

Entrepreneurship and relational capital
in a Levantine Context:
The Abbott of Salonica (18th–19th century)

Despina Vlami

Abstract

The paper explores the entrepreneurial strategy and tactics of a British merchant who traded in the port of Salonica from the late 18th to the first decades of the 19th century. Bartholomew Edward Abbott was a Levant Company's Freeman who was also involved in the Company's internal affairs as an appointed interim consul of the Company's factory in Salonica. Abbott's strategy intertwined with his family life and relatives and with his rights, duties and commitments as a Freeman. The origin and performance of his relational capital —comprising kin, Freeman, and businessmen from the local society— shows how his activity was sustained by overlapping and, at times, opposing identities. His case allows us to get another glimpse inside a great chartered trade company and examine, even briefly, its operation and corporate identity. Through the brief study of the connection between the overlying administrative mechanism, the apparatus of officials appointed in the factories and the Company's Freeman, it is possible to get an idea of the barriers distinguishing the activity of a Freeman from that of an independent entrepreneur, the aspirations of a merchant from those of an officeholder of the Company.

Keywords: British trade; Chartered Companies; Levant Company; Entrepreneurship; Relational Capital; Ottoman port-cities; Salonica; Bartholomew Edward Abbott; 18th–19th century

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Introduction

In 1715, the English Levant Company —the regulated chartered trade company that since the 16th century had obtained from the English crown the right to trade exclusively in the Ottoman Empire¹— opened an agency/factory in the port of Salonica and sent Richard Kemble, an English merchant from Smyrna, on the spot to assume the duties of its representative and consul.² By that time the Company was already represented in various commercial centers and ports of Eastern Mediterranean and its major factories operated in Constantinople, Smyrna and Aleppo.³ The delayed addition of Salonica in the constellation of the Company's representations was due, first, to the Company's policy to check the excessive expansion of its transactions and contain enterprise to specific geographical areas, and second, to the opposition of the English merchants of Smyrna who feared the consequences that the establishment of an English factory in Salonica might have upon their turnover.⁴ These reasons were, apparently, not sufficient to put off English business interests in the port for long and in the beginning of the 18th century the Salonica factory was founded. It remained open until the dissolution of the Levant Company in 1825 when all the British consulates in the Mediterranean were put under the authority of the Foreign Office.⁵

Throughout its history the Levant Company's factory in Salonica comprised five or six steady members.⁶ The English merchant Bartholomew Edward Ab-

¹ For the history of the Levant Company see M. Epstein, *The early history of the Levant Company*, London, 1908 and the classic opus of A. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, London, 1935. Also G. Ambrose, *The Levant Company, 1640–1753*, unpublished PhD, University of Oxford, 1935. On the organization of the Levant Company see E. Lipson, *Economic History of England: The age of mercantilism*, vol. II, London 1931, pp. 335–344. For an early history of Anglo-Ottoman relations see D. Goffman, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire 1642–1660*, Washington, 1998.

² See D. Vlami, “Vretaniko Emporio kai Diplomatia stin Anatoliki Mesogio: I Levant Company sti Thessaloniki, 1792–1825” (in Greek), *Mesaionika kai Nea Ellinika*, vol. 8, 2008, pp. 143–268.

³ A. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 5. For the Aleppo factory see R. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the eighteenth century*, London, 1967; for the Smyrna factory see S. P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey: Paul Rycout at Smyrna, 1667–1678*, Oxford, 1989, and extensive reference in the E. Frangakis-Syrett, *The commerce of Smyrna in the eighteenth century (1700–1820)*, Athens, 1992, pp. 76–85. Another operational center of the Company was established in Patras where a joint-stock venture undertook the valuable trade of currants. This “company inside the Company” dissolved in the 17th century, but a British general consulate of Peloponnesos operated in the city-port until the 19th century, in A. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 71. For the trade operations of the English merchants in the area of Ionian Islands and Peloponnese and the long lasting rivalry between English and Venitians see M. Fusaro, “L' uva passa di Zante e Cefalonia,” paper presented in the *Convegno Internazionale di Studio: Il Mediterraneo centro-orientale tra vecchie e nuove egemonie. Trasformazioni economiche, sociali ed istituzionali nelle Isole Ionie dal declino della Serenissima all'avvento delle potenze atlantiche (secoli XVII–XVIII)*, Venice, December 1996.

⁴ A. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 122 and D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–167.

⁵ A. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁶ This is considered a poor number compared with the number of factors participating in the Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo factories at certain periods of time. In 1661 the Smyrna factory counted 49 members, 36 in 1704, 6 in 1794, 8 in 1813 and up to 25 in 1821. The factory in Constantinople comprised around 25 members in the 17th century, 5 in 1794, 5–6 between 1806–1813, see A. Wood, *passim*. 50 factors were established in Aleppo in 1662 and only 2 in 1780, in R. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89. In 1804 Francis Charnaud, Peter Chasseaud, Bartholomew Edward Abbott, John Pyburn and George Frederic Abbott

bott was one of them.⁷ Arriving to the city from Constantinople in early 1770s according to an unconfirmed source, Abbott received from London twenty ballots of cotton loaded on the vessel Resolution of Captain Currie in 1777.⁸ Founder of a rich and famous merchant family that dominated in the economic and social life of the Ottoman city-port from the late 18th century until the early 20th century,⁹ Abbott was considered the “*father of the Levant Company*” in Salonica by his contemporary traveler Daniel Edward Clarke.¹⁰

In the Levant Company’s Archive kept in the National Archives in London, documents concerning the life, activity and assets of the British merchant are held in an individual file under the heading “*Various Documents relative to Disputes between Mr. Consul Charnaud of Salonica and the Heirs of the late Mr. Abbott. Held at the disposal of Mr. Charnaud. His letter answered 6 May 1819.*”¹¹ In the following paper this valuable information, combined with references to the Company’s consular correspondence, has been studied to allow an investigation of the entrepreneurial performance and strategy of a Levant Company’s Freeman who, incidentally, was deeply involved in the Company’s internal affairs. Abbott was, in fact, entrusted various duties and offices by the Company, mostly in times of crisis, and had established a close, and often personal, relationship with many Company officials.

The Abbott documentation reveals some interesting aspects of the personal business tactics of a British merchant who traded in Salonica from the late 18th century to the first decades of the 19th century. The organization of his enterprise, his operations and some of his methods, legitimate or disputable, are partly depicted. It is also possible to perceive the way Abbott’s strategy intertwined, first, with his family life and relatives and second, with his rights, duties and commitments as a Levant Company Freeman. The origin and performance of his relational capital,¹² comprising Freemen and businessmen of the local

signed a petition of the Salonica factory to the Levant Company for the employment of a reverent, in D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁷ C. A. Vacalopoulos, “Contribution à l’histoire de la colonie européenne de Thessalonique vers la fin du XVIII siècle,” *Makedonika*, vol. 12, 1972, p. 183–200; also Aggeliki Metallinou, *Palaia Thessaloniki* (in Greek), vol. 1, Thessaloniki, 1939, p. 46, pp. 170–172. On the Abbott family see also A. Vacalopoulos, “Istorika stoixeia gia tin oikogeneia Abbott tis Thessalonikis” (in Greek), *Makedonika*, vol. 22, 1982, pp. 214–221.

