

Amsterdam's Greek merchants: protégés of the Dutch, beneficiaries of the Russians, subjects of the Ottomans and supporters of Greece

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Merchant diasporas have long attracted the attention of scholars through the narrow prisms of 'nations' and states. The history of Amsterdam's Greek Orthodox merchants, together with the other cases—who left the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century and established a seemingly controversial range of networks involving the Dutch, Russian, Ottoman and Greek states there—is an oft-quoted example. This article draws attention to some of the problematic aspects of these perceptions of the relations between states and diaspora merchants. The main tenet of the article is that nation- and state-centred perspectives are limited in explaining the full scope of flexibility and pragmatism displayed by the diaspora merchants.

Keywords: Trade; Ottoman Greek diasporas; pragmatism; Amsterdam; the Dutch Republic

These great corporations are a good thing. They are the government of the country, they work for their own account and behalf without having to go abroad, ... [they provide] work and enable all of them to work. All these things cannot be supported under the Turk, nor can they come about, for he is without order and justice and if the capital (*sermaye*) is a thousand, he calls it ten times as much, so as to confiscate it, to impoverish the others, not appreciating that the enriching of his subjects is the wealth of his Empire. But these [the Dutch] maintain with justice and he [the Turk] is wholly unjust and cannot achieve anything but spoil.¹

1 N. Andriotis, 'Το Χρονικό του Άμστερδαμ', *Νέα Εστία* 10 (1931) 851. I have used the English translation provided in R. Clogg, 'The concerns of a Greek merchant: the journal of Ioannis Pringos of Amsterdam', in R. Clogg (ed.), *The Movement for Greek Independence 1770–1821: A Collection of Documents* (London 1976) 43–44. For an introduction in Dutch, see S. Antoniadis, 'Het dagboek van een te Amsterdam gevestigde griekse koopman', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 69 (1956) 57–66. The most detailed study on Pringos is V. Skouvaras, *Ιωάννης Πρίγκος (1725;–1789): Η ελληνική παροικία του Άμστερνταμ, η σχολή και η βιβλιοθήκη Ζαγοράς* (Athens 1964).

Written by a prominent Greek merchant² in Amsterdam, these lines graphically express his appreciation of the Dutch infrastructure for international trade, namely the presence of large commercial corporations and the possibility of accumulating capital, and his equally balanced dissatisfaction with the inability and unwillingness of the Ottoman administration to provide such infrastructure. The author of these lines, Ioannis Pringos (Johannes Brink in Dutch sources) hailed from the small Ottoman region of Zagora, adapted successfully to Amsterdam and amassed a fortune there. During the Russo-Ottoman war (1768–74) he had great sympathy for Russia. In Amsterdam, he collected hundreds of books and in his native Zagora he established a library where pioneers of the Greek Enlightenment, including Rigas Velestinlis, spent considerable time. Taken at face value, the lives and activities of merchants such as Pringos could and did serve a number of nationalist perspectives. Kordatos saw in Pringos a pioneer of ‘Romaic bourgeoisie’ (ρωμέϊκη μπουρζουαζία) which, he thought, was essential for an understanding of the ‘Romaic nationalism’ in the time of Rigas.³ Acknowledging this view, Stavrianos claimed that Pringos and other Balkan merchants in Europe ‘tended to be radical-minded because of their contacts with the West,’ and made important contributions to ‘Balkan national development.’⁴ On a broader level, these views were on a par with the general image of the Greek merchants as a new social group that made the Greek Revolution financially sustainable and helped to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment. This image of the non-Muslim merchants was recognized by scholars of Ottoman and Middle Eastern history. They assumed that the non-Muslim merchants flourished due to their collaboration with foreigners and that their interests were in harmony with those of the foreigners. Bernard Lewis even associated these merchants with the compradors in China.⁵ For a long time, such a negative view of the merchants in question in Ottoman studies retained the interpretation of diaspora merchants in the way assumed by the nationalist perspectives.

These nationalist readings have been challenged by a number of scholars from different fields of history. While the role of the merchants in disseminating the Enlightenment ideas has been acknowledged by a number of scholars, Richard Clogg questioned the view that makes a direct link between diaspora merchants and Greek nationalism and stated that the rich merchants who contributed to Greek nationalism were ‘very much the exception.’⁶ Similarly, Reşat Kasaba opposed the idea associating the

2 In this article, the term ‘Greek merchant’ refers to both Greek-speaking and Greek Orthodox merchants. The Greek merchants in Amsterdam largely differed from the case of some other Greek diasporas which involved Greek Orthodox converts to Catholicism, and Orthodox merchants who spoke other languages than Greek.

3 G. Kordatos, *Ρήγας Φεραίος και η Βαλκανική ομοσπονδία* (Athens 1945) 7–28.

4 L. S. Stavrianos, ‘Antecedents to the Balkan revolutions of the nineteenth century’, *The Journal of Modern History* 29/4 (1957) 342–3.

5 B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London 1961) 448.

6 R. Clogg, ‘The Greek mercantile bourgeoisie: “progressive” or “reactionary”?’ in R. Clogg (ed.), *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence* (London 1981) 104.

Ottoman non-Muslim merchants and the compradors in China and pointed out a number of discrepancies between the interests of the Ottoman non-Muslim merchants and the British.⁷ While diaspora studies in Greek academia have regarded the Greek diasporas initially as integral components of the Greek state, equally contributing to its emergence and maintenance,⁸ a second strand of scholars in the post-junta period in Greece brought about an alternative approach and methodology. In this new framework diasporas in question began to be analysed not necessarily as part of a phenomenon springing from a common source—in this case Greek ‘nation’ and/or state—but also as part of the host states to which Greek people migrated. This outlook entailed a new methodology that combined Greek sources with those produced by the mechanisms of the related host country. Studies by Olga Katsiardi-Hering, starting with her two-volume monograph on the Greek diaspora in Trieste,⁹ opened new avenues of research for diaspora studies in terms of taking the diasporas themselves as the key point of departure regardless of their contribution to the Greek state. Herself a prolific scholar, she has contributed to the field as an author, supervisor, and editor for books, book series and journals, hence helping to create a niche for a new strand of studies analysing the diasporas afresh under the light of Greek and European sources.¹⁰ In connection with this development, new research directions including migration studies and maritime history began to flourish in this period.

A particular advantage of diaspora studies is their ability to bring the scholarship on Greek diasporas into conversation with non-Greek cases. However, a notable pitfall in this approach is its reiteration of a uniform image of diaspora communities—one that mimics the nation outside its normative ‘space’¹¹ for the sake of comparison. Despite such developments within the secondary literature, however, nationalist readings have not ceased to exist even in some of the revisionist approaches. While proposing to challenge the ‘national historiographies’ which ‘have masked the significance of trade diasporas and their entrepreneurial networks’,¹² a recent publication involves, alongside a more nuanced vision of the Greek diasporas, perspectives that see a direct link between the Greek state

7 R. Kasaba ‘Was there a compradore bourgeoisie in mid-nineteenth century Western Anatolia?’, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 11/2 (1988) 215–28.

