



Summary :

At the end of the nineteenth century the Arvanitidis and Sideridis families were found to have settled in Constantinople. They were merchant families who from the 1870s were also occupied with navigation and shipping, especially with the transportation of petroleum from Batumi. The shipping activity of the Sideridis family ceased in 1914 whilst that of the Arvanitidis family after 1930.

Date

late nineteenth century - inter-war period

Geographical Location

Constantinople, the Caucasus coast, Batumi

1. Data regarding the origins and main professional activities

Published data concerning the Arvanitidis and Sideridis families are too poor to be able to comprise the lineage of these two families, their roots, origins and evolution until the end of the nineteenth century. It is precisely then that we find them settled in [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) and comprising the most important exporter of petroleum from the harbour of [Batumi](#) of the Caucasus on the northeastern side of the Black Sea.

2. Petroleum production in Batumi

It is essential that a few words be mentioned about Batumi and its development, which will explain the choices of the above families. Batumi, as well as Poti, were insignificant regions prior to the 1880s. However, they acquired special importance from that time on mainly thanks to the exportation of the petroleum of the Caucasus, especially the region of Baku (present-day Azerbaijan); the “Baku Petroleum,” as named by the British Consul of Batumi in 1884.¹ The rise of the ports of the Caucasus, which between 1880 and 1900 amassed 38% of the total tonnage of departures from the harbours of southern Russia, was due to important infrastructure works such as the construction and the inauguration of the Inter-Caucasus railway on 3rd July 1883, which connected the coast of the Caspian with that of the Black Sea. Moreover, shipping infrastructure works in the port of Batumi, the cost of which was estimated as having reached 500,000 pounds sterling, in addition to the demands of the international economy, which pursued the exploitation of the mineral wealth for the growing sector of the chemical industry, is evidence of the importance placed on it by the Russian government.² Batumi was in an advantageous position as well since it possessed a safe, deep and natural harbour. The data regarding the port's volume of traffic shows significant development even from the years 1882-1883. The total tonnage for steamship arrivals in the harbour reached 163,781 tons in 1883, while in the same year the arrivals and departures of coastal shipping reached 191,221 tons for steamships and 35,537 tons for sailing vessels.³ Parallel to this, owing to the importance of petroleum exports, which at the beginning of the 1880s had reached 3-4 million barrels,⁴ backward linkages were created with the development of local industries so as to sustain the petroleum trade.⁵

3. The activities of the Arvanitidis and Sideridis families in maritime and shipping enterprises

Within the framework of these developments, many Greek businessmen turned to these areas and invested in lucrative businesses. The brothers Arvanitidis, together with the Sideridis brothers, who all the same had settled in Constantinople, monopolised the export of petroleum from Batumi. Kosmas Arvanitidis, as well as Spyridon and [Xenofon Sideridis](#), (Üsküdar 1851- Constantinople 1921), apart from their activities in the Russian petroleum trade, were also occupied with [shipping](#). Indeed, their activities were part of the shipping exchange circle, which the historian Tzelina Harlafti named the ‘[Ionian network](#)’. It prospered between 1870 and the beginning of the twentieth century, leading to the transition to modern naval technology and shipping.⁶ Their establishment in Constantinople, a focal point of the Ionian network, from where it seems they directed their businesses, led them into collaboration with ship-owners and into naval investments. Harlafti includes them, along with [Zarifis](#), in the category of merchant-bankers, apart



from that of the naval shipping agents, who financed a significant number of ship-owners at the beginning of the twentieth century. Specifically it seems that Spyridon Sideridis financed the ship-owners Karras, Chatzipateras, Livanos, Laimos and Pateras from [Chios](#), as well as Pnevmatikos, Rethymnis and Gianagas from [Kasos](#), while Arvanitidis seems to have financed the three ship-owners from Kasos Island as well.⁷

Their investments in steamships, however, was probably not their only activities in shipping, as is corroborated by the fact that the 500 ton brig 'Despina', launched in 1876 at an unknown place and registered at the harbour of Constantinople in 1910 and 1914, belonged to the Arvanitidis Bros. or Arvanitidis L. & Sons. The brigs 'Sevastianos' (396 tons), registered in Skiathos in 1900 and 1905, and 'Evlampia' (874 tons), registered in Constantinople in 1905, belonged to Ch. A. or X. (Xenofon?) A. Sideridis.⁸

Their naval and shipping activities continued strongly in the first decades of the twentieth century despite their non-naval origins, in contrast with the more typical cases of the Ionian network members who were mainly occupied with sea activities. Thus, in 1905, the firm 'Σιδεριδης Σ.Α. & Χ.Α.'⁹ (this is probably a case of failing to change the Latin letter (X) to the Greek (Ξ); the persons named were obviously Spiridon & Xenofon), possesses two steamships with a capacity of 2,597 net registered tonnage (nrt), while in 1910 the fleet comprises five ships of 7,066 nrt. In 1914, even though the number of ships has dropped to four, the total capacity has risen to 9,597 nrt.¹⁰ On the other hand, in 1905 the Arvanitidis Bros. possess two ships of only 1,475 nrt, while, in 1914, we find that I. Arvanitidis has seven ships of 11,905 nrt and the company Arvanitidis L. & Sons only one ship of 500 nrt. Nevertheless, the Arvanitidis Bros. make use of funds granted by the Bank of Athens for the construction of ships during the period 1900-1914, either for steamships built after 1880 or for those built during the period 1900-1914. In this way was financed the construction of the 2,870 tons steamship 'Chalkidona', launched in 1894.¹¹

Finally, it must be noted that the investments made by these companies in naval and shipping activities were probably ephemeral, dependent on the circumstances, and not a systematic occupation, since these particular families possessed neither a naval tradition nor experience. This activity had mainly a supplementary character, as was common among merchants of that time. Thus, it is not accidental that the Sideridis family was no longer referred to as being occupied with shipping after 1914, whereas, the Arvanitidis family ceased activities after 1930.¹² Between these two families, which virtually followed a parallel course, there must have developed familial ties through intermarriages, which are not further clarified by available published data.¹³

1. FO/Annual Series, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade & Finance, Russia, Batoum*, 1883 (Historical Archive ETE).

2. FO/Annual Series, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade & Finance, Russia, Batoum*, 1883 (Historical Archive ETE), p. 531; Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 190.

3. FO/Annual Series, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade & Finance, Russia, Batoum*, 1883 (Historical Archive ETE), p. 530.

4. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 190.

5. FO/Annual Series, *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade & Finance, Russia, Batoum*, 1883 (Historical Archive ETE), pp. 530-1.

6. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 211-2; on the Ionian network see pp. 173-213.



7. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 194, 211-2, figure 4.4.

8. Χαρλαύτη, Υ. – Βλασσόπουλος, Ν., *Ποντοπόρεια, 1830-1940. Ποντοπόρα ιστιοφόρα και ατιμόπλοια από την ίδρυση του ελληνικού κράτους μέχρι τον Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο* (Athens 2002).




9. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 547.
10. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 553, 560.
11. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), pp. 252-3, 262, appendix 4.15.
12. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 613.
13. Χαρλαύτη, Τ., *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας* (Athens 2001), p. 514-5.

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	Χαρλαύτη Τ. , <i>Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19^{ος}-20^{ός} αιώνας</i> , Νεφέλη, Αθήνα 2001
	Χαρλαύτη Τ., Βλασσόπουλος Ν. , <i>Ποντοπóρεια, 1830-1940. Ποντοπόρα ιστιοφόρα και ατμόπλοια από την ίδρυση του ελληνικού κράτους μέχρι τον Δεύτερο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο</i> , Ε.Λ.Ι.Α., Αθήνα 2002

Glossary :

	Ionian network
<p>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.</p>	

Sources

FO/ Annual Series, *Diplomatic & Consular Reports on Trade & Finance, Russia, Batoum, 1883* (Historical Archive ETE).