⁸ National Archives, State Papers 105/137, pp. 205–205a. Henceforth abbreviated to NA, SP.

⁹ M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430–1950*, New York, 2007, p.155–158. According to Mazower, Jackie Abbott, the grand son of Bartholomew Abbott, was the real architect of the family’s rise in the mid 19th century. Jackie, who was British by nationality and Greek by religion, became a famous money lender and Sadik Pasha’s chief local banker.

¹⁰ D. E. Clarke, *Travels in various countries of Europe, Asia and Africa: Part the Second, Greece, Egypt and the Holy Land*, Section the First, London 1812, pp. 364 and ff.

¹¹ NA, SP 105/137 f. 148r–306v.

¹² Relational capital has been defined as all relationships —market relationships, power relationships and cooperation— established between firms, institutions and people, which stem from a strong sense of belonging and a highly developed capacity of cooperation typically of culturally similar people and institutions, in R. Capello & A. Faggian, “Collective Learning and Relational Capital in Local Innovation Processes,” *Regional Studies*, vol. 39, 2005, pp. 75–87. It is a category of Intellectual Capital or Intangible Assets that is created and maintained by having, nurturing and managing good relationships with clients, suppliers employees, governments, other stakeholders and even competitors. Elements can include the value of things as: the networks that an organization is part of, the strategic alliances, joint ventures, coalitions a firm has formed, relationships with government agencies and other stakeholders. The value of relational capital is based on both the sheer presence of

society —partners and creditors, collaborators and “friends”— shows how his entrepreneurial activity was sustained by overlapping, and sometimes opposing, identities. As much as these identities brought forth business, they nevertheless impeded Abbott’s exclusive connection with a strong corporate identity that would guarantee his conformity to the Levant Company rules and determine his strategy of trade.

The Abbott enterprises: transactions and interactions

Salonica had been an important maritime and commercial center since the beginning of the Ottoman period: it was an intermediary station in the complex network of commodity transport routes that interweaved the Ottoman Empire linking the Middle East with Rumelia, the Balkans, the Black Sea and North Africa, a depôt of the agricultural production produced in its vast fertile hinterland, and most importantly, a maritime city directly linked with Central Europe —the Habsburg Empire in particular. Although it never surpassed Smyrna, the major Ottoman emporium, in terms of bulk of activity, Salonica retained its position as an important port of call for both long distance and coastal trade.¹³ French and Dutch were established in the city since the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Until the late eighteenth century Venice, Ragusa, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Spain and Prussia were also represented there.¹⁵ As one of the favorite outposts of French trade in the Mediterranean, Salonica became a frequent stop over of western European vessels loaded with textiles, luxury and colonial products that were exchanged with grains, cotton, tobacco, silk and wax.¹⁶ French business and ways outshined all other western European presence in the city particularly during the 18th century when it seems that the port caught English attention. The first English merchants who are known to have business transactions in the port —long before the arrival of the Levant Company on the spot— operated under the protection of the French consul.¹⁷ In 1726 the Russian monk Barskij was impressed by the number and the variety of people who arrived to Salonica “from Constantinople, Egypt, Venice, France, by English trading vessels and

certain relationships and on the capability to handle and manage the relationships well, see in *12Manage Dictionary*, <http://www.12manage.com> (accessed March 2009).

¹³ See N. Svoronos, *Le Commerce de Salonique au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1956. Also for the 19th century, see E. Themopoulou, *Salonique, 1800–1875: Conjoncture économique et mouvement commercial*, Thèse de Doctorat de l’ Université de Paris I, t. 4, 1994. Also C. A. Vacalopoulos, “Le commerce de Salonique 1796–1840 d’ après les rapports inédits des consuls européens,” *Makedonika*, vol. 16, 1976, pp. 73–173. For a concise history of the city, see the already mentioned M. Mazower, *op. cit.*, and A. Vacalopoulos, *History of Thessaloniki*, Thessaloniki, 1978. For a history of the Jews in Salonica, see J. Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, 7 v., Paris, 1936. For the commercial relations between Salonica and Smyrna in the 18th century, see N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, p. 244 and E. Frangakis-Syrett, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁴ N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, pp. 170, 210.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–239. Also S. Lambros, “To en Thessaloniki Venetikon proxeneion kai to meta tis Makedonias emporion ton Venetvn” (in Greek), *Makedonikon Imerologion*, 1912, pp. 227–241.

¹⁶ N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–338.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 195–198; M. Lascaris, *Salonique à la fin du XVIII siècle*, Athens, 1939, p. 11.

by land.”¹⁸ For English traders Salonica became important as an intermediate maritime station in the complex network of maritime and inland routes that developed through and around Smyrna; it was also a common itinerary when crisis in the Mediterranean prevented transport and necessitated the location of alternative routes to continental Europe.¹⁹ A picture of the British trade in Salonica in the late 18th century is provided by the French diplomat Félix de Beaujour who in his *Tableau du Commerce de la Grèce formé d’après une année moyenne, depuis 1787 jusqu’ en 1797* appears very critical of the Levant Company sustaining that its organization and monopoly held back free trade.²⁰ According to Beaujour this was probably the reason why in the late 18th century only two British factors resided in the city-port importing textiles (mostly woolen Londres and mohair, cashmeres, linen, and muslins), lead, tin plates, watches, jewelry and colonial goods such as sugar, coffee, indigo, pepper and ginger.²¹ It was during that period that Bartholomew Edward Abbott arrived to the city and associated —although the exact date of this association has not been retrieved yet— with his friend and relative Peter Chasseaud in the Abbott & Chasseaud enterprise. The company imported textiles, cotton yarn, sugar, earthenware, silverware, and other British products and exported tobacco, sponges, grains.²² It also participated into joint ventures with the George Frederic Abbott & Co., set up by Abbott’s son together with the Greeks Theodore Choidas, Niccola Zade and Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou.²³ Abbott & Chasseaud had also business transactions with Lee & Brant of London and Smyrna, Roux Frères & Cie of Marseille, Edward Hayes & Co.,²⁴ Fletcher & Co.,²⁵ M. Flitoker and J. L. Gout in Malta.²⁶

¹⁸ K. D. Mertzios, *Mnimeia Makedonikis Istorias* (in Greek), Thessaloniki, 1947, p. 453, cited by M. Mazower, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

¹⁹ D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, pp. 47–49, N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, pp. 195–198, and E. Themopoulou, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–143.

²⁰ Many British shared this opinion and it was the ideas of free trade that ultimately brought to the dissolution of the Company in 1825, see D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, p. 163. For an interesting comparison between the Levant Company and other similar chartered companies founded between the 16th and the 17th century with modern multinational enterprises of the 19th and 20th centuries, see A. M. Carlos-St. Nicholas, “Giants of an Earlier Capitalism: the Chartered Companies as Modern Multinationals,” *The Business History Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, Autumn 1988, pp. 398–419.

²¹ Félix de Beaujour, *Tableau du Commerce de la Grèce, [...] 1787–1797*, vol. II, Paris, 1800 (translation in Greek, Athens, 1974, pp. 169–189).

