational drug to inhale. For Dr Graham's life and career see L. Syson, *Doctor of Love: Dr. James Graham and his Celestial Bed*, London: Alma Books, 2008, and L. Hall and R. Porter, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

<sup>51</sup> NA, SP 105/134, ff. 31<sup>r</sup>-58<sup>v</sup>; NA, SP 105/136, ff. 119<sup>r</sup>-121<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", p. 210; Themopoulou, *Conjoncture*, pp. 512, 542, 600-609, 693, 697.

On 9 July 1813 Abbott & Chasseaud received nine bales of cotton yarn, 7 cases and nine bales of other merchandise sent by Fletcher & Co. from London via Malta on the *Vigilant* of Captain W. B. Fowler. On 6 April 1813 Abbott & Chasseaud sent to J. L. Gout in Malta, with final destination London, three loads of sponges containing 45 bales, 12 bales and 6 bales respectively. The sponges were loaded on the *Celerita* of Captain Valentin Riches. Three years later, in 1816, G. F. Abbott & Co. sent to Trieste 7141 kilos of Indian corn and 4858 kilos of wheat on the polacca *Sophia* of Captain Gaetano Pellerano. In 1818, one year after Bartholomew Edward's death, Peter Chasseaud carried on his operation, importing eight cases of powder sugar and two barrels of gunpowder that were carried to Thessaloniki on the bombard *St Caterina of Malta* of Captain Giuseppe Mericca. In the same year he imported two cases of British manufactures, 2500 stones of Malta, and one case of indigo on the brigantine *Carmelina* of Captain Saverio Giacomo, and 15 cases of powder sugar, one case of British manufactures, one case of indigo, three barrels of loaf sugar, 53 barrels of salted fish, one bale of shalloons and 2348 Malta stones carried on the brigantine *Alexander* of Captain Francesco Zarbi. During the same period, together with Abbott & Chasseaud and G. F. Abbott & Co., 59 other firms traded commodities on the London-Malta-Thessaloniki itinerary and paid duties to the British consulate.<sup>53</sup> 23 among them were Greek Ottoman associates, some of them were Jewish and Austrian, and 22 had offices in Malta.<sup>54</sup>

The Abbott enterprise relied heavily upon family capital, connections and personal effort. Abbott's partner and step-son Peter Chasseaud was also related to the Abbott family through his marriage to Mary Abbott, Bartholomew's niece.<sup>55</sup> Abbott's participation in Abbott & Chasseaud totalled two-thirds of the company's capital and Chasseaud's one-third. The company's capital had been advanced by relatives. Sarah Abbott, George Frederic Abbott – her son – and Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou were the company's major creditors. In

---

<sup>53</sup> See Table 1.

<sup>54</sup> Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", pp. 211-212. The amount of duties collected by the British Consul from British vessels and merchants augmented significantly. In only one year and a half, 1813-1814, Francis Charnaud collected 30,920 21/120 piastres of duties paid by 12 inbound and outbound ships, when in a period of eight years, between 1805-1812, 108 vessels had paid 88,337 piastres in duties. NA, SP 105/134, ff. 168<sup>r</sup>-169<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Abbott was the daughter of Jasper Abbott – Bartholomew Edward's brother – and Kiriaki Athanassi. Information on the Abbott family tree has been kindly provided by Nadia Giraud, descendant of the Abbott, Vianello and Gliubik families, and through [www.levantineheritage.com](http://www.levantineheritage.com), to which Nadia Giraud is one of the contributors.

1816 the capital of Abbott & Chasseaud amounted to 222,893 49/120 piastres.<sup>56</sup> From this capital 69,904 111/120 piastres had been invested by Sarah Abbott – Sarah’s credit had been divided between the two partners: a sum of 46,943 20/120 piastres was allotted to her husband and 22,961 91/120 piastres was allotted to her son. According to the liquidation plan of the company, George Frederic Abbott had invested in his father’s enterprise 36,570 56/120 piastres, and Caftangioglou 22,624 24/120 piastres. Abbott’s daughter Annetta Parsy had deposited to the company her dowry of 10,000 piastres and G. Chasseaud, a member of the Chasseaud family, 9450 37/120 piastres. Other well-known members of the Jewish and Greek merchant community of Thessaloniki had invested minor sums in the company.

The provenance of the capital invested in Abbott & Chasseaud, distinguished the two merchants entirely from the “large Levant merchants” referred to by Ralph Davies in his book on the English trade in Aleppo.<sup>57</sup> Depicting the social and economic profile of the British merchant entrepreneurs who ventured in the Levant, Davis remarked that “nobody could become a Levant trader in London before he had somehow, by inheritance, gift or his earnings in the Levant, acquired the necessary capital...”. He also stressed the necessity of a large initial capital that would give to any merchant embarking on Levantine trade the possibility to wait before high turnovers would arrive. It was in fact the model of the “gentlemen merchants” Radcliffes, Bosanquet and Vernons that Davis had in mind, and it is their story together with the story of other large Levant merchant families that he discussed in his book.<sup>58</sup> Being British in origin and a Levant Company Freeman, Abbott set up his company

---

<sup>56</sup> The *kuruş* or piastre, as it was referred to in European languages, was the standard unit of currency in the Ottoman Empire until 1844. It was subdivided into 40 *para*, each of 3 *akçe* (for the parity of the piastre with other European and Ottoman currencies see E. Liata, *Φλωρία δεκατέσσερα στένονν γρόσια σαράντα. Η κυκλοφορία των νομισμάτων στον ελληνικό χώρο, 15ος-19ος αιώνας* [Currency circulation in Greece, fifteenth-nineteenth centuries], Athens 1996. In 1801 in the English tariff negotiated between the Levant Company and the Ottoman authorities and presented by the traveller MacGill, the parity between the piastre and the English pound is also noted: 1 English pound corresponded to 13 piastres, while 1 piastre was divided into 120 aspers; see MacGill, *Travels*, Appendix II. In the market of Thessaloniki other coins circulated intensively like Venetian sequins and ducats, and German and Hungarian thalers; see Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 107-110.