8 On the reluctant attitude towards diaspora studies in Greek context, see D. Tziouvas, ‘Introduction’, in D. Tziouvas (ed.), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700: Society, Politics and Culture* (Farnham 2009) 1–15.

9 Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *Η ελληνική παροικία της Τεργέστης (1751-1830)* (Athens 1986).

10 For a recent edited volume displaying the current state of research see O. Katsiardi-Hering and M. A. Stassinopoulou (eds), *Across the Danube: Southeastern Europeans and Their Travelling Identities (17th-19th C.)* (Leiden 2017). For two literature reviews on diaspora studies in the Greek context, see I. K. Chassiotis, *Επισκόπηση της ιστορίας της νεοελληνικής διασποράς* (Athens 1993), and L. Korma, ‘The historiography of the Greek diaspora and migration in the twentieth century’, *Historiein* 16 (2017) 47–73.

11 A. Liakos, ‘Historical time and national space in modern Greece’, in H. Tadayuki and H. Fukuda (eds), *Regions in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present* (Sapporo 2007) 215–16.

12 I. Baghdiantz McCabe, G. Harlaftis and I. Pepelasis Minoglou, ‘Introduction’, in I. Baghdiantz McCabe, G. Harlaftis and I. Pepelasis Minoglou (eds.), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History* (Oxford 2005) xvi.

and the Greek diaspora merchants, as though Vienna and Amsterdam, or Odessa and Marseille were necessarily the same.¹³ This uniform view of the diasporas has been noted by a group of scholars such as Seirinidou and Grenet, who present a more diverse view of the individuals and strategies in the Greek diasporas.¹⁴ On the other hand, Ottomanists such as Murphey have exposed to serious criticism the common wisdom about the connection between the interests of the early modern states and the merchants.¹⁵

Following this line of research, this article proposes that rather than being a mere element of the diasporas, it is this very diversity in the identities, networks, and policies of the communities, families, and even individuals in the diasporas that explains their flexibility and flourishing. It seeks to achieve this purpose by studying the rather pragmatic relations that the Greek merchants of Amsterdam established—sometimes in a seemingly controversial fashion—with the Dutch, Russian, Ottoman and Greek states from the eighteenth until the mid-nineteenth centuries. It is when we see these seemingly controversial relations in a holistic fashion that we have a more comprehensive and realistic understanding of the diaspora phenomenon.

Amsterdam Greeks as protégés of the Dutch Republic

Immigration of Greek Orthodox merchants from the Ottoman Empire to Amsterdam has its roots in the *berathli*/protection system. As a result of the agreements known as *ahdnames* and capitulations,¹⁶ the Ottoman administration gave the ambassadors of the foreign state in question the right to employ interpreters from among the Ottoman non-Muslims.¹⁷ As is stated in the appointment documents (*berat*) of these interpreters,¹⁸ their new status as a *berathli*/protégé of a foreign country gave them some

13 *Op. cit.*, xx. I. G. Harlaftis, 'Mapping the Greek maritime diaspora from the early eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries', in Baghdiantz McCabeHarlaftis and Pepelasis Minoglou (eds.), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks*, 148.

14 V. Seirinidou, 'Grocers and wholesalers, Ottomans and Habsburgs, foreigners and "our own": the Greek trade diasporas in Central Europe, seventeenth to nineteenth centuries', in S. Faroqhi and G. Veinstein (eds), *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire* (Paris 2008) 81–97, and M. Grenet, 'Entangled allegiances: Ottoman Greeks in Marseille and the shifting ethos of Greekness (c. 1790-c. 1820)', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36/1 (2012) 56–71.

15 R. Murphey, 'Merchants, nations and free-agency: an attempt at a qualitative characterization of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1620-1640', in A. Hamilton, A. de Groot, M. van den Boogert (eds), *Friends and Rivals in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden 2000) 25–59.

16 H. İnalçık, 'İmtiyâzât', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, III (Leiden 1971) 1178–89. M. H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Berathlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden 2005) 19–63.

17 Boogert, *The Capitulations*, 8.

18 For a facsimile publication of an interpreter's *berat* see H. P. Almkvist, *Ein türkisches Dragoman-Diplom aus dem vorigen Jahrhundert: Nachträgliche Bemerkungen* (Upsala 1895). For a few of the *berats* given through the mediation of the Dutch see Prime Ministerial Ottoman Archive [hereafter BOA] BOA.A. DVN.DVE.d.22/1; 83, 130, 425, 458, 519.

symbolic advantages such as exemption from the *cizye*, a per-capita tax defining the status of a *zimmi* as a subject of the Ottoman Empire. Although some Ottoman Greeks, for instance some members of the illustrious Phanariot Karatzas family, dominated the ranks of interpreters for the Dutch ambassadors during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,¹⁹ in many cases the main reason for seeking Dutch protection was related to the commercial advantages that the *berats* entailed. Therefore, in effect, most of the *berathis* were engaged not in the diplomatic affairs of the embassies and consulates but in trade, benefiting from the privileges accorded to the Dutch Republic.²⁰

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, controlling the number and activities of the *berathis* became unfeasible, whereupon the *berathis* began to attract the resentment of Ottoman authorities, especially in local contexts. Coupled with a number of other factors including the duty concessions of the Dutch diplomatic and commercial agents,²¹ Ottoman officials exerted their energies to extort more profits from the *berathis*, leading to a large corpus of complaints by the ambassadors about the breach of the *berat* terms. Incidents of this sort culminated eventually in the establishment of the common wisdom that the interests of the *berathli* merchants had close affinity to those of the European states that offered protection to them.²² More detailed studies of the Dutch correspondence, however, have shown that from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards, Dutch merchants trading in the Levant were, in fact, alarmed by the increasing involvement of the *berathis* in Ottoman-Dutch trade by benefiting from the same privileges.²³

Against the backdrop of this complicated combination of privileges and reservations towards the Greek merchants in the Mediterranean context, some Greeks enlarged their networks to the Dutch Republic and began to settle in cities such as Amsterdam. The initial motive was probably related to the free-trade policy pursued in the Levant by the Dutch, who, in stark contrast with the English and French, excluded it from the monopoly of the East India Company. The Dutch Directorate of Levant Trade acted as an informal advisory service, and as would be seen in the coming years, its suggestions were not necessarily followed in the Republic.²⁴

19 G. R. B. Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity: Ottoman-Dutch Relations during the Embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726–1744* (Amsterdam 1977) 132–3. In the Ottoman registers in question there is also reference to two other Karatzas registered as interpreters for the Dutch ambassador: Yorgaki Karaca whose *berat* was renewed in 1695, and his grandson, another Yorgaki Karaca, who replaced his grandfather upon the latter's death in 1734. BOA.A.DVN.DVE.d.22/1; 236 and 248.

