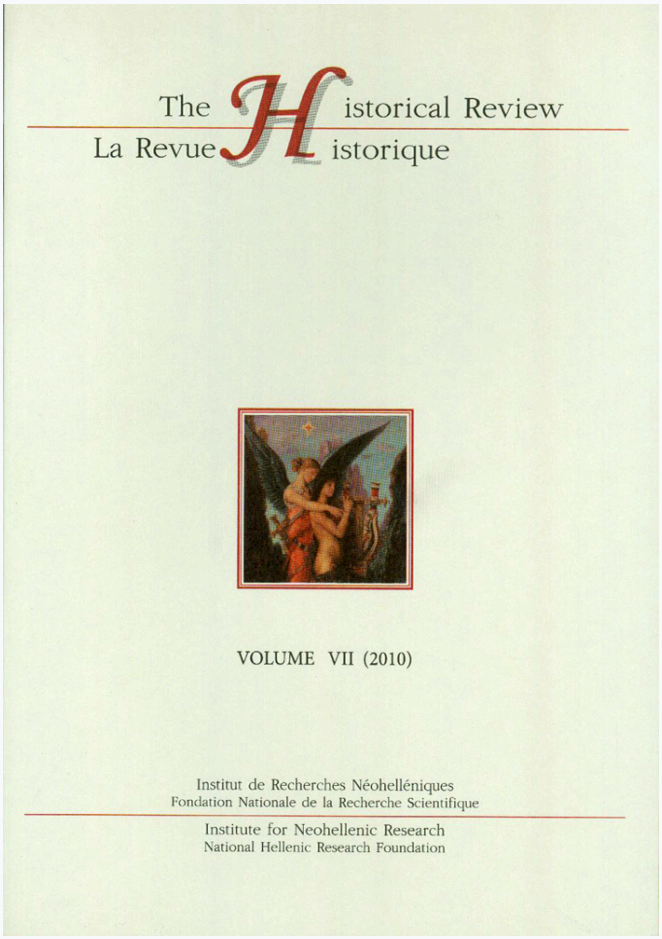
ePublishing

ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΩΣΗΣ
EKT NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 7 (2010)

Networking and Spatial Allocation around the Mediterranean, Seventeenth-Nineteenth Centuries



G.A. Melos' Trading Network (Venice, 1712-1732): Structural Characteristics and Temporary Partnerships

Eftychia Liata

doi: 10.12681/hr.259

To cite this article:

Liata, E. (2011). G.A. Melos' Trading Network (Venice, 1712-1732): Structural Characteristics and Temporary Partnerships. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, *7*, 127–177. https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.259

https://epublishing.ekt.gr | **e-Publisher:** EKT | **Downloaded at:** 06/09/2026 00:15:10

G. A. MELOS' TRADING NETWORK (VENICE, 1712-1732): STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TEMPORARY PARTNERSHIPS

Eftychia Liata

Abstract: The subject of this article is the life and especially the commercial activity of a Greek merchant of the diaspora, Georgios Antonios Melos. In the 1670s, at a young age, he left his native Athens and emigrated to Spain, the country of his mother's origin. He first worked on the behalf of Spanish traders as a travelling merchant and also as an independent trader travelling to various markets in the Levant. He would soon have his own shop of colonial goods in Madrid, where he lived with his family until roughly the early eighteenth century. From 1712, now alone subsequent to the death of his family, he made Venice his home and initiated a commercial collaboration with his two brothers in Nauplion. For 20 years (he died in 1732), Georgios Melos engaged in varied and profitable commercial activities, mainly as *corrispodente* for other merchants, Greek, Italian and Spanish, but also on his own account, participating in a dense commercial network that spread to markets in Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Italy and Spain. His case is representative of that of a medium-scale Greek commercial operator in the second half of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth.

"If you can't sell, change tactics and maybe your fortunes will change." Such was the advice of Konstantinos Oikonomos of Smyrna to his partner Ioannis Kokkonis in Constantinople, when the latter was struggling to sell copies of *Rhetorikai* by the same Oikonomos.[1] This practical advice, which the scholar was borrowing from merchant lore, sums up the way in which certain professional tactics – widely deployed through the ages and across every level of the market – could be used to help get sales moving.

When we speak today of modern-day commercial networks, we tend to think of them as something static, functioning – if not exclusively, at least increasingly – with the help of technology, as communications have been carried out, with the passing of time, by telegram, telephone or email. It requires a certain stretch of the imagination to reconstruct in our minds – with the aid of our archival sources, of course – the workings of such trading networks in times past (and the further back we go, the harder this

[1] Konstantinos Oikonomos o ex Oikonomon, *Αλληλογραφία* [Correspondence], Vol. 1: 1802-1817, ed. K. Lappas and R. Stamouli, Athens: Research Centre for Medieval and Modern Hellenism, Academy of Athens, 1989, p. 228.

becomes), particularly since our knowledge of the past necessarily relies on the availability of surviving sources. Whether involving a host of centres or based around a single centre, a trading network is both the precondition for, and the result of, collaboration among many persons who, while installed in or travelling around diverse geographical locations and performing various individual roles, nevertheless work in a coordinated fashion to serve either their own economic interests, arranging affairs within their own commercial network, or the interests of third parties, as links in networks run by others.

This study aims to contribute to the debate regarding commercial networks, which in the past 20 years in particular has found, in Greece too, increasingly fertile ground for historical research.[2] While discussion of trading networks has been a fairly recent undertaking, the phenomenon itself is ancient and, of course, not exclusive to the Greek business world. Furthermore, the fact that a substantial portion of research has focused on the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries should not be taken to imply that this is when such phenomena first appeared or that there was any particular surge in this kind of activity: it simply means that we are availed of evidence for this period.

In those exceptional cases when we are fortunate enough to have access to such material as commercial records from earlier periods, we come across evidence for such phenomena from as far back as the late Byzantine period. To limit our scope to the Mediterranean basin, we may cite the case of the Venetian merchant of Constantinople Giacomo Badoer, whose account books furnish us with a wealth of information regarding the geographical network for the trading of goods (though not the related human network) in the wider region of the Levant in the period 1436-1440.[3]

When it comes to the modern Greek period, our evidence starts to become more substantial from the late seventeenth century onwards, as the sources, which are scant and infrequent to begin with, become steadily more numerous in the mid-eighteenth century and, especially, the nineteenth, as Greek commerce experienced a phase of rapid growth and began to assume other dimensions and new orientation, shifting from the markets of Western

---

[2] For a coherent and concise treatment of the Greek commercial diaspora and trading networks in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries, including bibliography on the subject, see S. I. Asdrachas *et al.*, *Ελληνική οικονομική ιστορία, ιε΄-ιθ΄ αιώνας* [Greek economic history, fifteenth-nineteenth century], Vol. I, Athens: Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation, 2003, pp. 159-160 (N. E. Karapidakis), pp. 240-247, 461-481 (O. Katsiardi-Hering).

[3] G. Bertelè (ed.), *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli, 1436-1440)*, Padua 2002.

Europe, and particularly the ports of the Italian Peninsula, to the commercial centres of the Balkans and, above all, Central Europe. The surge in Greek trading relations with Central Europe in the nineteenth century[4] had its roots in Venetian Greek trade of the seventeenth century and, above all, the eighteenth.[5] It is to this field that we shall attempt here to contribute some

[4] Important in this regard is the appearance of research, mostly in the form of doctoral dissertations produced in recent decades in the history departments of Greek universities, which has reaped rich harvests and shed light on the range and diffusion of Greek trade in this part of Europe. The citation of these studies is unnecessary here, as they can easily be accessed through the graduate programmes of the relevant departments; however, a rough overview of this emerging bibliography may be consulted in the recent, unpublished doctoral thesis of Ikaros Mantouvalou, *Όψεις του παροικιακού ελληνισμού. Από το Μοναστήρι στην Πέστη. Επιχείρηση και αστική ταυτότητα της οικογένειας Μάνου (τέλη 18ου-19ος αιώνας)* [Views of Hellenism abroad: from Monastiri to Pest: the business ventures and bourgeois identity of the Manos family (late eighteenth to nineteenth century)], University of Athens, Department of History and Archaeology, 2007. A. Diamantis, *Τύποι εμπόρων και μορφές συνείδησης στη Νεώτερη Ελλάδα* [Varieties of merchants and modes of consciousness in Modern Greece], Athens 2007, discusses the features and growth of Greek trade, as it evolved in the markets of Central Europe and the Italian Peninsula, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[5] Besides scattered information about Greek merchants and trade in this period drawn primarily from the unsystematic and fragmentary publication of their correspondence (K. D. Mertzios, "Εμπορική αλληλογραφία εκ Μακεδονίας (1695-1699)" [Commercial correspondence from Macedonia (1695-1699)], *Μνημεία Μακεδονικής Ιστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian history], Thessaloniki 1947 (²2007), pp. 209-255; *id.*, "Το εν Βενετία Ηπειρωτικού Αρχείου" [The Epirote archive in Venice], *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά* XI (1936), pp. 1-351; *id.*, "Εμπορική αλληλογραφία εκ Θεσσαλονίκης" [Commercial correspondence from Thessaloniki], *Μακεδονικά* VII (1966), pp. 94-147), systematic study of Greek-Venetian trade in the eighteenth century is rare, with the sole exception of the ground-breaking dissertation by S. I. Asdrachas, *Patmos entre l'Adriatique et la Méditerranée Orientale pendant la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle d'après les registres de Pothitos Xénos,* Paris 1972, which has not, however, been properly exploited since it remains unpublished and difficult to find. In some articles aspects of the activities of the Greek merchants Selekis-Sarou, Taronitis and Peroulis have been presented either partially or along general lines: V. Kremmydas, "Ιστορία του ελληνικού εμπορικού οίκου της Βενετίας Σελέκη και Σάρου. Μια στατιστική προσέγγιση" [The history of Selekis and Saros, a Greek commercial enterprise in Venice: a statistical approach], *Θησαυρίσματα* XII (1975), pp. 171-199; P. Michailaris, "Ανέκδοτες επιστολές (1695-1696) του Μιχ. Ν. Γλυκύ στον Μιχ. Σταμ. Περούλη" [Unpublished letters (1695-1696) from M. N. Glykys to M. S. Peroulis], *Θησαυρίσματα* XIII (1976), pp. 245-257; *id.*, "Η εμπορική εταιρική συνεργασία του βενετικού οίκου Ταρωνίτη-Θεοτόκη και των αδελφών Γ. και Θ. Γεωργίβαλων (1732-1737). Ο ρόλος και η δράση του εμπορικού πράκτορα Δημ. Χαμόδρακα" [The commercial

data, focusing on a very specific angle: to be precise, our object of enquiry will not be manifestations of the large-scale commerce of the day or one of its more eminent players. The individual we shall examine below[6] belongs most probably to the middle ranks of the merchant class and is surely a representative type to be found widely in this period, thereby providing us with a good yardstick for the subjects of this stratum. It will provide us, in other words, with a clearer picture of this socio-economic sphere, particularly since the archival evidence is so scarce.

The case of Georgios Antonios Melos, like that of Pothitos Xenos, belongs to the Mediterranean rather than continental network for the movement of people and goods. However, Melos and Xenos differ from one another in a number of key structural respects, as well as the circumstances of their particular sphere of trade. Xenos' area of trade gives us a glimpse of some of the structural features of the Greek world of commerce in the Mediterranean in the second half of the eighteenth century. Based in Patmos, Xenos bought local produce from the islands of the Aegean and the ports of Asia Minor and the Egyptian littoral, transporting and selling them in Italy. There he bought

---

association between the Venetian company Taronitis-Theotokis and the brothers Y. and Th. Yeorgivalas (1732-1737): the role and activity of the business agent D. Hamodrakas], *Μνήμων* VIII (1980-1982), pp. 226-302. Michailaris has also gathered material from the rich archive of the Peroulidis family housed in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV). However, this archive and that of other Greek merchant families, such as Karagiannis and Maroutsis, await systematic and exhaustive investigation. For a preliminary presentation of the now accessible archive of the great Epirote merchant family, the Maroutsis, also in the ASV, and an assessment of its significance for the history of the Greek community and the culture of the Greek diaspora in Venice more generally, see C. Maltezou, "Η οικογένεια Μαρούτση στη Βενετία" [The Maroutsis family in Venice], *Καθημερινή* (2-7-2006), "Τέχνες και Γράμματα", p. 2.

[6] The rich archive of G. Melos, which he himself bequeathed to the Greek community, has been occasionally presented according to various thematic interests and theoretical approaches. The purely economic side of the archive has been treated in the following studies: D. H. Gofas, *Η φόρτωσις επί του καταστρώματος* [Loading on the deck], Athens 1965, pp. 117-118, 139, 140; *id.*, "Ελληνικαί εξαγωγαί κατά τας αρχάς του 18ου αιώνος κατ' ανέκδοτον εμπορικήν αλληλογραφίαν" [Greek exporters at the end of the eighteenth century according to unpublished commercial correspondence], *Επιθεώρησις Εμπορικού Δικαίου* XXIV (1973), pp. 316-334; E. D. Liata, "Ένας έλληνας έμπορος στη Δύση. Πορεία μιας ζωής από τον 17ο στον 18ο αι." [A Greek merchant in the West: the course of a life from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries], *Ροδωνιά. Τιμή στον Μ. Ι. Μανούσακα* [Rodonia: in honour of M. I. Manousakas], Vol. 1, Rethymnon 1994, pp. 279-297; *id.*, "Νιός πραματευτής στη Δύση. Παραλλαγή σε μια παραλογή" [A young merchant in the West: a parallel in a narrative song], *Θησαυρίσματα* XXXIV (2004), pp. 273-292.

locally manufactured products, which he then sold in the markets of the Levant. He was more of a travelling salesman than a sedentary businessman, working within the context of an agrarian economy in the Aegean, with its ports and markets. This agrarian economy underwent monetization on the basis of trade and shipping.

Melos seems to have been a quite different kind of merchant. Active in the first half of the eighteenth century, he was based in Venice, directing commercial operations that radiated from the East to the West. However, he played a totally different role to that of Xenos, working mainly as a commercial representative.