<sup>57</sup> Davis, *Aleppo*, pp. 68-69; Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>58</sup> S. Mentz, *The English Gentleman Merchant at Work: Madras and the City of London, 1660-1740*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005. On the ideology of gentlemanly capitalism see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, New York: Longman, 2002.

in the Ottoman Empire relying on immediate family, kin and local resources. This was certainly not an innovative strategy as the organisation of many eighteenth-century international commercial houses benefited from family solidarities and capital. Distance from the country of origin and the necessity of operating inside a foreign, and often hostile, environment strengthened family, kin and ethnic bonds, phenomena that have been interpreted with reference to the entrepreneurial achievement of various diaspora merchant communities that had a leading role in the commercial expansion of the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> In the case of Abbott, family, kin, social acquaintances and co-nationals provided the company with long and sound credit. It appears, however, that excessive family involvement turned the company into a vehicle for the fulfilment of personal or family interests that sometimes opposed the company's growth and progress. The employment of family members in the enterprise, the bestowing of allowances and annual pensions to some of them, and the appropriation of capital from the company's treasury by family members and creditors without the previous knowledge of the other partner brought about disagreements and clashes between family members and partners.

In 1811 Peter Chasseaud questioned his partner's and step-father's management – conferred to him by the association contract signed by them some years before – and denounced to the Austrian consulate of Thessaloniki his economic transactions with George Frederic Abbott. Chasseaud claimed that his step-brother George Frederic appeared to have advanced to Abbott & Chasseaud a credit of 5500 piastres that, as Chasseaud maintained, should be allotted to Bartholomew Edward's personal account and not to the company's as it had never been utilized for the benefit of the enterprise or been deposited to the company's treasury. Chasseaud also called into question George Frederic's appointment as secretary of the company with an annual salary of 500 piastres plus interest. This appointment, Chasseaud sustained, was completely unnecessary and contravened the association contract that determined the number of employees necessary for the company's operation. Chasseaud contested the payment by the company of an annual pension of 3500 piastres to George Frederic for the maintenance of his

---

<sup>59</sup> For family business history see M. B. Rose, "The Family Firm in British Business, 1780-1914", *Business Enterprise in Modern Britain*, ed. M. W. Kirby and M. B. Rose, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 61-87, and A. Colli, *The History of Family Business, 1850-2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. On the diaspora merchant communities see among many B. McCabe, G. Harlaftis and I. Minoglou Pepelassis, *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, New York: Berg, 2005.



family and household employees. The money had been advanced to George Frederic annually for a long period after his marriage. Finally, Chasseaud requested the transfer from the company's account to the personal accounts of Bartholomew Edward Abbott and John Pyburn the sums of 772 96/120 piastres and 226 piastres respectively. This money, he claimed, was owed to George Frederic by the two merchants for "things" they had purchased from him for their personal use.<sup>60</sup> Bartholomew Edward Abbott's response to his partner's allegations was simple, acid and weak. As he maintained, articles 15 and 16 of the company's association contract gave him priority over the company's management. Abbott denied that his son had been receiving an allowance and expressed his curiosity for Chasseaud's late reaction – eight years after George Frederic's appointment as a secretary in the company. He also referred sarcastically to Chasseaud's appropriation of capital from the company's treasury to pay for the renovation of his house some years before.<sup>61</sup> The merchant magistrate set up by the Austrian Consul to arbitrate on the dispute – its members were Giuseppe de Choch, John Pyburn and François Masse – after having considered all the relevant documents brought by the two sides in the dispute, adjudicated that the credit of 5500 piastres advanced by G. F. Abbott to the company was valid, however it should be allotted to his father. They also acknowledged the appointment of George Frederic as secretary in the company and invited the partners to advance him his salaries. Finally, they estimated the allowance George Frederic had been receiving by the company to 2000 piastres per year and they sustained that the money he had received should be returned to the company.<sup>62</sup>

The involvement of family members in the company as creditors triggered personal interests and eventually situations of conflict and incongruity. When Bartholomew Edward Abbott died in 1817, George Frederic was once again found in the centre of a long and bitter dispute that this time brought him in opposition with his sisters and brothers-in-law, over the execution of their father's inheritance, the management and the liquidation of his assets. In the heart of the dispute, which was fed by distrust, suspicion and greed, lay the question of who among Abbott's heirs would first get the money he/she had invested in the company, once all the assets had been liquidated. Annetta Abbott Parsy claimed her 10,000 piastre dowry invested in the company jointly by her and her husband, Antoine Parsy, while George Frederic called

---

<sup>60</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 160<sup>r</sup>-163<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 160<sup>v</sup>-161<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 162<sup>v</sup>-163<sup>r</sup>.

for the reimbursement of a credit of 36,570 56/120 piastres he had made to his father. His sisters denied that such a credit had ever taken place. Another disagreement arose from George Frederic's administration of his father's assets and management of the enterprise as his father's sole representative following his mother's death in 1818. Annetta Parsy and Canella Abbott Gliubik, wife of Peter Gliubik, presented to the French consulate in Thessaloniki, which represented them, a formal protest against their brother and his operation, accusing him of manipulating the company's documents. They thus formally requested the deposit to the British Chancellery of all the books, documents, bills and letters concerning Bartholomew Edward Abbott's inheritance, an official copy of the inventory of their paternal house and all the books, registers, documents and effects belonging to Abbott & Chasseaud. They finally claimed from their brother a number of valuable items that, as they stated, were still "found in his hands".<sup>63</sup>

This uneasy family situation depicted in the Abbott documentation lasted at least two years, 1817-1819, and shows business as an area of conflicting imperative family interests. It also reveals how family, business and local merchant solidarities got intertwined or collided in situations of crisis.

