ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

Summary :

Rostov is situated on the banks of the Don, at the cove of the Azov Sea, near the port of Taganrog. From the middle of the 19th century, Rostov developed rapidly. This coincided with the relative decline in the ports of Odessa and Nikolayev. The presence of the Greeks in the Rostov wheat trade continued dynamically up to the Russian Revolution.

Other Names

в

Geographical Location

Azov Sea

Historical Region

Administrative Dependence

Rostov Oblast

---

1. The Establishment and the Naming of the City

The city was founded in 1749 on the right bank of the River Don (originally the Tanais), 65 km from its mouth on the Azov Sea. In 1760, the construction of the fort was begun in order to protect the southern borders of the Russian Empire. It was initially given the name of its archbishop, Dimitry of Rostov. Its name was later changed to the ‘Fort of Dimitry of Rostov’, then to ‘Fort of Rostov’, then only to Rostov and finally to ‘Rostov of the Don’, in order to distinguish it from the old city, Great Rostov, which is located in the region of Yaroslav in central Russia.

Owing to its advantageous geographical position at the junction of land and river paths, Rostov expanded economically and did not merely remain a military centre. The commercial port was organised near the wall and was visited by Russian, Greek, Italian, Turkish, Persian and Armenian merchants. Rostov (on the Don), just as Taganrog and Mariupol, owed its development to the expansion of the Russian Empire to the south and to the increased commercial role of the wheat-producers of the southern Russian regions. Parallel to this, it comprised the economic centre of a broader region which experienced the intense settlement and movement of populations throughout the 19th century.

2. Demographic Features

People from the Russian hinterland, as well from areas of the southern Balkans, gathered in Rostov. As a result of this, the population of the city rose from 4,000 in 1811 to 29,000 in 1863, 119,000 in 1897 and it finally reached 172,000 in 1914.[1] The Greek population of Rostov is estimated to have been 800 at the end of the 19th century; 500 of whom were from Cephalonia (Kefalonia) and the remainder of Asia Minor. In the following years, the Greek population expanded reaching 2,000 persons in 1915.[2]

The presence of the Greeks in Rostov (on the Don) was, to a large extend, restricted after the ascendancy of the Bolsheviks in 1919. Many wealthy businessmen decided to leave Russia and take their businesses and families to either Greece or Western Europe. However, others less well-off either emigrated to Greece during the period 1918-20 and at the beginning of the 1920’s, where difficult conditions of survival awaited them as refugees, or they remained in Rostov as they were unable to emigrate. The latter gradually assimilated into the Soviet society whilst preserving, in many cases, their sense of heritage.

3. The Economy

In the first decades of its existence, Rostov made no notable development as it neighboured on Taganrog which had a harbour and a

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

customs house on the Azov Sea. In 1836, a customs house was established in Rostov, an event that indicates the beginning of great growth and which intensified after the Crimean War (1853-56). The economic expansion of Rostov on the Don, as well as that of Tangarog, competed against that of Odessa and Mykolaiv on the Black Sea. Rostov on the Don developed commercial relations with Western Europe equivalent to those developed earlier by Odessa and Mykolaiv. The rise of Rostov coincided with a relative decline of these ports after the middle of the nineteenth century. What is more, the prosperous hinterland of the Azov Sea assisted in the growth of Rostov, independently of the traffic of the northern coastal ports of the Black Sea.

In the second half of the 19th century, the major port of southern Russia, Odessa, experienced a slight decline in its commercial traffic. The reason for this lie in a series of initiatives taken by the Russian government, which affected the market and trade, as well as in a series of poor harvests of the hinterland. These had as a result a fall in the profits of the Greek merchant houses and their ensuing turn to other markets of interest.

At the same time, a turnabout in the preferences of Western European wheat consumers was observed; from the poorer quality wheat of Odessa to the higher quality wheat of America and of the hinterland of the Azov Sea. With the end of the American Civil War (1861-65), Europe turned to importing American wheat. Parallel to this, there was an increase in the exports of the highest quality wheat, g*hirka*, which was produced in the hinterland of the Azov Sea. Thus, after the Crimean War, the harbours of the Azov Sea were the most important harbours of southern Russia, accounting for 40-50% of the total exports of the south and competing with Odessa and Mykolaiv.[3]

3.1. Trade

Rostov was the hinterland's export centre of wheat. Greek merchant houses, with headquarters in Odessa, had already begun to show interest in the commercial activities of the port in the 1820's. Thus, they gradually set up branches among Rostov merchants houses, such as that of Z. Rallis, K. Pappoudov, Th. Rodokanakis of Odessa, and I. Skaramangas of Taganrog. Following that, the merchant houses and their managers moved from Odessa and Tangarog to Rostov. The Greek merchant houses in Rostov co-existed with the British and the Jews and competed for the same trade routes and the same merchandise.

Up to the 1860's the commercial life of Rostov was dominated by members of what is known as the 'Chian network', due to the fact that most of them either came from Chios or had established intermarriage ties with Chian families. Of the most well-known families were those of Avgerinos, Rallis, Salvagos, Sevastopoulos, Skaramangas, and Spartalis. These merchants were involved in the export of wheat from the hinterland of Azov, where they had set up a network of representatives who attended to the pre-purchase of goods from the producers, with its prompt and safe loading and its transport to and export from the harbour via the sailing boats or steam-ships of their associates. They rarely invested in the shipping industry but, instead, usually collaborated with captains who belonged to the same network of partnership and kinship.

They simultaneously maintained an extensive network of associates and representatives in ports of the Western Mediterranean (Genoa, Livorno, Marseilles, and Barcelona), and of the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea (Amsterdam, London, Anvers and Hamburg). Their associates were heads of branches in these cities. The branches were legally independent of each other; however, they shared the profits. It was the responsibility of the branch heads to attend to the promotion and sale of the merchandise. As the goods were conveyed by ship, the sale of the merchandise was based on samples sent earlier overland. In the Baltic centre of London the Greek merchants negotiated the cargo of wheat on the basis of the sample which had been sent by their representatives. Thus, the captain of a ship would lay anchor in specific harbours along its route (Constantinople, Malta, Gibraltar, Cork in the south-east of Ireland), where they received instructions as to the final destination of the cargo and its buyer.

With the retreat of the sailing vessels and the introduction of steamships a new generation of merchants emerged, their origins being from the Ionian Islands. These people dominated the commercial life of the city till the end of the 19th century. Taking advantage of their kinship with merchants of the Chian network, they ended up dominating the Russian trade. In the 1880's and 1890's, Rostov presented notable economic activity resulting in its becoming the base for the firms of M. Vallianos, E. N. Mavrogordatos, N. A. Skanavis, P. Petrokokkinos, I. E. Skaramangas, Zifos Bros., S. Sevastopoulos, G. L. Zifos & Co, and G. Livas. The merchants of

the Chian network, as well as the ones of the Ionian network, were equally involved in the export of wheat from the Russian hinterland. The made use of the local network of representatives, which they had organized in order to secure low prices and sufficient quantities from the local merchants. They invested in cargo of similar merchandise, in particular wheat from Russia, with which they supplied Western Europe. The steamships on their return supplied the ports of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea with coal, transported from England. Their commercial network was dependent on relatives who undertook the management of the branches in ports of the Mediterranean, such as in Constantinople and Marseilles, as well as in those of Western Europe and mainly in London.

Nevertheless, the merchants of this period, in contrast to those of the previous one, invested also in the means of transport, e.g., in the steamships. Eventually they evolved into major shipowners. Among others that dominated were the Vallianos and Frangopoulos families from the Ionian islands, and Paspatis, Rallis, Rodokanakis, Sevastopoulos, Sekiaris, Skaramangas, Skylitsis, Valieris, Georgakopoulos, Evgenidis, Zarifis, Iliadis, Ionidis, Kasdaglis, Kassavetis, Papagiannis from Chios. At the same time, they invested in other sectors as well, such as industry: Georgios Antypas, for example, kept a general store and a steam – powered dough, whilst P. Kouroupos owned the sole lemonade – producing workshop in the city. The brothers Vlantis managed the ‘Grand Hotel of Moscow’. Besides the merchants from Greece, in Rostov settled in addition Greeks of the Pontos, who had also developed commercial interests. Among them were the Aslanidis brothers, who were the owners of one of the largest tobacco factories in Russia.

The Greeks of Rostov on the Don were also involved in other fields of work associated with trade and shipping: tugboats, cargo barges, small river-steamers used for transport along the Don and out of the harbour. They also featured as shipping agents, distributors, warehouse and shop-owners, warehouse and office workers.

In the city the Greeks kept coffee-shops and restaurants, such as that of Ilias Apostolopoulos (‘Petroupolis’), Constantinos Moscholiopoulos (‘Odissos’), And. Tzakis (‘Kefalonia’) the restaurants of Germanis, Ger. Avgoustatos (‘Athinai’), Ger. Mousouris (‘Crete’), and Germanis.

3.2. Transport

Rostov is a port on the River Don which is navigable up to its mouth. Wheat was transported by barges from the hinterland of the Azov Sea to its delta. However, at this point the Don becomes shallow, thus preventing the barges from reaching the ships in Azov Sea. Therefore, wheat was transported overland to Taganrog, where ships were waiting to be loaded. In general, however, the accessibility of both Rostov and Taganrog by boat from the sea was exceptionally difficult owing to the fact that the waters of Azov Sea are shallow. The harbours were unsuitable for receiving large ships and especially steamships, while in the straits of Yeni Kale, at the entrance of Azov Sea, there was a sand bar that hindered shipping. In addition, the Sea of Azov was cut off for 60-90 days of the year due to ice. Thus, those ships that had not managed to depart before this period were obliged to wait until the melting of the ice. Finally, the quarantine regulations of Kerch further delayed the movement of ships.

Every now and then, the authorities attempted to ease the problems of navigation, as shipping was of vital importance for the economy of the region. After the Crimean War (1853-1856) these efforts were intensified. A dredger dragged the narrow strait of Kerts, resulting in reaching a depth of 24 feet, while quarantine was also abolished. At the end of the 19th century, the authorities constructed a thirty miles long canal between Kerch and Yeni Kale, along which steam and sailing boats could pass the strait at the mouth of Azov Sea with the assistance of tugboats. Despite these, up to the beginning of the 20th century the movement of ships in the Sea of Azov faced severe difficulties.

Rostov on the Don, apart from the excellent connection with the hinterland afforded by the navigable river, was connected in 1865 by rail with many Russian cities (Odessa, Moscow, Sankt Petersburg). This contributed to its commercial and economic importance.

4. The Greek Community

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

The Greek residents of Rostov on the Don were not hasty to form a community. In 1898, after passing through the city, G. P. Paraskevopoulos reported that the Greeks possessed neither a community nor a church in which to congregate despite the fact that there were 1,000 affluent merchants and businessmen. This can be probably attributed to the relatively late development of the city and to the fact that the Greeks had moved from Taganrog relatively late in the 19th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, they proceeded in the construction of a church, in the establishment of Greek schools, in the securing of social services for the members of the community and in the cultivation of a national identity among the members of the community. In the days before the First World War, the Greeks of Rostov were one of the most powerful Greek communities in Russia, having surpassed the commuinty of Taganrog and rivalling the one of Odessa, according to the evaluation of El. Pavlidis.[4]

In 1901, the regulation of the 'Greek Benevolence Community of Rostov on the Don' was drawn up, using the one of Odessa as its model. The drafting of the regulation and its implementation was initiated by the Greek vice-consul, Alexander Kaloutas, and the industrialist, Achilleas Aslanidis, an Ottoman subject. Aslanidis was the first president of the community and its great benefactor. In 1905, thanks to the initiatives taken by the community, a two-grade Greek school was opened and, in 1909, the inauguration a magnificient Greek church took place under the presidency of the Cephalonian Dionysios Tselentis, with donations made by D. Tselentis himself and his brother, Theofanis.

In the early 1920's the community had a seven-grade primary school, which had been constructed from the donations made by the brothers Charalampos and Agathangelos Theofanis. The school was named 'Theofaneios' in honour of their brother Theodore Theofanis, also a founder of the community. In 1926, the school was placed under state jurisdiction.

Among the leading members of the community were the family of Vallianos, the brothers Theofanis, Mavrogordatos, Koumantaros, Korfiatis, Avgoustatos, the brothers Aslanidis, D. Tselentis, I. Kontos, G. Kriezis, A. Kaloutas, G. Rodopoulos, Io. Sifnaios, Tavaniotis and others. In 1914, a Greek hospital for the treatment of the war victims was founded under the management of S. Tavaniotis, to which women members of the community offered their services.

In 1919, representatives of the community of Rostov participated at the first Conference of the Greek Communities of Russia, which was held in Taganrog. There, they presented themselves as an organized political group opposed to the representatives of Batumi, who were named the 'Greek National Democratic Party'. The representatives of the Rostov community (M. Efmorfopoulos, M. Leontidis, I. Simeonidis, D. Tavaniotis, S. Makridis and D. Chorafas) did not confine themselves to the expression of requests which were clearly on educational and social issues; they also presented issues of political character. Their stance on issues which they printed on a special leaflet was considered irrelevant and detrimental to the national interest of the Greeks, as expressed by Xen. Stellakis, the representative of the Greek Embassy in Sankt Petersburg, who was also the consul general in Yekaterinodar (today Krasnodar).

The conference resulted in the founding of the 'Association of Greeks in Russia'. An eight-member executive committee was elected with Greek representatives from Taganrog, Rostov - Yekaterinodar and Novorossiysk. The committee would proceed to establish the Central Council with its headquarters in Rostov. Its aim was to promote the decisions taken at conference and to make preparations for a second conference which would aim to systematically promote the demands of the Greeks of Russia.[5]

5. The Greek Press in Rostov

The Greek newspaper "*Ethniki Foni*"(National Voice) was first printed in 1913. It cultivated the concept of the union of all Greeks in Russia. The newspaper *Ethniki Drasis* (National Action) continued its publishing course in Rostov in 1913. The newspaper was published in Batumi from 1908 to 1912 by F. Filippidis. In 1912 its base was transferred to Yekaterinodar and finally to Rostov, since it was a major trade centre for the Greeks of Russia. The editor of the newspaper was N Despotopoulos.

6. The Greeks of Rostov during the Soviet Period

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

The presence of the Greek element continued to be strong in Rostov even in the first Soviet decade. In 1928, the Greek post-revolutionary newspaper *Communist*, which belonged to the largest Greek publishing house in the Soviet Union with the same name. However, changes in the political organization of the region also had repercussions on the activities of the Greeks of the city. In 1936, the *Communist* was transferred from Rostov to the town of Krymsk, capital of the 'Greek Region', which had been established in 1930.

The presence of Greeks in Rostov allowed them not only to come into contact with Russian and European merchants, but also with intellectuals, and to participate in the moulding of the ideology of the period.

Zorzis K. Rallis, a descendant of the Rallis family of Chios, was born in Rostov. He studied law at the university of Sankt Petersburg, and philosophy, logic and aesthetics at Berlin University. In 1869, he settled in Geneva, where he came into contact with the group of Russian revolutionaries. He met the anarchist leader Mikhail Bakunin, with whom he exchanged opinions on the revolution, the revolutionary effort and its methods of social organization. Zorzis Rallis printed the *Newspaper of the Russian Worker* in 1878. Significant propagandistic and theoretical work has been credited to him.

Konstantinos Stefanou, whose origins were from Constantinople, was born in Rostov and was a graduate of University of Kazan. He regularly wrote articles for the magazine *Kolokol* (The Bell) which was published by Aleksandr Herzen, well-known progressive Russian novelist and intellectual. Finally, Antonios Rosollymos was one of the instigators of the strikes of 1895-1896 in Sankt Petersburg. The Russian police kept a file on Stafanou's and Rosollymos' activities.

---

1. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία* (Athens 1998), p. 75.

2. Χασιώτης, Ι. Κ. – Ξανθοπούλου-Κυριακού, Α., «Δημογραφικές εξελίξεις στο ελληνικό στοιχείο των ρωσικών χωρών από τα τέλη του 19ου αι. ως τον Α΄ Παγκόσμιο πόλεμο», in Χασιώτης, Ι. Κ. (ed.), Οι Έλληνες της Ρωσίας και της Σοβιετικής Ένωσης. Μετοικεσίες και εκτοπισμοί. Οργάνωση και ιδεολογία (Thessaloniki 1997), p. 146. Paraskevopoulos estimated the Greek population around 1,000 persons at the end of the 19th century. See Παρασκευόπουλος, Γ. Π., *Η Μεγάλη Ελλάς ανά την Ρωσσίαν, Ρουμανίαν, Βουλγαρίαν, Σερβίαν, Μαυροβούνιον, Τουρκίαν, Σάμον, Κρήτην, Κύπρον, Αίγυπτον και Παλαιστίνην* (Athens 1898), p. 76.

3. Καρδάσης, Β. – Χαρλαύτη, Τ., «Αναζητώντας τις χώρες της επαγγελίας: Ο απόδημος Ελληνισμός από τα μέσα του 19ου αιώνα ως τον Β' Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο», in Χασιώτης, Ι.Κ. – Κατσιαρδή-Hering, Ο. – Αμπατζή, Ε. Α. (ed.), *Οι Έλληνες στη Διασπορά, 15ος – 21ος αιώνας* (Athens 2006), p. 60.

4. Παυλίδης, Ε., *Ο Ελληνισμός της Ρωσίας και τα 33 χρόνια του εν Αθήναις Σωματείου του εκ Ρωσίας Ελλήνων* (Athens 1953), pp. 243-4.

5. Δένδιας, Μ. Α., *Αι ελληνικαί παροικίαι ανά τον κόσμον* (Athens 1919), pp. 24-6, and Παυλίδης, Ε., *Ο Ελληνισμός της Ρωσίας και τα 33 χρόνια του εν Αθήναις Σωματείου του εκ Ρωσίας Ελλήνων* (Athens 1953), p. 98.

Bibliography :

- **Κορομηλά Μ.**, *Οι Έλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα. Από την εποχή του Χαλκού ως τις αρχές του 20ού αιώνα*, Αθήνα 1991
- **Χαρλαύτη Τ.**, *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19ος-20ός αιώνας*, Νεφέλη, Αθήνα 2001
- **Χασιώτης, Ι. – Ξανθοπούλου-Κυριακού, Α. – Αγτζίδης, Β. (επιμ.)**, *Οι Έλληνες της Ρωσίας και της Σοβιετικής Ένωσης. Μετοικεσίες και εκτοπισμοί, οργάνωση και ιδεολογία*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1997

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

Καρδάσης Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη νότια Ρωσία 1775-1861*, Αλεξάνδρεια, Αθήνα 1998

Καρδάσης Β., *Ο Ελληνισμός του Εύξεινου Πόντου*, Μίλητος, Αθήνα 1997

Σελέκου Ο., *Η καθημερινή ζωή των Ελλήνων της διασποράς. Δημόσιος και ιδιωτικός βίος (19ος - αρχές του 20ού αιώνα)*, Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικών Ερευνών, Αθήνα 2004

Χασιώτης Ι., **Γιαννίτση Θ.**, **Διάλλα Ά.**, "Ουκρανία, Λευκορωσία, Ρωσική Ομοσπονδία, Κεντροασιατικές Δημοκρατίες", Χασιώτης, Ι. Κ. – Κατσιαρδή-Hering, Ό. – Αμπατζή, Ε. , *Οι Έλληνες στη Διασπορά, 15ος - 21ος αιώνας*, Αθήνα 2006, 191-202

Παυλίδης Ε., *Ο Ελληνισμός της Ρωσίας και τα 33 χρόνια του εν Αθήναις Σωματείου των εκ Ρωσίας Ελλήνων*, Αθήνα 1953

Δένδιας Μ., *Αι ελληνικαί παροικίαι ανά τον κόσμον Οι Έλληνες εις Ρωσίαν, Ρουμανίαν, Αίγυπτον, Ηνωμένας Πολιτείας και πάσας εν γένει τάς άλλας χώρας*, Αθήνα 1919

Χαρλαύτη Τ., **Καρδάσης Β.**, "Αναζητώντας τις χώρες της επαγγελίας: ο απόδημος Ελληνισμός από τα μέσα του 19ου αιώνα ως τον Β΄ Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο", Χασιώτης, Ι.Κ. – Κατσιαρδή-Hering, Ο. – Αμπατζή, Ε.Α., *Οι Έλληνες στη Διασπορά, 15ος-21ος αιώνας*, Αθήνα 2006, 53-73

Webliography :

Rostov - on - Don

http://www.rostov-gorod.ru/index_en.php?id=86

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 commercialy 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.

Ionian network

The Ionian network was comprised by the Greek merchants, who were active commercially in the Black Sea (in Odessa and Nikolaiev, ports of the Azov Sea and Danube), Mediterranean and Western Europe during the period 1870-early 20th c. The most important merchants of the network originated from the Ionian islands and especially Cephalonia and Ithaka. The network's members started their activity as sailing shipowners and they were later involved in trade. At the end of 19th c., they were involved in transportation of cargos of the same kind, especially grain and coal. The network's members became important shipowners. The network's most important personalities were Athanasoulis, Antypas brothers, Aravantinos, P. Vallianos, N.P. Vlassopoulos, Drakoulis brothers, Theofilatos and Stathatos, Theofilatos brothers, Kavvadias brothers, G. Kakoulatos, A. Kourkoumelis, Lykiardopouloi brothers, Melissaratou brothers etc.

Authoring : *Papakonstantinou Katerina*
Translation : *Αμπούτη Αγγελική*
For citation : *Papakonstantinou Katerina , "Rostov on Don", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11600>

Sources

Παρασκευόπουλος, Γ.Π., *Η Μεγάλη Ελλάς ανά την Ρωσσίαν, Ρουμανίαν, Βουλγαρίαν, Σερβίαν, Μαυροβούνιον, Τουρκίαν, Σάμον, Κρήτην, Κύπρον, Αίγυπτον και Παλαιστίνην* (Athens 1898).