20 K. Theodoridis, 'Όλλανδοί πρόξενοι και προστατευόμενοι στη Θεσσαλονίκη του 18ου αιώνα: Η υπόθεση του Αναστασίου Κανέλλη', *Μακεδονικά* 41 (2016) 181–194.

21 Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity*, 127.

22 B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London 1961) 448.

23 Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity*, 202–3; I. H. Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century: Competition in Ankara, Izmir and Amsterdam* (Leiden 2012) 237–74.

24 Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants*, 198–237; 145–70.

These conditions provided the Greek merchants with channels for obtaining the full status of a Dutch citizen (i.e. Amsterdam burgher). While one may assume that when Ottoman non-Muslims became protégés of a European ambassador or consul, by definition this status gave them the citizenship of the European state in question, only a handful of those Ottoman non-Muslims who were settled in European cities such as Amsterdam were accorded citizenship. In the absence of an Ottoman law on citizenship until 1869, the status of these merchants was not defined in strict terms.²⁵ Attaining Dutch citizenship would have removed any possible advantages that their Dutch competitors had over them in Dutch and Ottoman contexts. Some of the early Ottoman Greek *berathis* began to send one of their associates, often from among their relatives to Amsterdam, and they began to apply for citizenship in Amsterdam. This policy proved successful for only some of these merchants, the example of Antonios Zingrilaras being a case in point. Having moved to Amsterdam, Antonios obtained Dutch citizenship and, in breach of the customs of his fellow Greeks, he even married a Dutch woman. Despite the opposition of the Directorate of the Levant Trade, eventually, in 1759, he managed to have the States-General declare his firm in Izmir—together with three other Greek merchant houses that he merged with it in the meantime—as a Dutch firm.²⁶ Likewise, in their correspondence with the Dutch authorities the prudent members of Amsterdam's Greek merchant community such as Stephanos Isaias (or Isaiou; Stephane d'Isay in Dutch sources) advocated the idea that their interests were in harmony with those of the Dutch merchants.²⁷

In addition to the pragmatism employed in commercial spheres, one should also take into account the patterns of relationship that these merchants established with Europe and the Dutch Republic in the cultural and intellectual realms, and the possible connotations that these patterns may have had with their position towards states. The peculiar and unique relationship that Adamantios Korais, in his earlier years as a merchant in Amsterdam,²⁸ established in the cultural and intellectual atmosphere of Dutch society, as it is observed in a dismissive fashion by his less literate associate Stamatis Petrou, presents a useful window. The son of a merchant from Chios, Korais was born in Izmir and was brought up in this already-cosmopolitan city having access to a large library owned by his maternal grandfather. The transformation of Izmir into an international commercial entrepot²⁹ attracted not only merchants like his father but also other

25 C. Osmanağaoğlu Karahasanoğlu, 'Zimmi esnaf ve tacirlerin yabancı devlet vatandaşlığı iddialarının Osmanlı hukukuna etkisi', in F. Demirel (ed.), *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Esnaf ve Ticaret* (Istanbul 2012) 105–26.

26 Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity*, 201.

27 Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants*, 226–8.

28 B. J. Slot, 'Commercial activities of Korais in Amsterdam', *Ο Εραμιστής* 16 (1980) 55–139. See also V. Kremmydas, 'Ο Κοραΐς στο Άμστερδαμ. Η μύηση στους κόσμους του Διαφωτισμού και οι αντιστάσεις', in C. Loukos (ed.), *Κοινωνικοί αγώνες και Διαφωτισμός: Μελέτες αφιερωμένες στον Φίλιππο Ηλιού* (Irakleio 2007) 1–13.

29 D. Goffman, 'Izmir: from village to colonial port city', in E. Eldem, D. Goffman and B. Masters (eds), *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (Cambridge 1999) 79–135.

men of humbler background as agents of bigger merchants. One such man was Petrou from the island of Patmos, who began to work for Stathis Thomas, the trade partner of the Korais family. Korais' desire to pursue his studies in Europe coincided with the time when his father and Thomas decided to open a branch in Amsterdam. Eventually their decision to send Korais and Petrou to Amsterdam brought together the fates of these two conflicting figures in one house for the next few years in Amsterdam.³⁰ During that time, Petrou dispatched thirteen letters to Thomas, mostly complaining about Korais, of which complaints those regarding the latter's affiliation with 'Europe' are particularly useful. As Olga Augustinos puts it, in line with his appreciation of Enlightenment ideas, for Korais the material and non-material cultures were intertwined. For Petrou, however, the material culture of Europe enabled by the Ottoman-Dutch trade could not and should not interact with the non-material culture that he brought with him.³¹ On a later occasion Korais would mention a direct connection between the Greeks' importation of textiles, metals and other products of European industry and that of books and knowledge from Europe and in particular from France.³² For Petrou, however, 'the diabolic French books' that Korais read turned him into 'a prodigal son.'³³ Korais' close pursuit of the fashion for wigs in north-west Europe (known in Dutch as *pruikentijd*)³⁴ presents another field of friction between them. The following remarks by Petrou display the divergent receptions of individualism and freedom, two venerated ideals in Enlightenment Europe: 'Here, he found his freedom and, what is more, he liked himself. For this reason, Europe is not for us. For it dresses the youth and may holy God help us.'³⁵ Likewise, Korais' expenses in the art auctions, operas, and private lessons, including one for learning how to play 'the guitar, an English instrument',³⁶ were nothing but a waste of money. His adoption of 'Frankish attire' including such components as 'a cloth with golden stripes', 'a golden hat', and 'a long sword'³⁷ at the expense of his traditional *kaloupaki*³⁸ and long Oriental clothes are among the other criticisms that Petrou levelled against Korais. If we are to believe Petrou, a Greek complained to the Orthodox

30 H. Çolak, 'Bir ev iki dünya: on sekizinci yüzyıl Amsterdam Osmanlı Rum tüccar cemaatinde yol ayrımı', in H. Çolak, Z. Kocabıyıkoglu Çeçen and N. I. Demirakin (eds), *Ayşegül Keskin Çolak'a Armağan Tarih ve Edebiyat Yazıları* (Ankara 2016) 63–79.

31 O. Augustinos, 'Philhellenic promises and Hellenic visions: Korais and the discourse of the Enlightenment', in K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Aldershot 2008) 182.

32 B. Trencsényi and M. Kopeček (eds), *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries, I. Late Enlightenment – Emergence of the Modern 'National Idea'* (Budapest 2006) 145.

