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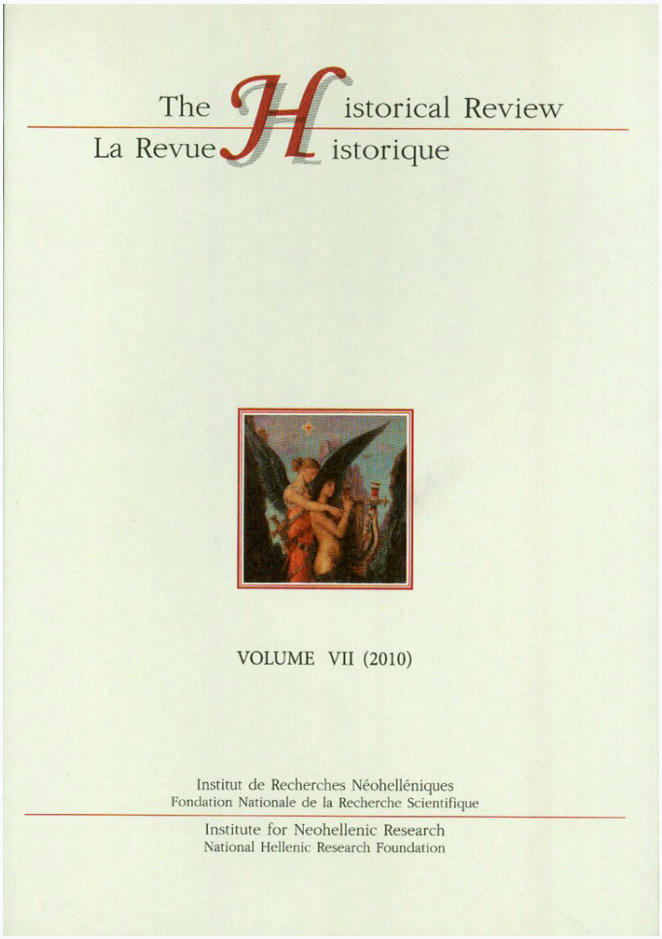
Networking and Spatial Allocation around the Mediterranean, Seventeenth-Nineteenth Centuries



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Maria Christina Chatziioannou

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MEDITERRANEAN PATHWAYS OF GREEK MERCHANTS TO VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Maria Christina Chatziioannou

Abstract: This article refers to the emergence of the Greeks as a small ethnic group of merchants in Victorian England and proposes comparisons with other trading groups in London, developing three main points. The first section configures trade migrations in the relevant historiography and argues the link between ethnic community, family firms and individual entrepreneurs in Greek commercial networks; the second section indicates common characteristics of Greek immigrants in England: their Ottoman past and their trade experience in the Italian Peninsula; and the third section concludes with two representative case studies, one of a medium-sized merchant house, and the second representing the longer-lasting and more successful case, a firm that diversified into a global network in direct response to nineteenth-century "Anglobalization".

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight

These lines are quoted from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, perhaps his most famous work, a controversial poem that details the journey of the human soul searching for redemption. An American-born British subject, T. S. Eliot identified a model Mediterranean merchant and placed him in a well-known port city, Smyrna, which was famous throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the export trade of raisins. Numerous Greek and foreign merchants gathered there, anticipating prices and cargoes for Western Europe. Eliot chose a real Greek merchant, Eugenides, most probably to be identified with Eugenios Eugenides (1883-1954), who originated from Thrace but was established in Constantinople at the turn of the twentieth century. His main business activity started with trading and importing timber from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean.

At the time T. S. Eliot published *The Waste Land*, in 1922, Eugenides was preparing to set up his business in Piraeus, Greece. In the same period and corresponding to his entrepreneurial activities, he obtained a diplomatic

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assignment as consul of Finland in Piraeus,[1] combining personal economic interests with foreign diplomatic representation in his country. Eugenides became an exemplary agent in the Mediterranean. From Piraeus he moved to Egypt, then to South Africa and finally to Argentina. Soon after World War II, he established in Genoa the international Home Lines Company (1946). Finally, in 1953, he re-established his business in Greece, becoming one of the first Greek ship-owners to repatriate.[2] So, Eugenides' liners linked the Mediterranean with the Atlantic.

We could justly argue that Eugenides had nothing to do with Smyrna's raisins, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, not even with Peloponnesian currants, which were one of the predominant import products from the Eastern Mediterranean to Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. But poets are not bound by factual accuracy or realistic details. Eugenides can be considered as a Greek entrepreneur who thrived in the Mediterranean. It was in the Mediterranean where he accumulated his business culture – in Constantinople – and from there he expanded to the global economy. His entrepreneurial path was based on the commodification of goods and services.[3] It involved economic migration, geographical transfer of business activities and personal intuition. Above all, he exemplified the role of the agent, the intermediary of the capitalist economy.

The type of trader-entrepreneur that Eugenides represents at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth had a strong legacy, formed over time by socio-economic conditions and interpreted accordingly by historiography. It evolved from the previous Greek merchant-entrepreneur of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who traded various import-export commodities and rarely specialised. Their role as intermediary merchants in the foreign trade of the Ottoman Empire has been well documented. The majority were merchants who relied on local products of the Mediterranean region, such as Smyrna raisins, Smyrna cotton, Egyptian cotton and Patras currants, and depended on them in order to expand their entrepreneurial activities. They were all exposed to international demand and faced a high

[1] *Επετηρίς Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, 1929* [Yearbook of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1929], pp. 350-351.

[2] For information on his life and deeds, see the entry "Ευγένιος Ευγενίδης" [Eugenios Eugenides], in K. Vovolinis, *Μέγα ελληνικόν βιογραφικόν λεξικόν* [Large Greek biographical dictionary], Vol. I, Athens [1958], pp. 565-580.

[3] On global capitalism, see the introduction in Peer Vries, *Via Peking back to Manchester: Britain, the Industrial Revolution, and China,* Leiden University 2003.

degree of inter-ethnic and international competition. It was a large, uneven group that consisted of big-, medium- and small-scale merchants.