#### The Local Connection

Abbott's relational capital could in fact be represented graphically as a number of overlapping circles, each one representing a different operational area comprising contacts, associates and relatives: family and kin, members of the local Jewish and Greek Ottoman merchant community, European merchants and their diplomatic representatives in Thessaloniki, Freemen and officials of the Levant Company and independent British merchants.<sup>64</sup>

In the previous section we saw how family permeated the Abbott enterprise and how business was supported by family and kin. We also saw that, through intermarriage, merchant families exchanged capital, connections and solidarity. This practice found its most successful version in the relationship established between B. E. Abbott and Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou, one of the wealthiest members of Thessaloniki's merchant community, principal sponsor

---

<sup>63</sup> These were antique jewellery, silverware, golden and silver coins, other personal items, Bartholomew Edward's horse and a bill of exchange for 9500 piastres coming from a sale of cotton, NA, SP 105/137, f. 256<sup>r</sup>-256<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> See also D. Vlami, "British Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Levant Company, 18th-19th cent.", *Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Καθ. Γ. Β. Δερτιλή* [A volume in honour of Prof. G. B. Dertilis], Athens: Alexandria (forthcoming).

of both Abbott enterprises, father-in-law of George Frederic Abbott and owner of the mansion let by the Abbott and Charneaud families.<sup>65</sup> Caftangioglou was not, however, the only member of the local merchant community that had established a strong, binding and antagonistic relationship with the Abbotts. The liquidation plan of Abbott & Chasseaud mentioned above and the account books kept by Bartholomew Edward's heirs for one year (1817-1818) after his passing away unveil the local credit circuit upon which the Abbotts relied.<sup>66</sup> Two sequestration acts concerning Abbott's son George Frederic, one presented by Caftangioglou<sup>67</sup> and the other by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz, another distinguished member of the local Jewish merchant community, provide additional information on the subject.<sup>68</sup> These two documents also allow us to detect the way credit and cash were sometimes employed to provide quick and illicit profits, unveiling the utilisation of disputable or illegitimate methods in the service of family interests.

The Abbott enterprises relied upon capital provided by members of the local Jewish and Greek Ottoman merchant community: these were Bohor Covo, Anastasis Giovanni, Mose Namias, Sahula Salem, wife of another well-known merchant, Haggi Gusho, the Adritti family – David and Elia Adritti – Abraam Namias, Salomon Frances and Yuran Yenegelis.<sup>69</sup> The Abbotts had also set up partnerships with eminent Greek Ottoman and Ionian merchants, thus accessing local connections and know-how: Theodore Choidas and Niccola Zade were partners in G. F. Abbott & Co., while Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou had invested 70,000 piastres in the enterprise.<sup>70</sup> George Frederic Abbott had borrowed money from Lady Bona Fernandez Diaz and Lady Flor Fernandez, mother and wife respectively of the merchant Joseph Fernandez Diaz. The two ladies had advanced to Abbott a credit of 18,000 piastres paid in three bills of 7000 piastres (10-1-1817), 5500 piastres (25-1-1817)

---

<sup>65</sup> See Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou's will in G. G. Papadopoulos, *Τὰ κατὰ τὸν αἰδίδιμον πρωταθλητὴν τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀγῶνος τὸν Πατριάρχην Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Γρηγόριον τὸν Ε΄* [Documents from the archive of the Patriarch of Constantinople Gregorios V], Vol. I, Athens 1865, p. 421. Also a description of the mansion by Francis Charneaud is presented in NA, SP 105/139, ff. 273<sup>r</sup>-274<sup>v</sup>, 31 July 1821.

<sup>66</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 236<sup>v</sup>-237<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 177<sup>r</sup>-184<sup>v</sup>. George Frederic Abbott was married to Domna Caftangioglou in 1815 but she died some years later. After her passing away he was remarried to Georgetta Giustiniani and then to Fundria Aneza, NA, SP 105/137, ff. 177<sup>r</sup>-184<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 189<sup>r</sup>-190<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> See Table 2.

<sup>70</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 177<sup>r</sup>-178<sup>r</sup>.

and 5500 piastres (8-2-1817). Spandoni Hatzi Gusho, the French François Masse and the Consul of Austria in Thessaloniki Count Giuseppe de Choch exchanged credit and favours with the Abbotts as well. This extended circle of collaborators and investors supported the Abbott trade business. However, as it appears in the Abbott case – as probably in many others of merchant entrepreneurs during this period – credit represented an autonomous and very profitable source of income. Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou’s allegations that his son-in-law George Frederic Abbott had presented false balances for G. F. Abbott & Co. point in this direction.<sup>71</sup> Caftangioglou insinuated that G. F. Abbott & Co. had been utilized by the Abbott family as a cover up to collect credit that they had usurped.<sup>72</sup>

The Abbott entrepreneurial activity, family and business affairs also took place inside a milieu of European merchants established in Thessaloniki permanently or occasionally, bound together through business, credit, sociability, kin and identity and organised around consulates and foreign communities. Although British in origin, the Abbotts operated under the jurisdiction of the British, Swedish, French, Austrian and Venetian consulates. Bartholomew Edward himself participated in this milieu by amassing positions of diplomatic representation of different nations. Occasionally he was nominated by the Levant Company pro or interim Consul in the British consulate. He also served as Vice-Consul of Sweden and Denmark in Thessaloniki and, for some time he undertook the representation of Venice. The Abbott family was also very close to Count Giuseppe de Choch, the Austrian Consul in Thessaloniki – although it is not clear whether it was Bartholomew Edward’s step-son and partner Peter Chasseaud or his son George Frederic who had obtained Austrian protection. Abbott’s daughters, Anna and Canella, and their husbands, Antoine Parsy and Pierre Gliubik, were represented by the French consulate in Thessaloniki.

It would seem that the European merchant community offered to Abbott another important area for encountering and recruiting collaborators, partners, connections and “friends”. Around the European consulates in Thessaloniki converged the foreign communities of merchants operating in

---

<sup>71</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 179<sup>v</sup>-179<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Caftangioglou sequestered George Frederic Abbott’s revenue that would be produced by the liquidation of his father’s assets until a sum of 36,750 piastres would be paid to him. Abbott refused Caftangioglou’s sequestration maintaining that as a Greek Ottoman subject he had no right on the property of a European subject unless a “Frank” would guarantee for him. This man was found in the person of the merchant Mattatia Abram and Caftangioglou was thus able to renew the act of sequestration.

the Levant protected by the Capitulation agreements, Freemen and Licensees of the Levant Company, independent merchants and Ottoman subjects who had obtained for a high price a *berat*, or a patent, guaranteeing them protection and tax exemption. The settlement of two disputes concerning the Abbot enterprise and inheritance by two merchant magistrates, called up by the Austrian and the British Consuls respectively, reveals this circle of merchants in which Abbott and members of his family participated and to which they turned to when they needed favours, assistance, collaboration and sociability.

