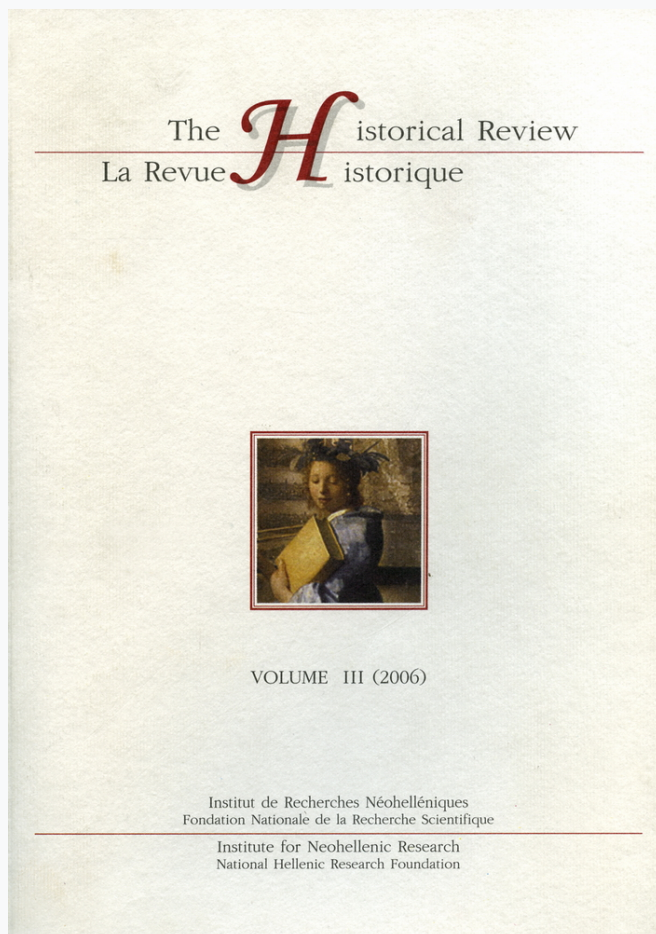


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**The Dark Side of the Moon: Rivalry and Riots for Shelter and Occupation Between the Greek and Jewish Populations in Multi-ethnic Nineteenth-century Odessa**

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THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON:  
RIVALRY AND RIOTS FOR SHELTER AND OCCUPATION BETWEEN  
THE GREEK AND JEWISH POPULATIONS IN MULTI-ETHNIC  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY ODESSA.<sup>1</sup>

*Evridiki Sifneos*

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to shed light on the competition between Greeks and Jews in the multi-ethnic context of Odessa, suggesting that rivalry was “the dark side of the moon”, while the other side was characterised by conviviality, basically through assimilation and upper-class solidarity.

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The history of the Greek populations that resided in Southern Russia in the late Imperial period has been studied recently. Greek commercial houses related to the grain trade and maritime enterprises, aspects of the economic performance and social life of Greek immigrants, philanthropy and education have been some of the issues considered.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, most of our information comes

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 7th International Conference on Urban History held at Panteion University in Athens from 27 to 30-10-2004, under the title *The European City in Comparative Perspective*.

<sup>2</sup> P. Herlihy, “Greek Merchants in Odessa in the Nineteenth Century”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3-4 (1979-80), pp. 399-420; *id.*, “The Greek Community in Odessa, 1861-1917”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 7 (1989), pp. 235-252; G. Harlaftis, “The Role of Greeks in the Black Sea Trade, 1830-1900”, *Shipping and Trade, 1750-1950: Essays in International Maritime Economic History*, ed. L. R. Fischer and H. W. Nordvik, Rotterdam 1990, pp. 63-95; *id.*, *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19ος-20ός αι.* [History of Greek-owned shipping, 19th-20th centuries], Athens 2001; V. Kardassis, *Έλληνες ομογενείς στη Νότια Ρωσία* [Greek homogeny in South Russia], Athens 1998; J. A. Mazis, *The Greeks of Odessa: Diaspora Leadership in Late Imperial Russia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005; Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou, “The Greek Merchant House of the Russian Black Sea: A Nineteenth-century Example of a Trader’s Coalition”, *International Journal of Maritime History* 10, 1 (June 1998), pp. 61-104; Evridiki Sifneos, “Business Ethics and Lifestyle of the Greek Diaspora in New Russia: From Economic Activities to National Benefaction”, in Anne-Marie Kuijlaars, Kim Prudon and Joop Visser (eds), *Business and Society*, Rotterdam 2000, pp. 455-468; *id.*, “Οι αλλαγές στο ρωσικό σιτεμπόριο και η προσαρμοστικότητα των ελληνικών εμπορικών οίκων” [The changes in the Russian grain trade and the adjustability of the Greek merchant houses], *Τα Ιστορικά* 40 (June 2004), pp. 53-96; Evridiki Sifneos and S. Paradisopoulos, “Οι Έλληνες της Οδησσού το 1897. Ξαναδιαβάζοντας την πρώτη επίσημη απογραφή” [Greeks in Odessa in 1897: revisiting the all-Russian census], *Τα Ιστορικά* 44 (June 2006), pp. 81-122.

from secondary sources, while inadequate access to the Ukrainian state archives has deprived us of fundamental historical material.

Recent historiography tends to study the Greek immigrants and their institutions not as islets of Greek “Hellenism” connected to the homeland, but as integral parts of the multi-ethnic society that characterised many ports of the Russian Empire.<sup>3</sup> In this vein, the problems of intra-ethnic conflicts, the rise of nationalism and assimilation emerge at centre stage of the debate.<sup>4</sup> In my recent article concerning the Greek community of Odessa, based on the all-Russian census, I tried to underline the importance of the assimilation process that occurred mainly in the second generation of Greek immigrants, through mixed marriages, adoption of Russian citizenship and the loss of Greek as the mother tongue.<sup>5</sup> These phenomena occurred with frequency in Odessa’s Greek diaspora group, which was constituted half by middle- and upper-class people and half by non-privileged wage-earners.

On Easter Sunday 1871, during the religious celebration of the Resurrection in the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Odessa, then South Russia, today Ukraine, riots broke out between the worshippers and the Jewish inhabitants of that quarter. Reinforcements joined both sides, but the Greeks, supported by the Russians, persecuted the Jews, who ran into their houses and shops to find refuge. The result of this conflict was the destruction of Jewish property and synagogues, while the police did not manage to disperse the crowd.

According to the US Consul’s report, organised gangs were soon formed in different parts of the city.<sup>6</sup> Giving an indication of Jewish urban occupations, the Consul maintained that these gangs attacked grog shops (“of which there are some thousands, nearly all kept by Jews”), grocery shops, second-hand

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<sup>3</sup> In this respect see the works of Herlihy, Kardassis and Sifneos mentioned above, as well as the paper of O. Katsiardi-Hering, “Από τις ‘ελληνικές κοινότητες του εξωτερικού’ στην ιστοριογραφία του μεταναστευτικού φαινομένου (15ος-20ός αι.)” [From the ‘Greek communities abroad’ to the historiography of the migration problem (15th-20th centuries)], Institute for Neohellenic Research / NHRE, IV International Congress of History, *Historiography of Modern and Contemporary Greece, 1833-2002*, Proceedings, Vol. I, ed. P. M. Kitromilides and T. Sklavenitis, Athens 2004, pp. 223-250.

<sup>4</sup> Historiography on the German and British communities has already offered some comparative paradigms. Cf. A. Henriksson, “Nationalism, Assimilation and Identity in Late Imperial Russia: The St. Petersburg Germans, 1906-1914”, *Russian Review* 52, 3 (July 1993), pp. 341-353.

<sup>5</sup> See Evridiki Sifneos and S. Paradisopoulos, “Οι Έλληνες της Οδησσού το 1897”.

<sup>6</sup> NACRO (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC), Dispatches from the US Consul in Odessa, Russia, 22-4-1871.



The Church of the Holy Trinity, Odessa, scene of the 1871 conflict. Photograph by G. Yerolympos (2005), INR Odessa project.

clothes and iron shops, crockery, glass and leather workshops, brokers' and bankers' offices, as well as private houses that belonged to Jews. Their contents were pillaged and thrown into the streets. The police authorities proved unable to restore order for more than three days and finally managed to do so with military intervention.

This image reveals the dark side of the moon of a so-called cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic and multilingual city, composed of various communities: Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Greeks, Germans, Tatars, Poles, Armenians and French.<sup>7</sup> Their co-existence was not based on mutual toleration. On the contrary, economic recession in the second half of the nineteenth century accelerated ethnic distinctions, and resentment was provoked by the ascension of social or ethnic groups, which led to the redistribution of resources.

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<sup>7</sup> These were the nine largest groups by native language in the city of Odessa according to the 1897 Imperial census data: 58.8% of the city's population were Russian speakers, 30.84% Yiddish speakers, 4.31% spoke Polish, 2.54% spoke German, 1.26% Greek, 0.36% Tatar, 0.35% Armenian, 0.28% French and 0.18% Italian. Source: *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii, 1897g.*, Vol. XLVII: Odessa, Moscow 1903, p. IV.

As the US Consul predicted, new upheavals were to follow because “the hatred of the [Jewish] race was deeply rooted in Greeks and Russians”. In fact, new persecutions against the Jews were to break out both in 1881 and 1905 not only in Odessa, but in almost every city of Southern Russia. This paper intends to shed light on the events that occurred in 1871, in which the Greek ethnic community strongly participated. It means to give an historical explanation of the rivalry and conflicts for shelter and work that emerged between the Greek and the Jewish communities leading to the first pogrom. Before analysing our case, however, we will proceed by outlining the views of both sides. On the Greek side, we have the testimony of Grigorios Couppas, an employee in a Greek trading house, who had recently arrived in Odessa.<sup>8</sup> Grigorios Couppas’ correspondence delineates in a unique way the geographical and social mobility of the Greek merchants in the Russian grain markets. From this point of view his letters constitute one of the few primary historical sources that enrich and deepen our knowledge concerning the entrepreneurship of the Greeks living in Southern Russia during the third quarter of the nineteenth century – a difficult time for the Greek presence:

The troublesome race of the Jews didn’t allow us to spend a peaceful Easter. Our town presents an outrageous spectacle. I feel obligated to describe to you what happened. The Resurrection in the night took place in peace because at that time the Jews were having a rest. But the same calmness was not exhibited during the Second Resurrection. The churchyard was full of sailors who took to shooting. Mobs usually like shooting and the Jewish mob gathered around the Greek church because shooting was not a custom in the Russian church. However, there was no reason for anything to happen if the Jews had the required respect and not this troublesome attitude, which together with the Greeks’ irritability ended up in a conflict [...]. The mob attacked the Jews severely, shattered the windows of their houses from the basement up to the 3rd or 4th floor. At the same time the Christians had to erect icons and crosses on all of their windows in such a way that their houses would be distinguished from the Jewish houses. The whole city was

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<sup>8</sup> On Gr. Couppas’ adventure in Russia, cf. E. Sifneos, *Εθνικός αυτοπροσδιορισμός σε ένα οικονομικά μεταβαλλόμενο περιβάλλον. Η μαρτυρία ενός έλληνα εμποροϋπαλλήλου από το ρωσικό εμπόριο σιτηρών* [National awakening in a changing economic environment: a testimony from a Greek merchant in the Russian grain trade], Institute for Neohellenic Research, Tetrada Ergasias 28, Athens 2005, pp. 116-125. On the Couppas’ family machinery works in Piraeus, cf. E. Kremmyda, *Achille Couppas et Cie. Histoire d’un constructeur mécanique du Pirée, 1882-1940*, Ph.D. thesis, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris 2001.

transformed into an iconostasis. In the evening small oil lamps were put in front of each icon so there was a kind of illumination. Meanwhile, the police forces wandered around the streets not willing or not having the ability to repress the riots. As a result, next day, the destructive mob became more cheeky and also increased in number. They entered private houses and smashed, scattered and looted whatever was on their way.

One could see the pianofortes, the tables, the chairs, the silverware and even money thrown out of the windows and in the streets. Another mob waited downstairs for the things to “land” and took over smashing into pieces these items, precious to their owners.<sup>9</sup>

The Jews attributed the pogrom to the widespread resentment against the growing prosperity of their community.<sup>10</sup> The account of the pogrom related in a Jewish newspaper by the lawyer M. G. Morgulis stresses the accidental nature of the initial provocation and the idleness of the forces of order, which initially viewed the battle as a fight between two foreign groups.<sup>11</sup> The consequences of the pogrom were devastating: 6 persons killed, 21 wounded, 863 houses and 522 businesses destroyed; a total of properties estimated up to 2,000,000 roubles.

The above-cited sources give a hint of the reasons for the outbreak of riots that lie far beyond racial or religious differences. Even the most unsuspecting witnesses tried to present a certain objectivity by condemning rampages and alluding to economic or social differences.

A basic component needed to understand the increasing racial hatred is its connection with the changing demographic structure of the city. As the 1897 official census shows, Odessa was rapidly becoming a predominantly Jewish city, due to immigration, high fertility among Jewish women and low mortality among Jewish children.<sup>12</sup> Jews increased from 19% of the total population in 1854 to 30.84% in 1897. Even though their numbers continued to grow, their status deteriorated, especially after the promulgation of the Ignatiev Laws<sup>13</sup> in

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<sup>9</sup> ELIA (The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive), Athens, Grigorios Couppas' correspondence, letter of 11-4-1871.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the article by the Jewish lawyer M. G. Morgulis, quoted in P. Herlihy's *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 301.

<sup>11</sup> P. Herlihy, *Odessa*, p. 302.

<sup>12</sup> P. Herlihy, *Odessa*, p. 256.

<sup>13</sup> Count Nicholas Ignatiev was Minister of the Interior under Czar Alexander III, responsible for the “Russification” policy of the Empire. The May 1882 Laws debarred any Jew from holding an administrative office, from becoming a lawyer or owning land. Jewish schools were closed and books in Hebrew banned. Jews could not marry Christians unless they changed faith.

1882. Russification or extinction were the sole alternatives proposed to the Jewish community. As a matter of fact, a third road, the one of emigration from Odessa, occurred after the pogrom of 1905.

Demographic pressure in Odessa led to an increasing demand for shelter and work. The city doubled in size through the incorporation of several suburbs within its limits. Although most of the Jews were middlemen and shopkeepers, a profession also exercised by Greeks, they mainly populated the quarters on the outskirts of the city, while Greeks lived predominantly in the central ones.

Table 1  
Distribution of Greek-, Yiddish-, German- and French-speaking populations  
in the quarters of Odessa, 1897

Quarters	Greek-speaking			Yiddish-speaking			German-speaking			French-speaking		
	M	W	%	M	W	%	M	W	%	M	W	%
Bulvarniy	980	574	30.55	5419	5280	8.59	871	972	17.99	144	282	37.47
Alexandrovsky	548	328	17.22	18,446	19,240	30.27	868	702	15.32	67	103	14.95
Khersonsky	601	379	19.27	4461	4179	6.94	1272	1267	24.78	130	239	32.45
Petropavlovsky	359	214	11.27	15,259	15,954	25.07	927	743	16.30	28	39	15.13
Mikhailovsky	295	174	9.22	15,486	15,836	25.15	919	717	15.96	36	21	
Peresipsky	351	176	10.36	2080	2048	3.32	366	277	6.27	17	17	
Port	32	2	0.67	5	2	0.01	30	2	0.31	1	-	
Dalnitsky	40	33	1.44	391	434	0.66	159	156	3.07	8	5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3206</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61,547</b>	<b>62,973</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5412</b>	<b>4836</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii, 1897g.*, Vol. XLVII: Odessa, Moscow 1903.

From Table 1 we can make two observations: apart from a middle-class group that resided in Alexandrovsky, 54% of the Jews lived in the periphery (Petropavlovsky, Mikhailovsky and Peresipsky). This becomes more obvious as the city grew in size and the Jewish population arrived much later in Odessa. On the contrary, Greek-speaking people as well as French speakers, who belonged to the first wave of settlers and whose ethnic presence diminished in the second half of the nineteenth century, populated the inner centre of the city, mainly in the Bulvarniy, Alexandrovsky and Khersonsky quarters.

The second observation refers to the ratio of male and female presence. The Jewish community presents a balanced ratio between men and women, which alludes to more viable households and a more settled population. In contrast, the predominantly male population of the Greek community is connected to



Plan of Odessa in 1814.

1. the Bulvarniy quarter, 2. the Alexandrovsky quarter, where the Greek Orthodox Church was situated, and 3. the Khersonsky quarter.

long-distance migration and occupations such as sailors, travelling merchants, etc. The high number of bachelors and renters of single rooms in households, as the data from the census presents, alludes to an unstable family life and an itinerant population, travelling back and forth for some years, while their families remained settled in their homeland.

The Jewish presence in the most important economic activity of the city, the grain trade, occurred at the expense of Greeks. It is worth mentioning Grigorios Couppas' words:

When I first came to Odessa in 1864, I became a purchaser of grain on behalf of our house,<sup>14</sup> at Moldovanka [a suburb, later incorporated into the city]. The majority were Greeks, with a few Russian middlemen. Now there are no Russians, and as for the Greeks they are counted on the fingers of one hand. Jews are the ones who have taken over the market.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Couppas was working in the commercial firm of the Sevastopoulo Bros, registered in the first guild of merchants.

<sup>15</sup> ELIA, Grigorios Couppas' correspondence, letter of 26-2-1879.



In fact, the Greek commercial houses in the form of international trading houses dominated Odessa's grain trade from the 1830s until the late 1850s. Some of the most prominent ones were: the Ralli Bros, Th. Rodochanaki, the Pappudov Bros,<sup>16</sup> the Scaramanga Bros, G. Avierino, the Vagliano Bros, Gr. Marazlis, A. Mavro, G. Vouchina, N. Igglesis, A. Koumbaris, P. Iraklides and A. Zarifi, etc. During this period immense fortunes were made. The Greek magnates succeeded in taking advantage of their capacity to organise trade under primitive conditions and through their established commercial networks with the West. Through their efficient transactions they supplied European urban centres with large portions of Russian grain. It is estimated that from the early 1840s until the Crimean War (1854) 20 Greek commercial firms controlled 46% of Odessa's import-export trade.<sup>17</sup>

The changes that occurred after the Crimean War in Russian and international trade, such as the introduction of the telegraph, the construction of railway lines, the development of infrastructures (new ports and port facilities), plus banking, etc., brought substantial changes to commercial practices and limited the profit margins of such trading. Greeks were replaced by Jewish middlemen. Grigorios Couppas offers us a sagacious observation about the changes brought in by the construction of the new railway lines in Southern Russia. He believed that they were the reason why the grain markets dispersed and the centralised collection of grain no longer occurred in the suburbs of Odessa. Now, smaller portions of grain were gathered in the villages, facilitating the Jewish grog-shopkeepers to become middlemen and get involved in the grain trade. Because of the new conditions presented above, the few remaining Greek employees were forced to hurry in advance to the inlands in order to purchase portions of grain before the arrival of the Jews.

Competition in the grain trade proved to be acute due to the different purchasing policies adopted by Greeks and Jews. The Greeks insisted upon buying the grain at the lowest possible price, always taking into consideration the corresponding prices of the European markets and calculating a safe profit margin. The Jews were interested in the quick turnover of their small capital and sold to other middlemen, who would take the grain to the port. For this reason Couppas commented that the Jews were not familiar with the "art of buying" and the prices reached in Europe. According to his experience they

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<sup>16</sup> Constantine Pappudoglu russified his surname into Pappudov. Many Greek residents of the second and mostly of the third generation used Russian abbreviated names or took Russian names, a fact considered as a trait of assimilation.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the journal *Odesskii Vestnik's* annual lists of the most important traders.



Grain transported to the Odessa port.  
Source: Odessa City Museum.

“rocked the boat in the market” because they continued buying even when prices ascended, in contrast to the Greeks, who had orders from their houses to stop buying and wait for prices to fall again.<sup>18</sup>

The Jewish merchants proved to be better adapted to the changing conditions of the grain market by being omnipresent in the countryside, near the small villages and railway stations where grain was gathered in order to be sent to the ports, and by possessing small sums of money from the liquor shops they owned. They worked more tightly within their ethnic network and with smaller profit margins than the Greeks. Disenchantment emerged from the steady pace by which Jewish merchants conquered the grain market. Eventually, Odessa’s economic slowdown in the 1870s and 1880s weighed heavily upon the Jewish population, which was the winner in the new era of the grain trade.

Moreover, economic rivalry between Greeks and Jews was obvious not only in the grain trade but in other urban occupations too. The US Consul gave an accurate definition of the role of Jews as middlemen:

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<sup>18</sup> ELIA, Gr. Couppas’ correspondence, letter of 26-2-1879.

As a class they occupy themselves with trade and favoring their own race or sect, that is that their combinations, in a great many instances, amount almost to monopolies. The common remark therefore is that “everything is in the hands of the Jews”. To sell or buy a house, a horse, a carriage, to rent a lodging or contract for a loan, to engage a governess and, sometimes, even to marry a wife the Jew gets his percent as a “go between”. The poor laborer, the hungry soldier, the land proprietor, the money capitalist and, in fact, every producer and every consumer is obliged in one way or other to pay tribute to the Jew. There is again in the city from ten thousand to twenty thousand Greeks, also commercial people but doing generally the larger and better kinds of commerce more independently on their own account and in accordance with recognized principles of trade. Between the Jews and Greeks therefore, there are constant jealousies and animosities, originating, no doubt, mostly from difference of race and religion but also, perhaps, sometimes excited and encouraged from collisions of business interests.<sup>19</sup>

It is obvious from the Consul’s report that the Jewish population was charged with the accusation of “exploitation of the Christian population” of Odessa. Thus, the pogrom was aimed directly at weakening the economic power of the Jews and to eliminate competition in the same professions.

Unlike the other ethnic groups, a portion of the Jewish community filled the middle-class ranks, and it was in middle-class occupations that they competed severely with the Greeks. I. G. Orshanskii, a contemporary author who described the 1871 pogrom, attributed the reasons for the conflict to the state of the city’s retail trade. One of the most outstanding differences between the Greek and Jewish shopkeepers was their selling practices. As he noted, Greek shopkeepers who mainly held the trade of Mediterranean commodities, until the Crimean War, used to sell olive oil and olives at the expense of Odessa’s consumers. They would add puds<sup>20</sup> of lime to the olive oil barrels and salt to the olives, so as to preserve them and sell them by adulterating their weight.<sup>21</sup>

At the close of the nineteenth century, various sources add a statistical picture to the ascending economic activity of the Jews and the descending of the Greeks. At the end of the Crimean War only 5 out of the 25 first guild merchants were Jews and 15 out of the 52 of the second guild; the rest were Christians,<sup>22</sup> among which a high percentage were Greeks, who watched their

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<sup>19</sup> NACRO, Dispatches from the US Consul in Odessa, Russia, 22-4-1871.

<sup>20</sup> 1 pud is equal to 16.38 kilograms.