On examining the trading network of Melos,[7] whose total business activity extends in time over the last three decades of the seventeenth century and the first three decades of the eighteenth, we are in fact seeking to decouple the working mechanisms of the trading networks from the space and time dimension defined above. In following the career of Melos, it is useful to know, from the outset, certain key data from his life in order to better understand and interpret his actions and choices, weighing his personality against more general phenomena and the reality of his day. Likewise, an examination of the specific will enable us to extract and project interpretations onto the wider scene.

Georgios Antonios Melos, the fourth son of a large family originating from Thebes, was born in Athens around 1647, as we learn, indirectly, from his will and the date of his death.[8] At the age of 23 or thereabouts he had to

[7] The all-embracing, although brief treatment of the issue in the present study is based on the investigation and use of data gleaned from the archival material in its entirety. The detailed citation of technical references to each document would simply weigh down the presentation of my research with unnecessary data, without adding meaningfully to the content. Therefore, reference to a particular document in the file will only be made where necessary, e.g. when an extract from a document is translated, or where the document is a frequently cited source, such as a will. It goes without saying that the work has been based primarily on financial documentation in the Melos Archive (registers and papers), supplemented by his rich correspondence. According to the new guide to the archive, the registers or files which constitute the archival sources used for the preparation of this study are identified as Αρχείο Ελληνικού Ινστιτούτου Βενετίας (EIB) [Archive of the Hellenic Institute in Venice], Οικονομική διαχείριση 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ1-Κ13 and Θ1-Θ10; see C. Maltezou, *Οδηγός του Αρχείου* [Guide to the Archive], Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, Venice and Athens 2008, pp. 237-240, and for their corresponding numbering in the old index of K. Kavakos, see pp. 366-367.

[8] The Italian will of Georgios Melos was drawn up on 12 September 1732 and is held in the ASV, Notai di Venezia (not. Emilio Velano). Testamenti, b. 1009, fasc. 169. A

leave Athens "because of their misfortunes," as he himself states – though it is unclear whether these misfortunes were of a family nature or concerned the misfortunes more generally of Athenians living under the misgovernment of the Turks – and in April 1670 we find that he was in Venice, paying his *luminaria* to the Greek community, perhaps with the intention of settling permanently there, although shortly afterwards he left for Spain, the country of origin of his mother, Ursola de Macri[9] (whose Hellenized name was Orsa Makri). He ended up staying there for the next 40 years, working in commerce, initially as a travelling merchant on behalf of others, though also perhaps on his own account, transporting goods around the markets of the Mediterranean basin. Thus, in 1671, on his way from Venice he stopped off at Corinth where he was hosted for some days in the "mansion" of his uncle Nikolaos before continuing his business travels (though it is not known where he proceeded to).

A few years later, in March 1678, we find him again on his travels in the Mediterranean, as *sopracarigo* accompanying goods from Rosetti to Tripoli in North Africa. We would have known nothing of this phase of his career if the records had not preserved an account of an incident involving the capture of the ship by pirates close to the island of Symi. He pursued compensation for his lost goods through the courts, until the following year when his claim was rejected.[10] In early 1680 he returned to Madrid, where he appears to have remained until the early years of the eighteenth century. Once again, we learn more of his subsequent social and professional life in Spain thanks to his own account: he married a Spanish woman from a well-to-do family and fathered two children by her. Thanks to his prosperous marriage, he was able to set up his own business in the centre of Madrid, at Puerta del Sol, where he traded

---

Greek translation of the will can be found in K. D. Mertzios, *O Μικρός Ελληνομνήμων* [Hellinomnimon minor], fasc. 2, Ioannina 1960, pp. 100-105.

[9] Although there exists no bibliographic or archival evidence, there are indications – such as the Spanish background of Ursola, who married in Thebes Antonios Melos, who was of Albanian extraction, or the Spanish wife of Nikolos Melos in Athens – that permit us to suggest that in seventeenth-century Attica and Boeotia there still survived families reaching back to the period of Catalan occupation in the fourteenth century. The family connection of G. Melos with Spain clearly explains, in addition, his original decision to settle and pursue his business career there and not in Venice, the obvious choice of Greeks living and working abroad in this period.

[10] On this adventure and its final outcome, as well as for the presentation of all the relevant evidence, see K. Dokos, "Μια υπόθεσις πειρατείας κατά τον 17ου αιώνα (1672-1680)" [A case of piracy in the seventeenth century (1672-1680)], *Θησαυρίσματα* II (1963), pp. 36-62.

in colonial products and ran a network of agents and associates in various locations, both in Spain and beyond.[11]

It is hard to form any clear picture of Melos' Spanish period, as his own references to this phase in his life are meagre and stem only from archival evidence from his subsequent Italian period. Accordingly, the lack of continuity in the evidence means that we can only follow his life and career in Spain fragmentarily, with jumps in time and substantial gaps in our knowledge, leaving us with a number of moments and places, but not clearly set out sequences and routes.

Unlike his somewhat vague reference to the nature of his trade, the archival evidence reveals more about his associates and the geographical range of his operations: the space within which he operated was the Kingdom of Spain and various commercial centres of the Italian Peninsula (Cadiz, Alicante, Livorno, Genoa); the region of Greece and the Levant in general do not appear to be included within his sphere of business, at least until the early years of the eighteenth century. As for his associates, most seem to have been either Spanish (Matteo de Manuel, Diego de Garay, Pablo Tadeo, David de Mirman, Cottardo Ghiglione, Miguel Chuco, the Necco brothers and others) or Italian (Anzelo Zambelli, Urri and others).

Although we do not possess sufficiently detailed data to allow us to substantiate fully his precise professional status in Spain, apart from indirect evidence and his own account preserved in his correspondence with his brothers, we can nevertheless assume that he achieved a degree of success. The reason for his decision to leave Madrid surely lies elsewhere, probably personal or family misfortune: the death of his wife and children – between 1704 and 1707 – and his own poor health must have played a critical role in his decision to emigrate, particularly when, in 1705, he learnt that his two younger brothers, Nikolos and Michalis, were alive and living with their mother in Anapli (Nauplion).[12] This protracted silence and seeming

[11] The data are derived from the unpublished Spanish will of G. Melos, drawn up in December 1707 (whether on the occasion of some trip or his final departure from Madrid is not known), located among his papers: ΕΙΒ, Οικον. Διαχείρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ2, file 2.

[12] On the establishment of the Melos brothers in the Peloponnese and information related to their sojourn there, see E. D. Liata, "Όψεις της κοινωνίας τ' Αναπλιού στις αρχές του 18ου αι. (Με αφορμή μια διαθήκη)" [Views of society in Anapli in the early eighteenth century (according to a last testament)], *Άνθη Χαρίτων* [Anthi Chariton], Venice 1998, pp. 243-270; *id*., "Ενα εργαστήρι τ' Αναπλιού στη βενετοκρατία (1712-1715)" [A workshop in Anapli during the Venetian period (1712-1715)], *Ναυπλιακά Ανάλεκτα* III (1998), pp. 230-258; *id*., "Τεκμήρια για την αθηναϊκή κοινωνία στις αρχές του 18ου αιώνα. Η

indifference regarding the fate of his relatives (presumably the result of some kind of dispute with his family that led him to depart for foreign lands and break off relations) hardly seems to explain his actions satisfactorily; besides matters of personality or family relations, we need also to consider the general signs of the times.

Regardless of whether his departure from his family environment was a personal choice or just the chance result of the course his career and events took him, driven by personal strife rather than regained affection, Melos – now aged over 60 – abandoned his business ventures and headed back to his relatives in Greece. Accordingly, in the summer of 1710, having sold off all his property and leaving his few outstanding business affairs in the hands of his associates, he departed from Madrid and, passing through Rome and Genoa, arrived in Venice in October of the same year. He did not adjust to the new location easily, and was in no hurry to start up business, as is evident from a letter he wrote to his associate in Spain, Cott. Ghiglione, in which he says that he does not know the language well and is not in a position "to converse about business".[13]

During this phase of readjustment, between September 1711 and August 1712, Melos went on a business fact-finding mission around the Peloponnese with his brothers, with whom he planned to organize a business partnership. Thus, when he returned to Venice he was ready to enter into new commercial ventures. He used his enforced stay in the lazaretto (quarantine area) as an opportunity to find a place to live, with the help of two fellow Greeks of Venice, Kakavakis and Komitas. Of the houses he was offered, he chose to take that of Glykis – although more expensive than the others, it was better situated.[14] This is where he settled after leaving the lazaretto, together with his young assistant, Anargos Psaros, whom he had brought with him from Nauplion.

From this point on, thanks to more fully preserved records, we can trace in considerable detail Melos' life and career. However, before examining

---

αθηναϊκή αστική φορεσιά" [Traces of Athenian society in the early eighteenth century: the Athenian town dress], *Μνήμων* XI (1987), pp. 32-53.

[13] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ7, file 31. In addition to Greek, Melos spoke and wrote Spanish well; he learnt whatever Italian he knew once he had settled in Venice. In connection with Melos' knowledge of languages, the testimony of Argyros Bernardis is revealing: "and when you want to send me a letter, ask someone to write the name and address in Italian", cited in Dokos, "Μια υπόθεσις πειρατείας", p. 49.

[14] The rent at the Glykis house was 340 ducats per year for two rooms – habitation and storeroom – and board for himself and his assistant. The contract was signed in September 1712. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ1, file 3.

more closely his commercial activities in Venice, it is worth giving an overall outline of his career up to the time of his death. While his collaboration with his brothers appears to have progressed well for over two years, the reconquest of the Peloponnese by the Turks in 1715 meant that silk exporting activity was banned and Venetian trade in the region ground to a halt.[15] Having relied solely on his collaboration with his brothers, Georgios Melos was forced – following the captivity of Michalis and death of Nikolos – to abandon his commercial business in the Peloponnese and, disillusioned with the general outcome of his affairs, considered (in February 1716) leaving Venice. In the end he decided to stay on in Venice, continuing his commercial activities with other associates in other regions. In the Peloponnese itself he was able to maintain trade contacts via his brother Michalis, following the latter's release from captivity, once the Turks reopened the port of Patras for commerce in 1717. Thus the merchants of the Peloponnese resumed commerce with Venice, trading not only in silk, but also olive oil from Attica, as Athens was on the rise commercially during this period. Of course, traders needed to buy the "cooperation" and friendship of the Turkish officials in the region in order to ensure that they could ply their trade unhindered. It was at this time that the merchants of Ioannina appeared on the stage, bringing Venetian goods to the Peloponnese and purchasing silks that were then exported to Venice via Corfu. At this time, Georgios Melos made attempts (though, as it turned out, unsuccessfully) to revive his trade links with the region, but his brother and only associate for this part of the world proved lacking as a businessman and consequently, in 1722, Georgios Melos brought an end to all his commercial activities in the Peloponnese.

In the same period he initiated shipments of goods – which became frequent between 1716 and 1718 – to Madrid via the Necco brothers of Genoa, as we shall see later. However, trade in this direction was solely export, and Melos operated exclusively as the recipient of other merchants' orders, primarily from the Necco brothers. A restless spirit and indefatigable businessman, Georgios Melos in 1718 expressed to his collaborators – despite his advanced age, being by then over 70 years old – the desire to accompany the goods to Cadiz in person, as had been his wont, but he was forced to cancel this trip on account of the deterioration of his health (he suffered from chronic gout). A few years later (1723) he was forced to retire, writing

[15] On his brothers' adventures during the war in the Peloponnese and trade-related issues at that time, see E. D. Liata, "Μαρτυρίες για την πρώση τ' Αναπλιού στους Τούρκους (9 Ιούλη 1715)" [Evidence for the fall of Anapli to the Turks (9 July 1715)], *Μνήμων* V (1975), pp. 101-156.

to his collaborator Nicolò Frangelà that sickness and old age did not allow him to undertake trade on behalf of others in the future, since he could no longer leave the house and conduct his business in person, as he had always done in the past. He did not retire completely from his business activities, however, until the end of 1730; thereafter, his only concern was to close all open accounts, asking his partners to settle their accounts and refusing categorically to consent to any proposed collaboration. He died in September 1732, at the age of 85.

According to his will, his only valuable assets were 1358 zecchini, which he kept at home, and 4000 ducats deposited at the Zecca at 3% per year. In addition, there was the accumulated debt of his nephew Leonardos Perdikaris valued at 1465 ducats, which he asked the executors to remit. He also felt obliged to declare, as his final duty and in recognition of his wife (and in this way discharging his debts to her), that his property had derived from her dowry, which he had increased by commercial investment both in Spain and Venice.

A general review of these 20 years of Melos' commercial dealings shows that at the end of his life he was in possession of a cash capital of only 2253 zecchini and no other types of assets. This means that he either reinvested his profits in trading or in small-scale lending to individuals. In only one case, at the start of his business in Venice, did he invest with a ship loan of 1400 zecchini in two vessels heading for markets in the Levant. In addition, we have no information about or indications of consumer spending on the acquisition of goods associated with social status. Given his way of life in Venice (a boarder in a single chamber), plus the fact that his will did not mention either household goods or valuable items, it can be assumed that beyond the necessary expenses for clothing, his expenditure over all these years on goods associated with social display was nought – which at least must indicate a deficiency in the archival evidence. He did not, then, invest in real estate or precious goods; he did not practise usury systematically beyond investments in commerce; he saved or accumulated in his home the hard currency of the day, the zecchini, or deposited his money to accrue interest in the Zecca of Venice.[16]

On the other hand, expenses of a charitable nature, in other words, benefactions evidently designed to confirm his social standing, are not entirely

[16] In this respect, as a type of merchant Georgios Melos was located at the opposite end of the spectrum from P. Xenos who, with a house and family in Patmos, in addition to making purely financial investments and hoarding his money, spent large amounts on home furnishings, valuable objects, expensive clothing, and consumer goods more generally. In this way Xenos conformed to the widespread habits of certain social groups

absent.[17] The professional merchant, especially the travelling merchant and large-scale merchant, was the most cosmopolitan of all professionals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and enjoyed a place of distinction in the social hierarchy. But Melos' position was subject to continuing uncertainty and had to be defended at all times in a highly competitive field in order to maintain his overall image as a player in the economic and social scene. In addition, the bequests made by Melos to ecclesiastical institutions or for religious purposes – especially as there were no descendants who would presumably be interested or would be mandated by the testator to be interested in the maintenance of his personal or the family memory – were recorded according to the standard norms of the time. Only one desire was expressed, although we do not know whether it was realized, namely, that he be granted the privilege of burial in the centre of the church of San Giorgio; the desire itself may imply his social distinction within the Greek community.[18]

As a supplement to the biographical sketch of Georgios Melos, we may also mention his active participation in the life of the Greek community, with

---

and his behaviour can be seen in turn as a product of collective behaviour. See Asdrachas, *Patmos*, chapter 10.