In 1816 the committee set up by the Austrian Consul Count Giuseppe de Choch to discuss the protest of Peter Chasseaud against his partner and step-father Bartholomew Edward Abbott comprised the British merchant John Pyburn, the French François Masse and Giuseppe de Choch himself and operated as an *ad hoc* Austrian magistrate. The British magistrate set up by the British Consul Francis Charnaud to arbitrate the dispute between the Abbott sisters and their brother George Frederic following their father's death comprised Francis Charnaud himself and the merchants Athanasios Miliarexis, Leone Morpurgo, Gregorios Ioannis Kiriakkou and Theodore Choidas.<sup>73</sup> The execution of the Abbott inheritance implicated the British, French, Austrian and Swedish consulates in an exchange of petitions, protests, decrees, ex-offices, appeals, acts of sequestration, and requests made mostly by the heirs of Bartholomew Edward Abbott, but also by members of the Ottoman, British and other European merchant communities with an interest in the case.<sup>74</sup> It also brought together a number of local European merchants, who were called to assist the various proceedings of the dispute, which lasted between 1817 and 1819: acting as witnesses and representatives, guarantors, creditors

---

<sup>73</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 148<sup>v</sup>-306<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Francis Charnaud (the British Consul), Bottu (the chargé d'affaires of the French consulate), Marçescou (the French chancellor) and Count de Choch (the Austrian Consul) had to decide whether George Frederic Abbott had indeed advanced to his father the amount of 36,570 56/120 piastres as he claimed. The magistrate conveyed its sentence on 12 March 1819 (NA, SP 105/137, ff. 305<sup>v</sup>-306<sup>v</sup>) and declared unanimously the credit to be valid, justifying George Frederic Abbott. However, as decreed, George Frederic could not claim the payment of the entire amount of his credit from the rest of the Abbott heirs. Once the liquidation of the assets included in the inheritance had taken place, Abbott would be paid a proportion of his credit that would correspond to the ratio of assets versus liabilities. The sentence of the magistrate was renounced by both sides participating in the case. George Frederic Abbott assigned to the law office of John William Lubbock & Co. his representation in front of the competent British tribunal in London (NA, SP 105/137, f. 169<sup>v</sup>-169<sup>v</sup>).

and judges, these merchant entrepreneurs, along with their trade operations, had sometimes assumed minor diplomatic positions, or were picked up by the Consuls for their credentials, good name and/or their connection to the Abbott family. Hence, Philip Lafont, medical doctor in Thessaloniki, and Rafaele Mordo were present when Bartholomew Edward Abbott named as his representatives and administrators of his assets his son George Frederic Abbott and his wife Sarah Abbott. Abbott had invited the Austrian deputy chancellor Michele Piazza to draw up the act, and a copy of the document was sent to the British chancellery.<sup>75</sup> Michele Piazza (Austrian deputy chancellor) and Giacomo Piazza together with Pietro de Choch (Austrian deputy Consul) and Lorenzo Badetti signed as witnesses petitions and protests presented by G. F. Abbott in the British consulate in the period 1817-1819.<sup>76</sup> The Austrian Count Giuseppe de Choch, the British John Pyburn and the French François Masse (of François Masse & Cie) were nominated arbiters in the magistrate called by de Choch to resolve the dispute between Bartholomew Edward Abbott and Peter Chasseaud in 1811.<sup>77</sup> In 1819 Theodore Valetti and Spiridon Monti had signed as witnesses the appeal of George Frederic Abbott against the sentence handed down by the British magistrate in Thessaloniki concerning his dispute with his sisters and co-inheritors.<sup>78</sup> Philip Aliotti and J. J. Odds were witnesses in the act of sequestration presented by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz in the Austrian chancellery on 9 March 1818.<sup>79</sup> Cesar Odds together with Francesco Castelli and Ignazio d'Andrea were present and signed as witnesses the inventory of the Abbott house drawn up by James Charnaud. Odds was also entrusted with the keys of the house, which had been sealed following the death of Sarah Abbott.<sup>80</sup> J. J. Odds together with Lorenzo Badetti and Emmanuel Ioannis Kiriakkou were witnesses in the liquidation of Abbott & Chasseaud, while Philip Aliotti together with Leon Morpurgo, Athanasios Miliaris and Gregorios Ioannis Kiriakkou were nominated by the British Consul Francis Charnaud as arbiters in the case of George Frederic Abbott's credit.<sup>81</sup> Aliotti's place was taken by Theodore Choidas, following an appeal from the Abbott sisters, who sustained

---

<sup>75</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 150<sup>r</sup>-150<sup>v</sup>. Philip Lafont's son Felix married Caroline Sarah Abbott, daughter of George Frederic and Domna Caftangioglou.

<sup>76</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 157<sup>r</sup>-158<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 160<sup>r</sup>-163<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 169<sup>r</sup>-169<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 190<sup>r</sup>-190<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 195<sup>v</sup>-216<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 301<sup>r</sup>-306<sup>r</sup>.

that George Frederic Abbott was a relative to Philip Aliotti by marriage.<sup>82</sup> Two other merchants, Theodore Valletti and George Vianello, were witnesses in the presentation in front of G. F. Abbott and his mother Sarah Abbott of the appeal of the Abbott sisters against them,<sup>83</sup> while Ignazio d'Andrea and Giuseppe Funck signed as witnesses another appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother.<sup>84</sup>

This was a world of merchants in action,<sup>85</sup> not the usual action of buying and selling in the central market, waiting for the arrival of cargo in a busy port, packing and storing goods in warehouses or stock rooms in the back of mansions, negotiating prices with offices in London, Marseille, Livorno, Malta and Smyrna. On this occasion the merchants were invited to provide credit and assist in the settlement of differences that so often arose in the life of a busy merchant community, to provide social service guaranteeing their good reputation and dignity, to contribute to a resolution of conflicts and a quick restart of business. This kind of social action brought them together for their common good and bound them into relations of interdependence and sociability.

The Abbott relational capital comprised relations built upon trust and solidarity, expectations for profit, common social and ethnic identity, family solidarity, collaboration and sociability and were strengthened by a mechanism that reproduced and disseminated good reputation. This system of interaction functioned simultaneously with another one developed inside the institutional and contractual environment of the Levant Company and very often extended outside the imaginary borders of the Company's networks.<sup>86</sup> Bartholomew Edward Abbott moved comfortably in both these systems, participating in a power game for status, profit and connections.