²² NA, SP 105/134 f. 31r–58r, SP 105/136, f. 119r–121v.

²³ Caftangioglou was George Frederic Abbott’s father in law from his first marriage. For the life and the activity of the famous Greek Ottoman merchant see E. Hekimoglou, “Ioannis Gouta Caftangioglou[...],” *Grigorios Palamas*, no. 758, 1995, pp. 407–464. Also M. Mazower, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

²⁴ The company had offices in London, Malta and Smyrna. It traded oil, grain, wine, rice, currants, tobacco, soap, shawl and Indian textiles. In 1812 John Charmont was the director of the Malta office; see M. D’ Angelo, *Mercanti Inglesi a Malta 1800–1824*, Milano, 1990, pp. 63, 64, 75, 79.

²⁵ This was one of the most important British enterprises in Malta until 1820. Mathew Fletcher and Alexander Grant were two of the associates. The company traded carpets, wool, pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg, salted meat and even women’s hats, paper flowers, books and opium. Mathew Fletcher together with Swinton C. Holland and William Higgens were associated in the Holland & Co., *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 92.

²⁶ J. L. Gout arrived to Malta in 1807–1808 and remained there for some years. He traded flour, *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64, 79.

Partners and Creditors

Two documents belonging in the Abbott documentation depict some aspects of the entrepreneurial strategy and transactions of Bartholomew Edward Abbott: an arbitrary sentence emanated by a magistrate set up by the consul of Austria in Salonica Count Giuseppe de Choch following a petition of Peter Chasseaud on 28th November 1811²⁷ and a liquidation plan of the B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud signed by the two partners on 31st December 1816.²⁸ More information on the family's transactions is provided by two acts of sequestration against George Frederic Abbott. The one was presented by his ex father-in-law Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou²⁹ and the other by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz.³⁰

Abbott's participation in the Abbott & Chasseaud totaled two thirds of the company's capital and Chasseaud's one third. According to the association contract that had been signed by the two partners, Abbott would have taken over the management of the enterprise. Members of the Abbott family had invested money to the company and the major creditor among them was Sarah Abbott, Bartholomew Edward's wife.³¹ In 1816 the capital of Abbott & Chasseaud amounted to 222.893 $\frac{49}{120}$ piastre. From this capital 69.904 $\frac{111}{120}$ piastre had been invested by Sarah Abbott. Sara's credit had been divided among the two partners: a sum of 46.943 $\frac{20}{120}$ piastre was allotted to her husband and 22.961 $\frac{91}{120}$ piastre was allotted to Peter Chasseaud. Two other important creditors, according to the liquidation plan of the company, were George Frederic Abbott and Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou. The first had advanced to his father Bartholomew Edward 36.570 $\frac{56}{120}$ piastre, and the second 22.624 $\frac{24}{120}$ piastre. Abbott's daughter Annetta Parsy had deposited to the company her dowry of 10.000 piastre while well-known members of the Jewish and Greek merchant community of Salonica had invested in the company minor sums, namely Bohor Covo (15.374 $\frac{113}{120}$ piastre), Anastasi Giovanni (6.760 piastre), Mose Namias (2.563 $\frac{57}{120}$ piastre), Sahula Salem, the wife of a well-known merchant (3.018 $\frac{40}{120}$ piastre), Haggi Gusho (1.500 piastre).

The credits allotted to Peter Chasseaud were more modest. Sarah Abbott, members of his family and the Adritti family had advanced the largest sums (G. Chasseaud 9.450 $\frac{37}{120}$, David Adritti 11.983 $\frac{99}{120}$ piastre and Elia Adritti 16.237 piastre). Abram Namias had granted Chasseaud 750 piastre, Salomon Frances 600 piastre and Yuran Yenegelis 5.000 piastre.³²

The credit circuit upon which the Abbott & Chasseaud relied for its capitals, the distribution and the amount of money invested in the enterprise was not exactly typical of the "*large Levant merchants*" as these have been identified by R. Davies in his book on the English trade in Aleppo.³³ Referring to the social

²⁷ NA, SP 105/137 f. 160r–163r.

²⁸ NA, SP 105/137 f. 255r.

²⁹ George Frederic Abbott had four children with the Caftangioglou daughter and after her passing away he was remarried to Georgetta Giustiniani. NA, SP 105/137 f. 177r–184v.

³⁰ NA, SP 105/137 f. 189r–190r.

³¹ According to another unconfirmed information found out by Abbott's descendants, Sarah (née Anartary ?), who married Bartholomew Edward Abbott between 1780–1785, was the widow of Gabriel Chasseaud, a merchant of French origin who operated in Salonica. Their three children, George Frederic, Annetta and Canella were brought up in the Christian orthodox religion, see *Levantine heritage, the story of a community: The Abbotts of Salonica*, in <http://www.levantine.plus.com> (accessed March 2009).

³² See Table 1 on page 7.

³³ See R. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69. See also A. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–215.

Table 1: Plan of Liquidation of Abbott & Chasseaud Debts to be Settled as Follows

Bartholomew Edward Abbott Credits (piastre)	
Sarah Abbott	46.943 ²⁰ / ₁₂₀
George Frederic Abbott	36.570 ⁵⁵ / ₁₂₀
Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou	22.624 ²⁴ / ₁₂₀
Annetta Parsy	10.000
Bohor Covo	15.374 ¹¹³ / ₁₂₀
Anastasi Giovanni	6.760
Mose Namias	2.563 ⁵⁷ / ₁₂₀
Sahula Salem	3.018 ⁴⁰ / ₁₂₀
Haggi Gusho	1.500
Bartholomew Edward Abbott	3.241 ² / ₁₂₀
Total:	148.595 ⁷² / ₁₂₀
Peter Chasseaud Credits (piastre)	
Sarah Abbott	22.961 ⁹¹ / ₁₂₀
G. Chasseaud	9.450 ³⁷ / ₁₂₀
David Addritti	11.983 ⁹⁹ / ₁₂₀
Elia Adritti	16.237
Abram Namias	750
Salomon Frances	600
Yuran Yenegelis	5.000
George Frederic Abbott's null and of no effect	7.314 ¹¹⁰ / ₁₂₀
Total:	74.297 ⁹⁷ / ₁₂₀
Total Capital:	222.893 ⁴⁹ / ₁₂₀

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

and economic provenance of the merchants who decided to trade into the Levant, Davis remarked that “*nobody could become a Levant trader in London before he had somehow, by inheritance, gift or his earnings in the Levant, acquired the necessary capital...*”. He also pointed out on various occasions that in order to embark on the Levantine trade one needed a large initial capital that would give him the possibility to wait sometime before high turnovers would arrive. It was in fact the model of the “*gentlemen merchants*” Radcliffes, Bosanquet and Vernons that Davis had in mind, and it is their story together with the story of other large Levant merchant families that he discussed in his book.