[17] Both throughout his life and in his will, Melos made gifts and benefactions to individuals and church or cultural foundations in Thebes, Athens, Ioannina, Nauplion, Venice and to the Megaspeleion Monastery. In addition to his will, see also E. D. Liata, "Ο Γεράσιμος Θηβών (1722-1734) και έπειτα Π. Πατρών (1734-1759) και η ανακαίνιση του Μητροπολιτικού ναού της Θήβας" [Gerasimos of Thebes (1722-1734) and later of Patras (1734-1759) and the restoration of the cathedral of Thebes], *Θησαυρίσματα* XII (1975), pp. 155-171; G. S. Ploumidis, "Σχολεία στην Ελλάδα συντηρούμενα από κληροδοτήματα Ελλήνων της Βενετίας (1603-1797)" [Schools in Greece maintained by bequests by Greeks of Venice (1603-1797)], *Θησαυρίσματα* IX (1972), p. 244.

[18] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more generally, to possess the status of a merchant lent a particular prestige and social distinction, and demanded appropriate treatment of those so esteemed, both in their lifetime and afterwards. This is confirmed not only in the case of Melos, but also in that of another merchant, Michalis Voyiatzis of Kalamata. When in 1689 the latter was in Venice for professional reasons and fell ill, he drew up his will, in which he expresses the wish, in case he died while in Venice (which in fact came to pass only a few days later), that they "bury [me] as befits a merchant, with the bishop and as many priests as my trustee, kyr-Panayiotakis, deems appropriate and to escort me with the banner of the church of San Giorgio". A. Fotopoulos, "Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα από το αρχείο της οικογένειας Μπενάκη της Καλαμάτας" [Unpublished documents from the archive of the Benakis family of Kalamata], *Μεσσηνιακά Χρονικά* III (2003-2007), p. 178. For information concerning the manner of burial of the Greeks in Venice, see E. Liata, "Μνείες θανάτων Ελλήνων της Βενετίας από τα ταμιακά βιβλία της Ελληνικής Αδελφότητας των ετών 1536-1576" [References to deceased Greeks of Venice in the fiscal records of the Greek brotherhood for the years 1536-1576], *Θησαυρίσματα* XI (1974), pp. 191-239.

his election to various offices: he was on several occasions elected member of the Quarantia, one of the two Governatori, and one of the twelve Degani della Banca, but he was never elected to the highest office of the Guardian Grande, although he was several times a candidate.[19] It is worth noting his election in 1716 as a member of the Rappresentati di Napoli di Romania, that is one of the seven-member delegation from Nauplion – not Thebes (the place of his family's origin), nor Athens (his birthplace and place of residence in his youth), but Nauplion, a city where he had never lived, but had visited briefly for the first and only time, as we have seen, in order to meet his family. He was a representative of the town where his siblings resided and where he had set up trade relations, and it was precisely these economic relations and professional ties that played a key role in his election as a suitable representative and not the concept of a homeland. It was in this way that the Athenian Melos entered into the quasi-institutionalized community of traders from Nauplion.

Melos also made his presence felt in the Greek community of Venice, at all levels throughout his life, through his social and philanthropic activities. He was well disposed to help both financially and morally, support newcomers, act as guardian to young students, offer charity to the poor, assist in the ransoming of slaves, act as mediator in legal disputes, and make donations to schools and churches in his many "homelands": Thebes, Athens, the Peloponnese and beyond. In short, he participated fully as a social being, a pious "greco" and "honest businessman" who had made a comfortable life for himself, but with the misfortune of being without an heir. He was generous in spending his material and spiritual resources for the sake of his compatriots; he was a small-scale benefactor who divided his charitable works among a variety of small-scale benefactions. As such, the information we possess about his activities, drawn mainly from his rich correspondence, is valuable for our understanding of the social involvements of this type of merchant who belonged to the Greek diaspora in the early eighteenth century.

In contrast to this evocation of his quality of life, in the following pages we will be concerned with the purely professional side of his activities, drawing primarily on the strictly financial data in the archive and using the correspondence only for supplementary material. Let us clarify at the outset that the case of a Greek merchant will concern us here as a type and not as an individual personality, since Georgios Melos can be made to stand for a

[19] At different places in the books of the Archive of the Greek Community in Venice: ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 2, Κ41; Οργάνωση 1, Κ1; Οργάνωση 2, Κ25; Οργάνωση 3, Κ8 και Κ9.

representative example of small- and medium-scale traders operating in the Venetian sphere and for this reason can be considered a good observatory for the study of attitudes and practices in the commercial world of his time. This study is also offered, thanks to the sufficiency of the evidence, as an investigation of the mode of operation for commercial networks, not only in terms of their horizontal relations but also vertical, from the highest to the lowest economic strata of traders or commercial enterprises, in order to establish the convergences between them or the differences with regard to the operational modes and mechanisms of these networks.

Georgios Melos was born, lived and died in an era of social and political ferment, a transitional period for the economic situation of the Greek people under foreign rulers – whether alternating or stable. A particular feature of this time was the restless mobility of these subject people, among others as well, within the Mediterranean basin and their steady but also intensifying and ever-expanding engagement in economic activities such as trade and shipping, which took them beyond traditional agriculture and animal husbandry.[20] The aptitude for commercial enterprises penetrated and spread to all levels of society, regardless of the pre-conditions for the ultimate success or otherwise of the endeavour. Amidst this indiscriminately generalized thirst for predictable and quick wealth from trade would emerge the success stories of those who enjoyed a business career characterized by both continuity and development throughout the eighteenth century and, in the case of some, even into the nineteenth. But for most, business ventures would remain an occasional private engagement that would not continue beyond the individual's lifespan.

Although involved in trade exclusively and without interruption for some 60 years, Melos never sought to create, or never had the opportunities or suitable conditions in which to create, a commercial business with prospects for continuity and, even more importantly, with growth potential.[21] Although

[20] The full treatment by Asdrachas *et al.*, *Ελληνική οικονομική ιστορία*, pp. 34-45 (S. Asdrachas), sets the framework of the general economic factors, spheres of influence and geography, as they developed, became intertwined and gave shape to the Greek economy in the modern period.

[21] Disillusioned by his collaboration with his brothers and having experienced the disappointment of the ambitions he had attached to them, Georgios Melos expressed his bitterness and indignation in a letter to Nikolos: "I have one life and I don't want to lose it thanks to business; I don't have children and, if I came here, I did it for your sake.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, K12, letter dated 19-7-1713; relations between the brothers had not improved a year later, since Georgios would complain adamantly to his brother

the scale of his trade was not huge, the geographical range of his activities reached across almost the entire Mediterranean, from Spain and Sicily to the Italian markets and the Ionian Islands, to the Peloponnese and Smyrna and as far south as the markets along the Barbary Coast. In the Venetian period of his life and work, which is of concern to us here, Melos turned his hand to various sectors of trade. The result was his composite image as merchant, agent and broker. In what follows we will look more closely at this tripartite character.

It is worth noting from the start that compared to other contemporary Greek merchants of Venice – the Peroulis, Kapetanakis, Kothonis, Taronitis, Karagiannis and Maroutsis families to mention only a few – who were primarily traders and only incidentally and occasionally acted as brokers for others, Melos functioned mainly as a correspondent-agent, creating in this capacity a link to other commercial networks. Even as an established merchant in the Venetian market he negotiated all trade deals in person, and yet for his business to function it was necessary that he organize a network of trade partnerships, building on trust and honesty, as well as the competence of his associates. As we shall see later, he created his own small networks, whenever and wherever they were needed to facilitate his work and strengthen his role and position in the major commercial networks of which he was a part.

Before we treat in detail Melos' principal role as a commercial correspondent-agent, let us look at the economic range and volume of commercial transactions in which he engaged for his own account. Departing Nauplion in August 1712 for Venice, he left his brother Nikolos 4772 reals for immediate investment in silks, and another 3139 in reserve, making a total of 7911 reals. From the first account[22] that Nikolos sent his brother the following year, it appears that until March 1713 he had invested 6420 reals in silk (the purchases plus the cost of transportation to Venice). The balance is favourable for Georgios Melos with a remainder of 1491 reals still in Nikolos' possession.

In addition, a few months later, in September 1713, Georgios Melos drew up the "balance of his business", in accordance with which he kept in his trunk 10,000 ducats in various currencies and another 2000 ducats in the "banco". Adding to this amount what some people in Venice owed him, estimating what he expected to receive from the sale of the silk, madder and cotton thread which he had in his shop, and subtracting 2593 ducats which he owed to others, indicates that his overall commercial capital in cash,

---

that he had deceived him when he promised at the start of their collaboration that "You would invest my money, and I came here and am spending what I have to hand.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ12, letter dated 25-10-1714.

[22] The evidence is drawn from the document of N. Melos dated 22-3-1713. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ1, file 3.

stock and debt to be collected amounted to 40,621 ducats.[23] Let us retain this amount to compare it with the final account he drew up at the end of his life as recorded in the *maestro* and in his will.

Table 1 sets out the scattered economic data contained in the registers, invoices of orders and Melos' correspondence, where each transaction made on his account was recorded throughout the period of his life in Venice.

Table 1

Commodity	Quantity	Amount received in ducats	Date of transaction	Comments
coffee	2405 ltr. 520 ltr.	1130 260	1714/5, Feb. 1717, March	from Alexandria via Livorno
flax	1209 ltr. (2 balls)		1715, Aug.	same shipment with incense (see below)
incense	1261 ltr. (3 crates)	569	1715, Aug.	same shipment with flax (see above)
ivory	774 ltr. (17 tusks) 2130 ltr. (30 tusks)	289 817	1715, Aug. 1715/6, Feb.	from Alexandria to Venice
madder	3 packages	—	1713, Oct.	from Zakynthos; lost in shipwreck
mirrors	4 chests	243[1]	1729/30, Feb.	joint venture with S. Kapetanakis; from Livorno to Cadiz
pearls	8 cases	2121	1718, Sept.	from Livorno to Spain
silk, Chinese	370 ltr. (1 package)	2960[2]	1719, April	joint venture with L. Kapetanakis; from Genoa to Livorno
silk, Peloponnesian	6000 ltr. (20 packages)	11,000	1713, Sept. 1715, May	sent by N. Melos in various shipments on different ships
steel	7385 ltr. (14 cases)	601	1717, June	from Venice to Cadiz
"various merchandise"	3 chests	278[3]	1727, Nov.	joint venture with S. Kapetanakis; for Cadiz to P. Kapetanakis, who sent the money to L. Kapetanakis (Livorno), who invested it in mirrors

NB: a) ltr. = *litre venete*, Venetian pound.

b) [1],[2],[3]: denote the portion that represented Melos' share.

c) The total gross earnings from expenditure – not profits – amounted to 20,268 ducats.

[23] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ2, document dated 14-9-1713, file 3.

We may conclude from the Melos documents, as from Table 1, that the primary product around which his commercial activities in the Peloponnese were centred was silk and the main, if not exclusive, suppliers were his brothers. Let us very briefly trace how the Peloponnesian silk was procured and made its way from the Peloponnese to Venice, as far as can be reconstructed from the Melos Archive. In the appropriate season, Nikolos Melos went in person to the villages and "closed his deals". That is to say, he purchased the quantities of silk he wanted in advance,[24] taking care to be there at the same time as the other merchants, since a coordinated procedure of pre-purchasing the silk kept the producers from modifying their prices however they wished and thereby making the prices prohibitive to small-scale merchants and buyers who arrived later. However, some large-scale foreign traders had no qualms about violating this procedure and would visit the silk-producing villages even earlier, taking advantage of the producers' need for cash. They would transact even earlier pre-purchases, thereby pushing up the prices to such a level that the next buyers would be forced either to withdraw or accept the elevated price.[25]

When the silk, whether from the region of Kalavryta or Mystras, was ready, the producers or their associates, or even more rarely the buyers themselves, arranged for their transport from the villages to Patras.[26] Thence

[24] As he wrote in his letters dated 22-6-1713, 11-7-1713 and 1-8-1713. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8, file 4.

[25] On 27 June 1714, Michalis Melos wrote to Georgios: "and it annoys me that you did not write earlier to Nikolos to find money with a bill of exchange and to get it on your account, but you waited until the last minute. In the Peloponnese, you always have to plan ahead to buy goods and even then you might not get what you want. Getting there to buy in good time is the practice of some foreign traders, who give 1/2 or even 3/4 a real per oka over what the traders of the Peloponnese give for the goods, and these men are working for Genova, or Livorno or Venice.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ5.

