



Summary :

The Rodokanakis was one of the most prominent families of Chios, with a firm presence in the island's social and economic life. Despite the fact that members of the family distinguished themselves in many ways, the family earned its name mainly because of the status the Rodokanakis' merchant house enjoyed. From the late 18th century the family expanded its commercial activity to the Black Sea; simultaneously, thanks to the extended network of representatives and associates in the main British and Mediterranean ports, the family dominated the grain trade. At the same time, they invested in banking and industry.

Other Names

Rabdokanaki, Rodocanachi

Date and Place of Birth

Late 18th century – Southern Russia, Constantinople (Istanbul)

Main Role

Merchants, ship-owners, bankers

1. Origin – Genoese period

The Rodokanakis family ranked among the oldest [Chiot](#) aristocratic families. References on its antiquity and its leading economic and social position are multifold. In fact, some of these references accredit it with Byzantine roots; specifically, the Rodokanakis are attributed to have originated from a 12th century family of Byzantine officials from the [Theme of Thrakesion](#), whose original name was Rabdokanakis.¹

Anyway, what is certain is that the Rodokanakis family are recorded as early as the Genoese period as one of the leading families both economically and socially that extended their business beyond the island itself.² This was a usual choice for most of the Chiot families of the time, since they had acquired much of their wealth by profiteering from products cultivated in the neighbouring and fertile Asia Minor areas.³ The inclusion of the Rodokanakis family in the island's economic and social elite during the Genoese period is further confirmed by their participation (among other families) in Mahona, the Genoese company managed by nobles that administered Chios' wealth.⁴

2. Ottoman period

During Ottoman rule, the Rodokanakis' house remained part of the Chiot local elite. The island enjoyed significant privileges and was governed, essentially, by the powerful Greek-Orthodox families who had also dominated during the Genoese period. In fact, during the Ottoman period the lack of Genoa's supervision and the devitalisation of the Latin (Roman Catholic) faction offered almost absolute power to the Chiot families. These families, including the Agelastos, the [Argentis](#), the [Rallis](#), the Skylitsis, the Petrokokkinos, the [Skaramangas](#) and, naturally, the Rodokanakis, were called Kastrinoi because they inhabited the area inside the castle of the town of Chios.⁵

Several members of the Rodokanakis' family distinguished themselves in various intellectual pursuits and were granted leading offices both during the Ottoman period and subsequently. Among them the following stand out: Konstantinos Rodokanakis (1635-1687), physician to Charles II, King of England, and Emmanuel Rodokanakis (1859-1934), distinguished and highly decorated historian in France, where he was born and where he spent his whole life; he also was a corresponding member of the Academy of Athens.⁶

3. Rodokanakis family economic activities



3.1. Introduction

The main sectors dominated by the Rodokanakis family and for which they are recorded in collective memory are commerce and business. The family's participation, expansion and financial power on an international level pertains to the development of world trade and the transportation of goods. This process came as a result of the fact that the Ottoman Empire entered the sphere of Western economic interests, as well as the subsequent Industrial Revolution. During the modern period, Chios was the nodal point for Westerners involved in commerce and other transactions in the East. Consequently, Chioti had attained both experience and knowledge in business and trade and, therefore, became one of the groups that succeeded in asserting and acquiring significant part of the export trade between East and West as early as the 18th and 19th century.

Actually, they had established their control by introducing a business network connecting the main commercial centres in the Mediterranean with the West. Members of the family or associates related to the family or just people originating from the same area located themselves in these centres as representatives, thus establishing an entrepreneurial network of information exchange and commercial collaboration. This was the "Chiot network" defined by the historian Gelina Harlaftis and described so simply and graphically by Andreas Syggros in his memoirs.⁷

Within that context and these developments, the Rodokanakis family along with other Chiot families (Rallis, Petrokokkinos, [Negropontis](#) etc) created an equivalent network of associates – relatives in the most important commercial and mercantile centres of the time.

3.2. Rodokanakis family commercial activity during the 19th century

The Rodokanakis branch, members of which distinguished themselves mainly in business and established a notable international commercial network in the 19th century, was lead by Pavlos Rodokanakis, son of Emmanuel (Chios 23/9/1749-Constantinople 8/6/1801). Pavlos had 7 sons, Pandias (Chios 4/12/1786-Livorno 7/11/1846), Emmanuel (Chios 8/8/1789-Marseille 3/7/1855), Petros (Chios 4/12/1791-Chios 6/5/1822), Georgios (Chios 1795-Livorno 10/12/1845), Stefanos (Chios 1796-Syros 25/10/1882), Theodoros (Chios 1797-Odessa 1882) and Loukas (Chios 25/7/1801-Livorno 14/7/1832), as well as 2 daughters Argyro (Chios 1794-Livorno 12/9/1878) and Despoina, for whom it is only known that she was married to Antonios Evmorfopoulos.⁸

The cities where they established and founded their enterprises in were port cities, where grain trade dominated. So, not accidentally, they located in [Odessa](#) (Theodoros), Livorno (Pandias and Georgios), Marseille (Emmanuel), Chios (Petros) and Syros (Stefanos), in [Smyrna](#) and [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul). According to an agreement composed in Chios on January 22nd 1819, the first branches of the Rodokanakis enterprise were founded in Constantinople, Smyrna, Livorno and Odessa.⁹ The aforementioned ports constituted the main grain trade routes from the productive areas of the Danube, the [Black Sea](#) and the East in general to the West via Marseille and Livorno.¹⁰ According to Kostas Avgitidis, there were two trade names within the Rodokanakis commercial houses, namely "Rodokanakis & Co", based in Livorno, Smyrna and Constantinople, and "Rodokanakis, Son & Co", based in Odessa, Marseille and Paris.¹¹ Moreover, members of the family appear to have moved to England from the late 1830s. Specifically, on a diagram of Greek business houses located in Finsbury Circus, London, around 1839, two companies related to the family are recorded: the *Rodocanachi & Sons Merchants* and the *Rodocanachi Giovanni & Co*.¹² Another source, on the other hand, puts the Rodokanakis company in Manchester first (1842) and then London, under the name *D.E. Rodocanachi*.¹³

Theodoros P. Rodokanakis, second youngest son of Pavlos, located in 1819 in Odessa. His original capital amounted to 150,000 piastres, meaning that his was the smallest of the four offices simultaneously founded by the Rodokanakis brothers.¹⁴ In 1828 he married in Vienna Arietta, daughter of Thomas Galatis. The couple gave birth to Ifigeneia (Odessa 3/5/1834-Marseille, 26/7/1854), Periklis (Odessa 1841-Paris 12/11/1899), the only male descendant and essential administrator and heir to the father's immense fortune, Ariani (Odessa 1842-Vienna) and Maria (Odessa 21/11/1847-Paris 24/6/1893).¹⁵

Grain trade was the key of success for the Rodokanakis family. Emmanuel Rodokanakis, located in Marseille, was not randomly



called king of grain (“roi du blé”) as early as the 1830s,¹⁶ while quantitative data from a reliable French source of the time (1840) fully justify the aforementioned designation.¹⁷

Theodore’s activity in Odessa, however, appears to have been the key in order for the Rodokanakis network to control the majority of grain exports in Southern Russia. As early as the first year of his location there, industrious Theodoros attempted to be included in the first class (division) of merchants, ie. the grand merchants, and acquire the Russian citizenship, which he was granted in 1826. From that year onwards, his business’ commercial value, worth 355,751 roubles, ranks him among the most significant grain exporters.¹⁸ Along with the [Mavros](#), [Rallis](#), [Pappoufou](#) and [Zarifis](#) commercial houses, he is part of the hard core of Greek grand merchants that will dominate grain exports in Odessa for the following decades (1830s and 40s) until the outbreak of the Crimean War. Between 1833 and 1860, these five companies handled 26% of the grain exports total, while Theodoros Rodokanakis' facility was worth more in value than the other four (42,640,748 roubles, compared to the 33,487,895 roubles the second house of I. Rallis was worth).¹⁹ In general, the Theodore Rodokanakis' company constituted the most powerful merchant house in Odessa during the 1830s and 40s, handling almost 10% of the total exports and ranking steadily first concerning the city’s export trade from 1845 until 1853.²⁰

3.3. Shipping

The Rodokanakis' company branch in Odessa expanded its activities to shipping as well. In 1835 Theodoros Rodokanakis appears as owner of the sailing ship “Nettuno” (tonnage 336), while the “Rodocanachi” and “Condor” sailers (350 and 140 tonnage respectively) were built in 1840 and registered in Marseille.²¹ Avgitidis mentions that between 1855 and 1857 four more sailers were built as well as a steamboat on behalf of the Odessa house.²² From 1870 to 1890 it seems that the Rodokanakis family (unclear which specific branch) are prominent ship-owners, since they handle part of the trade between Marseille and the Black Sea with 49 ships in 1870 (tonnage 14,808), 30 ships in 1880 (tonnage 15,678) and 9 ships in 1890 (tonnage 5,289).²³

3.4. Industry

The company’s activities, however, were not only confined to the “traditional” entrepreneurial sectors that other Greeks involved themselves with at the time. The Odessa branch of the Rodokanakis family also invested in industry. They were shareholders with 56,610 roubles worth of stocks in a Bryansk factory producing railroad hardware, while owning 200 stocks worth 34,000 roubles in a steel factory, 235 stocks worth 117,500 roubles in a tannery and 82 stocks worth 82,000 roubles in a factory producing enamels and paints. Furthermore, they were shareholders in an Eastern Siberian gold mine, a factory producing jute (raw fibre, useful in rope-making), they were associates to a factory producing flour in [Novorossiysk](#), owned a winery in Odessa and a tan yard running on steam in [Sevastopol](#).²⁴

3.5. Banking

A company of such financial puissance and width of entrepreneurial activities could not possibly abstain from the [banking sector](#). With his arrival in Odessa in 1819, Theodoros Rodokanakis founded a bank which was in operation until his passing. Moreover, he participated in the establishment of the “International Commercial Bank” in 1869, along with the banks “Theod. Mavrokordatos & Co” of Odessa and “Skaramangas & Co” of [Taganrog](#). Furthermore, he was co-founder of the “Russian Central Bank” in 1873 and the “Azhov-Don Bank” in 1871 along with the Skaramangas house. Additionally, he held shares in the original capital funding the “Russian Bank of External Commerce” in 1871, a bank with branch offices in all major Russian towns. At the same time, he was involved in banking abroad in establishments such as the “National Bank of Tuscany”, the “Italian-German Bank” etc.²⁵

3.6. Landed property – Estates

As expected, the Odessa Rodokanakis family owned a vast property in land, particularly in areas such as Bessarabia (400 hectares), Benderovsky, [Kherson](#), Uget, Tiraspol, Akkerman.²⁶ In the city of Odessa they were attributed with the proprietorship of 18



buildings, ranking third after the [Mavrogordatos](#) and [Maraslis](#) families.²⁷ According to a source stated by the historian Vassilis Kardasis,²⁸ Theodore Rodokanakis' landed property amounted to 321,377 roubles. That did rank him third in the list of estate owners; these data, however, attribute the first place to Stefanos Rallis and not to the Mavrogordatos family.

3.7. Involvement in politics

Theodoros Rodokanakis' involvement in Odessa politics was as intense as his business activities. As early as the third year of his location (1822) he was elected among the 6 Greeks participating in the Odessa city council. In 1831 he finds himself a member of the Commercial Chamber in town, in 1837 a member of the Commercial Council branch, while in 1839 he is proclaimed an honorary citizen of Odessa. Since 1871, the year the [Greek Charitable Community of Odessa](#) was founded, until his death (1882), he constantly served as its president. However, among the official positions that he held, the most prominent (and the one linked to his close collaboration with Western ports) was probably his appointment as Tuscany's Consul General in Odessa.²⁹

His fame, along with his vast fortune, was a positive influence on the rest of the family as well, since his son Periklis was one the few Greeks who were granted a patent of nobility by the Russian Czar Nicholas II on December 19th 1896 for the success of his commercial business. Similar titles were awarded to the Rodokanakis family branch in Livorno: Pandelis Rodokanakis received a title of nobility by the Great Duke of Tuscany in 20/7/1846. His son Emmanuel, on the other hand, was named a count on 26/6/1887 by the King of Italy.

