

Greek and other trans-imperial merchant diasporas in Global Capitalism during the long 19th century

*Fifth Greek Economic History Association Conference, **October 20–24, 2027***

*Hosted by the IMS-FORTH and the University of Crete in **Rethymno***

*Organised by Gelina Harlaftis, and Socrates Petmezas
(GEHA, IMS-FORTH and University of Crete)*

The debate on the formation of a bourgeois class in Greece, closely interwoven with the Hellenic State-building, was the most heated one back in the 1970s–1980s and was part of the international dialogue about the rise of capitalism in the eastern Mediterranean. It was clear, and a novelty back then, that research on the («internal») bourgeois class in the Greek state, could not be engaged without taking under consideration the («external») Greek bourgeoisie, active outside the small kingdom and residing in the merchant colonies (*paroikies*) of the extended Greek diaspora. This diasporic bourgeoisie, a trans-imperial capitalist class in itself, was fervently engaged, in international trade, shipping and finance, by land and sea. Entrepreneurial, emigrational, cultural, even ecclesiastical networks of Greeks from Odessa and Taganrog to Marseille and Trieste, from Smyrna and Alexandria to the Danubian and Atlantic port cities played a key and multifarious economic role in this larger area interlocking distant imperial lands, and integrating Southeastern Europe, the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean to Global Capitalism.

The capitalist nature of the international Greek diaspora has been fully recognized in Greek historiography. What is still missing is detailed research on the specific linkages of this capitalist class to the one active in the Greek state. This conference wants to take a step forward by:

- a) examining closely the linkages and entanglements of the *trans-imperial* diasporic capitalist class with that of the small Greek state during the long 19th century, which ultimately led to the connection of the latter to global capitalism;
- b) investigating to what extent these connections pre-existed, since at least the 18th century, and continued to flourish during the 19th and the formation and expansion of the Greek state;
- c) questioning how was ‘Greek’ defined and redefined or challenged, in this era of Nationalism, Imperial Modernization and Colonialism. We particularly invite a comparative approach with other old or new diasporic merchant communities in Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Armenian, Jewish, Levantine, Bulgarian etc.), and
- d) probing whether a “unified” Greek capitalist class, active both inside and outside the Greek kingdom, was formed and which role it came to play in the state-building, industrialization and urbanization of the independent Greek state.

The conference will illuminate recent scholarship carried out in particular by a new generation of researchers and open up new avenues for enquiry.

More information will be uploaded soon on our website.