[26] Indeed, Georgios Melos was uncompromising on this subject: "Once again I tell you not to leave the silk in the hands of others, just take care to load it yourself, and mine as well, and stay another ten days in Patras so they get to Zakynthos," he wrote on 6 July 1714 to Nikolos, and returned to it with the same intransigence again on 11 August 1714: EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ12. The centralized collection of Peloponnesian silk at Patras was a long-established practice stemming from the first period of Turkish rule and was renewed in the *kanunname* of 1716 for the second period of Turkish rule, without the 30 intervening years of Venetian occupation having changed the way in which the product was distributed, because this served well the tax demands of both rulers. For the relevant rulings in the Ottoman texts, see E. Balta, "Οι κανουνναμέδες του Μοριά" [The *kanunnames* of Morea], *Ίστωρ* VI (December 1993), pp. 33-35, 54.

the silk was shipped to Zakynthos, where it was received by Angelo Foskardi and Petro Venetanto, associates who trans-shipped the merchandise to Corfu, and from there it would normally continue on the same ship as far as Venice or, less usually, it would be again shipped before arriving at its final destination. This was the usual route used for transporting silk from the Peloponnese to Venice, although sometimes for economic reasons, or to move it more quickly, or on account of political factors, Zakynthos was bypassed and the merchandise was transported directly to Corfu from Patras. But the merchants in Venice did not recommend this route to their collaborators, discouraging it as high risk.[27]

It is clear that at all the transit points there were facilitators who collaborated with the merchants and undertook, whenever the merchandise was unaccompanied (which was usually the case), to look after the shipment or smooth the journey's continuation according to written instructions. Such instructions had in most instances been sent ahead or accompanied the goods, having been delivered by the merchant-agent to the captain and entrusted to his care. These facilitators undertook the necessary bureaucratic steps and paid the required fees, which they charged to the merchant in addition to their own commission, usually 2% of the value of the merchandise in the bill of lading which they handled. Before leaving this part of Georgios Melos' business activities, it should be noted that he had a shop in Venice that was used as a temporary storehouse for goods in transit, which he had either received or was intending to dispatch, since he was not engaged in retail

[27] "Don't ever again send stuff here from Patras, because the risks are great," wrote G. Melos from Corfu en route to Venice; and he returned to the subject on 19 October 1712, after he had reached Venice: "Don't send anything to Corfu, because there are many dangers there." He himself, together with some companions, crossed from Corfu to Otranto, accompanied by two Venetian ships and from there they continued their journey to Venice. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, K12. On the importance of Corfu as an entrepôt and as a hub for sailings to and from Venice, from the sixteenth century onward, see G. D. Pangratis, "Το *Κονσουλάτον των Μυτιληναίων* στην Κέρκυρα (1548-1549)" [The *Consulate of the Mytilinians* on Corfu (1548-1549)], *Εώα και Εσπέρια* IV (1999-2000), pp. 22-44. On the harbour as it was in the seventeenth century, see A. Nikiphorou, "Η διακίνηση του εμπορίου στο λιμάνι της Κέρκυρας κατά τον 17ο αιώνα" [The trans-shipping of goods at the harbour of Corfu in the seventeenth century], in A. Nikiphorou (ed.), *Κέρκυρα, μια μεσογειακή σύνθεση. Νησιωτισμός, διασυνδέσεις, ανθρώπινα περιβάλλοντα, 16ος-19ος αι., Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου, Κέρκυρα 22-25 Μαΐου 1996* [Corfu, a Mediterranean synthesis: island identity, junctions, human environments, sixteenth-nineteenth century: proceedings of the international conference, Corfu, 22-25 May 1996], Corfu 1998, pp. 81-100; also Asdrachas *et al.*, *Ελληνική οικονομική ιστορία*, pp. 231-232.

business. The goods he traded were sold wholesale, as we have seen already and will see again below, to merchants either in Venice or other markets.

Of the triptych of Melos' activities – general merchant, agent and financial broker – the first does not appear to have been a systematic concern and in any case his involvement in it lessened during the last decade of his life. If his commercial involvement in Venice had a vigorous and optimistic start, its prospects were checked by the change in the political situation in the Peloponnese, and it was perhaps in any case late for the elderly Melos to undertake a new beginning with a fresh orientation, even if he did initially make an attempt.

The sector to which Melos devoted his energy most intensely and regularly throughout the course of his professional career was that of *corrispodente*.[28] The role of agent was his main occupation and brought him limited, but secure and predictable profit. As *corrispodente* of the Greek merchants, he undertook on the part of third parties – not necessarily only long-term collaborators, but occasional ones as well – to receive their goods for sale in the Venetian market, or to forward them to another market either within or outside Italy and/or to buy Venetian goods on a third party's account and dispatch them to destinations and persons designated by the third party. Trust in this type of brokerage was, moreover, a firm policy of many merchants, as Nikolos clearly formulated in a letter: "Brothers, what can I say? The brokerage of merchandise is the best business in the world, whenever someone's got goods to send you, or you send them goods at guaranteed prices, and the goods are received in lazaretto."[29] We should not take this view for a conservative, personal opinion of a small-scale merchant who operated on the margins of serious commercial activity. Rather, trade brokerage was a widespread practice among businessmen both large-scale and small, and to act as an agent guaranteed a limited yet steady and largely risk-free income, something not to be scorned. In fact, even the leading merchants or commercial companies were occupied with trade brokerage well beyond the eighteenth century.

Having decided on this course, Melos endeavoured to engage the partnership of many merchants, including powerful ones, and did not hesitate to build up a network that reached across the entire Mediterranean region. It is important to consider that in the formation of such networks, a key factor beyond that of family relations was one's place of origin. Bearing

[28] On the role of the *sensali*, the formal agents in markets in the West, see O. Katsiardi-Hering, *Η ελληνική παροικία της Τεργέστης, 1751-1830* [The Greek community of Trieste, 1751-1830], Athens 1986, pp. 399-403.

[29] ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8, letter dated 26-2-1713 (= 1714), file 4.

this in mind, we would locate Georgios Melos within the context of the Athenian and later, by transfer, the Naupliote network of merchants who were active in the eighteenth century between Venice and the Levant.

Naturally, there were parallel networks active at the same time in the same, or at least overlapping, areas. These had some common collaborators, but as teams they operated independently without professional interaction. For example, Melos never had any professional relationship with the Peroulis family, Athenian merchants who were recognized by all their contemporaries as the paradigmatic Greek merchant princes, and they were indeed noblemen, with whom everyone wanted to do business of some sort. In addition, he does not seem to have collaborated with or even attempted to penetrate the famously dynamic Epirote commercial network. In contrast to his brothers in the past, Georgios Melos had no joint business with merchants of the Kothonaios or Maroutsis families, who constituted a constant and active commercial presence in Venice and elsewhere throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Melos based his commerce on a flexible network of merchants, agents and suppliers – Greeks, Italians and Spaniards. The whole ensemble of individuals with whom he was involved can be classified into the following groups:[30]

1) The permanent associates with whom he had purely professional relations.
2) The occasional associates with whom he had small-scale dealings on a trial basis or in exchange for some service he provided them.
3) A world of friends and acquaintances with whom he maintained mainly social relations and corresponded, making use of them as sources of information without their collaboration developing into a formal business relationship of any sort.
4) Finally, a circle of peers with whom he probably collaborated at some time, in some way.

Next, we refer to Melos' associates briefly as a whole, but classified in a different way:

1) Merchant-buyers to whom Melos sold the goods he received in Venice.
2) Merchant-suppliers from whom Melos bought whatever goods his associates outside Venice ordered.
3) *Corrispodenti*-agents-recipients of goods.

[30] On a basic register of a businessman in that period, see Asdrachas *et al.*, *Ελληνική οικονομική ιστορία*, pp. 471-472 (O. Katsiardi-Hering).

4) Insurers.
5) Travelling merchants: those who accompanied the merchandise, captains who oversaw commercial interests.
6) Friend-informants.
7) Secretary-assistants.

The information drawn from this particular archive, when properly sifted and organized, can help us outline the mechanisms by which a certain type of commercial network, such as that of Georgios Melos, operated. Despite its peculiarities, and even though Melos' network cannot be classified among those of the leading businessmen of his day, his network nevertheless shares common features with larger networks, as we would logically expect.

In the 20-year period between 1712 and 1732, Melos had dealings with 37 different individuals or companies (Fratelli…, Compagni…), Venetian merchants exclusively, to whom he sold whatever merchandise he received from his associates outside Venice, either on his own account or that of a third party. Let us now examine in Table 2 who these individuals were and what the nature of Melos' dealings with them was.

Table 2

Buyers	Date of transaction	Commodity : Quantity			Comments
Andrico, Franc.	1719, Aug.	madder	:	228 ltr.	
Baretta, Giampaolo	1714, Oct.	silk from Kalavryta	:	1327 ltr.	
Batistolis, Bastian	1716, Oct.	flax	:	498 ltr.	
Bechiri, Marcantonio	1715, May	wool	:	3 balls	
Besano, Giuseppe	1716, Sept.	silk from Mystras	:	168 ltr.	
Chenderi, Gianetto	1716, May	silk	:	180 ltr.	
	1716, July	silk from Kalavryta	:	268 ltr.	
Cohen, Giacob	1718, Oct.	silk from Mystras	:	1 package	

Buyers	Date of transaction	Commodity : Quantity			Comments
Dadia, Giacomo	1715, Sept.	ivory	:	774 ltr. (17 tusks)	
		ivory	:	2130 ltr. (30 tusks)	
Dalapinia, Paolo	1713, Nov.	silk	:	1 *colletto*	exchange
Duadone, Fancesco	1715, March	coffee	:	407 ltr.	
Filossi, Giambattista	1715, May	silk from Kalavryta	:	1196 ltr.	
	1716, July	silk from Kalavryta	:	554 ltr.	
	1716, Oct.	silk from Kalavryta	:	477 ltr.	
	1719, Aug.	silk from Kalavryta	:	300 ltr.	
Fleischer and Zimmerman	1717, April	silk from Kalavryta	:	271 ltr.	
Gioia, Francesco-Alessandro	1716, March	silk	:	1 package	
Koudouniolas, Alexandros and Christophoros	1718, Oct.	cotton	:	44 balls	
Maggi, Filippo	1712, Nov.	silk	:	211 ltr.	exchange for fabric
	1715, May	silk		237 ltr.	
Malasioti, Giampaolo	1713, Sept.	silk	:	3 *colletti*	exchange for fabric
Martinelli, Juanne Martin	1714, July	silk	:	2070 ltr. (9 packages)	
Menini, Michelangelo and Domenico	1715, March	wool	:	773 (3 balls)	
Pelegrini, Paolo	1712, Dec.	silk	:	9 packages	partial exchange for fabric
	1713, Nov.	silk		1 package	
	1720, Sept.	silk		4 packages	
Petrini, Giovanni-Domenico	1715/6, Feb.	silk	:	5 packages	half exchange for fabric

Buyers	Date of transaction	Commodity : Quantity			Comments
Pichini, Giacomo	1719, Aug.	madder	:	172 ltr.	exchange for 12 dozen fezes
Privato, Madelin	1715, Nov.	flax	:	1 package	
Sanjonio, Giampaolo	1714, Aug.	silk from Kalavryta	:	1 ltr.	
Scala and Carli	1719, April	silk from China	:	1 ball	
Schwagen Brothers	1717, May	sponges	:	3 balls	
Silvestrini, Giambattista	1715, July	*strizi marini*	:	2100 pieces	exchange for 126 ltr. theriaca
Stingler, Giovanni-Martin	1715, July	coffee	:	964 ltr.	
Tassi, Angelo	1715, Nov.	flax	:	1 ball	
Teabon, Daniel	1717, April	braid trim	:	4849 ltr.	
Tinfel, Zuanne-Alberto	1715, July	coffee	:	389 ltr.	
Tomasini, Bernardo	1717, April	coffee	:	3 packages	
Tomasini, Giacomo	1715, Oct.	incense	:	1261 ltr.	
Torn, Alvise	1716, March	silk	:	1 package	
Ungaro, Giovanni-Maria	1713, Nov. 1714, Oct.	silk from Kalavryta	:	14 ltr.	purchase in 5 instalments
Venturi, Ruselo	1719, Aug.	madder	:	336 ltr.	
Zefferelli, Daniel	1717, April	coffee	:	4 packages	

NB: ltr.= *litre venete*, Venetian pound.

Among the individuals with whom Georgios Melos had dealings appear the names of well-known big businessmen in Venice, such as Giambattista Filossi, Giovanni-Maria Ungaro, Paolo Pelegrini and Paolo Dalapinia, who was considered to be "the best businessman in *merceria* [haberdashery]", and others,[31] as Georgios Melos would write to his brother. Melos was always personally involved with the negotiations and sales of merchandise to the merchants without the intervention of an agent or aid, and for this reason, when on account of his health or advanced age he could no longer manage his business in the same manner, he discontinued this part of his commercial activities.

He did not have regular buyers but preferred, as is clear from his registers, to address himself to a new customer for each sale. He would sometimes divide the same merchandise from one shipment between two or three different buyers in an attempt to guarantee in this way the greatest profit by finding a better sale, if he was not satisfied with the first buyer and hoped to attain a better price by approaching another buyer. This practice carried with it a risk, however, since he could incur a loss rather than profit if in the meantime – even if the time lapse between two deals was short – the market prices changed on account of a superfluity of goods available, or decrease in demand, and instead of increasing, the price would fall. In only a few instances did Melos deal more than once with certain merchant-buyers: twice he did business with three merchants (G. Chenderi, G. Dadia, F. Maggi); three times he sold merchandise to Pelegrini and four times to Filossi. It is worth noting in particular the case of the Venetian merchant G.-M. Ungaro with whom Melos had contracted an agreement in the autumn of 1713 for the provision by March the following year of 14 packages of silk (known as a *colletta*) from Kalavryta. In fact, Melos would sell him the agreed-upon quantity in five instalments, but spread out until October 1714, and payment for the purchase was made in instalments until December 1714. It should be noted that Ungaro was one of the five merchant-buyers with whom Melos had collaborated from early on and with such regularity, but he struck a business arrangement of this kind only with him. The commitment to provide such a large quantity of silk within a period of only six months – even if in the end he did not manage to keep it, and nearly doubled the time required to fulfil the agreement – might be accounted for by demand and have been the buyer's request. However, it might also have been the Greek merchant's initiative, if he was optimistic about his debut on the Venetian

[31] ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ12, letter dated 14-10-1712.

market and wanted to establish a dynamic presence. He would therefore have wanted to guarantee a stable buyer from amongst the most important names in Venice who would absorb the continuous flow of large quantities of silk from the Peloponnese which he had hoped would be arriving.

The goods Melos sold to the Venetian merchants included products from the markets of the Orient, but mainly from the Peloponnese and Smyrna: small quantities of wool, madder, coffee, cotton, flax, sponges, wax and incense and, of course, large quantities of silk, from Kalavryta, Mystras and once from China. Payment was usually in cash within a period of a few months, but in a small number of cases merchandise was exchanged for various Venetian goods, mainly fabrics, but also theriaca (opium) and Egyptian fezzes, which were supplied by the Venetian merchant-buyers themselves.

With the exception of these few cases of merchant-buyers who also served as suppliers for Georgios Melos, usually the suppliers and buyers were different people. In the course of a 20-year period, Melos collaborated with 23 merchant-suppliers, all of whom were Venetians except for Rallis Notaras, a silk producer and large-scale silk merchant in Trikala, in Corinthia. Let us now turn to Table 3 to consider Melos' suppliers and the goods they supplied.