Eugenides' personal itinerary represents some critical issues regarding Greek trader-entrepreneurs as a non-unified body in the Mediterranean: economic migration as an entrepreneurial venture, the role of several Mediterranean economic centres, such as Constantinople, and Italian ports as cosmopolitan maritime-trading centres characterised by pragmatism and pluralism, as well as being foyers of knowledge and entrepreneurial know-how. Eugenides' story is one of many that unfolded in the Mediterranean and determined the fame of "The Corrupting Sea", as the cradle not only of civilisation but also of trade and entrepreneurship. The Mediterranean is a transnational node that links distinct peoples and cultures, a geographical entity that has been described as a "universe", in which people migrated to and fro: a "universe" that was integrated into the world economy and the globalised market. Following Braudel's path, new generations of scholars have analyzed *la Méditerranée* as an organizing concept in the world of exchanges, a world that developed through utilizing business organization and networks, a world that surpassed sovereign national boundaries. From early modern times until the industrial era, a non-unified economic world had been created in Europe through commercial transactions, practices and the ethics of business dealings. This geographically structured thesis has been challenged in recent decades by social anthropologists and historians of earlier periods.[4]

Getting Settled in England: The Prerequisites

Around the third decade of the nineteenth century a small ethnic group of merchants began to come into view in Victorian England, the Greeks. It was a group that believed that the growth of trade was among the most important factors in the process of economic development.[5] The Greek immigrants to England settled in major economic centres, such as London, Manchester and

[4] Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000. The same authors continued their critical views on Braudel and the Mediterranean in the AHR forum "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology'", *American Historical Review* CXI/3 (2006), pp. 722-740.

[5] Before that, a scanty presence of Greeks in the late seventeenth century has been confirmed, as visitors and isolated residents in London and elsewhere. J. Harris, "Silent Minority: The Greek Community of Eighteenth-century London", in D. Tziovas (ed.), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700: Society, Politics and Culture*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, pp. 31-43.

Liverpool, and formed ethnic-religious communities as institutions. Their settlement in England began in the second decade of the nineteenth century, driven by economic reasons and coinciding with the establishment of the Greek State (1828). They were represented collectively by State diplomatic representatives, while the Greek Orthodox church and their private and public lives were regulated by an inter-community set of formal and informal laws.

The business group that prevailed within the London Greek community took advantage particularly of three import commodities that created geographical diversification for Greek networks in English markets: silk from the Ottoman Empire for the provisioning of the English silk industry; currants, the main export product of the Greek State after the 1840s; and cereals for the populous English realm after the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846. Cotton was imported to Liverpool from the USA. However, the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the blockade led to a major reform of this market and increased cotton imports from Egypt and India. After the 1870s and up to World War I, the London Stock Exchange became an important factor in the British economy in trading stocks and shares issued by numerous joint-stock enterprises, and this became another entrepreneurial field for Greek businessmen, creating new ethical issues in the Greek mercantile world.[6]

The origins of these merchants were mostly economic hubs within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. What is interesting to note is that most of these family firms were already in the second phase of their entrepreneurial expansion around the 1830s, having accumulated capital and knowledge in the Eastern Mediterranean. These Ottoman-based firms (Constantinople, Smyrna) had already experienced market conditions in Italian port-cities (like Trieste and Livorno) and Malta and had already established relationships with foreign merchants. The experience that these relationships bore can be thought of as a form of capital, part and parcel of their trade capital. Social capital incorporates social norms, attitudes, values, language and culture.

The concept of social capital in combination with personal networks has been elaborated on by sociologists and economists. Social capital, in the form of close ties to family and community, may produce benefits by raising utility and by raising profits (by reducing the cost of transacting business due to higher trust). Several studies have examined the impact of social capital on the accumulation of human capital.[7] The analysis often takes for granted

[6] Maria Christina Chatziioannou, "Relations between the State and the Private Sphere: Speculation and Corruption in Nineteenth-century Greece", *Mediterranean Historical Review* XXIII/1 (2008), pp. 13-14.

[7] In his pioneering article, Coleman examines three forms of social capital –expectations and obligations, information channels and social norms – by engaging "new institutional

two behavioural assumptions: either the emigrants maximize individual utility with no concern for the welfare of others, or migration is part of a collective welfare maximization process in which all migration externalities for emigrants and non-emigrants are internalized.[8]

A number of studies have documented the importance of personal relationships in economic activity. When formal arrangements were difficult to access, or too costly, personal relationships provided valuable channels of information, implementing the terms of an agreement, based as they were on familiarity, trust and, if necessary, by punishing a cheating party by excluding him from the flow of regular transactions. In the Ottoman Empire and the Greek State personal relations have strongly determined the evolution of all kinds of private and state institutions. It is well known that cohesive ethnic groups dispersed among many countries have historically been successful at identifying and securing business opportunities. Like the Chinese in East Asia or Greek-Epirotes and Greek-Chiot families in the nineteenth century, or any other of many historical examples, the members of these groups usually share a geographical origin, common language and religion.[9] These groups showed a preference for personal and informal agreements. Their strategies made clear that they were exploiting the personal connections between group members to overcome obstacles to information and adjustment in new environments. The importance of personal networks, which emerges from the firms' operations within the Mediterranean area, makes the case for characterizing networks as intermediate forms of organization, while Ottoman-Greek networks, like those of East Asia, were the only forms of "economic institutions" engaged in international competition.[10]

The organization of trade by different ethnic groups presents a range of common characteristics that have existed for long periods, as is the case of

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economics with sociology"; J. S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology,* supplement, XCIV (1988), pp. 95-120. From the recent bibliography, see Nan Lin, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action (Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences)*, Cambridge University Press 2002.

[8] M. Schiff, "Trade Migration, and Welfare: The Impact of Social Capital", Policy Research Working Paper 2044, The World Bank Development Research Group, Trade, January 1999.

[9] For the Chinese diaspora networks, which present similar characteristics to the Greeks, see A. McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diaspora, 1842 to 1949", *The Journal of Asian Studies* LVIII/2 (1999), pp. 306-337.