33 F. Iliou, *Γράμματα από το Αμστερνταμ* (Athens 1976) 41.

34 B. J. Slot, 'Een Amsterdamse Griek in de pruikentijd', *De Tweede Ronde* 4 (1983) 79–84.

35 Iliou, *Γράμματα*, 13.

36 *Op. cit.*, 7.

37 *Op. cit.*, 27.

38 *Op. cit.*, 12.

priest that Korais would be ‘Turkified’ easily,³⁹ i.e. he would lose his pre-departure values. In short, on the cultural and intellectual levels, the diaspora experience of the Greek merchants in Amsterdam created not only staunch protagonists of European culture, but also strong opponents to change.

Despite the rather difficult relationship established by the majority of Greek merchants with European culture in Amsterdam, for some merchants their diaspora experience offered them other opportunities. For example, in the list of Dutch diplomatic representatives prepared by Schutte, for the island of Patmos there appears the name of a certain ‘Stamati di Petro, merchant from Amsterdam’, who swore his oath in 27 July 1797 as consular agent in Patmos.⁴⁰ Although the Dutch employed a number of Ottoman Greeks in their consular apparatus,⁴¹ this particular appointment presents a curious case from a number of perspectives. First of all, cases of merchants who moved to the Dutch Republic from the Ottoman Empire and returned as representatives of the Dutch Republic are rare if not unique. Secondly, this post must have been created specifically for Petrou, since there was no earlier Dutch consular representation for Patmos. Thirdly, if the vice-consul is indeed the same Stamatis Petrou who wrote a number of negative statements about Dutch and European culture and ideals, his appointment becomes even more important in terms of showing the level of pragmatism employed by diaspora merchants.

I think that the two names must refer to the same Stamatis Petrou. In the later stages of his life Petrou established his own company ‘Stamati Petro en co.’ in Amsterdam, and according to the documents of the Levant Trade, he conducted trade in Amsterdam between 1778 and 1793.⁴² According to Iliou, Petrou must have returned to Patmos between 1793 and 1800, which coincides with the appointment in question in 1797. Likewise, on the basis of the Codex of the Orthodox Church of Amsterdam,⁴³ Iliou found only a second person with the same surname: Vasileios Petrou from Patmos,⁴⁴ which is also confirmed by the *familiadvertenties* of the Dutch Centre for Family History.⁴⁵

The disjunction between the interests of the Dutch Republic and the pragmatism employed by diaspora merchants appears to have continued during Petrou’s tenure,

39 *Op. cit.*, 19.

40 O. Schutte, *Repertorium Der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers, Residerende in het Buitenland, 1584–1810* (The Hague 1976) 347.

41 Schutte’s list of Dutch diplomatic representatives includes a number of Greek names, especially for the islands in the Eastern Mediterranean. Slot has studied some of them: B. J. Slot, ‘Ολλανδοί πρόξενοι Μήλου-Κιμώλου’, *Κιμωλιακά* 8 (1978) 157–267.

42 J. G. Nanninga (ed.), *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Levantschen Handel, 1765–1826* (The Hague 1966), IV, 1727–1765, part 1, 263–5, 324–6, 517–19, and part 2, 1358, 1362.

43 Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief: 5001/399.

44 Iliou, *Γράμματα*, 71.

45 Centrum voor Familiageschiedenis: VFADNL104506: fiche 5339, 1.

which lasted until 19 July 1799, when he was dismissed from this post.⁴⁶ Dissatisfaction with his services sets the tone in his letter of dismissal issued by the Dutch Ambassador, van Dedem. Among the first two reasons for his dismissal, van Dedem stated that Petrou deserves 'no confidence' as a public officer who failed 'in his duties and in the fulfilment of his instructions', and remarked that the latter ignored van Dedem and failed to maintain a correspondence with him. Petrou's dismissal came at a time of a more global phenomenon that affected the whole of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, namely the Napoleonic Wars. After Napoleon invaded the Dutch Republic in 1795, he landed his army in Ottoman Egypt in 1798. This sequence of events worked to the effect that the Ottoman administration adopted a policy of associating the Dutch with the French and treated them accordingly. One major result of this policy shift was the (temporary) suspension of political relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Batavian Republic that was formed following the Napoleonic invasion of the Dutch Republic.⁴⁷ Interestingly, this political crisis is mentioned only as the third and last reason in van Dedem's letter. Additionally, although no official appointment was made to replace Petrou, the fact that his unfulfilled duties were transferred to a foreigner, the Prussian consul Gilly, may point to the level of disjunction between the interests of the Republic and Petrou. Petrou's background as a man with a closed system of values opposing many aspects of Dutch and European culture, his controversial appointment as the Dutch representative in his native Patmos, and his dishonourable dismissal are indicative of the need to consider the intricate relationship that a diaspora merchant could establish with his host state in the light of diaspora merchants' pragmatism.

If we return to Pringos' positive remarks about the Dutch trade infrastructure, particularly the great corporations, the other examples stated above may help us in looking at his pro-Dutch discourse from the point of pragmatism, as well. However, in order to have a more complete idea about his particular pragmatism, it is worth taking a look at his attitude towards Russia and the implications of such an attitude for the Greek merchant community in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam Greeks as beneficiaries of the Russian Empire

The relationship formed by the Greek merchants of Amsterdam with the Russians is related to the issues of the establishment and maintenance of an Orthodox church in Amsterdam, and the prospects of Greek independence. In 1758, thirteen Greeks wrote a letter to the Russian tsarina Elizabeth Petrovna. Drawing on their common Orthodox faith, they asked for her help in establishing an Orthodox church in Amsterdam. The petitioners included prominent members of the community such as Ioannis Pringos. A striking aspect of this letter is the politically engaged manner with which the petitioners

46 Nationaal Archief [hereafter NA], NA.1.02.20, 874.

47 I. H. Kadi, 'On the edges of an Ottoman world: non-Muslim Ottoman merchants in Amsterdam', in C. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (London 2011) 285.

identified themselves vis-à-vis the Russian Empire: ‘the *Romaioi* of the city of Amsterdam, humble servants of your imperial highness.’⁴⁸ In other correspondence with Russian authorities, they retained a similar terminology in identifying themselves: ‘the humble supplicant servants of her highness’,⁴⁹ ‘sailors of Amsterdam, humble and ... servants of your magnificent Empire’.⁵⁰ Unexpectedly, however, the required money for the establishment of an Orthodox church came neither from the Russians nor the said Greek merchants themselves.