The above observation applies also to the George Frederic Abbott & Co. set up by Bartholomew Edward's son George Frederic. A sequestration act presented by Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou in 1818 proves it. Caftangioglou put a sequestration upon “*whatever may be the amount or portion of Mr. G. F. Abbott from his father's estate.*”³⁴ With this act registered in the British chancellery, Caftangioglou claimed to be creditor of the G. F. Abbott & Co. for the sum of 70.000 piastre. As he maintained he had lent a sum of 1.000 piastre to G. F. Abbott and another of 7.000 piastre to Theodore Choidas, another partner in the

³⁴ NA, SP 105/137 f. 177r–178r.

association. After Choidas had retired, this money had been transferred to the account of Abbott and Niccola Zade who was the third partner. The rest of the money had been invested in the company and had ended up in the current account of George Frederic. Caftangioglou insisted that George Frederic had made personal use of an amount of 38.835¹⁰⁰/₁₂₀ piastre from the company's capital when his own capital in the company amounted only to 15.000 piastre. He also accused George Frederic for presenting a false balance according to which the company's profits in 1817 had been a mere 1.235¹⁰⁸/₁₂₀ piastre. This money, Caftangioglou sustained, had also been usurped by G. F. Abbott who in that way contravened the association contract he had signed with his partners. Caftangioglou sequestered George Frederic Abbott's revenue that would be produced by the liquidation of his father's assets until a sum of 36.750 piastre would have been paid to him. Abbott refused Caftangioglou's sequestration maintaining that as a Greek Ottoman subject he had no right on the property of a European subject unless a "*Frank*" would guarantee for him. This man was found in the person of the merchant Mattatia Abram and Caftangioglou renewed the act of sequestration.³⁵ Caftangioglou's allegations were grave as he insinuated that G. F. Abbott & Co. had been utilized by the Abbott family as a cover up to collect credits that they usurped making easy, quick and illicit profits.

Some days later two other creditors of George Frederic Abbott, Lady Bona Fernandez Diaz and Lady Flor Fernandez, represented by Joseph Fernandez Diaz, their son and husband respectively, presented an act of sequestration of George Frederic's revenues in order to recover a credit of 18.000 piastre. The sum had been advanced in three bills of 7.000 piastre (10/1/1817), 5.500 piastre (25/1/1817) and 5.000 piastre (8/2/1817). Except for Caftangioglou and Fernandez Diaz family, the merchant Spandoni Hatzi Gusho, the François Masse & Cie and the consul of Austria in Salonica Count Giuseppe de Choch participated in the group of trade operators who exchanged credit and favors with the Abbott family.³⁶

The arbitrary sentence emanated by an Austrian Magistrate in 1816 following a petition of Peter Chasseaud offers some unexpected glimpses inside the operation of the Abbott & Chasseaud. The merchant committee of judges arbiters set up by de Choch comprised the British merchant John Pyburn, the French François Masse and Giuseppe de Choch himself. It had the important duty to convey its judgment upon the argument that had arose between the two partners and was communicated in a four point protestation by Peter Chasseaud. Chasseaud questioned Abbott's management and George Frederic Abbott's involvement in economic transactions with his father.

George Frederic appeared to have advanced to Abbott & Chasseaud a credit of 5.500 piastre that, as Chasseaud maintained, should be allotted to his father's personal account and not to the company as it had never been utilized for the benefit of the enterprise or been deposited to the company's treasury. Chasseaud also called into question George Frederic's appointment as secretary of the company with an annual salary of 500 piastre plus interests. His appointment, Chasseaud claimed, was completely unnecessary and contravened the association contract that determined the number of employees necessary for the

³⁵ NA, SP 105/137 f. 179r-179v.

³⁶ Bills carrying their names were found deposited together with the rest of the company's papers in the British chancellery.

company's operation. Chasseaud contested finally the payment by the company of an annual pension of 3.500 piastre to George Frederic for the maintenance of his family and house employees. The money had been advanced to George Frederic annually for a long period after his marriage. Chasseaud requested as well, the transfer from the company's account to the personal accounts of Bartholomew Edward Abbott and John Pyburn of the sums of 772⁹⁶/₁₂₀ piastre and 226 respectively. These, he claimed, was money owed to George Frederic by the two merchants for "things" they had purchased from him for their personal use.³⁷

Bartholomew Edward Abbott's response to his partner's allegations was simple, acid and weak. As he sustained, articles 15 and 16 of the association contract gave him priority over the company's management. Abbott denied that his son had been receiving an allowance by the company and expressed his curiosity for Chasseaud's late reaction —eight years after George Frederic's appointment as a secretary in the company. He also referred sarcastically to Chasseaud's appropriation of capitals from the company treasury to pay for the renovation of his house some years before.³⁸ Giuseppe de Choch, John Pyburn and François Masse, after having considered all the relevant documents brought to the Magistrate by the two sides in the dispute, adjudicated that the credit of 5.500 piastre advanced by G. F. Abbott to the company was valid however it should be allotted to his father. They also acknowledged the appointment of George Frederic as secretary in the company and invited the partners to advance him his salaries. Finally they estimated the allowance George Frederic had been receiving by the company to 2.000 piastre per year and they sustained that the money he had received should be returned to the company.³⁹

When Bartholomew Edward Abbott died in 1817 George Frederic was implicated in another long and bitter dispute, this time with his sisters and brothers-in-law, over the execution of their father's inheritance, the management and the liquidation of his assets. This uneasy family situation depicted in the Abbott documentation, lasted at least two years, between 1817–1819, and shows how business permeated family life as long as family members and relatives got involved into business. It also reveals how family, enterprise and the local merchant community got intertwined in occasions of crisis or need.

Brothers and Sisters

Business was part of the everyday life of the Abbott family. The forty pages inventory of their family house drawn up by the British chancellor James Charnaud, following the death of Sarah Abbott, is an unmistakable testimony of the extent to which trade had infiltrated in their life. The house, that was let to the family by Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou for 1.500 piastre per year, was filled with merchandise and commodities, in particular woolen, silk and cotton textiles, cotton and silk yarns, shawls of all different types and fabrics, furs, curtains, earthenware, silverware and cutlery all kept in trunks, closets and cases.⁴⁰

The members of the Abbott family had invested money in the Abbott &

³⁷ NA, SP 105/137 f. 160r–163r.

³⁸ NA, SP 105/137 160v–161v.

³⁹ NA, SP 105/137 f. 162v–163r.

⁴⁰ NA, SP 105/137 f. 196r–216v.

Chasseaud and were beneficiaries of the interests.⁴¹ This situation set off a long disagreement when the head of the family Bartholomew Edward passed away. In the heart of the dispute, which was fed by distrust, suspicion and greed, laid the question of who among Abbott's heirs would get the money he/she had invested in the company first, once all the assets had been liquidated. Annetta Parsy Abbott claimed her 10.000 piastre dowry invested in the company jointly by her and her husband, while George Frederic called for the reimbursement of a credit of 36.570 ⁵⁶/₁₂₀ piastre he had made to his father. His sisters denied that such a credit had ever taken place.