Table 3

Suppliers	Date of transaction	Commodity	Quantity
Bacarin, Pietro	1725, Aug.	rosaries	3775 dozen
Cavallaro, Simon	1717, May	steel	7385 ltr.
Gasparini, Gasparo	1715/6, Feb. 1716, May 1716, July	pearls pearls pearls	8615 ltr. 3862 ltr. 707 ltr.
Giambelli, Inassio	1720, April	cloth	76 bracci
Giannini, Pichin	1716, Nov. 1717, Apr.	coloured paper coloured paper canvas	48 risme 12 risme 24 bracci
Gulielmi, A. and Baluardi	1720, March	steel	5374 ltr. (2 chests)
Maggioni, Juanne	1715, July 1716/7, Feb.	garnets and rubies garnets and rubies	 80 mazzi

Suppliers	Date of transaction	Commodity	Quantity
Orti, Giacomo	1722, Aug.	pearls	6107 ltr.
Pasquinelli, Giovanni-Maria	1714, Oct.	satin in various colours	132 bracci
Provedan, Pedro	1716, Dec. 1721, Apr.	pearls pearls	2402 ltr. 6672 ltr.
Regatini, Giorgio Tomaso (eredi di…)	1721, Oct. 1722, July 1723, Oct.	steel steel steel	9026 ltr. (15 chests) 2130 ltr. (4 chests) 10,921 ltr. (20 chests)
Salchi, Domenico	1725, March	paper	12 mazzetti
Saquedel, Juanne	1724, July 1725, Aug.	rosaries rosaries	2008 dozen 750 dozen
Scala, Giorgio	1713, Feb. 1714, June	fabric fabric	135 bracci 60.5 bracci
Scarello, Cristoforo	1721, Aug. 1723, Dec.	general "merchandise" and fabric	7.5 bracci
Scotti, Bernardo	1717, April	orpiment and vitriol	
Straus, Bernardo	1722-1725	garnets, rubies and pearls[1]	
Valle, Bartolomeo	1723, April	different types of paper	
Valle, Pedro	1723-1724	garnets, rubies, pearls and rosaries[2]	
Vichelli, Giampietro	1720, May	nails	24,000
Zelo, Giambattista	1714, Oct.	braid trim	24 ltr.
Zigala, Giovanni-Maria	1713/4, Jan.	rifles, pistols, spades, needles	

NB: a) *litre venete*, Venetian pound.

b) [1], [2]: Melos purchased these items on different dates.

As a rule, Melos carried out only a single transaction with each of his suppliers, as he did with his buyers. There were only a few exceptions to this. He approached six traders on a second occasion to obtain a particular item; and in three instances he bought merchandise from only two traders – Gasparo Gasparini and the firm Eredi di G. T. Regatini. It is interesting to note that he often came into contact with different sources to procure exactly the same merchandise, and this, in fact, without any great period of time elapsing between the purchases. Melos' strategy of systematically selecting different sources for his trading transactions and maintaining a steady relationship with particular traders in only very few instances is related both to the type and volume of his business dealings and to particular qualities of the given individual. The fragmentariness of his business affairs, the variety of the items traded, the preferences of purchasers and, above all, Melos' concern to respond in the best way possible to the demands of his associates all obliged him to pursue quality in combination with a low price; that is, he not only conducted market research but also opted for "multi-fragmentation", selecting different individuals both for purchases and sales. He based both the satisfaction and broadening of his circle of associates on this practice. In other words, he increased his profits by acting as intermediary.

In keeping with this line of action and in contrast to his buyers, Melos always paid directly and in cash, as he believed that exchange in kind and purchases with deadlines were disadvantageous, both because of the financial expense incurred and the waste of time that came with this type of transaction. For this reason he preferred going to the Rialto in person, with cash in hand; he characteristically wrote his brother that "I want you to know that whatever I buy for you I buy in cash, and you have a serious advantage in finding good deals, as I walk every day like a skinner with bag in hand",[32] thus giving us a vivid image of the commercial world of Venice.

The items supplied and the orders placed by his associates exhibited great variation. These included a wide range of fabrics, yarns and threads, a variety of glasswork items, an array of stationery, household goods, metal products, different types of weaponry, ironmongery, as well as books, pharmaceutical products and many other items. At this point, it should be noted that Table 3, as well as the table itemizing traders and purchasers (Table 2), were compiled using data in Melos' *maestro* and reproduce the information concerning both the people and the merchandise in the manner in which it had been recorded. However, the file also contains scattered data located in consignment

[32] ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ12, letter dated 22-5-1714.

contracts or in letters to his associates, which do not mention the names of merchant-buyers or suppliers of the merchandise.[33] Consequently, under no circumstance should one consider Table 3 to be complete; rather, it provides a part – certainly the largest – of Georgios Melos' turnover.

In order to guarantee the quality or type of item ordered, the agent often turned to a *mostra*, or sample, of the merchandise whenever this was possible, or to their precise description in cases where the items could not be sampled. The commissioning agent sometimes followed this practice as well, in order to update associates on some new product available on the market or suggest something in its place that was considered better or was the only item available on the Venetian market.[34]

The role of correspondent-agent bore Georgios Melos satisfactory profits. He chased after business, his level of activity remarkable for his age; his commission was steady at 2% above the total value (*ad valorem*) of the merchandise, and thus the agent's percentage of profits was not subject to fluctuation (in contrast to the trader's), being linked as it was to the purchase price, extra costs and the selling price of the product.

In comparing the sales with the purchases he carried out as intermediary, it turns out that the former significantly outweighed the latter in terms of both volume and value. Certainly, despite his clearly expressed esteem for intermediation, when Melos originally began his trading activity with his brothers, his ambition had been to become very active as a merchant of silk, a

[33] For example, in the letter-invoices – one of the many such cases – itemizing different types of fabrics which G. Melos sent to Nikolos on 10-9-1714, we find recorded the quality, quantity and price of the goods, but not the supplier. ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ2, file 5.

[34] For a historical treatment of the role of the sample in commercial transactions from antiquity to the nineteenth century, see D. H. Gofas, *Δείγμα. Ιστορική έρευνα επί του ελληνικού δικαίου των συναλλαγών* [Sample: an historical study of Greek commercial law], Athens 1970. Let us look at some of the very typical samples in the Melos Archive: in an order for fabrics, N. Melos (30-9-1713) described to his brother a "mauve fabric from Pergamon, not very dark and dyed with indigo blue. Francessetti has some fabric of this quality in his shop and everyone is buying it…": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8. In another invoice also from Nikolos (1-9-1712) we find "fabric of the londrin type in a brown colour. Go to Scarello's shop and ask for a sample of what you want to buy. This shop too is beneath the arches of the Rialto.": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8, file 4. Finally, on 26 December 1716 Michalis Melos in Smyrna ordered from his brother in Venice, "ivory tobacco boxes similar to the above samples [he has sketched the design – oval – and the size he wants], six dozen, with designs inside: female figures and other patterns": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ5.

Peloponnesian staple. However, his aspirations were thwarted – not on account of the fall of the Peloponnese to the Turks, but much earlier, owing to poor communication and a problematic partnership with his brother Nikolos.[35] A basic factor for the success of a commercial partnership was strict adherence on the part of the *corrispodente* to the orders of his merchant boss. Of course, this absolute dependence and absence of free initiative on the part of the trader's associated correspondent often boomeranged and had an adverse effect on their commercial activity. The golden mean was to be found somewhere in between: the associate needed to conform, on the one hand, to the orders of the merchant "master", but be primed, on the other, to take advantage of the opportunities presented in the local market, which did not permit any delays owing to time-consuming, correspondence-based agreements.[36] In short, there had to be readiness and flexibility. However, Nikolos Melos appeared not to possess these attributes, a fact that often gave his brother occasion to criticise him, or whenever he did take the initiative his actions did not meet with the approval of Georgios, who viewed them as bad choices.[37] This kind of

[35] It is worth having a look at how G. Melos had imagined his business career in Venice and how it evolved in practice: "You wrote that the silk from Mystras was very good, but I had ordered you not to get it for me since I knew it was poor; but since you knew it was good why didn't you go and get me 1000 okas? You wrote that you went to Agia Varvara on the 6th of December and got me 295 okas and I can't understand why you got that since you were supposed to go one month earlier and you would have got me 700 okas, but you justify yourself by saying that as soon as the villagers saw you coming early they would raise the price. I had hoped you would get me this year 2000 okas of silk with my money so that I would be taken seriously in the marketplace. If I brought money with me when I was there, it was because I wanted to buy you merchandise and send it to you from Venice, and I wasn't interested to make a profit of 4%. I didn't come here to make only 200 ducats a year, I came to invest my money and make 2000 ducats. And if I knew it would be like this I would not have come to Venice but would have thought otherwise, because it is my pleasure that you do what you promise to do.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, K12, letter dated 23-9-1713.

[36] We offer one example of the two brothers' collaboration. In a letter dated 14 September 1712, Nikolos wrote to Georgios that he did not purchase wheat in June when the prices were low because he did not have an order from him and so he lost a good opportunity since the prices immediately escalated, as he reports much later, on 31 January 1712 (= 1713). EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8, file 4.

[37] For example, Nikolos' initiative to invest in a ship, loan money which his brother had left him to purchase silk, was stoutly deplored by Georgios. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, K12, letter dated 16-2-1713. Nikolos' reply, written on 20 June 1713, reveals the problem of the time-lag in communication between transactions: "On the 18th of this month the *San Buonaventura* arrived and I received the orders and all your letters and saw

relationship among associates did not constitute an exception, however, and was frequently observed in other commercial undertakings as well – at least insofar as the surviving evidence allows us to determine.[38]

In drawing to a close this section on the Venetian merchants with whom Melos associated in his capacity as trader-agent, I shall yield to temptation and pose an unanswerable (at least for this project) question: to what extent were the particular traders with whom Melos associated also purchasers or suppliers for other Greek traders active in Venice at the same time? That is, did the Greek commercial networks show a preference for or a clustering around particular Venetian traders? And concomitantly, another question arises: what did these people represent within the commercial world of Venice? An affirmative response to the first question would indicate cohesion among the members of the Greek community beyond the community framework, as well as the operation of the ethnic group in particular fields of activity in the city where its members had settled, such as in the economy and, additionally, in roles of economic leadership (in other words, that they had entered into the ranks of the economic élite). This is also traceable through an examination of the relationship between those traders who had settled in Venice and their partners in Greece.

Any answer or conjecture we may give in response to these questions, however, presupposes a broadening of the field of research and a comparative approach between other contemporary Greek commercial archives, as well as, undoubtedly, knowledge of the archives of the Venetian traders of the period. However, this broader questioning moves beyond the limited thematic framework of the present study.

Correspondent-intermediaries

As already mentioned, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of his commercial network, Georgios Melos collaborated with and employed

---

that you have relieved me of the right to conduct our dealings with Genova and Livorno, and I, brother, will do whatever you command me to do.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ10. In this case, as often happened, the reason for their misunderstanding was the poor timing of revisions intended to cancel, change or delay a previous order, or to hurry or supplement another, according to the movement and prevailing demand in the market for which the particular goods were destined.

[38] For another good example of similar problems, see V. Kremmydas, *Εμπορικές πρακτικές στο τέλος της Τουρκοκρατίας. Μυκονιάτες εμπόροι και πλοιοκτήτες* [Mercantile practices at the end of the Ottoman period: merchants and ship-owners from Mykonos], Athens 1993.

various people as his correspondents (*corrispodenti*) outside Venice. They carried out, on his behalf, the work that he did on the part of others: they accepted merchandise he sent on his own account from Venice or at the behest of another person, in the aim of either selling the merchandise on the spot or forwarding it to another market, in the care of another one of his merchant-associates. They were nodal agents and not auxiliary figures in his world of trade. Let us see in Table 4 who these people were.

Table 4

Associates of G. Melos	Place	Time of association
Borelli, Filippo and Giovanni	Modena	1722, 1724, 1728
Boyer, Veran and Cia	Smyrna	1716
Gerenis, Nikolos	Alexandria Cairo Livorno	1724 1726 1727
Finochetti and Gaspari	Livorno	1718
Fragelà de Michel	Livorno	1713-1726
Fragelà, Zuanne	Cadiz	1717
Fragelà, Nicolò	Livorno	1726-1732
Kapetanakis, Leonardos	Livorno	1714-1732
Kapetanakis, Pavlos	Cadiz	1717-1728
Mantelos, Ioannis	Patras	1713
Merano, Giannandrea and Marcello	Cartagena	1717
Necco, Juan-Tomaso	Genoa	1716-1731
Necco, Manuel	Genoa	1713-1720
Pavia and Riso	Cartagena	1716

Associates of G. Melos	Place	Time of association
Pratti, Pietro	Parma	1722-1730
Salama and Flores	Alexandria	1712-1728
Sibton, Zacob and Men	Alexandria	1714-1715
Sunina, Abraam	Rosetti	1715
Foskardi, Ang. and Ventanto, Petro	Zakynthos	1713-1715

This category of Melos' associates included nineteen people (or companies) distributed geographically as follows: five in Livorno; three in Alexandria; two in each of Genoa, Cadiz and Cartagena; and one correspondent in each of the remaining markets, that is, in Modena, Parma, Rosetti, Cairo, Smyrna, Patras and Zakynthos. It is also the case with Melos' correspondents that the people recorded in the table were not his only associates in this capacity; however, it is certain that they were the most important and most professional practitioners in this field. There is evidence that Melos occasionally employed various other figures from his broader circle, mainly for smaller tasks. He had a limited – in terms of time and finances – association with most of these intermediaries, using them to move around in markets where he did not carry out steady and continuous financial transactions. They were figures who as a rule had been recommended to him by traders he knew, by his long-standing associates, and who, in offering their services to Melos – not disinterestedly, of course – had hoped to continue their collaboration with him.

He did, however, have a steady collaboration with specific people in whom he took stock to carry out his business affairs and who were active in markets that also comprised the basic structure of his network. Let us see, then, through specific situations, how certain commercial networks intertwined or touched on each other and, at the same time, follow some of the trade routes to and from Venice. Angelo Foskardi and Petro Venetanto acted as Zakynthos correspondents for Melos – and not only. They exclusively received the silk products that arrived from Patras and undertook the task of forwarding them to Venice, either via Corfu or by ship sailing directly from Zakynthos to Venice. The consigners of the silk were Melos' brothers Nikolos and Michalis from Nauplion, and Rallis Notaras from Trikala in Corinthia.