---

<sup>82</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 281<sup>r</sup>-282<sup>r</sup>. Theodore Choidas was also the partner of George Frederic Abbott in G. F. Abbott & Co.

<sup>83</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 220<sup>r</sup>-221<sup>r</sup>. George Vianello was married to Charlotte Adele Lafont, daughter of Felix Lafont and Caroline Sarah Abbott. His brother Niccolo Vianello was married to Emilia Charnaud, daughter of the Consul Francis Charnaud and Catherine Kneping.

<sup>84</sup> NA, SP 105/137, ff. 221<sup>v</sup>-222<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> See Table 3.

<sup>86</sup> See Vlami, "British Trade", for an investigation of the link between institutional, contractual and individual aspects of the Levant Company's operation in the Eastern Mediterranean. For an interesting comparison between the Levant Company and other similar chartered companies founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with modern multinational enterprises of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Carlos and Nicholas, *Giants*, pp. 398-419.

“The Father of the Levant Company”

Being a Freeman and a highly committed member of the local British factory, Abbott’s entrepreneurial strategy, tactics, dealings and associations were also performed inside the Levant Company’s extended background. Abbott’s commitment to the factory’s affairs started long before he gave the Oath of the Levant Company Freeman. His local connections and successful operation probably gained him a prestigious and powerful position inside the British factory while also determining his lasting relationship with the Levant Company officials. Abbott was actually never offered the post of the local British Consul.<sup>87</sup> However, every time the position remained vacant, he was invited to serve and was nominated pro-Consul or interim Consul. This happened in 1786 when the British Consul in Thessaloniki Olifer announced to the Company his wish to resign and referred to “Mr. B. E. Abbott” as the proper person to succeed him. During the long and agitated term of Francis Charnaud, Abbott was once again invited by the Company to take over the British factory. In 1803 Charnaud himself appointed Bartholomew Edward Abbott as pro-Consul for a period of three months and headed to Constantinople on business (NA, SP 105/122, pp. 360-361). Abbott assumed the duties of pro-Consul at least two more times during Charnaud’s term in office, in 1811<sup>88</sup> and then in 1814 when Charnaud was temporarily suspended.<sup>89</sup>

B. E. Abbott’s standing inside the local merchant community, his power and wealth probably determined his paternalistic approach to the Company’s affairs in Thessaloniki and moulded his antagonistic manner towards the Company’s officials, which often hid his expectations of gaining control of the factory; Abbott systematically undermined and discredited the local British Consuls, sometimes coming in direct confrontation with them. At the same time he constructed his relationship with the Levant Company officials back in London with great care and intuition, providing information and services whenever necessary and attracting notice as the guardian of legitimacy and order in the Company’s factory. His direct correspondence with the Company’s Secretary George Liddell and the General Consul in Constantinople, Isaac Morier, to whom he presented his requests and ideas or reported something unusual or dishonest taking place inside the factory, proves it. On the other

---

<sup>87</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 205-228.

<sup>88</sup> NA, SP 105/123, p. 249.

<sup>89</sup> NA, SP 105/123, pp. 415-416; Charnaud was suspended by the General Court when he interrupted his correspondence with the Company and neglected his duties between 1805 and 1814. He was restored to the office in 1815 (Vlami, “Βρετανικό εμπόριο”, p. 207).



hand, and although on certain occasions serious allegations of dishonesty and treachery were pending against him, the Company's administration always supported him; Company officials back in London often put pressure on the local Consuls to satisfy his requirements or come to a compromise with him. From within this environment Abbott obtained powerful enemies and valuable friends. His relations with Consuls George Moore and Olifer show two opposing aspects of his dealings with the Company's administrative apparatus. Hence in 1787 in the middle of Consul George Moore's term in Thessaloniki, Abbott conveyed to the Levant Company's administration in London a testimony that some factors at Smyrna had consigned British products to foreign houses in Thessaloniki and that a certain George Perkins, who had loaded six bales of shalloons on the *Ephrates* under his own name to be received by M. J. L. Frugier & Co., had in fact defrauded the Company as the cargo had been received instead by a certain Greek named Pari Venrasi.<sup>90</sup> His direct interference in the factory's affairs most likely made Moore nervous and in the years that followed their relations got edgy and bitter. Soon, their conflict was exposed when Abbott, together with ex-Consul Olifer, presented to the Company a protest complaining about Consul Moore's conduct respecting an application presented to him by Abbott in order to obtain possession of a house on behalf of Olifer. The situation had a follow-up as in return Abbott refused to pay an *ad valorem* duty for a cargo of St Martha's wood that was not at the time rated in the British Tariff.<sup>91</sup> In the following months, both sides continued to undermine each other, with the Company often taking the role of mediator. Abbott and his partner Peter Chasseaud sent a petition to the Company presenting their reservations about the people appointed by Moore to the positions of chancellor and dragoman of the British consulate.<sup>92</sup> Moore replied to the provocation by accusing the commercial enterprise of Abbott & Chasseaud of trying to evade the payment of 1% duty on the value of goods that had been exported by them "on Foreign Ships to Foreign ports on account of Foreigners". On that occasion the Company notified Moore that he should revert to the Company's printed Orders, according to which no consulship should be levied on goods exported to foreign ports in foreign ships by British subjects on account of foreigners. Once again the officials in London chose to back the British merchants against the Consul when Abbott & Chasseaud complained about the fees charged by the chancellery for the provision of

---

<sup>90</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 190-191.

<sup>91</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 210-212; Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", pp. 199-200.

