



Summary :

The Rallis family, originating from Chios, is probably the most prominent Greek merchant family during the 19th century. Its members located in Britain, Trieste, Odessa and Constantinople (Istanbul), where they dominated the grain trade between the ports of the Black Sea and Western Europe. Since the middle of the 19th century, the Rallis house gradually withdrew from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea markets and expanded its business to Southern Asia and America.

Other Names

Raul, Radul

Date and Place of Birth

The activity of the Ralli family begins in Smyrna during the early 19th century.

Main Role

Merchants, ship-owners

1. Origin – Genoese period

The Rallis house has deep historical roots, as do several Chiot families. They are recorded for the first time in the 16th century, although their location in [Chios](#) is estimated about one century earlier.¹ This estimation concurs with an available record on a certain Niccolo Ralli, who had developed commercial activity between Chios and Pera in Constantinople (Istanbul) around 1450.²

It is quite interesting, though, that another, prior reference to the name Rallis is recorded as early as the 11th century: a certain Raoul or Radoul is mentioned in 1081 as a delegate of Robert Guiscard to Constantinople and the court of Emperor Alexios Comnenos.³ Consequently, it is quite possible that the family re-located from Constantinople to Chios, as was the case for most of the island's nobility. Furthermore, their settlement in the areas Aplotaria and Atsiki, also corroborates the theory of their later arrival in Chios in comparison to older noble families, who traditionally inhabited Kastro and Egremos.⁴

2. The Rallis house

Even though the Rallis house was included among the most powerful Chiot families during the Ottoman period,⁵ it appears more assertive from the end of the 18th century onwards, with the ascent of world trade and the diaspora of Greek merchants to Western Europe, the [Black Sea](#) and the Eastern Mediterranean. The case of the Rallis family diffusion and the co-operation between its members, located in the various commercial and maritime centres of the time, is regarded as the paradigm of what was called “[Chiot network](#)”; the theory behind this model is apparently built and epitomised on the Rallis.⁶

The specific genealogical branch of this multitudinous family,⁷ which created the financial empire known as “Ralli Brothers”, derives from the line of Stephanos Rallis and Marietta [Mavrokordatos](#), daughter of Pantelis; the couple probably lived from the late 17th to the mid-18th century, if it is taken into consideration that out of their six children (Eleni, Zannis, Ambrousis, Marietta, Georgios and Stratis), first-born Eleni came in 1722 and the baby of the family, Stratis, was born in 1741.⁸ The eldest son Zannis, born in 1724, was married to Ploumou [Skaramangas](#) in 1754 and had seven children: Stephanos, Petros, Dimitrios, Argyro, Loula, Marouko and Pandias. Form the first-born Stephanos (1755-24/3/1827) and Loula (Ioulia), (2/12/1768-Constantinople, 4/10/1848), daughter of Avgoustis Sekiaris and Virginia Ralli, who were married in 1784, originated the first generation of “Ralli Brothers”. Those were Zannis (3/11/1785-Paris, 8/10/1859), Avgoustis (10/1/1792-18/4/1878), Pandias (1793-London, 9/7/1865), Thomas (Tomazis), (10/1798-London, 20/10/1858) and Stratis (22/4/1800-London, 1/9/1884). The couple also gave birth to four daughters: Ploumou (1790-Marseille, 10/5/1867), married to Alexander Rallis son of Antonios, Vierou (30/12/1801-London, 17/9/1885), married to



Kozis Agelastos, Argyro, married to Emmanuil Psyakis (1803-1881), and Marigo (20/10/1806-23/3/1891), married to Petros Skylitsis.⁹

3. Expansion of the “Ralli Bros” company

The company’s expansion to the great commercial centres of Europe and the East followed the usual path of all the great merchant businesses of the time, focusing on places of most commercial interest. Thus, they started off around the beginning of the 19th century from [Smyrna](#), great commercial centre of transaction between the Ottoman Empire and the West and basis for Chiot merchants as early as the 18th century.¹⁰ That is where first-born Zannis appears to have located during the late 1810s and where the “Rallis, Sekiaris and [Argentis](#)” company was founded. Around the same time, in 1814, another establishment is recorded in Malta called “Branch office of the Zannis Rallis & Co in Malta”.¹¹ According to other sources Zannis Rallis started off in 1805 from Livorno, where his father’s business was located,¹² while the historian Gelina Harlaftis estimates the foundation of that specific facility in 1817.¹³ It is indisputable that during the first half of the 19th century Livorno was the main transit port in the Mediterranean (mainly in grain trade), as a way station for products between the Eastern Mediterranean and the West, principally Britain. Consequently, it was only natural that the interest of many Greek – chiefly Chiot – merchant houses was attracted, resulting in their location there.¹⁴