This "silk route" was eventually closed to traffic – at least in Melos' case – following the recapture of the Peloponnese by the Turks.

On four occasions between 1722 and 1728, F. and G. Borelli in Modena, Italy, received merchandise sent by Melos and forwarded it to Pietro Pratti in Parma, who in turn sent it to J. T. Necco in Genoa, in six consignments, between 1722 and 1730. From 1716 through 1731, J. T. Necco acted as the main Genoa correspondent for Georgios Melos – and for many other traders, both Greek and non-Greek – a position his brother Manuel Necco had previously held, initially working with Nikolos and then with Georgios Melos. As transporters, the Necco brothers received merchandise from various cities in Italy through two main routes: Venice→Livorno→Genoa and Venice→Modena→Parma→Genoa. As a rule, the aim was to forward this merchandise to Cadiz or Cartagena. It was not rare, however, that at the behest of their associates they undertook the sale of some of the merchandise on the spot. Georgios Melos' *maestro* reveals that over the course of their approximately 15-year business relationship, he sent Necco 45 consignments of a variety of types of merchandise (mainly steel, glassware, imitation pearls, feeding bottles) and in the cases where Necco sold merchandise on the spot, he sent Melos the sum he collected either in cash or directly by bill of exchange. In the cases where the final destination of the merchandise was Madrid, the Necco brothers of Genoa sent it to Juan Martin Necco, their third brother, who had settled there permanently.

On the other route, when merchandise was forwarded through Livorno – a port that had been a commercial hub for Western trade since the sixteenth century, and in particular for Greek trade mainly from the mid-eighteenth century onwards –[39] Melos' correspondent in that city was Nicolò Fragelà, a nephew of Fragelà de Michel, with whom Melos had collaborated between 1716 and 1725. Melos had had a steady and exclusive business relationship with Fragelà de Michel, who had handled a total of 13 consignments of merchandise originating from Venice, Smyrna or Alexandria; this merchandise was either sold on the spot or forwarded to markets in Spain. Following his death, his nephew and business successor Nicolò Fragelà carried out 6 business transactions in total by order of Melos during the period 1726-1732. These concerned the forwarding of merchandise to Cadiz (to Giovani Fragelà and Pavlos Kapetanakis), the receipt and sale of a quantity of coffee arriving from

[39] D. Vlami, *Το φιορίνι, το σιτάρι και η οδός του Κήπου. Έλληνες έμποροι στο Λιβόρνο, 1750-1868* [The florin, the wheat and Garden Street: Greek merchants in Livorno, 1750-1868], Athens 2000.

Alexandria and, finally, the collection of bills of exchange from traders in Livorno on behalf of Melos.

Melos' main correspondent in Livorno was Leonardos Kapetanakis, with whom he had a close and varied business collaboration. At times he sent him various items to be sold in Livorno; in other instances, he sent him goods for transit; and there were also situations in which he gave him the order to invest – but not particularly large sums – in the purchase of merchandise or in commercial voyages.

Another member of the Kapetanakis family, Pavlos, was based in Cadiz. From 1717 to 1728 he received nine consignments with a variety of goods, sent by Melos through the routes we looked at above, and took action for their sale. He sent the sums collected through these sales (in various currencies, mainly Spanish) to Melos either directly by way of various people or through Leonardos Kapetanakis in Livorno. On some occasions – but not regularly – the merchandise was loaded onto ships in Venice, with Cadiz or Lisbon being the direct destinations. Melos' correspondent ensured that any of the Venetian merchandise not absorbed by the Spanish market was forwarded to the *flota*, the commercial convoy, using either the same ship or through trans-shipping, so as to be sold in the markets of the West Indies.

It is understood that none of the people mentioned above who were active in some capacity was an exclusive associate of Melos – not even his brother Nikolos. Every trader, in accordance with his business savvy, capabilities, social position, drive and financial policy "spun" his network of associates using a dense or thin web, selecting few – but financially strong – traders, or, conversely, many medium-sized ones. In the most ideal of situations, he integrated people from all levels into his business circle. In other words, a commercial network could be limited, cohesive and financially strong, or extended, thin and with economically weaker pockets. Of course, there was no shortage of cases – mainly in the area of large-scale trade – where a commercial network was concurrently extended, dense and strong, the direct result of the personality of its creator, his financial standing and his selected strategy. The trader Georgios Melos, as we shall see below, appears to have sought a mixture of the two different models without, however, succeeding.

Insurers

The evolution, or "professionalization" of trade brought about the acceptance and institution of certain basic rules, which, although they had existed in former times, had had limited, occasional and lax enforcement. This situation had arisen because these rules and their effects upon the improvement of

trading practice and the safeguarding of the interests of the parties involved had not become accepted or entrenched. The rules in question were related to the insuring of merchandise being transported. This was a practice that was certainly very old but not generalized across all strata of the world of commerce and the entire spectrum of commercial activity. Small traders had not considered it necessary to insure goods being transported on every occasion and/or in their entirety, and this concerned not only transport on land but also by sea; they risked the maximum, a potential catastrophe or the loss of their merchandise for the sure – yet small – profit they would make by saving on insurance.

Both attitudes concerning the issue are found expressed in Georgios Melos' large archive – and in particular in his verbose and information-rich correspondence. On the one hand, there were trader-associates of his who preferred to send him merchandise uninsured – a view and action to which he was absolutely opposed, and for this reason he insisted upon emphasizing to them in his letters that he did not accept anything uninsured from anyone.

Completely synchronized with and informed about how the large European markets operated, and having decades of personal experience in the field behind him, Melos understood fully that insurance constituted a necessary part of commercial action, and for this reason he "didn't waste the horseshoe for the nail", as he noted to an associate in his typically proverbial speech. The Melos traders of the Peloponnese also regarded the insuring of merchandise or money sent by their brother from Venice as necessary: "… and everything must be insured, and that by 10% over what it costs; I don't want you to send me anything without insurance…",[40] Nikolos Melos would regularly repeat with almost every order he placed.

The Georgios Melos Archive includes 96 insurance documents, though it is not necessarily implied that this was the total number of such documents. These cover the period of time he was active in Venice – that is, from November 1712 through January 1732. The data one obtains from these documents, in combination with everything related to insurance mentioned in his correspondence and, most importantly, in the records of insurers in his *maestro*, reveal to us some of the commercial practices in this sector.

Immediately upon settling in Venice and initiating his trading activities with the Peloponnese, Georgios Melos never questioned the need to insure the merchandise, and it is for this reason that he upheld this principle with consistency from the beginning of his life to the end, associating, in fact,

[40] ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Κ7, letter dated 25-9-1713.

with some of the biggest insurers on the Rialto. The strategy he pursued was the following: as a rule, especially in the early years, he would in most cases spread the premiums for the goods he transported between two to four people. He would "get security" for various quantities of the same or different types of merchandise. These items, however, were loaded onto the same vessel and formed part of the same consignment and also shared the final destination. It was more advantageous, he wrote, to get insurance in the Calle, as Taronitis did, than to arrange it himself; in other words, he preferred the official insurers who worked in the service of Venice to the independent trader-insurers on the market. Despite all of this, however, he did not avoid these insurers, as evidenced by his papers.

In Venice he insured not only merchandise that was to leave from there, but also shipments that his associates were to make from other markets/ports ("ritorno di…") with Venice or some other point as their destination. This insurance was either fixed, for a certain load on a specific ship departing from and arriving at a particular port, or open, up to a specific monetary limit and with "sopra qualsi voglia" loading. When this clause appeared on the insurance document, it meant that the trader for whom the insurance had been arranged could load whatever merchandise he wished until the sum was reached, whenever he wished to do so and "on ships, marsilianas [Venetian ships] or any other vessels under our flag or another friendly flag", as Melos clarified in his writings to his associates who were merchandise transporters.[41]

In the event that one had taken out insurance for loading from a specific port and the loading did not take place, then the insured party was subject to a fine of 0.5% above and beyond the total amount of insurance. Insurance was proportional, added to the total value of the insured product and was variable, as it depended upon various factors: it was linked to the location and nationality of the ship, the product being transported, the season, the route and, first and foremost, political circumstances. Thus, several months prior to the outbreak of the war in the Peloponnese and faced with the threat and certainty of danger, the cost of all insurance premiums related to ports in that area saw a marked increase in excess of 20%, and despite this no insurers were found who were willing to underwrite the risk, even though the high premiums were especially enticing.

In spite of the fluctuations for the reasons mentioned above, Melos was able to take up insurance, on a regular basis, at a percentage that varied from

[41] ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, K12, letter dated 5-4-1715 to Foskardi and Venetanto.

3% to 5%, the most common figure being 4-4.5% for merchandise and 2% for monetary sums, "gold and silver".[42] A case of a shipwreck and fraudulent insurance claims, as recorded in our trader's archive, presents much interest concerning the different ways of thinking found within the world of trade. On 23 May 1713, Nikolos Melos expeditiously wrote to his brother to say that they had just been informed in Nauplion that the vessel carrying a shipment of various merchandise as well as money, and on which he had loaded two packages of silk, had been wrecked outside Methone. At once, many of those who had had uninsured merchandise on the ship scrambled to notify their correspondents in Venice to "get security", hoping that the news would be delayed in reaching that city, and thus they would be able to cover a part of the damage that had been caused by collecting on the insurance. Nikolos informed his brother that if he so desired he could also act accordingly, even though his own view – clearly expressed – was that this was "daylight robbery". Of course, Peloponnesian cunning was thwarted by the operational mechanisms and protection system of the Venetian trading business, with

[42] The insurance policies recorded in the Melos Archive are at much higher rates than those taken out by P. Xenos in the second half of the eighteenth century, which fluctuated between 0.5-2.5% above the value of the goods. In Melos' case, moreover, the tendency was for the total value of the goods to appear as lower than the actual value, whereas the opposite was true in the case of Xenos, where the goods were insured at a rate higher than the actual market value; see Asdrachas, *Patmos*, chapter 7. Let us consider, however, several instances from the Melos Archive of the insurance practices mentioned above. On 6 February 1712 (= 1713) Georgios wrote to his brother Nikolos the following: "I wanted to get you insurance on the boat which sior Sadias is sending, but I did not manage since many others had got it already. Do not load anything of mine on that [ship].": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, Κ12. In addition, on 12 July 1719 he updates his brother Michalis who is in Trikala, Corinthia: "I took out insurance for a total of 1600 ducats at the Calle di Sicurità so that you could load from Vostitsa, Patras and Zakynthos on whatever vessel it happens to be, except for a barca or londra. And if you want to send merchandise to Corfu, go ahead and send it but write first to Mantelo or someone else for them to insure it for you. I made the insurance for 3.5% and if I can I will get more […] and when you send merchandise to Zakynthos, write to sior Foskardi to make out the bill of lading for as much as he thinks necessary.": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′. In another instance, N. Melos loaded three packages of silk at Nauplion destined for Venice and wrote to his brother: "I am sending it to Zakynthos to sior Foskardi and sior Venetanto for them to send uninsured since I do not know whether you renewed the insurance in Zakynthos. In Nauplion they will be loaded with insurance for 2000 ducats which you have procured.": ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, Θ8, file 4, letter dated 23-1-1713 (= 1714). On shipping insurance in Venice more generally, see Alberto Tenenti, *Naufrages, corsaires et assurances maritimes à Venise, 1592-1609*, Paris 1959.

the news concerning the shipwreck reaching Venice first; thus no insurer fell into the trap. In any event, for Georgios Melos, as in the case of many other traders, it was also a matter of commercial ethics: "…let alone how can someone take out insurance and with what conscience when he knows that it has been lost," he would write to his brother two months later.[43]

We have said that Melos used both Venetian public insurers and private ones. According to his archive, he worked with a total of 42 "insurance offices" or insurers, but not with the same frequency and duration in every case. He enlisted the services of many of these only on occasion and, in fact, during the first years of his relocation to Venice there were times when he alternated insurers and later abandoned them, confining himself to a specific number of well-known, highly prestigious Venetian insurers. The list of those with whom he had a very frequent and steady business relationship included Gian-Maria Gianelli (April 1715 - May 1716), with 9 insurance policies; Juan Mariani (March 1714 - October 1718), with 16 policies; Andrea Bonifacio (April 1720 - September 1722), with 14 policies; Antonio Tagliapiera (1713-1719), with 31 policies; and Tagliapiera and Bonifacio (1723-1732), with 33 policies. Melos had a more infrequent and smaller-scale relationship with Aron Uziel (or Visel), Giacomo and Fratelli della Scala, Antonio Zuanelli, Giovanni-Battista Meratti and some Greek traders who on occasion had also acted as insurers,[44] such as Ioannis Dekas, Georgios Zandiris, Leonardos Kapetanakis, Antonios Kontostavlos, Andreas Kothonis, Georgios Stamatelos, Konstantinos Selekis and Michail Peroulis.

It is certain in the case of insurers as well that the above-mentioned individuals were not the only ones with whom Georgios Melos associated. It is without doubt that a number of people – those not recorded in his archives – have eluded us. However, even if they had been included, it appears that they would not have added anything substantially important or ground-breaking to the picture that we have sketched.

Travelling Merchants – Goods Escorts – Captain-traders

Within the general category of merchants with its many and varied operators, we may also include individuals whose work was in some way auxiliary, in

[43] N. Melos' letter is dated 23-5-1713 and the reply from G. Melos 17(= 28)-7-1713. ΕΙΒ, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ8, file 4, and Κ12, respectively.

[44] The phenomenon of insuring shipments assumed a new form and widened to embrace all the commercial ports of the Italian Peninsula from the end of the eighteenth century: see Asdrachas *et al.*, *Ελληνική οικονομική ιστορία*, pp. 478-479 (O. Katsiardi-Hering).

that they performed jobs that facilitated commercial transactions. Merchants employed these individuals either occasionally or systematically depending on circumstances as they arose, or they resorted to them out of necessity in order to gain time or money and thereby overcome unforeseen bottlenecks in the normal functioning of their trade. Georgios Melos was among those merchants who took advantage of the services of such individuals, both traders who acted as escorts, accompanying goods from market to market, or others who were simply acquaintances and friends who were travelling and whom he entrusted to carry small objects, money, business letters or verbal orders to colleagues and friends either outside Venice or in the reverse direction.

