

Notes for the talk

VICISSITUDES OF AN EXPAT FAMILY: THE DE JONGHS, 1812-1964

Presented by Willem Daniels at the

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The many Levantine lineages in 19th and 20th century Smyrna all evolved differently, of course, but certain features are widely shared and the history of the De Jonghs can serve to illustrate them.

First, their founders are typically newcomers with strong entrepreneurial instincts who make profitable use of the opportunities offered by the wide-open business climate of Smyrna in the early part of this period. Their descendants generally prosper but in most cases show somewhat less ambition. A few, however, go on to amass considerable fortunes and form the city's wealthy elite, typically building imposing villas set in beautiful gardens. The backdrop for this is an expanding and rapidly modernizing city whose many businesses offer diversifying forms of employment to succeeding generations of Levantines.

The First World War causes general disruption, but the Netherlands remain neutral and De Jongh men of military age are apparently not conscripted into the Dutch army. The events of 1922 mean the end of Smyrna for all the expatriates, few of whom return for good to carry on in the new Izmir. Only one young De Jongh couple with their two children do so, and they find it a struggle to maintain a decent standard of living.

The rest of the De Jonghs disperse to various destinations – but apparently none choose to try their luck in the Netherlands. Several settle in Greece, where their fortunes vary considerably. In WW2 four De Jonghs serve in the Allied forces. The paragraphs following contain further details and biographical information on the various individuals named in my talk.



John de Jongh (1785-1854) arrives in Smyrna in 1812, marries Mary Wilkinson (1791-1862) that same year. John's successful business ventures include a cotton press factory and a newspaper (The Impartial), and he becomes Consul General of Denmark.

John de Jongh



Mary de Jongh

John and Mary's sons John Robert (1816-1889) and David (1829-1870) carry on with the factory and newspaper and engage in banking. John Robert is appointed Consul of Denmark.

David de Jongh jr.
(1857-1918)



David de Jongh sr.
(1829-1870)

The third generation includes John Atkinson (1854-1940), David (1857-1918), Oscar (1859-1922), Henry (1862-1936). John Atkinson is appointed Vice-Consul of Denmark. David is thought to have engaged principally in banking. Oscar and his wife Cleofe are killed, probably by Turkish irregulars, just before the fire in 1922. Henry joins with Thomas Bowen Rees to found the Egypt & Levant Steamship Co. and builds the "De Jongh house" in Boudjah (present-day Buca).



Henry de Jongh
(1862-1936)

De Jongh house



The fourth generation includes Eric (1890-1946), Isidor (1888-1944) and Frederick (1890-1965), all at an early stage of different business careers when the Levantine community flees Smyrna in 1922.



Eric de Jongh (1890-1946)

After 1922 the only De Jonghs to return to Izmir permanently are Isidor and his wife Marina (1889-1949), who spend the rest of their lives in Turkey. Their son Emeric leaves Izmir to serve

with Dutch forces in the Second World War and becomes a Dutch diplomat after the war.



Emeric de Jongh (1914-1993)

Several other De Jonghs settle in Athens, including children of David and Oscar, and also Henry and his wife Dora (1870-1964). Henry and his family do quite well in Greece, but many of the other De Jonghs have lost most of their property in the fire and have a pretty tough time. A son and grandson of Henry and Dora serve in the Second World War as does Eric's son Geoffrey(1917-1943), who is killed while serving with the RAF. Henry establishes a factory in Athens which two of his sons run until they sell it, and his third son graduates from Oxford and becomes a British subject.