[10] The abuse of historical data or evidence by certain economists/economic historians has been disputed; see M. Casson and Mary Rose, "Institutions and the Evolution of Modern Business: Introduction", *Business History* XXXIX/4 (1997), pp. 1-8.

the business structure. Economic migration was part and parcel of trading. The type of the migrant-merchant differs little from that of the entrepreneur, in the sense that both apply strategic choices concerning the place of emigration and the kind of economic activity to be followed in the new place of settlement.[11] The success of the migrant-entrepreneur is not only illustrated by such impressive careers as the Rothschilds of Jewish background, or, in the Greek case, that of S. Sinas in Vienna, originally from the Vlach-populated Moschopolis, or A. Syngros and the Ralli brothers from Chios, but can be identified in strategic choices of medium-sized merchants as well. The central role of certain migrant-entrepreneurs inside the ethnic/religious/family network or community is indisputable, giving a prototype pattern of social and economic behaviour or forming a trajectory to depend on.

The Jews, a diaspora group *par excellence*, established themselves in the London business community as Sephardic and Ashkenazi networks from the seventeenth century. Their business activities were associated primarily with international trade and financial exchanges linked with Jewish networks based in Amsterdam. Eighteenth-century London was the centre of brokering, and the business community developed strong religious and family ties keeping Jews separate. Through a long procedure of political upheavals, economic demands and entrepreneurial ingenuity, Jews cropped up in financial and commercial activities in London and major economic centres in England.[12] Still, the role of leading figures such as the Rothschilds, Francis Pereira, a leading broker of Bank of England shares in the eighteenth century, and a few others shaped entrepreneurial behaviour and patterns affecting other Jewish merchant-entrepreneurs, as well as the mode in which the Jew was represented and perceived in British society.[13]

From the historiographical discussion on diaspora networks, I will touch upon the link between ethnic community, family firms and individual

[11] Maria Christina Chatziioannou, "L'emigrazione commerciale greca dei secoli XVIII –XIX. Una sfida imprenditoriale", *Proposte e ricerche* XLII/1(1999), pp. 22-38.

[12] Ann M. Carlos and Larry Neal, "The Micro-foundations of the Early London Capital Market: Bank of England Shareholders during and after the South Sea Bubble, 1720-25", *Economic History Review* LIX/3 (2006), pp. 498-538.

[13] A number of studies are dedicated to the house of Rothschild: B. Gille, *Histoire de la Maison Rothschild,* 2 vols, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1965-1967; N. Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild:* Vol. I: *Money's Prophets, 1798-1848*, Vol. II: *The World's Banker, 1849-1999*, London: Viking-Penguin, 1998; H. H. Kaplan, *Nathan Mayer Rothschild and the Creation of a Dynasty: The Critical Years, 1806-1816,* Stanford University Press 2006.

entrepreneurs;[14] that is, the legacy of certain persons inside the ethnic group and their impact on the formation of networks and communities. The London Greek community in the nineteenth century was a business community. It was a traders' community from the 1830s up to the 1870s and later on transformed into a group of entrepreneurs linked to the stock exchange and maritime business. Around this hub of Greek merchants and a few Greek diplomats, a number of other individuals were gathered of the same ethnic origin, like scholars, artists and teachers, and to a large extent depended on them. The central role of certain migrant-entrepreneurs inside the ethnic/religious/family network or community is indisputable, giving a prototype pattern of social and economic behaviour or forming a trajectory to depend on.

I wonder whether a more appropriate way in the study of Greek business activity in England is as a corporate entity referring to business groups and business communities, or as networks and individuals. The absence of individuality in many studies of corporate units places the historian in much more anxiety than the economist. While the historian struggles with the rhetorical narratives for individual entrepreneurs and firms, at the same time he has to examine critically exemplary case studies, as well as to evaluate information regarding public appraisal and social reception of the biographical data of the firm in question. How did social capital, local tradition and moral values influence the development, structure and functions of various firms? A combined methodology seems to be appropriate especially in cases where small groups, like the Greeks, are examined and where cultural characteristics were predominant in the formation of networks, community bonds and hierarchies, as well as entrepreneurial behaviour.

All relevant case studies affirm a performance which could not have materialised in a non-diasporic context. Diaspora business activity of the nineteenth century is seen through the lens of its impact on national economies, either that of the home country or that of the host countries. At this point my argument regards formal and informal alliances that could be obtained through the following sources:

[14] Apart from the historical approaches to the Greek diaspora, a recent approach to the Jewish Sephardic diaspora in Livorno offers interesting points: Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

a) Ethnic-religious groups
b) Kinship bonds and family partnerships
c) State support: home country/host country

Now, regarding the case of the relevant Greek case studies, the home country's economy started from 1828, while the main actors of the Greek diaspora had already been present in international economic milieux and had formed trade networks in the Mediterranean from the eighteenth century. A missing subject from the relevant bibliography is the study of British state policy towards small groups of foreign merchants like the Greek Orthodox group, dispersed in small communities or as individuals in England, as well as the role of religious differences in commercial exchanges. A relevant recent historiography relates to other small merchant groups coming from the East/Levant/Orient: the Armenians and the Muslim trade networks in England in the nineteenth century.[15] According to John Scholes' manuscript dated to the 1870s, an informal register of foreign merchants in Manchester, it seems that the Greek migrants there were considered as belonging to the "Orient". Greek, Armenian and Ottoman identity in the trading world of Manchester was defined initially by the place of origin and the main place of transactions. From the early nineteenth century Armenians had been moving to London and Manchester from Constantinople, alongside the Greeks, mainly as silk merchants. It can be assumed that in the early years of settlement Greeks and Armenians led parallel lives in Manchester due to their common origin in the Ottoman Empire.[16] The establishment of the Greek State and the organization of diplomatic and consular representation in England after the 1830s gave a decisive blow to separating the identities of these merchants.

The majority of the Greek merchants who arrived in London, Manchester and Liverpool in the early nineteenth century shared some common characteristics before coming to England:

a) An Ottoman past: the majority were born in regions of the Ottoman Empire, had participated in the external trade of the Ottoman Empire and had acquired trade know-how in Constantinople and Smyrna. The activities

[15] F. Halliday, "The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and Cotton Trade", *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies* XIX/2 (1993), pp. 159-176; Aliye Mataraci, *Trade Letters as Instances of Economy, Ideology and Subjectivity,* Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2005.