The first group of professional travelling merchants, which should be distinguished from that including itinerant traders in retail goods, was often active in particular markets and followed fixed routes: some to destinations in what is today the Greek State, others to Smyrna, others to the Barbary Coast and still others to the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas. All these carried out orders or the shipment of goods on behalf of their client in the context of a formal association with him on a professional basis, involving all that such an arrangement meant in that day, in other words payment of a fee in return for services.

The second group was made up primarily of people from Melos' narrower or wider social context, people in his closest confidence or recommended by trusted colleagues, and they generally offered their services without payment, or in return for a favour. Unlike the first category of travelling merchants who at that time were vital links in the chain of commerce, those involved only occasionally and in various ways in the world of trade functioned in an ancillary fashion, assuming tasks that could easily be done by the members of the first category. Some specific examples drawn from our merchant's world will show the practical application of what has been referred to so far only generally. Georgios Rembos, a Greek merchant in Venice, undertook in the summer of 1715 to accompany to Alexandria some of Melos' fabric in order to deliver it to Souninas for sale; he also carried with him an amount of cash, which Souninas was to invest in coffee or ivory.

In addition, when in August 1728 Mihos Dimos (or Dimas) departed from Venice, he had in his possession three zecchinia from Melos with the charge to purchase with them, upon his arrival in Zakynthos, a quantity of local fabric. Dimos replied to Melos in early September that even though during his eight days on the island he had sought out the fabric in question among the manufacturers, because he failed to find any which met with his satisfaction, he did not make the purchase. The reason for the scarcity and

poor quality of the particular type of fabric was an epidemic that did not allow people to interact and thus work together as usual: "…until now people have not turned their hands to big jobs on account of the plague and have avoided gathering together for joint efforts, such as those mainly performed by women".[45] This one sentence speaks volumes about the nature of small industry! However, since Dimas had to depart, he left the money with a friend, Georgios Koutouzis, and instructed him to execute the order once the situation in the city and market had returned to normal. Indeed, we learn from another document in the Archive that the order was finally executed and the fabric sent to Venice through the agency of Angelo Foskardi.

Melos had a purely professional relationship with Georgios Kladakis, a travelling merchant who operated between Smyrna and Venice, at least during the mid-1720s. Let us see how Melos operated in one case of his collaborations with Kladakis. In June 1725, Kladakis departed from Venice for Smyrna taking with him a chest with 124 litres of theriaca to sell on behalf of Melos. He was charged to invest the money in a specific amount of alacan (a type of cotton fabric), which he was to supplement with up to 100 reals, if necessary, and to send the cloth to Livorno to Frangelà de Michel. If he failed to sell the theriaca while he was in Smyrna, he was to leave it with Stanos Themelis, who would act on his behalf. However, the intervention of a third party was not necessary since Kladakis managed, with great effort and the aid of his friend Panayiotis Politis of Lefkada, to sell the theriaca and purchase the alacan, which he sent to Livorno. The entire process was executed in approximately six months.[46]

These examples are quite indicative of the intertwined relations in the commercial world, but also of the flexibility and cohesion of commercial networks. In the Melos Archive we find some of the Greek merchants familiar to us from other sources working systematically or occasionally with Melos as travelling merchants: Dem. Angravaris, Nikolos Gerenis, Nikolos Dendritsis, Theodosis Kakouris, Leonardos Kairis, Leonardos Korner, Giannakis Kalamitsiotis, Giorgakis Kladakis, Pantelis Lignos, Giorgakis Manolis, Theodosis Tzikaliotis and Anargos Psaros.

A common practice – and not only in this period – was for ship captains to act as traders or agents for goods, thereby playing a direct part in the commercial process. They both transported commodities as freight and

---

[45] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ1, file 4, letter dated 1-9-1728.

[46] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, Θ1, file 1, and K11, K12, for the relevant correspondence between Kladakis and Melos.

reaped a profit from commercial transactions either on their own account or on behalf of others. In a very few cases Melos collaborated on commercial ventures with such captains: in May 1715 he sold to Captain Giacomo Bartolo a package of silk from Kalavryta, for which he received half the amount in cash and the remainder through a bank deposit. In another case (February 1716/7) he gave Francesco Rossi, whose boat he used many times to transport goods, a quantity of mirrors to sell at Cadiz or Lisbon and give the money to Pavlos Kapetanakis in Cadiz. Finally, in 1717 and 1718 he invested 236 ducats in bottomry (*cabio maritime*) on the vessel of Luigi Viani, which was travelling from Venice to Thessaloniki.

Lastly, there is the category of occasional traders who should not really be considered as a necessary, organic part of the trade networks, but who made their appearance in commercial transactions in order to satisfy other types of financial needs. Thomas Petrou, for example, a farmer in Argos, sent his son Nikolos to study in Venice and entrusted his custody to Melos. In order to cover part of his son's expenses in the years 1714-1715, Petrou sent to his son's guardian four packages (*colletti*) of silk in three instalments, from the sale of which Melos would keep what he had spent on the young student. This was in fact a mixed transaction, a form of barter with partial payment in kind. Melos undertook a similar form of exchange from time to time with Thodoris Masios, Kallinikios Lavriotis and Leonardos Perdikaris.

Even by the most relaxed criteria, none of the individuals involved can rightly be added to the community of traders, and consequently their commercial transactions are noted not as basic, cohesive elements in the operation of a network, but as supplementary to it. By contrast, key individuals in the trade arena were the "postmen", the couriers of that time. It is known that such people, beyond delivering mail, transported news, money and goods in small quantities, thereby also playing the role of a trader. The Melos Archive reveals such a case: Lorenzo Bandini served as "courier" between Venice and Florence, and only once did Melos entrust him with a ball of silk to send to Leonardos Kapetanakis in Livorno.

Friend-informants

An important element in the successful outcome of a merchant's business arrangements was timely and reliable information, not only directly related to the commercial profile of a place, but also concerning whatever was happening in the prevailing political and social climate that could also impact trade. The merchants and their affiliates kept in touch about their merchandise and also about the conditions of trade, such as the movement of prices and goods

(subjects which had always been of interest to Venetians concerned with the state of play of the economy),[47] but also about the movement of people: who was going where, who had arrived and from where, what news did he bring, who was *corrispodente* of whom, who was trustworthy, and who not, who respected the world of commerce, and who did not.

However paradoxical it may appear, integrity (in other words, a good name) pulled the same weight in the market as did commercial ability. In other words, the titles "honourable", "most honourable", "most noble", etc., preceding a merchant's name were not mere formalities in a trader's correspondence, but possessed real meaning. The choice of one or the other epithet was not random, but carefully made to fit a particular individual.[48]

Georgios Melos was quite well-informed through his network and he himself was conscientious about keeping his associates informed about the market in Venice, despite his brother Nikolos' complaints about incomplete information sent, which had consequences for his own performance. The availability of news, of both special and general interest, was among the desiderata of every merchant, especially when the source was people outside the trade, who were considered more reliable and more objective if they were not involved in commercial activities and not competitors, and their sincerity uncompromised by conflicting interests that would lead to the concealment or misrepresentation of key information.

With this goal in mind, Melos asked Angelo Zambelli, who was in the service of the Venetian consul in Genoa, to inform him of whatever news arrived from Spain about the political situation there. Furthermore, highly interesting and revealing of Melos' regular and good-quality information about what was happening in the market in Madrid during the period of 1710-1721 is provided in his albeit sparse correspondence with José Grange, an old partner from the Spanish period of his life.

In the early days of his residence in Venice, Melos was updated about the commercial situation in Corfu by Anastasios Nikolopoulos, who upon informing Melos, requested in turn information on the prices in Venice. It is important to note that these two were never associates in a business venture.

---

[47] On the importance of staying up-to-date and exploiting every kind of information in the economic fortunes of Venice, see Pierre Sardella, "Nouvelles et spéculations à Venise au début du XVIe siècle", *Cahiers des Annales* I (1948), pp. 5-85.

[48] E. D. Liata, "Με *μυστικές γραφές* και *τίμιες* οι εντιμότατοι πραγματευτές αλληλογραφούν και νεγκοτσιάρουν τον 18ο αιώνα" [With "confidential" and "honourable writing": honourable merchants correspond and do business in the eighteenth century], *Μεσαιωνικά και Νέα Ελληνικά* VIII (2006), pp. 301-316.

The examples cited here can only be taken as suggestive since the information network of our merchant was quite wide, and the sources which fed him regularly, but also sporadically, with all sorts of news were spread across almost all markets in the Mediterranean. He did not appear to have such sources in Central Europe and the Balkans, that is, areas where Melos was not professionally active. In contrast to Melos, the case of Demos Kastrisios shows a merchant based in Thessaloniki who was active in the Italian markets as well as in the Balkans (Wallachia) and Smyrna, creating in this way an extensive trading network, as emerges from his published correspondence from the last decade of the seventeenth century, which constituted a varied and valuable source of business news.[49]

Merchants repeated news that they considered important (mainly commercial in nature) for their associate in two or three communications sent consecutively, so as to guarantee that the information reached its destination, even if one letter was lost. This habit is sometimes a source of confusion for the present-day researcher on account of the different manner in which the same information was expressed from communication to communication, with the result that one might even think that different information was being conveyed.

Apart from a merchant's regular and loyal associates for whom providing information to the "boss" was considered part of their duty, a world of relatives and friends acting as sideline operators for the merchant class also assisted by providing direct or indirect (and typically free-of-charge) work for mutual acquaintances. When the opportunity arose, it was to such reliable people that merchants would turn to transfer funds, valuable objects or confidential letters, in other words, items which they would not have wanted to be lost or mislaid.

They even accepted to lend money at the behest of their merchant-friend – not of course without reimbursement in this case – or to give currency to a person who happened not to have a circle of acquaintances to support him in a market, or because he was a newcomer, or lacked the necessary introductions which would make the local merchants trust him. Sometimes friends of the merchant were recruited, as mentioned above, to convey small objects or goods in small quantities (a few metres of fabric, for example) from one place to another in order to save the merchant transportation costs.[50]

---

[49] Mertzios, "Εμπορική αλληλογραφία εκ Μακεδονίας (1695-1699)", pp. 246-254.

[50] An example from the Melos Archive clearly reveals this sort of behaviour: after his captivity following the fall of Nauplion and his subsequent ransoming and liberation, M. Melos found himself in Smyrna in a sorry economic state. In an attempt to start up some business dealings there, he turned for support and economic assistance to his brother,

Thanks to their execution of such small-scale services, such people, who played a minor or completely insignificant role for large-scale merchants, were of particular importance in the world of the medium- and especially small-scale traders to whom they offered a significant contribution.

The involvement of mutual friends, the desire for collaboration or the continuation of collaboration with new faces are clearly neither unprecedented nor unique practices; rather, they are enduring features of trade, confirmed by examples of merchants both before and especially after the time in which Georgios Melos was active.[51]

Secretary-assistants

Amidst the variety of commercial personnel and indeed among the main associates of a merchant – both large- and smaller-scale – are those who performed the functions of assistant and secretary, and whose main concern it was to keep the financial ledgers and correspondence of their employer. They were usually young people who were paid an annual (or more rarely monthly) wage and came from the environment of the merchants' relations or friends. They were always individuals who could be trusted and possessed some degree of education, at least facility in reading and writing, and knowledge of the mathematics necessary for trade.[52] Their service at the master-merchant's side was simultaneously an apprenticeship, that is to say, an initiation into the secrets of the profession on a prescribed path toward their active involvement in trade. Thus, either when he considered himself ready and the time right, or at the initiative of the merchant employing him, the apprentice passed to the next stage and assumed a direct role in commercial ventures, first as his master's envoy, acting on behalf and in accordance with his instructions. The length of time an individual served at this stage depended on his skills

writing, "I am sending you another order to buy me some things and put them in a small chest and give it to some friend of yours to bring directly. I am now without any cash and have borrowed 25 reals from kyr-Pantelis.": EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, Θ5, letter dated 23-12-1716; see also pp. 171-172 below.

[51] For example, we find a similar phenomenon expressed in the correspondence of merchants from Mykonos in the late eighteenth century; see Kremmydas, *Εμπορικές πρακτικές* (1993), esp. pp. 100-101.

[52] The role of the secretary-assistant in all its dimensions is neatly illustrated in the example of Stamatis Petrou, associate of A. Korais; see P. Iliou, *Σταμάτης Πέτρου. Γράμματα από το Άμστερνταμ* [Stamatis Petrou: letters from Amsterdam], Athens: Ermis, 1976. See also Kremmydas, *Εμπορικές πρακτικές*, pp. 181-184; Vlami, *Το φιορίνι*, pp. 139-140.

and maturity, the circumstances and the personality of the employer. The competence of the young trader, the adequacy of his business knowledge and success of his apprenticeship alongside the experienced trader are the main factors that contributed to his full independence and ability to take initiatives in the commercial sphere. Promotion was not always without resistance on the part of the masters. Typical of this tension are the complaints expressed by businessmen of Ambelakia concerning the demands of assistants, described as young people who "nowadays after doing a bit they get ideas into their heads and do not perform the service which a servant performs".[53]

During the last two decades of Melos' trading activity, we have documentation for his employment of three successive secretary-assistants. When he left Nauplion in 1712 he brought with him the young Anargos Psaros as secretary and assistant. But soon after that time, and certainly from 1716 to at least 1723, Psaros assumed the role of travelling merchant on Melos' behalf, charged with trips to Livorno, Alexandria and Cairo, either accompanying goods for sale or to invest capital he carried with him in commodities available in those markets.[54]

Psaros' successor to the position of secretary-assistant was another young man, the Athenian Nikolos Gerenis, who would remain in Melos' service until 1724, when he too followed in Psaros' footsteps and begin taking commercial trips on behalf of Melos and/or others to roughly the same places as had been the destinations of his predecessor.[55] After Gerenis' "upgrading", Melos, now in the twilight of his life and career, employed Rodis Bozikis as his secretary for a short time. This young man left the service of the elderly Melos once the latter ceased his active involvement in commerce entirely. Equipped with good references from his former employer, he travelled to Cadiz in order to work alongside Pavlos Kapetanakis. Once again we observe the network of acquaintances at work. Among Melos' papers, both loose documents and registers, the handwriting of the three successive secretaries is discernible in addition to Melos' own style.