<sup>92</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 244-246.

various services to the factors. On that occasion too, the Company advised Moore to prepare a list of fixed fees in order to avoid further complaints. In 1790 in one of his letters to the Company Moore made allusions that B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud had made their entries of consular duties at the end of the year and not at the time of receiving or shipping goods. This was against the rules of the Levant Company and suggested fraudulent manipulation of the duties the enterprise had to pay to the British consulate.<sup>93</sup> This uncomfortable and controversial situation carried on until Moore's accidental death in 1790: Moore and the captain of a British vessel were assaulted by strangers during an evening walk.<sup>94</sup>

Abbott's friendly connection to Consul Olifer further fuelled the antagonism between Abbott and Moore. In 1786 Olifer had proposed Abbott to his superiors in London as the proper person to succeed him once he resigned from the post of British Consul in Thessaloniki.<sup>95</sup> In the following years the friendship of the two men had a more concrete return for Abbott. During his term in Thessaloniki's factory Olifer had obtained – with the Levant Company's consent – the vice-consulship of Sweden.<sup>96</sup> When he resigned he transferred the post to Abbott and not to his successor in the British consulate, George Moore. Although Moore complained to the Company about Olifer's partiality and favouritism, the London officials affirmed that the former Consul's decision was personal and irrevocable.

Abbott's relationship with Moore's successor, Francis Charnaud, was not uncomplicated either<sup>97</sup> and reached its lowest moment when Charnaud was temporarily suspended from his office, accused of neglecting his duties and failing to produce to the Company the accounts of consular revenues for more than five years. The fact that this period coincided with the "...great Trade carried through Salonica" during the last phase of the Napoleonic Wars, when the revenues of the British Consulate in the port augmented significantly,

---

<sup>93</sup> NA, SP 105/121, p. 264.

<sup>94</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 282-283.

<sup>95</sup> NA, SP 105/121, pp. 168, 170.

<sup>96</sup> As mentioned above, between 1790 and 1792 Abbott assumed the duties of the Consul of Venice in Thessaloniki. Until the end of his life he served as Vice-Consul of Denmark and Sweden (Svoronos, *Commerce*, pp. 203, 212).

<sup>97</sup> Francis Charnaud served as British Consul in Thessaloniki from 1792 to 1825; see Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", p. 168. He was preceded by Consuls Moore (1787-1790) and Olifer (in 1786 he resigned from the post). Between 1790-1792, Abbott assumed the duties of pro-Consul, see *ibid.*, p. 171.

made Charnaud's negligence even more suspicious.<sup>98</sup> He was suspended from his office and Abbott was nominated interim Consul. After he had sent to London all necessary accounts and duties Charnaud was absolved; he had, nevertheless, to call on the intervention of some of his powerful "friends" in the British capital, who apparently exerted pressure for his swift return to office. When that time arrived and interim Consul Abbott had to restore the consulate to Charnaud, the two men got involved in a bitter disagreement on economic returns. This dispute proves that consular revenues and salaries represented an important income, turning the position of Consul into a much sought-after employment by merchants who pursued profit and connections. The Abbott-Charnaud dispute was complicated and was founded upon accusations of mismanagement of the factory's finances and exploitation of the consulate's revenues. Following the reinstatement of Charnaud in the consulate of Thessaloniki, the two men could not agree on who of the two was entitled to the consular duties charged upon the cargoes of two vessels that had begun loading their cargoes during Abbott's administration and had finished after Charnaud had taken office again. Abbott also complained that Charnaud had not paid him the entire salary of one year – this was 2000 piastres – but had advanced him 1844 37/120 piastres, which corresponded to eleven months and two days' service.<sup>99</sup> The dispute was eventually brought to the General Court, which decided that the whole amount of consular duties charged upon the cargoes of the two vessels should be awarded to Abbott while Charnaud should pay him a whole year's compensation for his services.<sup>100</sup>

However, the rupture between the two men was fierce and was accompanied by allegations from both sides of irregularities in the factory's administration. Abbott accused Charnaud that he had mismanaged consular duties, while Charnaud blamed Abbott for having charged illicitly non-British subjects with the payment of a 2% duty on the value of their merchandise. Charnaud presented to the Levant Company the testimony of an Austrian subject, the merchant G. Vianello, owner of G. Vianello Sons & Co., who confirmed that as interim Consul Abbott had charged him the 2% duty.<sup>101</sup> Charnaud went on to

---

<sup>98</sup> On 7 April 1814 Abbott was invited by Isaac Morier, Consul General in Constantinople, to take over the British consulate in Thessaloniki as interim Consul (NA, SP 105/134, f. 164<sup>r</sup>). Charnaud claimed that his negligence was due to the long illness of one of his sons and produced documents that proved his reasons (NA, SP 105/134, ff. 168<sup>r</sup>-169<sup>r</sup>). See also Vlami, "Βρετανικό εμπόριο", pp. 184-185.

<sup>99</sup> NA, SP 105/137, f. 302<sup>r</sup>-302<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> NA, SP 105/123, pp. 485-487.

<sup>101</sup> NA, SP 105/123, ff. 197<sup>r</sup>-198<sup>r</sup>.

accuse Abbott's son George Frederic that he had contravened the Company's regulations and had formed G. F. Abbott & Co. in association with an Ottoman subject, the Greek merchant Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou. At that point the Levant Company intervened decisively, reckoning that the conflict had gone too far and the good name of the British factory was at stake. In a letter that was sent to both adversaries, the Company expressed its annoyance and asked that "all the animosity which it produced will cease, and that both of you Gentlemen will return to such habits of peace and good neighbourhood with respect to each other as may secure the tranquillity of the Factory at large and prevent further injury to the reputation of the parties concerned in the Quarrel".<sup>102</sup>

When Clarke referred to Bartholomew Edward Abbott in his *Travels*, he might have been predisposed by the man's imposing and influential personality, his extended circle of social and business connections, the volume and the amplitude of his activity, and his propitious and unshakeable relations with many Levant Company officials. Clarke might also have noticed his paternalistic manner that ultimately defined his ambiguous and troubled relations with the residents of the British consulate in Thessaloniki. As David Goffman has shown, however, similar conflicting situations arising between Freeman and between Freeman and officials were common since early in the Company's history, revealing antagonistic relations and the prevalence of personal strategies. The clash between two factors in Smyrna or the fierce antagonism between contenders for the post of Consul General in the Peloponnese<sup>103</sup> – two seventeenth-century incidents described by Goffman – put into question theories on the existence of a powerful network of Freeman that functioned under the institutional shield of the Company and was based on Company affiliation and common economic interests.<sup>104</sup> The long correspondence of Olifer, Moore, Charnaud and Abbott with the Levant Company's officials back in London proves that rather than one single Company network one can ascertain the existence of individual centres of power that operated around influential personalities of social and economic status. These individuals often held positions of eminence in the Company's administration and influenced decisions taken by the General Court. Around these centres of power assembled members of the Company of equally important social and economic standing, similar economic interests, related by kin and sociability; in the Company's jargon they were often referred to as "friends" and "friends of friends" and

---

<sup>102</sup> NA, SP 105/123, pp. 488-489.