[16] Maria Christina Chatziioannou, "Greek Merchants in Victorian England", in Tziovas (ed.), *Greek Diaspora*, pp. 45-60.

of the Greek traders were the link in the chain of the movement of trade from the East to the West.

b) The Italian Peninsula trade experience.

The development of Greek enclave communities in the Italian Peninsula can be examined as the main analytical axis because of its three main characteristics:

1. The sequential advantage: these communities constituted early organized *loci* of Greek emigration outside the Ottoman Empire. We mainly refer to Venice, Livorno and Trieste.[17] We observe, however, that during the eighteenth century there was an increase and intensification of economic activities, directly associated with the Ottoman economy and serving mainly the maritime transit trade. The Mediterranean ports of the Italian Peninsula had open, extra-dependent economies and did not belong to a nation-state. The activities of Greek immigrants were usually the link in transit trade. Nevertheless, the level of their social, economic and cultural exchanges was notably higher than that of the first emigrants' place of origin. Immigrants from different parts of Greece and Ottoman territory met and mingled for the first time. Through family ties and by capitalizing on family relations, since the first corporate core of most economic activities was the family itself, immigrants of different origin coexisted and competed in Italian ports that were *insulae* of a capitalistic economy.

2. The geographical advantage: the Italian Peninsula and especially the ports where Greek immigrants settled lay at the heart of the Mediterranean world, where businesses could penetrate other economic centres, such as Venice-Amsterdam, Venice-Vienna, Trieste-Vienna, Livorno-Marseille, Livorno-London. During the pre-industrial period the expansion of an enterprise was directly associated with geographical distance and means of transport. The commercial connections of Greek communities in the Italian Peninsula encompassed not only the Eastern Mediterranean ports, extending to the Black Sea and the Azov Sea, but also contacts – particularly from the northern part of the Adriatic Sea – with cities and markets in the

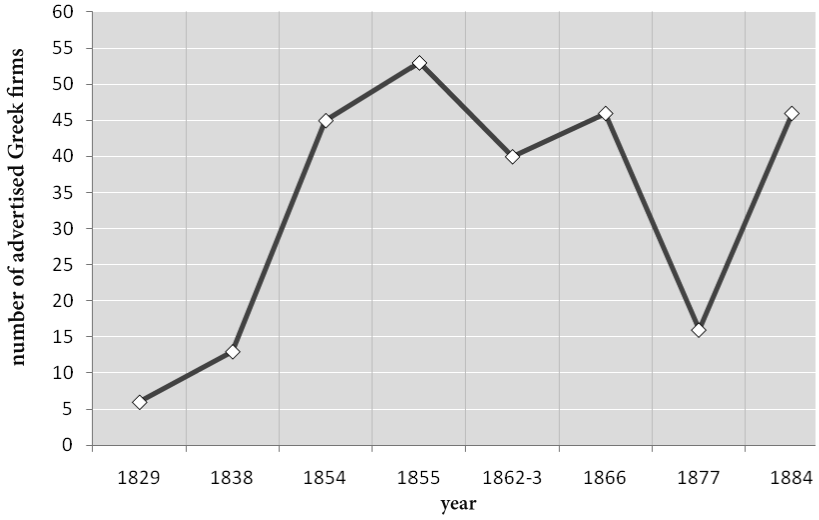
[17] Artemis Xanthopoulou-Kyriakou, *Η ελληνική κοινότητα της Βενετίας (1797-1866)* [The Greek community of Venice (1797-1866)], Thessaloniki 1987; Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *Η ελληνική παροικία της Τεργέστης, 1751-1830* [The Greek community in Trieste, 1751-1830], 2 vols, Athens 1986; Despina Vlami, *Το 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: Themelio, 2000. See also herein the articles by E. Liata and M. Dogo.

Balkans and Central Europe, which produced a complex web of sea and land communications.

3. The cultural advantage: the settlement of Greek immigrants in ports of the Italian Peninsula, as an opportunity for acquiring trade know-how and social experience, became a structural element in the formation of the Greek entrepreneur. In other words, it created trade culture. We can follow the return of expatriates from the Greek communities of the Italian Peninsula to the newly founded Greek State, as well as their resettlement in other European economic centres. Within a dense network of exchange and migration, we can trace the transfer of capital, the transfer and diffusion of economic know-how concerning commercial practice and the organization of commercial enterprise, as well as of fields of technical expertise such as wooden shipbuilding or in the textile industry.

Fig. 1.

Total number of Greek firms registered and advertised in London directories, 1829-1884.



Source: see Table 2.

In Figure 1, based on indexing a series of London directories from 1829 to 1884, we notice that in the period 1854-1884[18] 40-55 Greek firms were registered and advertised alphabetically in their pages, usually under the general category "Merchants". The figure refers mainly to London-based firms. The rather sharp decrease in their number in the 1870s must be considered accidental. This overall small number of firms accords with the known numbers of the Greek population in London for the period 1841-1881, ranging from 167 to 470 people.[19]

The Representative Case Studies

What is the main link that joins Eugenios Eugenides of the twentieth century to the Geroussi and Ralli brothers of the nineteenth century? All of them started their businesses in the Ottoman Empire and especially in the Eastern Mediterranean. They form part of a corpus of representative examples of commercial firms and family capitalism whose entrepreneurship was built on intermediation. The role of intermediary reduced the probability of unsuccessful trade that arose in direct trades. Their efficiency depended on various socio-economic and political variables, but as intermediaries they were more competent in matching buyers and sellers.[20] This competence was based in the Mediterranean area – as their place of origin, place of training and place of production and consumption of commodities. The Mediterranean was the source of their trade capital, that is, the knowledge of how to trade goods on the international market as well as the formation of their social capital.

The Geroussi merchant house[21] is an example of a family network that came into being in Smyrna and Trieste before the Greek Revolution, in 1821, subsequently expanded to the Aegean port of Syros and finally moved to

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[18] For the general utility of these "Yellow Pages" of their time, see P. J. Atkins, *The Directories of London, 1677-1977,* London: Mansell, 1990.

[19] D. Magriotis, "Η δημογραφική ιστορία της ελληνικής εμπορικής παροικίας του Λονδίνου (1837-1881)" [The demographic history of the Greek merchant community of London (1837-1881)], *Ta Historika* III/6, (1986), p. 367.