Another disagreement arose from George Frederic's administration of his father's assets and management of the enterprise as his father unique representative following his mother's death; once he had renounced his function, his sisters Annetta and Canella refused to accept his reintegration as administrator of their father's assets and declared to be very distrustful of his operations and manipulation of the company's documents. Together with their husbands Antoine Parsy and Pierre Gliubik requested from the French consulate that represented them the deposit of all the books, documents, bills and letters concerning Bartholomew Edward Abbott's inheritance, an official copy of the inventory of their paternal house and all the books, registers, documents and effects belonging to the Abbott & Chasseaud to the in the British chancellery. They finally claimed from their brother a number of valuable items that, as they sustained, were still "*found in his hands.*"

The dispute between the Abbott brother and sisters was fierce and assiduous.⁴² Francis Charnaud the British consul, Bottu the chargé d' affaires of the French consulate, Marçescau the French chancellor, and Count de Choch the Austrian consul, were implicated in the question on whether George Frederic Abbott had advanced to his father the 36.570 ⁵⁶/₁₂₀ piastre as he claimed. The case was ultimately brought to an ad hoc British magistrate and a committee of merchants in which Francis Charnaud and the merchants Athanasio Miliaresi, Leone Morpurgo, Gregorio Ioanni Kiriakou and Theodore Choidas participated. The magistrate conveyed its sentence on the 12th March 1819⁴³ and declared unanimously the credit to be valid justifying George Frederic Abbott. However, as it sustained, George Frederic could not claim the payment of the entire amount of his credit from the rest of the heirs of Bartholomew Edward Abbott. Once the liquidation of the assets included in the inheritance had taken place, Abbott would be paid a proportion of his credit that would correspond to the ratio of assets versus liabilities. The sentence of the magistrate was renounced by both sides participating in the case. George Frederic Abbott assigned to the law office of John William Lubbock & Co. residents his representation in front of the competent British Tribunal in London.⁴⁴

Witnesses, Judges and Arbiters

The Abbott inheritance brought together the members of the merchant community in Salonica, some of them sharing an interest in the case, some other assisting in the various procedures. Between 1817 and 1819, the British, French,

⁴¹ See also below.

⁴² NA, SP 105/137 f. 148r–306v.

⁴³ NA, SP 105/137 f. 305v–306v.

⁴⁴ NA, SP 105/137 f. 169r–169v.

Austrian and Swedish consulates in Salonica were implicated into an exchange of petitions, protests, decrees, ex officio, appeals, acts of sequestration, and requests made mostly by the heirs of Bartholomew Edward Abbott but also by members of the Ottoman, British and other European merchant communities with an interest in the Abbott inheritance. Around them assembled other merchants who acted as witnesses and representatives, guarantors, creditors, and judges, individuals who along with their trade operations had undertaken diplomatic offices, or were picked up by the consuls for their credentials, good name and/or their connection to the Abbott family in order to assist into various procedures.

Hence Philip Lafont medical doctor in Salonica and Rafaele Mordo were present when Bartholomew Edward Abbott named as his representatives and administrators of his assets his son George Frederic Abbott and his wife Sarah Abbott. Abbott had invited the Austrian chancellor deputy Michele Piazza to draw up the act and a copy of the document was sent to the British chancellery.⁴⁵ Michele Piazza (Austrian chancellor deputy) and Giacomo Piazza together with Pietro de Choch (Austrian consul deputy) and Lorenzo Badetti signed as witnesses petitions and protests presented by G. F. Abbott in the British consulate between 1817–1819.⁴⁶ The Austrian Count Giuseppe de Choch, the British John Pyburn and the French François Masse (of the François Masse & Cie) were nominated jury arbiters in the Magistrate called by de Choch to resolve the dispute between Bartholomew Edward Abbott and Peter Chasseaud in 1811.⁴⁷ In 1819 Theodore Valetti and Spiridon Monti had signed as witnesses the appeal of George Frederic Abbott against the sentence emanated by the British Magistrate in Salonica concerning his dispute with his sisters and co-heiresses.⁴⁸ Philip Aliotti and J. J. Odds were witnesses in the act of sequestration presented by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz in the Austrian chancellery on the 9th March 1818.⁴⁹ Cesar Odds together with Francesco Castelli and Ignazio d' Andrea were present and signed as witnesses the inventory of the Abbott house drawn up by James Charnaud the British chancellor. Odds was also entrusted the keys of the house that had been sealed following the death of Sarah Abbott.⁵⁰ The above mentioned J. J. Odds together with Lorenzo Badetti and Emmanuel Ioanni Kiriakou were witnesses in the liquidation of the B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud while Philip Aliotti together with Leon Morpurgo, Athanasio Migliaresi and Gregorio Ioanni Kiriakou were nominated by the British consul Francis Charnaud judges arbiters in the case of George Frederic Abbott's credit.⁵¹ Aliotti's place was taken by Theodore Choidas, following an appeal of the Abbott sisters who sustained that George Frederic Abbott was a relative to Philip Aliotti with his marriage.⁵² Two other merchants Theodore Valletti and George Vianello were witnesses in the presentation in front of G. F. Abbott and his mother Sarah Abbott of the appeal of the Abbott sisters against them⁵³ while Ignazio d' Andrea and Giuseppe Funck signed as witnesses another appeal of the Abbott sisters

⁴⁵ NA, SP 105/137 f. 150r–150v.

⁴⁶ NA, SP 105/137 f. 157r–158v.

⁴⁷ NA, SP 105/137 f. 160r–163r.

⁴⁸ NA, SP 105/137 f. 169r–169v.

⁴⁹ NA, SP 105/137 f. 190r–190v.

⁵⁰ NA, SP 105/137 f. 195v–216v.

⁵¹ NA, SP 105/137 f. 301r–306r.

⁵² Among others NA, SP 105/137 f. 281r–282r.

⁵³ NA, SP 105/137 f. 220r–221r.

against their brother.⁵⁴

This was a world of merchants in action,⁵⁵ not the usual action of buying and selling in the central market, waiting for the arrival of cargos in a busy port, packing and storing goods in warehouses or stockrooms in the back of mansions, negotiating prices with offices in London, Marseille, Livorno, Malta and Smyrna. On this occasion the merchants were invited to assist in the settlement of differences that so often arose in the life of a busy merchant community, to provide social service with guarantee their good reputation and dignity, to contribute to a resolution of conflicts and a quick restart of business. This kind of social action brought them together for their common good and bound them into relations of interdependence and sociability.

List 1: Witnesses, Judges and Arbiters of the Abbott cases

- Aliotti Philip*: Act of sequestrate by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz against G. F. Abbott
- Aliotti Philip*: Member of the British magistrate set up by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- Badetti Lorenzo*: Witness of the liquidation process of the Abbott & Chasseaud
- Badetti Lorenzo*: Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
- Castelli Francesco*: Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
- Charnaud Francis*: Member of the British magistrate set out by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- Charnaud James*: Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
- Choidas Theodore*: Member of the British magistrate set out by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- d' Andrea Ignazio*: Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
- de Choch Giuseppe, Count*: Witness arbiter in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud
- de Choch Piero*: Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
- Funck Giuseppe*: Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
- Kiriakou Emmanuel Ioannis*: Witness of the liquidation process of the Abbott & Chasseaud
- Kiriakou Gregorio Ioanni*: Member of the British magistrate set out by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- Lafont Philip*: Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
- Masse Francois*: Witness arbiter in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud

⁵⁴ NA, SP 105/137 f. 221v–222v.

⁵⁵ See List 1 on page 12.