Philanthropy was another field where the Rodokanakis family was active, as were most of the grand merchants of the time. Their [charitably activity](#), in fact, extended beyond the geographical boundaries of Odessa. Theodoros Rodokanakis, along with Theodoros E. Rodokanakis, were two of the benefactors contributing to the establishment of the "Evangelismos" hospital in Athens, of the Charity Association in Athens and of the Commission for the Poor in Athens, a branch of the Greek Red Cross. Furthermore, P. Rodokanakis made donations to the hospital of Chios and the local church of the Holy Trinity . The most important charitable deed, however, was the foundation of the [Rodokanakeio Girls' School](#) in Odessa by Thodoros Rodokanakis either in 1872 or 1874. This establishment operated until 1919; for the construction of the two-storey building 60,000 roubles were initially spent.³⁰

After the passing of Periklis, son of Theodoros, in 1899 at only 59 years of age, the 80-year old presence of the Rodokanakis company in Odessa and Southern Russia was suddenly terminated. Periklis, following the economic developments of his time, had distanced himself from the choices his father had made. He involved himself more with real estate and industry rather than with commerce,³¹ while he was married to a Russian widow of an officer instead of some Chiot girl, as was the custom among Chiot families and his father's burning desire.³²

1. Compare with Ροδοκανάκης, Δημ., *Ιουστινιάναι-Χίος* (Syros 1900), p. 5. Also See Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 398, who too refers to the Byzantine origins of the Rodokanakis family, probably after having examined the work of Prince Dimitrios Rodokanakis. The latter's efforts to trace the family back to the Byzantine period were avidly attacked both by Emile Legrand and the writer of *Notice sur la famille Petrococchino de l'île de Chio* (Genève 1909), p. 11; Ζολώτας, Γ., *Ιστορία της Χίου Α2* (Athens 1922), pp. 475-476.

2. Argenti, Ph., *The occupation of Chios by the Genoese, 1346-1566* (Cambridge 1958), pp. 535, 541, 600-601.

3. Heers, J., *Gênes au XV^e siècle: Activité économique et problèmes sociaux* (Paris 1961), pp. 385-406.

4. Compare with Ροδοκανάκης, Δημ., *Ιουστινιάναι-Χίος* (Syros 1900), p. 5.

5. *Notice sur la famille Petrococchino* (Genève 1909), pp. 9-10; Βλαστός, Α., *Χιακά, ήτοι Ιστορία της Νήσου Χίου Β'* (Ermoupolis 1840), pp. 65, 83-85; Ζολώτας, Γ., *Ιστορία της Χίου Α'* (Athens 1921), pp. 252-253.



6. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), pp. 398-399.
7. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 129-168; Συγγρός, Α., *Απομνημονεύματα Α'* (Athens 1998), pp. 143-147.
8. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), pp. 398-399.
9. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 207-208.
10. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 130.
11. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p. 43.
12. Χασιώτης, Ι.Κ. – Κατσιαρδή-Hering, Ο. – Αμπατζή, Ε.Α. (eds.), *Οι Έλληνες στη Διασπορά, 15ος -21ος αι.* (Athens 2006), p. 358.
13. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 210.
14. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 207.
15. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 399.
16. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 208.
17. Η πηγή αυτή είναι η εφημερίδα *Le Séaphore de Marseille*; see Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 137, table 3.4.
18. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 202, table 7.3.
19. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 206, table 7.4.
20. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 138; Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p. 85; Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 210.
21. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 159-160, table 3.10.
22. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p. 94.
23. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 198, table 4.14.
24. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), pp. 61-63.
25. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), pp. 73-76.
26. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), pp. 66-67; Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 211.
27. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγάλος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p.



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28. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 273, index 5.

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31. Συγγρός, Α., *Απομνημονεύματα Β'* (Athens 1998), p. 271.

32. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 211.

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