[20] G. Jones and Mary Rose (eds), *Family Capitalism,* London: Frank Cass, 1993, pp. 1-16; Th. F. Cosimano, "Intermediation", *Economica,* new series, LXIII/249 (1996), pp. 131-143.

[21] Maria Christina Chatziioannou, *Οικογενειακή στρατηγική και εμπορικός ανταγωνισμός. Ο οίκος Γερούση στον 19ο αιώνα* [Family strategy and commercial rivalry: the Geroussi house in the nineteenth century], Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 2003.

Patras, the export port for Greek currants. Its trade capital consisted of liquid assets, a network of personal relationships and the essential know-how that had been acquired through international transactions in Smyrna and Trieste. On this basis the three Geroussi brothers established their family network during the years 1823-1835. They exported agricultural raw commodities (valonia, raisins, silk, sponges, cotton) and imported colonial goods and manufactures (coffee, sugar, lumber boards, nails, paper, ropes, cloth) from Smyrna to Trieste.

The Greek War of Independence (1821-1829) caused political, economic and national upheavals in local and international relations with serious consequences for all Greek merchants trading in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Geroussi brothers, together with other conational merchants, survived wartime implications and found a temporary new commodity to trade: war canons that were sold as scrap in Trieste. Special partnerships were established *ad hoc* in order to organize the diving for, collecting and maritime transport from the south-west Peloponnese to Trieste. The Geroussi brothers participated with a 20% share in 1826 and a 50% share in 1827 for a mixed capital gain of 15-30%. These temporary lucrative opportunities gave extra capital to merchants with meagre financial resources.

The Geroussi house can be classified as a group of medium-sized merchants who were active in the early nineteenth century in the maritime trade of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its activities place it among the merchants who extended the limits of local trade within the Ottoman Empire: it became involved in international transactions through the security of the family network and the Greek communities in the port-cities of Ottoman Smyrna (multi-ethnic) and Hapsburg Trieste (free port) in the early nineteenth-century protected economic milieu, characterized by the absence of a strong entrepreneurial majority.

The family enterprise is one of the most durable structures in Greek society and the economy. Microanalysis of this enterprise reveals general issues, such as: the importance of personal relations in economic transactions; the strategy of trade capital in Ottoman and Greek lands, in combination with the distinctive means of transaction; the complementary operation of shipping and insurance-credit enterprises; and the importance of economic agency in European ports, such as Trieste, the most eastern city of the Italian Peninsula and a precious port of the Hapsburg Empire at that time.

Thus, the organization of the merchant house can be analysed on the basis of the fact that the geographical structure of the family network based in the Mediterranean from the early nineteenth century was the decisive

element of this type of enterprise. In Smyrna, Syros and Trieste the three brothers managed their capital – already in the second generation – through multiple short-lived commercial collaborations, which brought to light a number of merchants whose economic activities ran parallel to the Greek War of Independence and the Russo-Turkish War (1828-1829). Over and above these upheavals, the presence of one member of the Geroussi family in Trieste enabled the house to create a profitable system of intermediation services for merchants in Ottoman and Greek lands.[22] The Geroussi house did not achieve an international commercial presence by default; it upgraded its commercial presence in Europe, with the settling of family members of the third generation in England, taking advantage of an external factor – the first dynamic export product of Greek agriculture, currants – and an internal advantage, the skilful management of their trading capital.

The merchant house of the three brothers was dissolved after they were all established in the Greek city of Patras in 1835-1838. They all acquired land with vineyards and exported currants, starting with their most familiar Western port, Trieste. The next step was to acquire a family agent in London, the largest consumer market for currants after the 1840s. By 1858 Themistocles Geroussi, belonging to the third generation of the family firm, had already established an office in Broad St, which escaped anonymity by appearing in a legal procedure in Guildhall after three robbers broke into the premises.[23]

The Geroussi family is mentioned in London in J. S. C. Morris, *The Business Directory*, 1862-1863, 1866 and 1884. In the period 1858-1880 the third generation of Geroussis already had family agents established in London and Liverpool. In Liverpool they received agricultural goods by means of British agents (Leyland, Collings, Glynn, Burns, Papayanni, Bibby, Potter, Andrew, Melhuish). Their import cargoes from Patras, passing through Sicily (Catania, Messina, Girgenti), consisted of products that they knew well from their Mediterranean experience (currants, valonia, figs, olive oil, nuts, lemons).[24] The geographical diversification of the family firm was accomplished by

[22] The Geroussi house belongs in the typology of international commercial houses, that is to say commercial enterprises that operated simultaneously in two or more countries. S. Chapman, "The International Houses: The Continental Contribution to British Commerce, 1800-1860", *The Journal of European Economic History* VI/1 (1977), pp. 5-9.

[23] *The Morning Chronicle,* no. 28553 (28-6-1858).

[24] Index of Greek merchants/receivers of merchandise in the port of Liverpool compiled every decade from the *Customs Bills of Entry* (1840-1880). I thank Gelina Harlaftis for the use of this source (mf in photocopies) from her private library.

transferring all their trade capital from the Greek State and focusing on a major Greek export commodity with a big consumer market; England was consuming foodstuffs and raw materials in increasing numbers throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, a number of Greek merchants of the same or larger funds as the Geroussis would conclude their entrepreneurial itinerary from the Mediterranean in England in order to supply this demand.

Examining the above-mentioned London directories from 1829 to 1884 there is one firm, Ralli Bros, and a family name, Ralli, that prevails throughout the examined period (see Table 1).