<sup>103</sup> Goffman, *Britons*, pp. 45-67.

<sup>104</sup> Fusaro, "Networks", p. 145.

they were always ready to use their name, their connections and their money to guarantee and assist the members belonging to their circle. They often took sides supporting each other against other members of the Company or in front of the General Court.<sup>105</sup> This reality was not unrelated to the Company's procedure of selecting members: the aspiring Freemen had to be proposed by a number of active members, who as real "friends" would warmly support their candidacy.<sup>106</sup> However, as the Abbott case proves, outside these groups of "friends" – groups that inevitably intersected and overlapped – friendship, trust and affiliation were not self-evident notions, as collaboration and partnership were not uncomplicated practices.

### *Conclusion*

Bartholomew Edward Abbott might not be considered a representative case of the grand Levant merchants who in the late eighteenth century were still implicated in the British Levant trade. Abbott set up his business in the Ottoman Empire relying on family, kin and local resources. His entrepreneurial strategy was complex and developed in various modes, comprising contacts from different operational and geographical areas and taking advantage of opportunities that arose within different business environments. It was a strategy that assumed Abbott's participation and performance inside a system of overlapping circles of relatives, social and business acquaintances, collaborators and "friends", all bound together by reciprocal relations of interdependence; credit, partnership, alliance, friendship, manipulation, kin, ethnicity and sociability, trust and doubt mould this interdependence and associated those participating in the system through common and, sometimes, opposing identities.

Although deeply embedded in the local society, Abbott's life and business activities were also irretrievably connected with the Levant Company's factory since its first days; even before he gave the formal Oath of a Freeman and was accepted as a full member in the grand Company of "friends". And even though his relational capital expanded outside the institutional and contractual umbrella of the Company and his international operations sometimes contravened its rules, his constant involvement in the factory's

---

<sup>105</sup> For example, the "friendship" between Francis Charnaud and John Theo. Daubuz, a member of the Company's General Court who used all his influence to have Charnaud reinstated to his post in 1814 (NA, SP 105/122, pp. 371-372, and NA, SP 105/123, pp. 385-387) or the Olfier-Abbott companionship mentioned above.

<sup>106</sup> Wood, *Levant Company*, pp. 153-154.

affairs demonstrated his eagerness to be part of a power game taking place inside the Company in order to obtain authority, influence and profits. Abbott moved comfortably along a thin line between compliance and irregularity, tactlessness and diplomacy, authority and permissiveness in order to forward his business and family interests in the utmost way.

His case allows us to get a glimpse inside a great chartered trade company and examine, even briefly, its operation and corporate identity. Through the study of Abbott's relations with officials in London and Thessaloniki, the connection between the Company's overlying administrative mechanism, the apparatus of officials appointed to the factories and the Freemen is partly revealed. It is also possible to perceive the barriers distinguishing the activity of a Freeman from that of an independent entrepreneur and the aspirations of a merchant from those of a Levant Company officeholder.

*Research Centre for Medieval and Modern Greek Studies,  
Academy of Athens*

Table 1  
Commercial houses in Thessaloniki from the British Consular Archives, 1813-1818

A. British, French, Italian, German and other commercial houses
Abbott & Chasseaud (1813-1814)
Abbott, G. F. & Co. (1813-1814)
Abbott, G. F. & Co. (1816)
Allamandas, J. L. & M. J. Fazz (1813-1814)
André, P. F. * (1813-1814)
Bacchi, Giovanni (1813-1814)
Bachaloni, Giuseppe (1813-1814)
Baciatori, Stefano & Co. (1813-1814)
Ballano & Co. (1817)
Barker, Edward & Co. * (1813-1814)
Barxell & Faadt (1813-1814)
Bensusan, Joseph (1816)
Bensusan, Joseph & Sons (1816)
Benvenisti, Vidal (1816)
Berard, J. F. (1813-1814)
Bianco, Claudio (1813-1814)
Brine, William (1813-1814)
Brine, William & Grabau & Co. * (1813-1814)
Carasso, Isaac Levi (1816)
Castelli, Domenico (1813-1814)
Chabot, Routh & Co. * (1813-1814)
Charnaud, Francis (1813-1814)
Charnaud, Francis (1817)
Chasseaud, Peter (1818)
Cooper, Samuel & Co. (1813-1814)
Dalgas & Ott * (1813-1814)
Dalla Cozi * (1813-1814)
Dracopuli & De Marchi (1816)
Fazz, John (1813-1814)
Fenech, Giuseppe (1817)
Fernandez Diaz, J. D. & Co. (1816)
Fernandez, Elia & Misrachi (1813-1814)

Fernandez, Elia & Misrachi (1816)
Fletcher & Co. * (1813-1814)
Flitoker, M. (1813-1814)
Fouquier & Wailhem (1813-1814)
Garofallo, Domenico (1813-1814)
Gategno, Menahem & Isaac (1816)
Gategno, Moise & Isaac (1816)
Gategno, M. J. (1817)
Goffiero, Carlo (1818)
Gout, James L. * (1813-1814)
Grabau & Stresaw * (1813-1814)
Grabau, C. & Co. * (1813-1814)
Hausner & Co. (1813-1814)
Hayes, Edward & Co. * (1813-1814)
Heimpel, Christian (1813-1814)
Holland & Co. * (1813-1814)
Hunter & Co. * (1813-1814)
Jackson, Thomas * (1813-1814)
Jalm, J. & C. (1817)
Jannits, Giorgio (1817)
Jannits, George (1818)
Lachliy, J. (1813-1814)
Lisag, Elia Vita (1816)
Lutheroth, Ascan (1813-1814)
Magnetti, Ger. (1813-1814)
Marshall, John * (1813-1814)
Masse, J. & Co. (1813-1814)
Mercado, Jenni (1813-1814)
Mezzrini Fratelli (1816)
Morpurgo, G. D. (1813-1814)
Mutti, G. (1813-1814)
Namias, Abraam (1813-1814)
Pellerano, Gaetano (1816)
Premuda, N. (1813-1814)
Pyburn, John (1813-1814)
Reboul & Odds (1816)