The house’s dependence on the British market, however, quickly made Zannis and Stratis found a new establishment on Bond Street, London, in 1818.¹⁵ In 1826 they re-located to the celebrated Finsbury Circus (that consequently became the headquarters for many Greek companies), where they remained until the end of the house’s long entrepreneurial activity terminated in 1961.¹⁶ In the same year 1826, Pandias, the man destined to become the leading personage within the company and to contribute greatly to its vast expansion, also arrived in London probably from Marseille. Named the “Zeus” of the Greek community in London, he also served as the first ever consul of the Greek state there.¹⁷ The London facility was initially named “Ralli & Petrokokkinos”, as it is referred to by London guides since 1823.¹⁸ On a diagram of Greek businesses located in Finsbury Circus around 1839, the names “Ralli Antonio & Company”, “Ralli Pandia Theodore”, “Ralli & Mavroyanni”, “Ralli Karati” and the neighbouring – and probably tantamount according to the diagram – “Ralli Bros” και “Ralli Pandia Greek Consul”, appear among others.¹⁹

4. The Ralli house in Odessa

Along with Pandias’ presence in London, the arrival of Zannis in [Odessa](#) was also a landmark in the development of the Ralli company. Odessa was the place where, not accidentally, all representatives of the leading Greek entrepreneurial houses that would dominate the Black Sea [grain trade](#), such as [Theodore Rodokanakis](#), [Spyridon Mavros](#), [Constantine Pappoudof](#) and [Alexander Zarifis](#), located since the beginning of the 1820s.²⁰ Moreover, in 1827 Stratis settles in Manchester in order to involve himself in textile commerce, Tomazis (Thomas) directs the [Constantinople](#) and [Trebizond](#) establishments through the company “Thomas Ralli & Co”, while Avgoustis since 1834 manages the Marseille business under the name “Ralli, Skylitsis & Argentis”, originally named “Skylitsi-Argentis & Co” and founded in 1816. In addition, the “Petros Skylitsis & Co”, run by the husband of their youngest sister Marigo, operated from Liverpool also in the interest of the “Ralli Bros”. Furthermore, in [Taganrog](#) and [Rostov](#) the Ralli house was represented by the Skaramangas family, in Taurida by the “Ralli & Agelastos” company and in Rest by Petros P. Rallis.²¹

The Odessa office, managed by Zannis Rallis, was one of the most successful grain export houses in town. As early as 1826-1827, the establishment was included among the most significant Odessa exporters, both Greek and non-Greek. Specifically, it ranked just below the older merchant houses of Zaharov, Magoulas, [Kouppas](#) and the newcomer Mavros, its gross profits reaching 514,337 roubles.²² The Ralli Bros, along with the Pappoudof, Rodokanakis, Zarifis and Mavros houses between 1833 and 1860 handled up to 62% of the external trade carried out by Greek merchants in Odessa and 26% of commerce in total. The Pappoudof, Rodokanakis and Ralli establishments, especially, comprised the “hard core” players, handling 51% of the external trade carried out by Greek merchants and 21% of commerce in total. Altogether, the Ralli house during the aforementioned period exported goods worth 33,487,895 roubles in total, only second in revenue after the Rodokanakis family.²³ The Odessa office, however, did not confine its entrepreneurial activity to just grain, but expanded in animal fat, flax seed, silk and cotton exports,²⁴ a decision that proved



crucial in the future for the stability and salvation of the company, when the grain trade crashed and many commercial houses strictly depending on it went bankrupt.²⁵ The house's domination in the export of the aforementioned goods is also confirmed by data between 1841 and 1845. During that period "Ralli Bros" appear to have handled almost 35% of the grain and flax seed exports among Greek merchants and 10.5% of the total exports from Odessa to Britain. Concerning the animal fat and wool exports towards the same country the house was also dominant carrying out almost 91% of the exports among Greek merchants and 27% of total exports.²⁶ Furthermore, the Marseille establishment, named "Rallis, Skylitsis & Argentis", imported great quantities of grain from the Black Sea and ranked third following the Rodokanakis and Zizinias houses in 1840.²⁷

5. "Ralli Bros" activity during the second half of the 19th century

The Ralli merchant house, which distinguished itself from the other Greek businesses in entrepreneurial conduct, was transformed to a company of worldwide range by adjusting to the fluctuating financial circumstances. This transformation is apparent from their expansion into overseas markets, a choice that strays from the usual involvement in grain trade and coincidental profiteering. The Ralli brothers established office branches in Calcutta (1851), Bombay (1861) and New York (1871), while withdrawing themselves from the gradually unprofitable markets of Persia and the Ottoman Empire.²⁸ The deaths of leading Pandias in 1865, as well as Zannis in 1859 (in Odessa), however, brought about changes in management and readjustments with regard to the company's goals. In that context, the Black Sea grain trade was handed over to the business associate Skaramangas. After the Crimean War crisis, the Black Sea commerce was starting to come into the hands of Jewish merchants, a fact that forced the Greeks into retreat.²⁹ Within the concept of reorganising the company, the cousins Ioannis, son of Stratis, and Stephanos, son of Avgoustis, undertook the management of the Marseille establishment. The latter proved to be a pillar for the business until his passing in 1902. Then Loukas Stratis, Ioannis' younger brother, took over and directed the company until his death in 1931.

6. "Ralli Bros" and shipping

For the Ralli house initially, as well as for most merchants of the time, shipping was just a supplementary activity aiming to better accommodate the transport of goods, and not a self-contained activity, as it would evolve with the transition to ship-owning during the second half of the 19th century. Even so, the family owned several sailing ships, usually of great tonnage, such as "St Francis", a barque with a tonnage of 500 built in 1849 in Waterford and possibly owned by Pandias Ralli. Also owned by the Ralli brothers and probably managed by Zannis was "Stephanis", a brig with a 497 tonnage built in 1840 in Odessa, as well as the brigs "Panagia Myrtidiotissa" (tonnage 327) and "Artemis" (tonnage 133), built in [Syros](#) in 1868 and 1867 respectively and registered in Constantinople. Both were owned by Staphanos Ralli of Odessa, son of Zannis.³⁰ "Lykourgos" (314 tonnage) and "Nea Phani" (94 tonnage), registered in Marseille, are also recorded and owned by the "Rallis, Skylitsis & Argentis" office.³¹ Avgitidis also mentions that Zannis Rallis owned the sailers "Victoria", "St Alexander" and "St Nicholas", without providing further information though.³²

7. The family's social status

The special place and the significance of the Rallis family financial activities are indicated by the distinguished status some of its members held in the financial, political and social life of the areas they inhabited. In London, specifically, the Rallis family enjoyed a prominent position in probably the leading financial institution with regard to the grain world trade, but also other products, the [Baltic House](#). Pandias was a member of the institution's directorate since 1854, while in 1857, when the Baltic Coffee House developed into the Baltic Co. Ltd, among the 37 Greek members the following were included: the brothers Ambrousis and Pandias, sons of Theodoros Rallis (who was decapitated in the Chios massacre), son of Stratis, who was the younger brother of Zannis, from whom the "Ralli Bros" branch of the family hails. Also included were Pandias Rallis, son of Alexandros, descendant of a different branch of the family which appeared in the middle of the 18th century and headed by Theodoros Rallis, and Ephstratios Rallis, probably the fifth of the "Ralli Brothers".³³ Furthermore, in a list containing the names of Greeks who were members of the Baltic House in 1886, 8 members of the Rallis family are recorded, the highest number of representatives from any other Greek family.³⁴

Similar was the position the family held in Odessa. Following the [Maraslis](#) and Rodokanakis families, who owned 20 and 18 buildings



respectively, the Rallis family owned 17 buildings in town.³⁵ Moreover, Stephanos, son of Zannis, ranked first among the list of Greek estate owners in town with a property amounting to 539,500 roubles.³⁶ Furthermore, Zannis Rallis served as the USA consul in Odessa from 1832 until his death in 1859, as well as vice-president to the Commercial Chamber, while his son Stephanos became Justice of Peace and a state counselor in 1881.³⁷ However, after Zannis' passing and the detachment of the London office from the Odessa establishment, a different period began for the Ralli house in the Black Sea area. Because of the transformed financial circumstances, Stephanos turned to other entrepreneurial activities, as did many other descendants of the Greek diaspora grand merchant families, such as real-estate, landed property and the iron industry.³⁸

Stephanos was married twice, to Eleni Giannopoulou in 1841 and to Marie Epités, whom he wedded in Odessa on April 30th, 1850. He had two sons from his first wife, both of whom passed away at their thirties. From his second marriage he had 2 sons and 5 daughters. His youngest son Pierre became an officer of the Russian Imperial Guard and was married to the Russian lady Maria Kourovsky, while his oldest son Pavlos also had a Russian wife, Ekaterina Pavlovna Timachenko. After Pavlos' death in 1911 the presence of the Ralli house in Odessa was terminated.³⁹