Table 1

Ralli firms/number of annual references in London directories, 1829-1884

No.	Ralli firms	Number of references
1	Ralli, A.	1
2	Ralli, Antonio & Co.	4
3	Ralli Bros	8
4	Ralli, Const. & Sons	1
5	Ralli, Const.	1
6	Ralli, Pandia Theodore	4
7	Ralli, Theodore	1
8	Ralli, Theodore & J.	1
9	Ralli & Mavrojani	6
10	Ralli & Sons	1
11	Ralli & Tamvako	1

The Ralli brothers held a central role in the London Greek community. The fact that the Ralli were among the earliest Greek arrivals in London, the most renowned and successful paradigm, as well as an enduring focal point for other Greek migrants, often leads to a misleading view of the Greeks and the Ralli brothers as identical in England. There is also confusion of people with the same name and surname, for example at least three Pandia Ralli were active in business at the same time. Nonetheless, all of them were born in the Ottoman Empire before the advent of the Greek Revolution and dispersed in Mediterranean trading centres – Constantinople, Malta, Livorno and Marseille – before establishing themselves in London around 1818. One of their first

business acquaintances in London was Nathan Meyer Rothschild. The reason for this was to open a credit account with his house in the new, promising market of London. The circular letter bears the date London, 1 January 1819: "We beg to inform you, that we have this day formed an establishment in the City, under the firm Ralli & Petrocochino. At foot, you have the signature of our mr. Giovanni Ralli, to which we crave your attention, our Eustratio Petrocochino being absent his signature will follow in due course." Indeed, in a later circular of 17 May 1819, together with Petrocochino's signature, followed an indication of their nexus to the East: "You will see by the enclosed Letter, that our respective houses of Constantinople are answerable, and guarantees for all transactions in our Establishment in this City." The two partners of the London firm participated in two respective merchant houses in Constantinople: Pandia Jean Ralli & Cie and Petrocochino & Argenti.[25] As far as the continuation of their Constantinople branch offices is concerned, it seems that, through commercial *Annuaires* of the city, at least a Ralli Han (building), several other buildings and some members of the family were trading there in the period 1881-1901.[26] It is difficult at the moment to identify the late nineteenth-century Ralli in Constantinople, but their trades were the same as elsewhere throughout the nineteenth century: they were merchants of foodstuffs (cereals, flour, salted fish) and iron and metals, as well as bankers. One of them possessed there the capital of 25,000 Turkish liras (575,000 francs) in 1890.

Unfortunately, the Ralli brothers' business records were destroyed during World War II, so details of their trade not only are scarce, but also get mixed in a labyrinth of entrepreneurial actions of a multi-branched family with similar names. It appears that their earliest trade was in silk, which no doubt included exports of raw silk from Constantinople to England. The Ralli then took a strong trade interest in the export of Russian grain from the Black Sea ports to England. Return cargoes to the Black Sea and the Middle East were British manufactured goods (cottons).[27]

From the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, Greeks and Greek-speaking subjects of the dissolving Ottoman Empire continued to migrate to England as merchant-entrepreneurs. Some of them became employees in the long-lasting and prosperous Greek merchant house of the Ralli brothers.

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[25] Rothschild Archive, London, A. XI/112/43.

[26] See Table 3.

[27] S. D. Chapman, "Ralli, Pantia Stephen (1793-1865)", "Ralli, Stephen Augustus (1829-1902)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press 2004; online edition, January 2008.

This firm, one of the best examples of multinational companies, constitutes a distinctive example in business history of an international company of Greek origin.[28] I would also suggest that the main connecting node in the Greek communities and networks in England, as well as an essential agent with the Greek State, were the Ralli, who employed a number of Greek migrants to work in their branch offices and provided information not only to their own entrepreneurial network but also to the Greek State.

The German population in London rose from 16,082 in 1861 to 27,290 in 1911, while the Italians counted some 10,000 people by the dawn of the twentieth century.[29] A large number of all these foreigners were employed in various middle-class occupations. There is a point of difference with these numerically strong foreign communities, as the Greek group configured a predominantly business community whose main activity up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the provisioning of foodstuffs and raw materials to the British Empire. This economic procedure was well known from their past experience within the borders of the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg Empires. The most successful of them, like the Ralli, diversified into a global network under British governance, in direct response to a British-centred globalism.[30]

The Ralli pathway throughout the nineteenth century reveals family adaptations and hierarchical leadership within the Greek community embedded in the London business community. The liberal British political and economic climate offered conditions conducive to business competition for such newcomers as the Germans and Greeks. Competition with other foreign communities, as well as inside the same ethnic-religious group, developed mostly in the field of business activities, and the most successful and enduring enterprises were to go through a process of social and cultural integration into bourgeois British life.

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[28] G. Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals: British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 24-25.

[29] R. Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*, London: Abacus, 2004, p. 185.

[30] "Anglobalization" is a term utilized in international politics referring to British imperialism, used by the economic historian Niall Ferguson.

Table 2
Greek firms in London, 1828-1884

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm[31]	Year(s) of operation	Source[32]
1	*Adamidi, C. R.*	MRC	1838	2
2	*Agelastos, Petrocochinos & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
3	*Agelastos, A. & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
4	*Alexiadi, Delta & Co.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
5	*Anagnostopulos, Georgio*	MRC	1884	10
6	*Argenti, Sechiari & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1855	3 4 5
7	*Athanasiu, Geo.*	MRC	1884	10
8	*Avgerino & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
9	*Boyazoglu, Nicholas*	GMRC-SHP MRC	1877 1884	8 10
10	*Balli, Alexander*	MRC GMRC-SHP MRC	1866 1877 1884	7 8 10
11	*Balli, Alexander & Co.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
12	*Balli, Xenophon*	MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866 1884	3 4 6 7 10
13	*Baltazzi, J. Angel*	MRC	1828	1

[31] MRC = *Merchant*, SHP = *Shipper*, GMRC-SHP = *General Merchant Shipper*, CBK = *Cotton Brokers*

[32] 1829 *Robson's Guide for London = 1*
1838 *Pigot and Co. Directory and Topography, London = 2*
1854 *Watkins's London Directory = 3*
1855 *Post Office London Trades' Directory = 4*
1855 Fr. Kelly, *Post Office London Directory = 5*
1862-1863 J. S. C. Morris, *The Business Directory = 6*
1866 J. S. C. Morris, *The Business Directory = 7*
1877 *Post Office Directory of the Merchants and Manufacturers of the United Kingdom,* London, Kelly & Co. = *8*
1880 *Kelly's Directory* (Liverpool) = *9*
1884 J. S. C. Morris, *Business Directory = 10*

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
14	*Baltazzi Sons & Co.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
15	*Bolomachi, Adamantio J. M. & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
16	*Buba Bros*	MRC	1854	3
17	*Cambouroglou, Leno & Co.*	MRC	1855	4
18	*Carajanaki, Demetrius G.*	MRC	1866	7
19	*Caralambi, E.*	MRC	1854	3
20	*Caralli, Geo J.*	MRC	1866	7
21	*Carati, Antonio Alexander*	MRC MRC MRC	1866 1854 1855	7 3 4
22	*Cassaveti & Co.*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1884	6 10
23	*Cassaveti Bros & Co.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
24	*Cassavetis, D. G. & Co.*	MRC	1838	2
25	*Castanos, Geo*	SHP	1877	8
26	*Cavafy, George John*	MRC	1854	3
27	*Cavafy, George John & Co.*	MRC MRC	1855 1866	4 7
28	*Cefala, Spiridione G.*	MRC MRC MRC	1855 1862-1863 1866	4 6 7
29	*Chiriaco & Co.*	MRC	1854	3
30	*Christodulo & Sugdury*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
31	*Coronios, T. J. & Co.*	MRC	1855	4
32	*Coucoulas, Ach. & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
33	*Couvela, Demos*	MRC	1854	3
34	*Couvela, Demos & Co.*	MRC	1855	4
35	*Cuppa, Yerassimo Z.*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1884	6 10
36	*Damala, Emanuel*	GMRC-SHP MRC	1877 1884	8 10
37	*Deliyanni, Nicholas*	MRC	1884	10

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
38	*Demetrio di A. Sons*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1855	3 4 5
39	*Eustathius, El. & Co.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
40	*Eustratiadi, A.*	MRC	1866	7
41	*Fachiri, Andrew & Son*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
42	*Fachiri, N. P.*	MRC	1866	7
43	*Franghiadi Bros*	MRC MRC	1828 1838	1 2
44	*Franghiadi & Rodocanachi*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866	3 4 6 7
45	*Frangopoulo*	MRC	1862-1863	6
46	*Frangopoulo, Agelasto & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
47	*Galatti, John*	MRC	1866	7
48	*Galatti, Pandia S.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
49	*Galatti, Sergio*	MRC	1862-1863	6
50	*Gedeon & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
51	*Georgacopoulo, Alex*	MRC	1862-1863	6
52	*Georgacopulo, Panagopulo & Co.*	MRC-SHP MRC	1877 1884	8 10
53	*Georgiadi, Demetrius*	MRC MRC	1855 1862-1863	4 6
54	*Geralopoulo, Constantino*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863	3 4 6
55	*Gerussi, Aristomenes M.*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1884	6 10
56	*Gerussi, Themistocles M.*	MRC	1866	7
57	*Giallis, John*	MRC	1866	7
58	*Glavkopidi Bros*	MRC	1862-1863	6
59	*Ionides & Co.*	MRC MRC	1838 1862-1863	2 6
60	*Ionides, Sgouta & Co.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
61	*Lapoulide & Co.*	MRC MRC	1828 1838	1 2
62	*Lascaridi & Co.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
63	*Lascaridi, G. P.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
64	*Lutrari, Michel & Co.*	MRC MRC	1866 1862-1863	7 6
65	*Matzas, Constantine*	MRC	1866	7
66	*Mavro, Basili*	MRC	1866	7
67	*Mavro, Valieri & Co.*	GMRC-SHP MRC	1877 1884	8 10
68	*Mavrogordato, Emanuel*	MRC	1884	10
69	*Mavrogordato, John*	MRC	1828	1
70	*Mavrogordato, John Michael*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1855	3 4 5
71	*Mavrogordato, M. F.*	MRC	1854	3
72	*Mavrogordato, M. F. & Co.*	MRC MRC	1855 1862-1863	4 6
73	*Meimaroglu, Hercules*	MRC	1866	7
74	*Melas Bros*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866	3 4 6 7
75	*Messinesi, Aritomenes*	MRC	1884	10
76	*Negroponte, P. C.*	MRC	1838	2
77	*Negroponte, S. J.*	MRC	1866	7
78	*Nicolopulo & Chrissoveloni*	MRC	1862-1863	6
79	*Nicolopulo Bros*	MRC	1866	7
80	*Nicolopulo, D. & Sons*	MRC	1884	10
81	*Nicopulo, George & Co.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
82	*Pana, Foca, Cremmidi & Co.*	MRC	1854	3
83	*Pana, Cremmidi & Co.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
84	*Pappacalo & Bridge*	CBK	1880	9
85	*Papadachi Bros*	MRC	1884	10
86	*Paspati, M. F. & Co.*	MRC	1884	10

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
87	*Pervanoglu, John A.*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
88	*Petrides, Demetrius N. & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
89	*Petrocochino & Co.*	MRC	1854	3
90	*Petrocochino, Alex*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
91	*Petrocochino Bros*	MRC	1884	10
92	*Pezzali, D. S.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
93	*Polimeni, A.*	MRC	1884	10
94	*Pontifex & Wood*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8
95	*Protopazzi & Co.*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8
96	*Protopazzi Bros*	MRC	1884	10
97	*Psara, Paul N. & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
98	*Psychari, Anthony*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
99	*Psycha, Edward*	MRC	1855	5
100	*Ralli, A.*	MRC	1838	2
101	*Ralli, Antonio & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866	3 4 6 7
102	*Ralli Bros*	MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC	1828 1838 1854 1855 1855 1862-1863 1866 1884	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 10
103	*Ralli, Const. & Sons*	MRC	1855	4
104	*Ralli, Const.*	MRC	1862-1863	6
105	*Ralli, Pandia Theodore*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1838 1854 1855 1855	2 3 4 5
106	*Ralli, Theodore*	MRC	1866	7
107	*Ralli, Theodore & J.*	MRC	1862-1863	6