Renal, J. B. (1813-1814)
Reyman & Mayer * (1813-1814)
Richards, George * (1813-1814)
Ross, Higgins & Co. * (1813-1814)
Saja Moise & Juda Levi & Co. (1813-1814)
Sarai, Haggi Muhamed (1813-1814)
Sartorio, G.G. (1813-1814)
Tarabocchia, Marco Giovanni (1813-1814)
Tarabocchia, M. M. (1813-1814)
Thomas, R. M. & Co. * (1813-1814)
Tichy, Ant. (1813-1814)
Vernazza & Alliotti (1813-1814)
Vernazza & Alliotti (1816)
Vernazza & Alliotti (1817)
Vianello, Ant. J. (1816)
Vianello, G. Sons & Co. (1813-1814)
Vianello, Giovanni Sons & Co. (1816)
Vianello, Giovanni Sons & Co. (1817)
Volger, H. J. * (1813-1814)
Volger, Henry * (1813-1814)
Vujstich, Michele (1813-1814)
B. Greek commercial houses
Balis & Prasakakis (1813-1814)
Caftangioglou, I. G. (1813-1814)
Caftangioglou, I. G. (1816)
Castrizzis, I. Ch. (1813-1814)
Chatzigiorgos, Demetrios (1813-1814)
Chatzigiorgos, Demetrios (1816)
Choidas, Theodoros (1816)
Christodoulos, Demetrios (1813-1814)
Christodoulos, Domenicos (1813-1814)
Constandinou, Ioannis (1813-1814)
Costakis, Andreas (1813-1814)
Costourousis, Constantinos & Co. (1813-1814)
Coundouris, Andreas (1813-1814)
Dardaganis, Dimitrios (1813-1814)

Dardaganis, I. D. (1813-1814)
Dariotis, Georgios (1813-1814)
Giannicopoulos, Constantinos (1813-1814)
Giannitsis, Georgios (1818)
Giannitsis, Georgios (1817)
Golopoulos, Iatros (1813-1814)
Golopoulos, Michail (1813-1814)
Golopoulos, Nicolaos (1813-1814)
Hg. Grisso, H. J. Panajiotti & Co. (1816)
Ignatiou, Ioannis & Co. (1816)
Kiriakkou, Ioannis & Sons (1816)
Kiriakkou Sons & Co. (1816)
Kiriakkou, I. & Co. (1813-1814)
Manessis, Panagis (1813-1814)
Menexes, Christos Georgios (1816)
Mentzelopoulos, Nicolaos (1816)
Michalis, Pavlos (1813-1814)
Miliaresis, Athanasios (1816)
Rizos, Emmanouil (1816)
Sardilis, Stavros (1813-1814)
Scambalis, Constantinos Georgios (1816)
Thalassinos, Pavlos & Co. (1813-1814)
Thalassinos, Pavlos (1813-1814)
Tosizza Bros (1818)

Note: \* Commercial houses represented in Malta

Source: NA, SP 105/134, ff. 31<sup>r</sup>-58<sup>r</sup>; NA, SP 105/136, ff. 119<sup>r</sup>-121<sup>r</sup>; NA, SP 105/137, ff. 102<sup>r</sup>-107<sup>r</sup>.

Table 2  
Plan of liquidation of Abbott & Chasseaud, debts to be settled as follows:

Bartholomew Edward Abbott Credits (piastre)	Peter Chasseaud Credits (piastre)
Sarah Abbott, 46,943 20/120	Sarah Abbott, 22,961 91/120
George Frederic Abbott, 36,570 55/120	G. Chasseaud, 9450 37/120
Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou, 22,624 24/120	David Adritti, 11,983 99/120
Annetta Parsy, 10,000	Elia Adritti, 16,237
Bohor Covo, 15,374 113/120	Abraam Namias, 750
Anastasis Giovanni, 6760	Salomon Frances, 600
Mose Namias, 2563 57/120	Yuran Yenegelis, 5000
Sahula Salem, 3018 40/120	George Frederic Abbott's null and of no effect, 7314 110/120
Haggi Gusho, 1500	
Bartholomew Edward Abbott, 3241 2/120	
Total: 148,595 72/120	Total: 74,297 97/120

Note: Total capital: 222,893 49/120 piastres

Source: NA, SP 105/137, f. 255<sup>r</sup>.

Table 3  
Witnesses, judges and arbiters of the Abbott cases

Alliotti, Philip	Act of sequestration by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz against G. F. Abbott
Alliotti, Philip	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
Badetti, Lorenzo	Witness of the liquidation process of Abbott & Chasseaud
Badetti, Lorenzo	Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
Castelli, Francesco	Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
Charnaud, Francis	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
Charnaud, James	Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
Choidas, Theodore	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
D'Andrea, Ignazio	Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
de Choch, Giuseppe, Count	Witness/arbiter in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud
de Choch, Pietro	Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
Funck, Giuseppe	Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
Kiriakkou, Emmanuel Ioannis	Witness of the liquidation process of Abbott & Chasseaud
Kiriakkou, Gregorios Ioannis	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
Lafont, Philip	Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
Masse, François	Witness/arbiter in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud

Miliaresis, Athanasios	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
Monti, Spiridon	Witness in the appeal of G. F. Abbott against the decision of the British magistrate set up by Consul F. Charnaud
Mordo, Rafaelle	Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
Morpurgo, Leon	Member of the British magistrate set up by Consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
Odds, Cesar	Holder of the keys of the Abbott house after the death of Sarah Abbott
Odds, Cesar	Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
Odds, J. J.	Witness of the liquidation process of Abbott & Chasseaud
Odds, J. J.	Act of sequestration by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz against G. F. Abbott
Piazza, Giacomo	Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
Piazza, Michele	Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
Piazza, Michele	Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
Pyburn, John	Witness/arbitrator in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud
Valetti, Theodore	Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
Valetti, Theodore	Witness in the appeal of G. F. Abbott against the decision of the British magistrate set up by Consul F. Charnaud
Vianello, George	Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother