



Summary :

Family hailing from the Cyclades, members of which migrated in the Danubian Principalities and southern Russia (Odessa, Taganrog), where they excelled in commerce and shipping. Members of the Mavros family married into other notable diaspora families, such as the Melas and Vasileiou ones.

Other Names

Mavroviazis

Date and Place of Birth

Late 18th century – Southern Russia, Danubian Principalities

Main Role

Merchants, ship-owners

1. The Phanariot branch of the Mavros family

The Mavros family, hailing from the Cyclades, was divided into two branches towards the end of the 18th century. The first one, also known as the Phanariot branch, was founded by Ioannis Mavros, merchant in [Odessa](#), Bukovina and Moldavia from the late 18th century, who managed to enter Phanariot circles through his marriage with Maria, daughter of Nikolaos Ventouras and Victoria Soutsou. Their son Nikolaos (1781, Constantinople – 1868, Bucharest) was married twice, in 1820 to Pulcheria, daughter of Dimitrios [Gikas](#), grand notable of Craiova, and later to Sevasti Soutsou. From these two marriages he had five children. Between 1830 and 1851, Nikolaos served as general inspector of the lazarets (quarantine stations) organized by Russians in several Danubian cities. He was also in charge of the Russian intelligence service in the Danubian Principalities and generally closely associated with the Russophile boyars of Wallachia.¹

2. The Mavroviazis branch

The second branch of the family, which in fact distinguished the Mavros name in the Black Sea and Odessa [commerce](#) even more, was the Mavroviazis one. Towards the end of the 18th century, a daughter of the Mavros family married a descendant of the notable Roman Catholic family De Biasi of [Paros](#), whose origins were connected to the Crispi family, a Venetian dynasty of the Aegean. Their son Spyridon de Biasi included the surname Mavros in order to inherit the fortune of a certain childless uncle from the Mavros side of the family.² A member of the [Filiki Etaireia](#) (Society of Friends), he took refuge initially in Nizna, Russia, in 1821, and consequently, in 1825, he located in Odessa.³ His marriage to Eyphrosyni Vasileiou, daughter of the merchant Michail Vasileiou, initiated him, on the first hand, into the circle of a significant 18th century merchant family operating in Vienna and Leipzig and, on the other hand, into the Chiot circle, since Michail Vasileiou's wife hailed from the Chiot family of [Sevastopoulos](#).⁴ Furthermore, he was related to the [family Melas](#) from Epirus, since Georgios Melas was married to Michail Vasileiou's other daughter, Smaragda. In this manner he managed to organise his commercial network by appointing members of the families he was related to, to his several establishments.⁵

Spyridon Mavros and his wife Eyphrosyni had seven children: Michail (Odessa 25/8/1828 – Paris 29/11/1866), Ioannis (1830-1866),⁶ Alexandrini (1833-1911), Eyphrosyni, who was married to the Chiot Nikolaos Psycharis,⁷ Constantine (Odessa 16/12/1834 – Marseille 14/8/1859), another daughter who was married to a French merchant of Odessa, and finally Alexandros, who is not mentioned by Sturdza, but his existence and activity are known from other sources.⁸

3. Entrepreneurial activity of the Mavros family



3.1. Spuyidon Mavros' entrepreneurial network

Spyridon Mavros' entrepreneurial network extended to Marseille and Livorno through his wife's brothers, Alexandros and Dimitrios Vasileiou. Another associate was Ilias Panas, his wife's brother-in-law, who was co-director in the Livorno establishment along with Dimitrios Vasileiou. Moreover, the Melas brothers were representing the Mavros House in London and Georgios Melas, also brother-in-law to his wife, in [Taganrog](#).⁹ It is also recorded that the [Constantinople](#) office was directed by Georgios and Konstantinos Melas, a brother-in-law and a nephew respectively of his wife Eyphrosyni.¹⁰ Later on in Marseille, his son Konstantinos managed the bank "Mavros, Nephew and Co.", through which the rebellions in Epirus and Thessaly in 1854 were sponsored with Russian funds.¹¹