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
108	*Ralli & Mavrojani*	MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC	1838 1854 1855 1862-1863 1866 1884	2 3 4 6 7 10
109	*Ralli & Sons*	MRC	1854	3
110	*Ralli & Tamvako*	MRC	1828	1
111	*Rizo Sons & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
112	*Rodocanachi, Emanuel*	MRC	1866	7
113	*Rodocanachi, John*	MRC	1884	10
114	*Rodocanachi, Leone & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866 1855 1884	3 4 6 7 5 10
115	*Rodocanachi, Peter P. & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866 1884	6 7 10
116	*Rodocanachi Sons*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866	6 7
117	*Rodocanachi Sons & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1855 1884	3 4 5 10
118	*Sagrandi, Pandia Eustratio*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1855	3 4 5
119	*Scaramanga & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
120	*Scaramanga, G.*	MRC	1884	10
121	*Scaramanga, George Emanuel*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
122	*Schilizzi & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866 1884	3 4 6 7 10
123	*Schilizzi & Vuros*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
124	*Schilizzi Bros*	MRC	1884	10

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
125	*Schilizzi, Theodore F.*	MRC	1884	10
126	*Sechiari Bros & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
127	*Sevastopulo, Constantine & Mark*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866	6 7
128	*Sevastopulo, D. S. & Co.*	GMRC-SHP MRC	1877 1884	8 10
129	*Sevastopulo, Demetrio*	MRC	1866	7
130	*Sevastopulo, Mark*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
131	*Sinanides, Paris*	MRC MRC	1854 1855	3 4
132	*Sotirichos, Const.*	MRC	1854	3
133	*Spartali & Co.*	MRC MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866 1884	6 7 10
134	*Spartali & Lascaridi*	MRC	1855	4
135	*Spartali, Theodoridi & Lascaridi*	MRC	1838	2
136	*Spiliadi, Demetrio*	MRC	1884	10
137	*Spiropulo, George Emanuel*	MRC GMRC-SHP	1884 1877	10 8
138	*Tamvaco & Micrulachi*	MRC	1838	2
139	*Tamvaco, Micrulachi & Mavrogordato*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863 1866	3 4 6 7
140	*Theodoridi, John & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
141	*Triandi Bros*	MRC	1884	10
142	*Tzocanaki & Co.*	MRC	1884	10
143	*Tzocanaki, Demetrius*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8
144	*Vagliano Bros*	MRC MRC GMRC-SHP MRC	1862-1863 1866 1877 1884	6 7 8 10
145	*Valaority, Pericles*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8
146	*Xenos, Aristides & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
147	*Zanzi, Alex*	MRC	1855	4

No.	Name of firm	Type of firm	Year(s) of operation	Source
148	*Zarifi Bros*	MRC MRC GMRC-SHP MRC	1854 1855 1877 1884	3 4 8 10
149	*Zarifi Bros & Co.*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866	6 7
150	*Zerlendi, Nicholas M.*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8
151	*Ziffo & Co.*	MRC	1838	2
152	*Ziffo Sons*	MRC	1884	10
153	*Ziffo Sons & Co.*	MRC MRC	1862-1863 1866	6 7
154	*Zizinia Bros*	MRC MRC MRC	1854 1855 1862-1863	3 4 6
155	*Zizinia & Co.*	MRC	1866	7
156	*Zygomalas, Nicholas George*	MRC MRC MRC MRC	1854 1884 1862-1863 1866	3 10 6 7
157	*Zygomalas, Nicholas George & Co.*	GMRC-SHP	1877	8

Table 3[33]

Ralli merchants in Istanbul (1881-1883)

1. Ralli (A. S.) et Cie, banquiers, Ralli Han, R. Fermeledjiler, négociants en fers et métaux, R. Sirkédji Iskélessi, S.
2. Ralli (Antoniadis), négociant en farine et blés, R. Kilidj Ali Pacha, 32, G.
3. Ralli (Const.), Hasta Hané Han, 43, G. – Dom: R. Télégraphe, 14, P.
4. Ralli (R.), local Barry.
5. Ralli (D.), négociant, Kourchoum Han, 14, G.

Ralli merchants in Istanbul in 1891

1. Ralli et Cie NC, maison de banque et de courtage. Société Française en commandite simple au capital élevé le 1er Mars 1890 à livres turques 25,000 (575,000 francs), Mehmed Ali Pacha Han, 16, 1er étage, G. – Dom: R. Syra Selvi, 37, P.
2. Ralli (A. S.) et Cie, NC., banquiers, négociants en fers et métaux, R. Sirkédji Iskélessi, S.
3. Ralli (Antoniadis), courtier en cereles, Haviar Han, 10, G.
4. Ralli (D.), negociant, Kourchoum Han, 14, G.
5. Ralli (Dimitrio), cassier de la Maison Stefanovitch, R. Mezarlik, 2, P.
6. Ralli (Etienne), secretaire du club de Constantinople, P.
7. Ralli (Mme H. D.), R. Kiosk Imperial, 63, a Arnaoutkeuy.
8. Ralli (Stephani), poissons sales en gros, R. Meihame, 26, 28, S.

Ralli merchants in Istanbul in 1901

1. Ralli (Const. D.) banquier, Yacoub Han, 3, G. – Dom R. Syra Selvi, 37, P.
2. Ralli (Dimitro), caissier de la Maison Stéfanovich.
3. Ralli (Mme E. A.), propriétaire, R. Aïnaly Tchechmé, Maison Ralli, 8, P.
4. Ralli (Etienne), membre du club de Constantinople. – Dom: à Moda, Kadikeuy.
5. Ralli (L.), propriétaire, R. Agha Hamam, 3, P.
6. Ralli (Famille), R. Tchakmak, 25, P.
7. Ralli (Sava), habits indigènes, R. Bit Bazar, 49, S.
8. Ralli (L.), inspecteur à la dette publique ottomane. – Dom: à Halki.

[33] I assembled these data with the kind assistance of Dr Aliye Mataraci. *L'indicateur ottoman annuaire almanach de l'industrie, de l'administration et de la magistrature*, 2ème année, Constantinople: Cervati Frères & D. Fatzea, 1881; *L'indicateur ottoman illustré. Annuaire-almanach du commerce, de l'industrie, de l'administration et de la magistrature*, Constantinople: Cervati Frères & D. Fatzea, 1883; *Annuaire oriental du commerce, de l'industrie, de l'administration et de la magistrature*, Constantinople: Cervati Frères & Cie, 1891; *Annuaire oriental du commerce, de l'industrie, de l'administration et de la magistrature*, Constantinople: The Annuaire Oriental & Printing Company Limited, 1901.