In 1762, two Greek lawyers from Ottoman Filibe (modern Plovdiv) arrived at Amsterdam claiming the inheritance of their clients’ fathers who had died while trading in Dutch Batavia. The two merchants had worked under Dutch protection in the Indian Ocean and following their death, their inheritance was moved to the Weeskamer, the Dutch institution that dealt with the inheritance of those who died without a (known or reachable) spouse or child. Due to the difficulties that the two representatives faced in confirming their authenticity, the archimandrite of the Patriarch Silvestros of Antioch, Nektarios, who happened to be in the city and was then leading the ceremonies of the Greek Orthodox community in a house in Amsterdam, came up with an idea. He would request help from one of his friends, an influential member of the community, Antonios Zingrilaras, who for the esteem that he held for Nektarios would stand surety for the said representatives together with his Dutch friend Herman More, a lawyer. However, Nektarios set a condition for his mediation: around one third of the inheritance would be reserved for the community in Amsterdam with the purpose of buying a house that would serve as the first church of the Orthodox flock in Amsterdam. The plan was to dedicate this church to St Nikolaos in appreciation of his miracles on behalf of sailors.⁵¹ In 1763 the building that would function as the church was bought by the aforementioned Antonios Zingrilaras, and the church began to function in 1764.⁵²

Seemingly a fruitful result of the policies of the Greek Orthodox community in Amsterdam, in the coming years this church would function as the core element of a Greek-Russian rapprochement. This rapprochement would bring to the fore the efforts of individuals such as Ioannis Pringos who had not forsaken his generous words about the Dutch infrastructure for trade. Conveniently for the pro-Russian policies, this was a time of Russo-Ottoman wars (1768-74) during which the weakness of the Ottoman side became apparent, also among the subjects of the Ottoman sultan. Then, the Greek merchants reintroduced their policy of receiving the support of the Russian embassy, which was also in harmony with the new Russian policies adopted by Catherine the Great (1762-96) towards the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, in

48 Skouvaras, *Ιωάννης Πρίγκος*, 60-2.

49 *Op. cit.*, 59.

50 *Op. cit.*, 80. The omitted matter is left out as illegible by Skouvaras.

51 *Op. cit.*, 90.

52 V. F. H. E. van Schaik, ‘De Russisch-Griekse kerk van de Heilige Catharina te Amsterdam van 1763-1866’, *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 48 (1956) 241.

1766, the building was transferred to Count Woensoff, the Russian minister, and Ioannis Pringos 'for the use of the Greek and Russian community which will be or come here from time to time.'⁵³ Reflecting this policy change, the church was dedicated not to St Nikolaos as initially planned and probably announced to the families of the deceased merchants, but to St Catherine, a prudent correlation with the then Russian tsarina Catherine the Great. Especially after 1816 when Dutch-Russian relations were sealed with the marriage of the Russian princess Anna Pavlovna (d. 1865) and the Dutch prince William (later King William II, 1840–1849) the church would be popularly known as the Russian-Greek church, and would benefit from the benevolence of the Romanov dynasty. The archives of Anna Pavlovna refer to at least four instalments of £300 for the years 1831, 1832, 1833, and 1837 for the church in question.⁵⁴ Likewise, the church was presented with gifts by the Russian tsar Nicholas, Anna Pavlovna's brother, which had connotations with regard to the political concerns of both Russia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Epitomes of this relationship were two plaques commemorating the victories of the tsar and prince William against Poles and Belgians respectively in 1831. A watercolour painting of the inside of the church from 1840 displays these plaques on the walls of the church.⁵⁵

In his diary, Pringos made his pro-Russian stance evident in several places. For instance, he saw in the Russian Empire the possible liberation of the Orthodox from 'the heavy and insupportable yoke, the unjust, the plunderer, the infidel Turk'.⁵⁶ On another occasion, his support for Russia during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768–74 gave Pringos the opportunity to draw on the prophecies attributed to the Byzantine emperor Leo the Wise about the fall of Constantinople and the end of the world: 'The Turk shall remain for 320 years in the City [Constantinople]. And now it is 317 years from 1454 [sic] when they took the City until now, 1771. The Lord during these three years has made it possible for them [the Russians] to throw the Turk out of Greece and out of Europe.' Likewise, he asserted that 'the Turk in the City', i.e. the Ottoman sultan, interpreted the defeat of his loyal *paşas* against the unruly Ali Bey of Egypt as a fulfilment of the eschatological prophecies of the *Seyids* about the end of his Empire.⁵⁷ In a manner reminiscent of his allusion to the prophecies of Leo the Wise and the *Seyids*, Pringos also used Voltaire's criticisms of the Ottomans as part of his discourse: 'Voltaire ... says, all the rulers of Europe have the right to unite to expel the Turk from Europe.'⁵⁸ Was the twenty-second chapter of Voltaire's *Treatise on Tolerance*, entitled 'On universal tolerance'—inviting the Christians to regard the 'Turks' and people of other faiths on equal terms—also part of the pool of information to which Pringos had access? One can

53 Schaik, 'De Russisch-Griekse kerk', 241.

54 *Op. cit.*, 238.

55 *Op. cit.*, 236–7.

56 Clogg, 'The concerns', 42.

57 *Op. cit.*, 43.

58 Skouvaras, *Ιωάννης Πρίγκος*, 188.

only speculate if he had access to this chapter through written or oral means.⁵⁹ Even if he did, such concerns probably did not have any place in the discourse of figures like Pringos.

As important as the pragmatic expectations behind Pringos' support for Russia is his emerging resentment of Russian policies with respect to Greeks of the Ottoman Empire following the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. The most concrete result of the Treaty for the Greek Orthodox merchants was that they could now trade under the Russian flag. This was particularly important for the Black Sea trade because with this Treaty, there emerged a theoretically independent Crimean Khanate, nominally under Russian control only to be annexed by Russia in 1783.⁶⁰ On Russian initiative some Black Sea trading ports were invigorated by the participation of a number of Ottoman Greeks. The overall results of the Treaty also appear to have wiped out the hopes of some of the Greeks who saw in the war the prospect of a Greek state, free from the Ottoman Empire and probably under Russian protection. In a note written around one and a half months after the conclusion of the Treaty, Pringos condemned the 'ignorance' of the Greeks, and accused them—probably including himself—of pinning their hopes on Russia rather than on God. He also criticized the Russian policies in creating trading ports by giving Russian passports, land, and building materials to mostly Ottoman Greeks: 'Russia looks to her interest. She insisted on and succeeded in [obtaining] free travel to move Greeks to her lands, to inhabit her deserts [...] Russia should have held a free area of land in the Dodecanese as a refuge for the Greeks. But she cared little for them.'⁶¹ Pringos' negative views on these trading ports present an interesting irony in that the future examples of the Black Sea trading ports such as Odessa, where the key initiator of the Greek revolution, the Philiki Etaireia, would be established, were to provide an important stronghold for Greek nationalism.