- Migliaresi Athanasio*: Member of the British magistrate set up by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- Monti Spiridon*: Witness in the appeal of G. F. Abbott against the decision of the British magistrate set up by consul F. Charnaud
- Mordo Rafaele*: Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
- Morpurgo Leon*: Member of the British magistrate set up by consul Francis Charnaud to decide on the case of G. F. Abbott and sisters
- Odds Cesar*: Holder of the keys of the Abbott house after the death of Sarah Abbott
- Odds Cesar*: Witness in the inventory of the Abbott house
- Odds J. J.* : Witness of the liquidation process of the Abbott & Chasseaud
- Odds J. J.*: Act of sequestrate by Joseph David Fernandez Diaz against G. F. Abbott
- Piazza Giacomo*: Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
- Piazza Michele*: Power of Attorney by Bartholomew Edward Abbott to his son and wife for the execution of his will
- Piazza Michele*: Witness in the protest presented by G. F. Abbott against his sisters
- Pyburn John*: Witness arbiter in the dispute between B. E. Abbott and Peter Chasseaud
- Valetti Theodore*: Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
- Valetti Theodore*: Witness in the appeal of G. F. Abbott against the decision of the British magistrate set up by consul F. Charnaud
- Vianello George*: Witness in the appeal of the Abbott sisters against their brother and mother
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“The father of the Levant Company”

The Abbott documentation reveals some unexpected aspects of the entrepreneurial activity and networking strategy of one of the Levant Company’s Freeman, Bartholomew Edward Abbott.⁵⁶ As it appears, some of his operations transcended the Company’s milieu and were deeply embedded in the local society where the British merchant had established strong and binding relations of interdependence through kinship, credit, and joint operations. It is also worth noting that Abbott moved comfortably in a thin line between compliance and irregularity, tactlessness and diplomacy, authority and permissiveness in order

⁵⁶ For a theory of entrepreneurship see M. Casson & A. Godley, “Entrepreneurship and Historical Explanation,” in *Entrepreneurship: Country Studies. A Historical Perspective*, Y. Cassis & I. Pelelassis Minoglou eds, London, 2006, pp. 12–13. Also M. Casson, *The Entrepreneur: an Economic Theory*, Oxford, 1982.

to forward his business and family interests in the utmost way. This fact becomes even more obvious in the Company's consular correspondence where it is also showed that as a Levant Company official and active member of the Salonica factory Bartholomew Edward Abbott had the lasting support of the Company's administration.

Abbott was never offered the post of the local British consul.⁵⁷ However, every time the position remained vacant, Abbott was invited to provide service to the Company and was nominated pro-consul or interim consul. This happened in 1786 when the British consul in Salonica Oliner announced to the Company his wish to resign and referred to "Mr. B. E. Abbott" as the proper person to succeed him. The Company's reaction was cautious and mindful—after all Abbott had not yet been accepted as its member. Some months later, the General Court chose the merchant George Moore to take Oliner's place.⁵⁸ In 1790, following the accidental death of Moore, Sir Robert Ainslie, the British ambassador in Constantinople, sent to Bartholomew Edward Abbott a commission to act as pro consul until the nomination of a new British consul in Salonica. Abbott's commercial enterprise, the Bartholomew Edward Abbott & Peter Chasseaud was also assigned to carry out the liquidation of Moore's private business affairs "*to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned in them.*"⁵⁹ During the long and agitated term in the office of Moore's successor Francis Charnaud, Abbott was once again invited by the Company to take over the British factory. In 1803 Charnaud himself appointed Bartholomew Edward Abbott as pro consul for a period of three months and headed to Constantinople on business.⁶⁰ Abbott assumed the duties of pro consul at least two more times during Charnaud's term in office, in 1811⁶¹ and then in 1814 when Charnaud was temporarily suspended.⁶²

Abbott's commitment with the Company's affairs was sometimes expressed in a most paternalistic manner, something that very often brought him in direct confrontation with the factory's officials. The apparently well-connected merchant did not hesitate to put into question the factory's operation, to discredit the Company's officials, to quarrel with and plot against some of them and even correspond directly with officials in London when he wished to present his requests or ideas. Oddly enough, the Company's administration never disappointed him; on many occasions stood by his side and put pressure upon its officials in Salonica to satisfy his requirements or come to a compromise with him. Hence in 1787 in the middle of George Moore's office, Abbott conveyed to the Levant Company's administration in London a Memorial representing that some Factors at Smyrna had consigned British products to foreign houses at Salonica and that a certain George Perkins who had loaded 6 ballots of shalloons on the Ephrates, under his own name to be received by M. J. L. Frugier & C., had in fact defrauded the Company as the shalloons had been received instead by

⁵⁷ For the organization of the Levant Company and its factories in the Ottoman Empire see A. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–228.

⁵⁸ NA, SP 105/121, pp. 168, 170.

⁵⁹ NA, SP 105/121, pp. 302–304.

⁶⁰ NA, SP 105/122, pp. 360–361.

⁶¹ NA, SP 105/123, p. 249.

⁶² Charnaud was suspended by the General Court of the Company when he interrupted his correspondence with the Company and neglected his duties between 1805–1814, see D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, p. 207. Charnaud was restored to the office in 1815. See NA, SP 105/123, pp. 415–416.

a certain Greek named Pari Venrasi.⁶³ His direct interference in the factory's affaires was most likely to made consul Moore nervous and in the years that followed their relation got edgy and bitter. Soon, their conflict was exposed when Abbott, together with ex consul Oliner, presented to the Company a protest complaining for consul Moore's conduct respecting an application presented to him by Abbott in order to obtain possession of a house on behalf of Oliner. The situation had a follow-up as in return Abbott refused to pay an ad valorem duty for a cargo of St. Martha's wood that was not at the time rated in the British Tariff.⁶⁴ Another reason for resentment between the two men was Abbott's friendly connection to Oliner. During his office in Salonica's factory Oliner had obtained—with the Levant Company's consent—the vice consulship of Sweden. Once he resigned he transferred the post to Bartholomew Edward Abbott and not to his successor in the British consulate George Moore. Although Moore complained to the Company the London officials affirmed that Oliner's decision was personal and irrevocable.⁶⁵ In the following months, both sides continued to undermine the one the other with the Company often assuming the role of the mediator. Abbott and his partner Peter Chasseaud sent a petition to the Company presenting their reservations for the persons appointed by Moore in the positions of chancellor and Dragoman of the British consulate.⁶⁶ Moore replied to the provocation by accusing the commercial enterprise of Abbott & Chasseaud of trying to evade the payment of 1% duty on the value of goods that had been exported by them "*on Foreign Ships to Foreign ports on account of Foreigners.*"⁶⁷ On that occasion the Company notified to Moore that he should advert to the Company's printed Orders according to which no consulship should be levied on goods exported to foreign ports in foreign ships by British subjects on account of foreigners.⁶⁸ Once again the officials in London chose to back the British merchants against the consul when Abbott & Chasseaud complained for the fees charged by the chancellery for the provision of various services to the factors. On that occasion the Company advised Moore to prepare a list of fixed fees in order to avoid further complaints. In 1790 in one of his letters to the Company consul Moore made allusions that B. E. Abbott & P. Chasseaud had made their entries of consular duties at the end of the year and not at the time of receiving or shipping goods. This was against the rules of the Levant Company and suggested fraudulent manipulation of the duties the enterprise had to pay to the British consulate.⁶⁹ This uncomfortable and controversial situation carried on until Moore's accidental death in 1790. Moore and the captain of a British vessel were assaulted by strangers during an evening walk.⁷⁰

Bartholomew Edward Abbott's relation with Moore's successor, Francis

⁶³ NA, SP 105/121, pp. 190–191.