3.2. Commercial activity of the Mavros family (Odessa – Southern Russia)

In Odessa, Spyridon managed early on to flourish as one of the most significant entrepreneurs in the city. Naturally, as was the case for almost all Greeks in the Black Sea, the key to success was grain export. As early as 1826 – 1827 he was regarded as one of the most important grain merchants – exporters of Odessa, with exports worth 537,530 roubles and ranked fourth Greek after Zaharov, Magoulas and [Kouppas](#), who were located there quite earlier.¹² Between 1833 and 1860 his merchant house was one of the most significant Greek export houses in Odessa, along with the ones of [Pappoudof](#), [Rallis](#), [Rodokanakis](#) and [Zarifis](#) that represented 62% of the total Greek exports in Odessa. During this period, the net worth of the Mavros House reached 11,423,897 roubles and was ranked after the four aforementioned Greek houses.¹³

The Mavros House, however, proved to be more long-lived and more resistant to the changes occurring in the Odessa commerce during the 1860s, which resulted in the Greek houses' losing control of the grain export. Between 1883 and 1896 the Mavros house remains a significant merchant house, along with the ones of Rodokanakis, Sevastopoulos, [Voutsinas](#), Zografos, [Baltatzis](#) and Paspatis, and it manages to keep its place in the top-twenty Odessa exporting companies.¹⁴

It appears that the Odessa establishment was co-directed by Ioannis and Alexandros, Spyridon's sons, as is indicated by the tables of Greek merchant houses in Odessa between 1833 and 1869, where their names alternate.¹⁵ It is possible that Spyridon took over the management of the Taganrog establishment, leaving the Odessa office to his sons, since in 1886 he is recorded as one of the most significant grain exporters of Taganrog along with [Skaramangas](#), Skanavis, [Negropontis](#), Veltsos and others.¹⁶ Moreover, the company "Mavros and Co." is recorded as the second largest grain exporter of [Mykolaiv](#) among the Greek houses that controlled 49% of the total exports with 220,361 **chetwerts** (meaning over 30% of the total of Greek houses and ca. 16.5% of the grand total) in 1882.¹⁷

3.3. Shipping

Like most grand Greek merchant houses of the time, the Mavros family could not abstain from maritime activities, even though their involvement in this sector was complementary and aimed at better accommodating their commercial activities and product transport. In no way can they be called ship-owners in character and spirit, an early phenomenon for the Greek merchants for the period between 1800 and 1875. It is indicated, however, that A. Mavros (probably Alexandros Mavros) owned two sailing boats in 1830 and 1840, "Perikles" (349 tons) and "Alexander the First" (415 tons).¹⁸

During the 1850s and 1860s, the Mavros family was actively involved in shipping. In a source regarding Greek merchants – ship-owners who circulated the Black Sea – Eastern Mediterranean trade with Marseille, the company "Mavros & Co." owned nine ships in 1850 (2,169 tons) ranking fourth after Zizinias, Zarifis and Dromokaites, and the "Mavros and Vasileiou" company owned five ships in 1806 (1,121 tons) entering thus the second ten of ship-owners.¹⁹ The Mavros house was also included among the most significant Greek export merchants – ship-owners in English ports in 1870, 1880 and 1890, although no further data are available.²⁰

3.4. Landed property



The Mavros family also appears to have owned significant landed property in the city of Odessa, according to town records. In fact, they were among the most important Greek estate owners. More specifically, Eyphrosyni Mavroviazi ranked ninth among the most important Greek estate owners in Odessa with a property of 84,000 roubles, while Anna Mavroviazi ranked eleventh with a property of 82,500 roubles. Furthermore, Michail Mavroviazis, Spyridon's firstborn son, ranked eighteenth with a property of 67,175 roubles and Ioannis Mavroviazis sixtieth with a property of 19,286 roubles.²¹ Characteristically, in the top places is mentioned the landed property owned by members of the Mavros family, namely Eyphrosyni, wife of Spyridon, and Anna, wife of Ioannis, daughter of [Dimitrios Inglesis](#). It is also interesting that the husband and wife Ioannis and Anna are recorded separately, while the enigmatic Alexandros, for whom little is known, is nowhere to be found.

1. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 338.
2. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 338.
3. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 338; Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 201.
4. Χαρλαύ τη, Τζ., *Ιστορί α της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας, 19ος-20ό ς αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 149.
5. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 149.
6. His date of birth is rather confusing, since Ioannis Mavros is already recorded in 1836 as one of the twenty most significant Greek merchants of Odessa. Most probably the record refers to Ioannis Mavros of the Phanariot branch, for whom it is known that he owned a merchant house in Odessa.
7. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 203, table 7.7, p. 220. Sturdza's record of an unnamed daughter, married to the located in Constantinople Chiot banker Ioannis Psycharis, appears erroneous.
8. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 338; Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 206, 220, 313. Alexandros Mavros, who is mentioned as one of the wealthiest merchants of Odessa, as well as a member of the Philiki Etaireia in 1821 (see Καρδάσης, *ibid.*, p. 89), as buying a conscription to a book of grammar by Konstantinos Oikonomos (see Καρδάσης, *ibid.*, p. 93), and, finally, as the second wealthiest Greek merchant of Odessa in 1821 (see Καρδάσης, *ibid.*, p. 140), cannot be identified as the son of Spyridon Mavros nor can he be linked to the activity of the Spyridon Mavros' house in general from the available data.
9. Χαρλαύ τη, Τζ., *Ιστορί α της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας, 19ος-20ό ς αιώ νας* (Athens 2001), p. 149.
10. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 220. This means that Georgios was directing two establishments at the same time, which is highly improbable. Maybe Georgios Melas undertook the direction of the Taganrog office for a short period of time and later returned to Constantinople, where it is known that he remained for the rest of his life. See Μελάς, Λ.Ι., *Ηπειρωτικές μελέτες. Μία οικογένεια, μία ιστορία* (Athens 1967), pp. 198-199.
11. Sturdza, M.-D., *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople* (Paris 1983), p. 338.
12. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 201-202, table 7.3.
13. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 205-207, tables 7.4 & 7.4.1.
14. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 226.



15. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 237-258, appendix 1, tables 1-21.
16. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 232-233, table 7.10.
17. Χαρλαύ τη, Τζ., *Ιστορία α της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας, 19ος-20ό ς αιώ νας* (Αθή να 2001), p. 187, table 4.8.
18. Χαρλαύτη, Τζ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19ος-20ός αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 159, table 3.10; Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), p. 13. The information refers possibly to the wholesale merchant Alexandros Mavros, who dominated the Odessa market during the 1810s and 1820s, see *ibid.*, pp. 89, 93, 140.
19. Χαρλαύ τη, Τζ., *Ιστορία α της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας, 19ος-20ό ς αιώ νας* (Αθή να 2001), pp. 470-471, appendices 1.3 & 1.4.
20. Χαρλαύ τη, Τζ., *Ιστορία α της ελληνό κτητης ναυτιλί ας, 19ος-20ό ς αιώ νας* (Αθή να 2001), pp. 488-492, appendices 1.20, 1.21 & 1.22.
21. Καρδάσης, Β., *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία, 1775-1861* (Athens 1998), pp. 224-225, table 7.8, pp. 273-274, appendix 5.

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Glossary :

	chetwert The chetwert is a measure for capacity for grain, mostly wheat. Its weight varies according to the different commodities of grain and the humidity. A chetwert corresponds to 5.77 bushels (1 bushel = 60 litres).
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