Let us set aside the above examples of Pringos' anti-Ottoman discourse and return to his remark about the absence of an Ottoman infrastructure that would enable merchants like himself to accumulate more wealth through trade. Alongside an abundant number of negative attributes to 'the Turk', he laments that the Ottoman sultan does not see the parallelism between the interests of his subjects and his Empire.⁶² One can only imagine how Pringos, who had died in Zagora in 1789, would have acted if the Ottoman sultan indeed sought ways to facilitate the newly-flourishing commercial groups in and from his domains. Yet, some of his fellow Greeks in Amsterdam, who

59 His library in Zagora includes only Voulgaris' Greek translation of Voltaire's *Essai historique et critique sur les dissensions des églises de Pologne*, which was offered later, when he returned to Zagora, by the codonator of the library, Kallinikos, the former Patriarch of Constantinople. Skouvaras, *Ιωάννης Πρίγκος*, 316–18. P. Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford 2009) 84.

60 R. H. Davison, "Russian skill and Turkish imbecility": the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji reconsidered', *Slavic Review* 35/3 (1976) 463–483.

61 Clogg, 'The concerns', 45.

62 *Op. cit.*; 44.

signed a number of petitions to the Dutch and Russian authorities alongside Pringos, had this experience with Ottoman bureaucracy in the course of a few years.

Amsterdam Greeks as subjects of the Ottoman sultan

Early in his reign, the Ottoman sultan Selim III (1789-1808) handled the issue of the *berath* merchants within his broad programme of reinstating the Ottoman state in the international arena following the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. In 1791, he dispatched a decree to his administrative officials in places with large groups of *berath* merchants, pointing to a number of divergences from the traditional protection system: foreign states have been appointing 'the *cizye*-paying subjects' of the sultan as their consuls and vice-consuls, and distributing 'papers called *patente*' that placed the Ottoman merchants outside the reach of the state. He asked his officials to put an end to these practices which would subvert the 'order of the country' (*nizâm-ı memleket*), and asked them to inspect the authenticity of their documentation.⁶³ In parallel to the rather holistic fashion in which Selim viewed the matter, and in contravention of classical Ottoman political theory, some Ottoman intellectuals of the time such as the court historian Ahmed Vâsif Efendi began to voice mercantilist views inviting wealthy Ottoman statesmen to invest in shipping and trade.⁶⁴ In his later correspondence with his bureaucrats, including the Kapudan Pasha and his dragoman Panagiotis Mourouzis, a Phanariot Greek, Selim himself admitted that there were not enough Ottoman merchant ships.⁶⁵ As such details show, the pressing concern was the rapid shift of the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects into the orbit of Russian commercial-cum-political expansion in the Black Sea and the consequent shrinkage of the Ottoman merchant marine. The immediate measures were aimed at addressing this very problem, hence creating the system of *Avrupa tüccârı* (merchants of Europe) that offered the Ottoman non-Muslim merchants who were trading with Europe similar rights to those in the traditional protection system, but with the novelty that it was the Ottoman state which sold these *berats* at a cheaper price. Similarly, the Ottoman administration made notable contributions to facilitate the growth of a merchant marine, a major portion of which was owned by Ottoman Greeks.⁶⁶ These immediate measures were also coupled with the broader policy of establishing a permanent ambassadorial and consular presence in Europe. Thus, these reforms caused the agendas of the Ottoman state and Ottoman mercantile groups such as the Greeks in Amsterdam to overlap.

63 A. İ. Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayri Müslimler: Kapitülasyonlar, Avrupa Tüccarları, Berath Tüccarlar, Hayriye Tüccarları, 1750-1839* (Ankara 1998) 45–6.

64 E. L. Menchinger, 'An Ottoman historian in an Age of Reform: Ahmed Vâsif Efendi (ca. 1730-1806)', unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014, 255.

65 G. Harlaftis and S. Laiou, 'Mapping the Greek maritime diaspora from the early eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries', in McCabe, Harlaftis and Pepelasis Minoglou (eds), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks*, 24.

66 *Op. cit.*; B. Masters, 'The Sultan's entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa Tüccarları* and the *Hayriye Tüccarları* in Syria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24/4 (1992) 579–97.

Under such circumstances, and in reaction to the newly introduced municipal taxes in Amsterdam, a group of Greek merchants made the pragmatic claim that they should be exempt from these taxes because they were, in fact, the subjects of the Ottoman sultan. Eventually, they also brought the issue to the attention of the Ottoman administration, most probably through their Phanariot connections. Readily adopting this case, the Ottoman administration issued two memoranda, the second and more decisive one written by the Phanariot chief interpreter of the Porte, Konstantinos Ypsilantis. The Ottoman argument was that these petitioners were the sultan's genuine subjects and hence should be exempt from taxation just like the Dutch citizens in the Ottoman Empire. The Dutch point was that they were Dutch citizens who even paid to acquire this status.⁶⁷ The eventual result of the political crisis, which, coupled with the Napoleonic Wars, paved the way for Stamatis Petrou's dismissal from the vice-consulate of Patmos, presents a fruitful gain for the case of the Greek merchants. In 1804, the Ottoman administration appointed Nikolas Marcella, one of the Greek merchants of Amsterdam who negotiated the case, as the first Ottoman consul (*şehbender*) in Amsterdam with the purpose of coordinating with the Dutch authorities and facilitating the actions of Ottoman merchants in and visiting Dutch ports.⁶⁸ In short, when the appropriate conditions emerged, the Greek merchants of Amsterdam fully benefited from the offers of the Ottoman administration to the degree that they managed to represent the Ottoman state itself in Amsterdam.

A remarkable aspect of Marcella's rise from an ordinary merchant to the representative of the Ottoman state in Amsterdam was the mechanisms he utilized. The key connection was probably his earlier employment by Nikolaos Petrou Mavrogenis, who later became the prince of Wallachia (1786-9).⁶⁹ Despite being born not in Istanbul but in Paros, and resented in Phanariot circles as a 'crude islander', Mavrogenis filled one of the most influential positions in Ottoman bureaucracy, just as the preceding Phanariot bureaucrats had done.⁷⁰ These bureaucrats, as an integral component of the Ottoman state,⁷¹ were at the forefront of the transformation that Selim had placed on his agenda, and half a century before, they proved to be instrumental in curbing the Catholic influence within the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire.⁷² With his earlier

67 Kadi, 'On the edges of an Ottoman world', 284-5. For the Dutch correspondence on this issue see NA.1.02.20/908.

68 Kadi, 'On the edges of an Ottoman world', 285. On this issue see also M. van den Boogert, 'Ottoman Greeks in the Dutch Levant trade: collective strategy and individual practice (c. 1750-1821)', *Oriente Moderno* 86 (2006) 142-6.

69 Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants*, 305.

70 C. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley 2010) 45.

71 *Op. cit.*, 5-37.