⁶⁴ NA, SP105/121, pp. 210–212. The Tariffs that were negotiated between the British and the Ottoman authorities defined the rates of taxes advanced by the British merchants on imported and exported goods, see D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–200.

⁶⁵ N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Between 1790–1792 Abbott assumed the duties of the consul of Venice in Salonica. *Ibid.*, p. 203. Until the end of his life he served as vice consul of Denmark and Sweden.

⁶⁶ NA, SP 105/121, pp. 244–246.

⁶⁷ NA, SP 105/221, pp. 255–256.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ NA, SP 105/121, p. 264.

⁷⁰ NA, SP 105/121, pp. 282–283.

Charnaud, was not uncomplicated either. It reached its lowest moment when Charnaud was temporarily suspended from his office.⁷¹ This happened during the last phase of the Napoleonic Wars when Salonica offered the best solution to British merchants who sought to reach the markets of the vast Habsburg Empire: the city-port became a major trade junction in the London–Malta–Vienna passage. On that occasion, the until then undersized factory of the Levant Company became the focal point of an intense commercial activity operated by its members together with independent British, Greek, Jewish, French and Italian commercial houses.⁷² “*The great Trade carried through Salonica. . .*,” as the occasion was described by a Levant Company high official, had a strong impact upon the volume of goods exchanged and the ways of transacting. It also affected the factory’s operation and exposed some serious deficiencies in the organization of the Levant Company, deriving mostly from an inefficient and slow system of communication between administration and factories.⁷³ During that period consul Charnaud neglected his duties and failed to produce to the Company’s secretary the accounts of consular revenues collected for more than five years. He was then suspended from his office and Abbott was nominated interim consul in Salonica. After he had sent to London all necessary accounts and duties Charnaud was absolved and reinstated; he had nevertheless to call on the intervention of some of his powerful “friends” in the British capital who apparently put pressure for his swift return to the office. When that time arrived and the, until then, interim consul Abbott had to restore the consulate to Charnaud, the two men got involved into a bitter disagreement on economic returns. Their dispute was complicated: mainly, they could not agree on who of the two was entitled to the consular duties charged upon the cargoes of two vessels that had begun loading their cargoes during Abbott’s administration and had finished after Charnaud had assumed office once again. Abbott also complained that Charnaud had not paid him the entire salary of one year —this was 2.000 piastre— but had advanced him 1.844 ³⁷/₁₂₀ piastre which corresponded to eleven months and two days’ service.⁷⁴ The dispute was brought to the General Court which resolved that the whole amount of consular duties charged upon the cargoes of the two vessels should be awarded to Abbott while Charnaud should pay to Abbott a whole years’ compensation for his services.⁷⁵

This was not the end of the story. The rupture between the two men was fierce and was accompanied by allegations from both sides of irregularities in the factory’s administration. Abbott accused Charnaud that he had mismanaged consular duties while Charnaud blamed Abbott for having charged illicitly non British subjects with the payment of a 2% duty on the value of their merchandise. Charnaud presented to the Levant Company the testimony of an Austrian

⁷¹ See D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185. In 27 April 1814 Abbott was invited by the Isaac Morier, general consul in Constantinople to take over the British consulate in Salonica as interim consul. NA, SP 105/134, f. 164r. Charnaud claimed that his negligence was due to the long illness of one of his sons and produced documents that proved his reasons in NA, SP 105/134, f. 168r–169r.

⁷² The Salonica factory comprised five members until the end of the 18th century but it seems that many British merchants operated independently in Salonica at least during the first ten years of the 19th century. After the annexation of the Ionian Islands by the British in 1815, many Ionian citizens residents of Salonica sought and found protection by the British consulate in the city, see D. Vlami, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–176.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁷⁴ NA, SP 105/137, f. 302r–302v.

⁷⁵ NA, SP 105/123, pp. 485–487.

subject, the merchant G. Vianello owner of the association G. Vianello Sons & C., who confirmed that as interim consul Abbott had charged him with the 2% duty.⁷⁶ Charnaud went on accusing Abbott's son George Frederic that he had contravened the Company's regulations and had formed the G. F. Abbott & C. in association with an Ottoman subject, the Greek merchant Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou. At that point the Levant Company intervened decisively reckoning that the conflict had gone too far and the good name of the British factory was at stake. In a letter that was sent to both adversaries, the Company expressed its annoyance and asked that "*all the animosity which it produced will cease, and that both of you Gentlemen, will return to such habits of peace and good neighbourhood with respect to each other as may secure the tranquillity of the Factory at large and prevent further injury to the reputation of the parties concerned in the Quarrel.*"⁷⁷ However, some years later, following the passing away of Bartholomew Edward Abbott, both consul Francis Charnaud and his son James —by that time chancellor in the consulate— got involved in a bitter dispute between the Abbott sisters —Annetta Abbott Parsy and Canella Abbott Gliubik— and their brother George Frederic Abbott. George Frederic and his mother Sarah Abbott had been nominated representatives of Bartholomew Edward Abbott and administrators of his assets only two days before his passing away, on the 16th March 1817.⁷⁸ The reason for the direct implication of the Charnaud in the Abbott dispute was that initially George Frederic decided to renounce to his father's attorney. Later on he changed his mind and demanded from Charnaud to be reintegrated to his former divested functions as administrator of his father's assets.⁷⁹ By that time the chancellor of the factory James Charnaud had assumed the role of the administrator of the Abbott inheritance, according to the Levant Company's instructions. Francis Charnaud refused to accept George Frederic Abbott's demand and the issue was brought to the Ecclesiastical Court of England that was competent to judge the case. The Court's verdict was notified to the parts, but even then consul Charnaud refused to administer the oath of Executor to George Frederic although it had been explicitly requested by him by the Ecclesiastical Court of England. On the 6th May 1819 the Company expressed its entire disapprobation of Charnaud's behaviour and emphasized that it was compelled to attribute his refusal "*to perform an obviously necessary Act of public duty to private motives, as the affair had become merely personal.*" After referring grimly to the long dispute between the Abbott and Charnaud families, the Company's officials stated that if George Frederic Abbott had conducted himself unworthily it would by no means be Charnaud to judge him but it would be in the power of his sisters and coheirs in their father's inheritance, to call him to account before a competent Tribunal.⁸⁰

The last act of this long-lasting controversy between the two families implicated the third generation of the Abbott in the person of Robert Abbott —son of George Frederic from his first marriage to the daughter of the famous and rich Greek Ottoman merchant Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou— who at the time was employed as treasurer of the British embassy in Constantinople. Abbott

⁷⁶ NA, SP 105/123, f. 197r–198r.