1. Ζολώτας, Γ., *Ιστορία της Χίου* Α2 (Athens 1922), p. 450.
2. Argenti, P., *The occupation of Chios by the Genoese, 1346-1566* (Cambridge 1958), p. 502.
3. Ζολώτας, Γ., *Ιστορία της Χίου* Α2 (Athens 1922), pp. 448-450.
4. Ζολώτας, Γ., *Ιστορία της Χίου* Α2 (Athens 1922), p. 458.
5. *Notice sur la famille Petrococchino de l'île de Chio* (Gènéve 1909), p. 11.
6. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 129-168, for the notion of "network", especially the Chiot one, its structure and function. For the case of the Ralli house as an example of the Chiot network, see *ibid.* p. 147, figure 3.2.
7. For the Rallis family genealogical tree, see Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), pp. 387-393.
8. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 387.
9. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 387.
10. Syrett-Φραγκάκη, Ε., «Το εμπόριο της Σμύρνης το 18ο αιώνα», in *Νεοελληνική Πόλη. Οθωμανικές κληρονομίες και ελληνικό κράτος. Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Ιστορίας* Α (Athens 1985), p. 32.
11. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 148.
12. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 212; Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 386.
13. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 148.
14. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 142.
15. Καλβοκορέσης, Μ.Α., *Ο Οίκος των Αδελφών Ράλλη* (Chios 1953), p. 2; Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας. 19ος-20ός αιώνας*



(Athens 2001), p. 148, ref. 35.

16. Καλβοκορέ σης, Μ.Λ., *Ο Οί κος των Αδελφών Ράλλη* (Chios 1953), p. 2; Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 148.
17. The year of Pandias' arrival in London and the correlative location of Zannis in Odessa is a topic where historical opinions conflict. Harlaftis mentions the year 1826, noting that Zannis went to Odessa in 1827. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 148. According to Καλβοκορέ σης, Μ.Λ., *Ο Οί κος των Αδελφών Ράλλη* (Chios 1953), p. 2, however, Pandias arrived in London in 1822, while Kardasis reports that Zannis settled in Odessa in 1822. Καρδά σης, Β., *Ο Ελληνισμός ς του Εύ ζεινον Πό ντου* (Athens) pp. 134-135. On the contrary, in his *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 212, he mentions that Zannis had already moved in 1820, since that is the year he was married to Lucia Storni from Italy.
18. Καλβοκορέ σης, Μ.Λ., *Ο Οί κος των Αδελφών Ράλλη* (Chios 1953), p. 2; Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 212.
19. Χασιώ της, Ι. – Κατσαρδής -Hering, Ό. – Αμπατζή , Ε.Α. (ed.), *Οι Ελλή νες στη Διασπορά 15ος-21ος αι.* (Athens 2006), p. 358.
20. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 201.
21. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 214; Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 147, figure 3.2.
22. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 202, table. 7.3.
23. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 205, 206, table 7.4, p. 207, graph 7.4.1.
24. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 213.
25. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 125-126.
26. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), processed data from table 3.6, p. 141.
27. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), pp. 136-137, table 3.4.
28. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 148.
29. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 125.
30. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ. – Βλασσόπουλος, Ν., *Ποντοπόρεια, 1830-1940. Ποντοπόρα ιστοφόρα και ατιμόπλοια από την ίδρυση του ελληνικού κράτους μέχρι τον Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο* (Athens 2002), pp. 98, 139, 364, 406.
31. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), pp. 159-161, table 3.10.
32. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγαλέμπορος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p. 92.
33. Καρδά σης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενεί ς στη Νό τια Ρωσί α, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 128. For the branches of the family led by Ambrousis and Pandias Rallis, sons of Theodoros, see Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 390, and for the one led by Pandias, son of Alexandros, see *ibid.*, pp. 391, 393.
34. Χαρλαύ τη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας. 19ος-20ός αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 155, table 3.9.
35. Αυγητίδης, Κ.Δ., *Θεόδωρος Π. Ροδοκανάκης. Ο μεγαλέμπορος, επιχειρηματίας, πλοιοκτήτης και τραπεζίτης της Οδησσού* (Chios 2004), p. 131.



36. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 273, index 5.
37. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 215-216; Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 387.
38. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 216; Καρδάσης, Β., *Ο Ελληνισμός του Εύξεινου Πόντου* (Athens), pp. 134-135.
39. Καρδάσης, Β., *Ο Ελληνισμός του Εύξεινου Πόντου* (Athens), pp. 134-135; Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 387.

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Glossary :

	Baltic Exchange House The Baltic Exchange House was founded in 1823 as "Baltic Coffee House" and soon became the most important market for the purchase of cargoes in London. Its aim was to restrict the number of the traders and protect its 300 members from speculators. A significant number of its members were Greek.
	Chian network The network was comprised by the Greek merchants who were active commercially in the Black Sea, in the Mediterranean and in Western Europe during the period 1830-1860. The most important merchants originated from the island of Chios and very often were connected with kinship ties. These merchants combined trade with shipping and their companies were characterised by discipline



and cohesion. The most important families were those of Rodokanakis, Zizinias, Rallis, Dromokaitis, Petrokokkinos, Agelastos. The network's importance declined with the changes in Black Sea trade after the Crimean War (1853-1856), in connection with the technological changes in sea transport.