72 E. Bayraktar Tellan, 'The Patriarch and the Sultan: the struggle for authority and the quest for order in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire', unpublished PhD dissertation, Bilkent University, 2011; H. Çolak, *The Orthodox Church in the Early Modern Middle East: Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria* (Ankara 2015).

cooperation with a notable bureaucrat, Marcella was one of the most suitable people not only to bring the issue to the attention of the Ottoman administration but also to receive its approval for his future appointment as a representative of the Ottoman state. Marcella's appointment was part and parcel of a broader Ottoman policy to create a permanent diplomatic presence in Europe, which was filled almost exclusively by Greek merchants from the Ottoman Empire, as registered in a separate notebook series in the Ottoman archives called 'Notebooks on Consuls' (*Şehbender Defterleri*). Initially, a Greek from the island of Kefalonia was appointed as the first Ottoman consul in Naples,⁷³ and other examples followed suit. Hence, the first Ottoman consuls in European cities were mostly Greek merchants trading there: Thodoraki in Malta, Dimitrios of Thessaloniki in Marseille, Kyriakos Thodori in Trieste, Thodori of Crete in London, and some others in Genoa and Venice, Messina, Livorno, Lisbon, and Alicante.⁷⁴

A highly interesting and yet overlooked aspect of the resistance led by Marcella against the newly introduced Dutch taxes is the people who signed the petition alongside him. One of the most notable figures is Stephanos Isaias, who had endeavoured to show his interests in the Eastern Mediterranean to be compatible with those of the Dutch merchants, and who was one of the petitioners flirting with a politically-engaged language in writing to the Russian authorities. In parallel to these actions, we see the same Isaias defending the equally pragmatic idea that the Greek merchants in Amsterdam were the subjects of the Ottoman sultan and hence should be exempt from the recent taxes imposed by the Dutch authorities. If one pursues the same research track and looks further into the personalities and networks of the people who signed the petition claiming that they are the genuine subjects of the Ottoman sultan, it is possible to see even more controversial cases ignored by scholars who have written on Marcella's appointment.

Amsterdam Greeks as supporters of Independent Greece

A particularly interesting link among the Greek negotiators who secured the backing of the Ottoman state is provided by Anastasios Tomasachi, the father of Georgios Tomasachi (also referred to as Tomasinos), who would be a prominent supporter of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. Established in 1814 in Odessa, the Philiki Etaireia quickly attracted followers among Greeks outside Russian and Ottoman domains too. Although Frangos' survey of the members of the society does not mention any connection between the Philiki Etaireia and the merchants of Amsterdam,⁷⁵ Koster has published a number of documents showing a direct connection between the *philikoi*

73 BOA.A.[DVNS.ŞHB.d.1, 1.

74 See respectively BOA.A.[DVNS.ŞHB.d.1, 3–4; 9; 2–3; 6; 3–4; 4–5; 6; and 7. See also C. V. Findley, 'The foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry: the beginnings of bureaucratic reform under Selim III and Mahmud II', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3/4 (1972) 397.

75 G. D. Frangos, 'The Philike Etaireia, 1814–1821: a social and historical analysis', unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1971.

and some Greek merchants in Amsterdam.⁷⁶ One of these merchants was Georgios Tomasachi. That a member of the Greek merchant community in Amsterdam provided material support for the Greek Revolution was definitely not a unique incident. We know that the Greek Revolution attracted the support of Greeks, including merchants, across Europe in varying degrees.⁷⁷ However, the extent of the family and business networks of Georgios Tomasachi turns his connection with the Greek Revolution into a particularly curious case. Apart from his father, he was related to at least two other petitioners who negotiated their status as the subjects of the Ottoman state and avoided paying the taxes imposed by the Dutch authorities. He was the grandson of Stephanos Isaias, who himself signed several petitions to benefit from the support of the Dutch, Russian and Ottoman states for various purposes. More importantly, however, Tomasachi's uncle-in-law, and Isaias' son-in-law, was none other than Nikolas Marcella, the Ottoman consul in Amsterdam. What makes the relationship between the two families particularly remarkable is that they merged their companies into one called Tomasachi & Marcella, which continued until Marcella's death in 1814.⁷⁸ In this way the family names of both a consul of the Ottoman state and a future proponent of the Greek insurrection against Ottoman rule were represented within the same company. In short, those who avoided Dutch taxation by successfully negotiating their Ottoman status and the supporters of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire were related not only through family but also commercial networks.

The second member of the Greek community of Amsterdam who stood out with his engagement with the Greek Revolution was Stephanos Palaiologos. Like Tomasachi, he was one of the eleven members of the Philhellenic Committee in Amsterdam. The other, exclusively Dutch members included two notaries, a professor of law, three clergymen from Protestant and Catholic denominations, and three Dutch merchants trading in the Levant. Jan Fabius, a notary, acted as the president of the Committee.⁷⁹ As noted by Koster, in addition to coordinating the collection and dispatch of war materials and money possibly from several European ports to the revolutionaries, Palaiologos also contributed support in the form of cash from his own account.⁸⁰ Conveniently for the intrinsic relation between the Greek community and the benefactor of the Orthodox church of Amsterdam, the Russian princess at the Dutch court, Palaiologos owned a

76 D. Koster, 'Dutch Philhellenism and the Greek merchants of Amsterdam', *Pharos, Journal of the Netherlands Institute at Athens* 6 (1998) 54-7.

77 See, for instance, W. St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Cambridge 2008) 25.

78 Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie en Heraldiek, *Nederland's Patriciaat* (The Hague 1919) 241.

79 Koster, 'Dutch Philhellenism', 33, L. Wagner-Heidendal, *Het filhellenisme in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1821-1829): een bijdrage tot de studie van de publieke opinie in het begin van de negentiende eeuw* (Brussels 1972) 99-101, J. H. A. Ringeling, 'Het Eerste Philhelleense Comité in de Nederlanden: Amsterdam 7 Februari 1822', *Amstelodamum* 51 (1964) 145-55, R. A. D. Renting, 'Nederland en de Griekse Vrijheidsoorlog', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 67 (1954) 21-49.