---

[53] S. I. Asdrachas, *Ελληνική κοινωνία και οικονομία, ιη και ιθ αιώνες* [Greek society and economy, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries], Athens: Ermis, 1982, p. 150. The same is true for guilds, where the rhythm and mode of internal mobility was monitored by a charter, see *id.*, *Ζητήματα ιστορίας* [Historical problems], Athens: Themelio, 1983, pp. 98-102, 227.

[54] When the Ottomans captured Nauplion in June 1715, A. Psaros, who happened to be there on business, was taken captive but managed to escape in transit. On his experience of the war and his captivity, see Liata "Μαρτυρίες", pp. 111-113, 129-132; see also *id.*, "Νιός πραματευτής", pp. 286-289.

[55] On the brief, novelesque life of the luckless Gerenis, see Liata, "Νιός πραματευτής".

Although perhaps peripheral to our main concern with the operation of a particular commercial network, let us dwell briefly on the importance attributed by merchants to the good recommendations that would guarantee both the start and course of a career. Recommendations and indeed letters of recommendation which a young trader would procure from reliable people in the world of commerce were a necessary prerequisite for winning acceptance by and support from fellow merchants. Recommendations were something like an informal passport for entry into a particular commercial society when the merchant was "new to the place".

With regard to recommendations, Melos appears to have been generous. On many occasions he recommended individuals willingly and with gusto, especially new traders, beginners or outsiders to a particular market, or even aspiring traders. He recommended them to friends or acquaintances who could be of assistance, persons that he knew esteemed him and valued his opinion. There are quite a few cases – besides that of Rodis Bozikis – of associates, friends or mere acquaintances for whom Melos put in a good word when it was asked of him. There is no need to enumerate names of individual cases, but it is worth mentioning one or two examples that are indicative of the type of recommendations and the perceptions of the business community with regard to this issue.

Michalis Melos, after his experiences as a captive following the fall of Nauplion to the Ottomans and his subsequent release, found himself in Smyrna, miserable and destitute, a stranger among strangers in a city which was considered, given the conditions at the time, one of the most "difficult" and "closed" markets for small and inexperienced businessmen.[56] In his effort to find his own niche in the market in order to make a simple living, Michalis appealed for assistance to his only protector, his brother Georgios, imploring him: "Send me a letter addressed to kyr-Delurie or kyr-Veran Boyer and Cia; in these letters mention to them that I can have credit, because it is a shame every time there is a business opportunity for

[56] On Smyrna's notable commercial development in the eighteenth century and its role in the large-scale export-import market between East and West, see E. Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the 18th Century (1700-1820)*, Athens 1992. On the particularly strong economic and social position of Smyrna's commercial middle class, its role as a self-conscious player in the spread of Enlightenment values in the East and its members' claim to have a share in socio-political authority, see the discussion in P. Iliou, *Κοινωνικοί αγώνες και Διαφωτισμός. Η περίπτωση της Σμύρνης (1819)* [Social conflicts and Enlightenment: the case of Smyrna (1819)], Athens: EMNE-Mnimon, 1986.

me to be unable to take advantage of it."[57] In addition, when two other Greek traders, Malakis Katritsis and Demos Kakavakis, acquaintances but not close associates of Georgios Melos, arrived to assume jobs in Alexandria, they were equipped with the best recommendations from Georgios Melos to the worthy merchant Pantelis Lignos to assist them and encourage them to behave as if Melos himself were present.

Georgios Melos had himself been "patronized" in this climate of professional and patriotic solidarity by the brothers Maroutsis and by Sadias, associates of his brother Nikolos, when as a newcomer to Venice, he was in need of social supports in order to gain a foothold and be accepted by the commercial community. With a deep sense of obligation to them, especially to Sadias, Georgios Melos wanted to reciprocate the favour and for this reason insisted to Nikolos that if he had any business in Nauplion he should not hesitate to collaborate with Sadias' brother located there, because both were notable and reliable persons, especially the one located in Venice, who in addition to what "he had done" was a trusted and honest man.[58] This relationship of interdependence is a common phenomenon among merchants, whereby the old and revered merchants work as links for their inexperienced colleagues, who in turn would later perform the same supporting role for others of the same or lower economic rank.

Apart from the vertical economic stratification of the merchant class, there was also a horizontal hierarchization based on the qualitative assessment of its members. In this alignment of those involved in commerce, the young, the inexperienced and small-scale operators sought to situate themselves alongside the "good bosses", those with not only financial but also moral clout in society, in order to apprentice themselves to them and collaborate with them, knowing that their own progress and success in the commercial sector largely depended on such outstanding individuals. Therefore, merchants exchanged information and cross-checked the rumours or opinions that circulated in the market about those active in it, and they made judgments and evaluations, both positive and negative, about such people in order to

[57] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, Θ5, letter dated 23-12-1716; see also note 50.

[58] EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α′, K12, letter dated 14-10-1712. Among the ethical values and qualities distinctive to a good merchant, such as those which appear in Melos' correspondence, but also existed more widely in the estimations of the entire merchant class, the most esteemed are honesty, discretion, fairness and industry, followed by modesty, moderation and sobriety, virtues not always taken for granted, but nonetheless revered among men of the trade.

protect themselves and safeguard others from those with a bad name in the business world.

Such information is not, of course, missing from Melos' correspondence. We saw that Sadias was a "good merchant", and Thodoris Masios was also singled out in Trikala in Corinthia; and the noble Notaras family, also in Corinthia, were big businessmen who enjoyed the general admiration of all those involved in the production or marketing of silk and were sought-after associates for this reason. The general impression is that small traders in particular pursued collaborations, albeit limited, with several or at least one of the powerful, large-scale traders of their era.

The reasons for this were clear, if various. They were above all economic: such associations offered more opportunities, security and ease in financial transactions, support in finding solutions to financial impasses, protection against misjudgements and pitfalls which were part and parcel of the profession, and so on. But there were also social reasons: the mere fact that a small-time trader collaborated with a well-known merchant, regardless of the degree of their association, was enough to upgrade the former's station in society, to set him apart and lend him an authority and invigorated influence not only in the world of commerce, but across the social spectrum of his local setting more generally, since something of his illustrious patron-associate now reflected onto the more modest trader. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the wealthy merchants and the ethics that governed their class required them to behave as protectors of those who were connected to them through mutual economic interests.[59]

Of course, the desire for such associations was not always feasible. Proof of the difficulty lies in the fact that Georgios Melos, although until the end of his life he would occasionally pursue partnerships with some of the great Greek merchants of his day, never managed to forge commercial dealings with them. With the exception, as we have seen, of Kapetanakis and to some extent the Notaras family in the Peloponnese, Melos never collaborated with any of the leading Greek names in Venice: the Peroulis, Maroutsis, Karagiannis and Taronitis families and others of their kind remained outside his commercial network, and he was never able to penetrate theirs, maintaining instead purely social relations with some of them.

[59] On the mentality of the great merchants, see also Asdrachas, *Patmos*, chapter 10, and on the economic features of this same group, see for example *id.*, *Ελληνική κοινωνία και οικονομία*, p. 472.

The particular case of Melos' association with the Kapetanakis family allows us to follow how such relationships operated not only according to the economic but also the social and ethical rules which governed family networks at the micro-level. It was with the Kapetanakis family that Melos was associated through family relationships (as a godfather), and immediately after he ceased to collaborate with his own brothers he strengthened his professional relationships with almost all members of the Kapetanakis family, enjoying continuous, steady and good commercial associations with them throughout the Venetian period of his life.

However, even if Melos failed to forge the kind of professional relationships he desired with many of the great Greek merchants in Venice, this did not prevent him from winning the respect and friendship of some of them and boasting about his relationships with them.[60] In conclusion, throughout his professional career in its Venetian phase Georgios Melos moved in the middle stratum of the world of commerce, forging associations primarily with men of his own status, the exception being the Kapetanakis family, who acted more as his *correspodenti* and recipients of his goods than as partners in business ventures.

But Melos enjoyed his own social and economic standing in another category of smaller merchants, many of whom sought partnership with him, and mostly successfully. Let us look, though, at some of the unsuccessful proposals. When Ioannis Gasparis set himself up as a businessman at Smyrna, he proposed that Melos assume the role formerly played by his brother Michalis, who had returned to the Peloponnese, and act as a correspondent in that city. Melos did not act on Gasparis' proposal. In early 1715 and in view of the war, P. Lignos suggested to Melos that they initiate joint business ventures in Egypt in an effort to substitute the emerging market of the Barbary Coast for the now-lost Peloponnese market. Melos was open to discussing the proposal, but the time was not right as the sultan had temporarily (in 1716) prohibited the import of Venetian goods to countries under his dominion. Another trader in Arta, Anastasis Antonopoulos, suggested collaboration with Melos in 1721 – although we do not know whether this was done out of esteem for Melos or to repay a debt – but this was to be another proposal not taken up by Melos.

[60] For example, he wrote to his brother Nikolos that L. Kapetanakis and Count Taronitis honoured him with their friendship and did not omit to "inform [him] promptly" about every silk market at which they conducted business. EIB, Οικον. διαχειρ. 1, αρ. 118α΄, K12, letter dated 15-5-1714.

A proposition made by Theodosis Tzikaliotis, who in 1718 established himself at Smyrna in order to engage in trade, was clearly one of reciprocality. Tzikaliotis stated openly to Melos that he was available for any service in return for the debt he owed him for standing by him as a father during his stay in Venice. By contrast, the desire of the brothers Ioannis and Spyros Milidonis of Corfu in 1722 to initiate a partnership with Melos in which they acted as his suppliers of goods from Corfu and the Peloponnese was a purely professional proposition, which, nevertheless, did not bear fruit.

The above examples are only some of the direct proposals for collaboration suggested to Melos. The Archive reveals a number of people indirectly suggested by third parties as potential partners, but in most of these cases there was no response from Melos. The elder trader's hesitation in initiating collaborations with new associates, especially in the last decade of his life, should be attributed to his advanced age, which offers a satisfactory explanation for the limitations he placed on his business involvements and the financial contraction of his ventures.

Ultimately, this entire microcosm on the periphery of trade – with its occasional, small-scale, unmethodical commercial operations, and despite its marginality and secondary role in the commercial process – in fact constitutes an organic part of the trade networks by serving to facilitate and contribute, at least to a certain extent, to their proper functioning.

By way of drawing a close to our description of the commercial network – a network, as we have seen, which was both flexible and highly diversified – and one of its members, Georgios Melos, a dynamic Greek merchant in Venice during the first half of the eighteenth century, I would like to highlight one more element of his professional profile. Melos did not work directly with merchants who were connected with workshops, with the exception of his brothers Nikolos and Michalis, who had a workshop in Nauplion and for whom he was the sole supplier of Venetian wares during the period from the end of 1712 to spring 1715. The Melos brothers received and stored at their shop the array of goods sent from Venice. Of these some were destined for the local retail market, others to be sold wholesale to other workshops, or to travelling salesmen and pedlars, and still others for shipment to trade fairs across the Peloponnese. In parallel, they received orders from other merchants and transferred them to Georgios for execution. In brief, the Melos brothers worked as provider-suppliers for merchants and workshops, dealing in Venetian commodities, which through their network were diffused throughout the entire area.

Through the case of Georgios Melos I believe we have managed to retrace a clear and satisfactory outline of the practices and modes of operation typical of a Venetian merchant in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Trade between the Levant and Europe was conducted through an intricate network of trade relations operating at three intertwined levels: large-scale trade in the hands of a limited number of great merchants, among whom were included a few Greeks; a denser mass of medium-sized merchants, who best characterized trade in this period; and finally a loosely defined world of small-scale traders and speculators, often active as such only occasionally and attached parasitically to the two overlying levels. All categories of traders, but most of all the two lower strata, operated simultaneously as representatives of different people without restricting their activities to bilateral relations. In other words, they served many masters, but were at the same time served by and involved with other people and were thereby part of the fabric of both polycentric and monocentric networks, supporting the structure of commerce.

Georgios Antonios Melos, merchant-traveller in the last decades of the seventeenth century, an established dealer in Madrid and then in Venice during the first decades of the eighteenth century, was a citizen of the world with a varied life, who could almost be called an adventurer, a self-made merchant of diaspora Hellenism. He ran his course and completed the cycle of his 85 years modestly and unglamorously, without biological or professional heirs, a restless spirit, a man of an age characterized by decisiveness, taking his life in his hands and fashioning his own destiny away from his homeland and far from sovereigns and sovereignties. He lived and travelled as a free person, taking advantage of that latitude and the opportunities offered by everything within the framework and political constraints of the time.

Could we, ultimately, accept the proposition that the merchant of the diaspora Georgios Melos, and so many merchants before and after him, eroded the power system prevailing in their places of origin? The answer is twofold: no, because the ruling system (Ottoman in this case) interfered with its subjects' economic roles, including those related to commerce; yes, because these roles allowed the creation of economic power in the conquered societies, which in turn contributed to the sense of identity of the subject peoples.

Insofar as the conquered were ranged against a society that was entirely conquering, yet not entirely exploitative, one could objectively inscribe commercial activity among the factors that eroded the conquerors' system; and one could connect these with other parallel or converging "erosions", ranging from the world of warlike societies to the world of reforming (or at the same time revolutionary) political thought, an advanced sector of a

learned tradition. We should not forget that the merchants too participated in a kind of learning: empirical, in that it dealt with economic practicalities (since their economic theory was also of a practical sort), but also potential (as well as actual). Their learning may not have allowed them full understanding, but still encouraged them to attach great importance to education. They acted on this priority by making education one of the focuses of their benefactions.

It is within the analysis offered above that I locate the position of our merchant as well: modest but steady and creative in the exercise of his trade, he too contributed alongside those who worked with the sword, the pen and the *zygometro*, patient as a woodworm, to undermine the foundations of the Ottoman Empire and helped bring about its downfall.

Translated by Elizabeth Key Fowden

Institute for Neohellenic Research / NHRF