⁷⁷ NA, SP 105/123, pp. 488–489.

⁷⁸ NA, SP 105/137, f. 150r–150v.

⁷⁹ NA, SP 105/137, f. 157r–158r.

⁸⁰ NA, SP 105/124, pp. 208–211.

complained to the Levant Company that consul Francis Charnaud had shown a suspicious tardiness, equalling negligence, when coping with an important financial matter that affected directly his family's interests. Infringing hierarchy one more time, Abbott referred the case to the British ambassador in Constantinople.⁸¹ On the 25th November 1824 George Frederic Abbott himself accused Francis Charnaud for not having reacted swiftly enough to constrain George Carissi and Lysimaco Caftangioglou to pay their debt towards him. If Charnaud had been more efficient the whole issue would have been settled and "*it would have been a triumph for our nation*" Abbott sustained. On the contrary, Charnaud's incompetence had obliged the Abbott family to refer the case to the British diplomatic authorities in Constantinople in order to be resolved.⁸² As one of its last acts in Salonica before dissolving in 1825, the Levant Company supported George Frederic Abbott's argument and in a letter sent to Francis Charnaud on the 3rd August 1824 invited him to dedicate all his time and effort to succeed the positive and final conclusion of the case.⁸³ In 1825 the Levant Company dissolved and its license was transferred to the British state. The last years of its operation coincided with the political turmoil caused by the Greek Revolution breaking out in 1821. In many areas of the vast Ottoman Empire commerce was brought to a standstill and transports were deeply affected forcing many international operators to transfer capitals and expertise elsewhere. Crisis hit the British factory in Salonica as well and in 1824 in one of his last letters addressed to the British consul Francis Charnaud⁸⁴ the Company's Secretary George Liddell referred to the "*almost total absence of Trade at Salonica. . .*"⁸⁵

When Clarke referred to Bartholomew Edward Abbott in his Travels he might have been predisposed by the man's imposing and influential personality, his extended circle of social and business connections, the volume and the amplitude of his activity, his propitious and unshakable relation with many Levant Company officials. Clarke might also have noticed his paternalistic manner that ultimately defined his ambiguous and troubled relation with the residents of the British consulate in Salonica. As David Goffman has shown, however, similar conflicting situations arising between Freeman and between Freeman and officials were common since early in the Company's history revealing antagonistic relations and the prevalence of personal strategies. The clash between two factors in Smyrna or the fierce antagonism between contenders of the post of the general consul in Peloponnesus⁸⁶ —two 17th century incidents described by Goffman— put into question theories on the existence of a powerful network of Freeman that functioned under the institutional shield of the Company and was

⁸¹ In his letter to the Levant Company in London Robert Abbott stated that his family had specific demands upon Mr. George Carissi and Lysimaco Caftangioglou, heirs and administrators of the passed away Ioanni Gouta Caftangioglou's assets. He claimed that the two men owed to the Abbott family 130.000 piastre and to settle it they had supply them bills that were not valid, NA, SP 105/142 f. 183r–184v and f. 186r–187v.

⁸² NA, SP 105/142 f. 188r–189v.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Francis Charnaud served as British consul in Salonica from 1792 to 1825. He was the last and the more long lasting consul in the history of the factory, see Despina Vlami, *op. cit.*, p. 168. He was preceded by consuls Moore (1787–1790) and Olifer (in 1786 he resigned from the post). Between 1790–1792 Bartholomew Edward Abbott assumed the duties of pro consul, *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁸⁵ NA, SP 105/125, pp. 147–150.

⁸⁶ D. Goffman, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–67.

based on Company affiliation and common economic interests.⁸⁷ The long correspondence of consuls Olifer, Moore and Charnaud with the Levant Company's officials back in London proves that rather than one single Company network one can ascertain the existence of individual centers of power that operated around influential personalities of social and economic status. These individuals often held positions of eminence in the Company's administration and influenced decisions taken by the General Court. Around these centers of power assembled members of the Company of equally important social and economic standing, similar economic interests, related by kin and sociability; in the Company's jargon they were often referred to as "friends" and "friends of friends" and they were always ready to use their name, their connections and their money to guarantee for and assist the members belonging to their circle. Often they took sides supporting each other against other members of the Company or in front of the General Court.⁸⁸ This reality was not unrelated with the Company's procedure of selecting members: the aspiring Freeman had to be proposed by a number of active members who as real "friends" would support warmly their candidacy.⁸⁹ However, outside these groups of "friends" —groups that inevitably intersected and overlapped— friendship, trust and affiliation were not self-evident notions, as collaboration and partnership were not uncomplicated practices.

Epilogue

The life and business activities of the "*father of the Levant Company*" in Salonica were irretrievably connected with the Company's factory since its first days; even before he gave the formal oath of a Freeman and was accepted as a full member in the grand Company of "friends." At the same time, Bartholomew Edward Abbott's relational capital and operations expanded outside the institutional and contractual umbrella of the Levant Company and contained family members and individuals from the local society with whom Abbott and his son George Frederic embarked into joint ventures, sometimes contravening the Company's rules. The two merchant-entrepreneurs were connected to various groups of "friends," partners and collaborators through reciprocal relations of interdependence. Credit, partnership, alliance, friendship, manipulation, kin, ethnicity and sociability, trust and doubt, molded this interdependence. Abbott's entrepreneurial strategy was complex and developed in various modes, comprising contacts from different operational areas and taking advantage of opportunities that arose within different business environments. It was a strategy that was enhanced by overlapping and sometimes opposing identities and served only private interests.

Bartholomew Edward Abbott might not be considered as a representative case of the grant Levant traders who in the late 18th century were still implicated

⁸⁷ See, for example, M. Fusaro, "Commercial Networks of Cooperation in the Venetian Mediterranean: the English and the Greeks: a Case Study," in D. R. Curto & A. Molho (eds), *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World*, EUI Working Paper, HEC no. 2, Florence 2002, p. 145.

⁸⁸ For example the already mentioned "friendship" between Francis Charnaud and John Theo. Daubuz, who participated in the Company's General Court and put his influence to succeed the restoration of Charnaud to his post in 1814. NA, SP 105/122 pp. 371–372 and NA, SP 105/123 pp. 385–387, or the Olifer–Abbott connection mentioned above.

⁸⁹ A. Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–154.

in the British Levant trade. However, his case allows us to get another glimpse inside a great chartered trade company and examine, even briefly, its operation and corporate identity. Through the brief study of the connection between the overlying administrative mechanism, the apparatus of officials appointed in the factories and the Company's Freemen it has been possible to get an idea of the barriers distinguishing the activity of a Freeman from that of an independent entrepreneur, the aspirations of a merchant from those of an officeholder of the Company.

Biographical information

Despina Vlami is a researcher in the Research Center for Medieval and Modern Greek Studies of the Academy of Athens. Her research interests comprise Entrepreneurship and Mediterranean Trade (18th–19th centuries), the Greek Diaspora (18th-19th centuries), the Levant Company (16th-19th centuries).

Contact information

Research Center for Medieval and Modern Greek Studies (KEMNE)
Academy of Athens
Anagnostopoulou 14
GR-10673 Athens
Greece

e-mail: dvlami@academyofathens.gr