80 Koster, 'Dutch Philhellenism', 36.

frigate called the Anna Pavlovna. Both the Anna Pavlovna and the Briseïs, a brig owned by Emmanuel Xenos, made seven journeys each between the years 1820 and 1826 into the Eastern Mediterranean.⁸¹ Two letters of gratitude dispatched by the insurgents in the island of Hydra and the provisional Greek Ministry of Religion⁸² address both Palaiologos and Tomasachi, which ended up in the personal archive of Jan Fabius, the president of the Committee. Alongside these links with their Dutch collaborators, however, when it came to the official Dutch authorities, Palaiologos kept his connections with the Greek revolution a secret. An interesting example is a joint petition that Palaiologos signed with Stephanos Isaias and Anton Curtovich, both of whom also took part in securing the support of the Ottoman state against Dutch taxation. In this petition, they requested the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs to grant protection to Ioannis Xenos, another Greek merchant from Amsterdam who had set sail for Istanbul and Izmir around the time of the Greek revolution in 1821. As a mark of their ability to manoeuvre pragmatically in the intense international atmosphere, they mentioned specifically that although Xenos was not a burgher of Amsterdam, he 'had behaved and had been considered as a Dutchman.'⁸³ Likewise, in his letter to Gaspard Testa, the translator of the Dutch ambassador, he presented the Greek insurrection as a curse that had struck his 'unfortunate nation' and condemned them with the words: 'may heaven punish the chiefs and instigators of the insurrection'.⁸⁴

Of particular importance was the role of mediation that Palaiologos offered in order to secure the first foreign loan for the Greek state from the Dutch, which eventually did not take place as the preference was made for the London Stock Exchange. Often presented within the narrow confines of patriotism⁸⁵—the questioning of which is beyond the scope and intention of this article—I believe that the role that he sought to undertake can and should also be seen as an act of brokerage. In this way, a merchant underwent a formation into a political figure by also benefiting from the offers of his commercial vision and experience in the Levant. In his letter of 1823, offering his availability and willingness to act as mediator for a Dutch loan, he laid out a number of revenues that the Greek state would be able to receive in the coming five or ten years after achieving independence. He calculated, for instance, that a loan of five million Dutch florins at 6% interest would generate a yearly interest of 300,000 Dutch florins. Apparently familiar with the economic resources of the region, as can also be exemplified in his commercial activities there, he suggested that this yearly interest could be paid through trade 'in currants, silk, and other products of the region' which, according to his calculations, would generate a yearly profit of 500,000 Dutch florins.⁸⁶

81 *Op. cit.*, 53.

82 NA.2.21.006.01, 10.

83 Nanninga (ed.), *Bronnen*, IV, part 2, 1048. Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch merchants*, 229.

84 Nanninga (ed.), *Bronnen*, IV, part 2, 1074–5. Koster, 'Dutch Philhellenism', 53.

85 N. L. Foropoulos, 'Στέφανος Παλαιολόγος, ένας λησμονημένος Πάτριος αγωνιστής', *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά* 10 (1984) 139–170, Koster, 'Dutch Philhellenism', 36, 48 and 49.

86 *Τα Αρχεία της Ελληνικής Παλιγγενεσίας*, Vol. 11. *Λυτά έγγραφα Υπερτάτης Διοικήσεως & Εκτελεστικού - Α' & Β' Βουλευτικής Περιόδου (1822–1823–1824)* (Athens 1978) 205–6.

The actions of Tomasachi and Palaiologos continued after the recognition of the Greek state, as evidenced by their correspondence with Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Greek president.⁸⁷ The main context of their exchange of letters was the financial and material support of the Philhellenic Committee. The role of a broker, which researchers like Koster have limited to ‘working in the interest of Greece’,⁸⁸ is also evident in the nature of actions Palaiologos and Tomasachi offered to assist.⁸⁹ In 1830, Palaiologos wanted to get involved in providing the Greek navy with warships by sending some sketches to Kapodistrias, and offered, yet again, his mediation for a Dutch loan. Even though Kapodistrias hinted at the importance of warships for Greece, his murder in the coming year halted the potential of such cooperation. Regarding the latter offer, however, he stated quite clearly that the decision to receive a new loan no longer depended on himself on account of the earlier debts. Despite ‘the unfortunate circumstances’ regarding his business activities, within the same year, Tomasachi also offered to get a Dutch loan, which Kapodistrias declined for the same reason.

As the above incidents indicate, the interests of these individuals were not limited to the field of commerce because they began to enlarge their activities beyond its normative confines by intertwining their activities with politics. A manifest reflection of this relationship between trade and politics was the rapid rise to power of Stephanos Palaiologos’ nephew, Stephanos Palaiologos junior. Son of Athanasios Palaiologos, who was also a member of the Philiki Etaireia and was trading in Crimea, Stephanos came to Amsterdam only in 1835, shortly before his uncle’s death, as the vice-consul of the Greek state in Amsterdam. He worked in this capacity until 1874, at which time he became the consul-general and occupied this post probably until his death.⁹⁰

Conclusion

As I sought to indicate through the case of Greek merchants in Amsterdam, the policies of the diaspora merchants were often motivated by pragmatism and were so flexible that they could accommodate to and even benefit from the emerging commercial and political developments quite successfully. In the commercial, social and diplomatic spheres, the received wisdom about the alleged affinity between the host Dutch state and diaspora merchants is dubious, to say the least. Despite a set of positive and negative attitudes towards themselves, the merchants sought to pursue an active policy of associating themselves with the host state and society through a number of mechanisms

87 Koster, ‘Dutch Philhellenism’, 54–7.

88 *Op. cit.*, 49. Koster mentions in one instance that Tomasachi and Palaiologos ‘were not ignorant of their own commercial interests’ and that ‘philhellenism also meant business’ (*op. cit.*, 40). However, their ‘patriotic activities’ and ‘patriotic feelings’ set the tone of his narrative (*op. cit.*, 40, 36, 48 and 49).

89 *Op. cit.*, 57 and 56.

90 B. J. Slot and D. Koster (eds), *Dutch Archives and Greek History: A Guide to Dutch Archives and Libraries Concerning the History of the Greeks and the Greek World between 1250 and 1940* (Athens 2007) 69.

by seeking to assume the position of protégés, citizens and consular agents. The main reasons appear to be of a pragmatic nature, and as seen, this pragmatism was extended to other states, too. The patterns of both positive and negative relations that the Greek merchants established with Russia, interpreted by the merchants mostly on the basis of the extent of Russian benevolence provide another example of pragmatism as a key motive in state-merchant relations. When the conditions of similar benevolence were present from the Ottoman side, a number of the merchants in question took part in negotiating their status as Ottoman subjects and one of them became the representative of the Ottoman state. One of the two notable figures who provided material support to the Greek insurrection against the Ottoman administration was tied to the negotiators of Ottoman identity with family and commercial bonds. That is not to dismiss the very presence of the support by some of the Greek merchants in Amsterdam to the Greek Revolution. However, it is also equally impossible not to note the same element of pragmatism in the activities of the Greek merchants who supported the Revolution. The fact that all these changes occurred over a long time span bears testimony to the enduring ability of these merchants to adapt to the changing political developments. Rather than showing weakness, this diverse composition of the diaspora merchants and their seemingly controversial policies at the individual or communal level are the key to their flexibility and rise, which cannot be fully comprehended within the narrow confines of nation- and state-centred perceptions.