<sup>21</sup> I. G. Orshanskii, *Evrei v Rossii*, St Petersburg 1877, pp. 165-166.

<sup>22</sup> NACRO, Dispatches from the US Consul in Odessa, Russia, 1856, Statistical account of the town of Odessa.

participation in the export trade diminish. Among a list of 40 first and second guild cereal exporters at the end of the century only 3 Greek firms existed, and among 15 brokers in the grain trade only 1 was registered as Greek.<sup>23</sup> The city's factories present a similar state of comparison: from a list of 513 factories and industries registered in 1898, in the municipality of Odessa and its suburbs, only 35 belonged to Greek entrepreneurs and 141 to Jews.<sup>24</sup>

The 1897 census statistical data give us an accurate image of competition between Greeks and Jews in Odessa's occupational posts. As the table shows, competition seems harsh in middle-class professions related to all sorts of trade and particularly in the grain trade. The development of Jewish entrepreneurship in certain activities and territories is related to restrictions that existed for the Jewish minority, concerning their place of settlement and the permission to exercise certain occupations.<sup>25</sup> Such was the case with the liquor trade before it became a state monopoly in the 1890s.

The grain trade was the most challenging area for a Jew to make a fortune, since the non-Jewish competitors, including the Greeks, were facing difficulties adapting to its changes. The new era caused by the advent of the telegraph, the railways, the dispersion of grain in many railway stations, and the greater availability of credit by the extension of the banking institutions to the south did not suit the profile of the Greek trading houses,<sup>26</sup> which operated in the ports by sending their clerks for purchases to the interior. Jews who resided there bought grain in smaller portions and thus needed less capital: they were interested in quick transactions in order to gain a small sum of money from the speedy turnover of their capital. Their co-religionist networks were far more extensive than those of the Greeks' and they were found everywhere in the countryside. Thus, the new conditions made profit margins thinner, and the ex-traders looked for new entrepreneurial opportunities. Most of them diversified their activities by investing heavily in a new field of economic

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<sup>23</sup> C. A. Blengini de Torricella, *Livre d'adresses des négociants de la 1-re et 2-e Guilde d'Odessa*, Odessa 1890.

<sup>24</sup> *Fabrichno-Zavodskaja Promishlennost' Odesskogo Gradonachalstva Hersonskoj Gubernii I Nikolaevskogo Voennogo Gubernatorstva*, Odessa 1899.

<sup>25</sup> A. Kahan, "Notes on Jewish Entrepreneurship in Tsarist Russia", in Gr. Guroff and F. V. Carstensen (eds), *Entrepreneurship in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, Princeton 1983, pp. 104-124.

<sup>26</sup> E. Sifneos, "Οι αλλαγές στο ρωσικό σιτεμπόριο και η προσαρμοστικότητα των ελληνικών εμπορικών οίκων".

Table 2  
 Competition in Odessa's professions between Greeks and Jews in 1897

Professions	Greeks	% of Greek working population	% of Odessa's working population	Jews	% of Jewish working population	% of Odessa's working population
1. Rentiers who live on interest from capital	244	8.8	0.12	1523	3.1	0.7
2. Teachers	45	1.6	0.021	755		0.3
3. Science, art	9	0.3	0.004	139	1.5	0.07
4. Doctors	7	0.3	0.003	339	0.3	0.2
5. Clerks, servants	314	11.3	0.2	6882	0.7	3.4
6. Peasants	61	2.2	0.03	76	14.0	0.04
7. Wood processing	9	0.3	0.004	1387	0.2	0.7
8. Metal processing	35	1.3	0.02	1891	2.8	1.0
9. Workers in food processing industries	207	7.4	0.1	1206	3.8	0.6
10. Tobacco processing	6	0.2	0.003	813	1.7	0.4
11. Printing industries	12	0.4	0.006	1064		0.5
12. Garment industry	123	4.4	0.06	7770	2.2	3.8
13. Cart-drivers, stevedores	27	1.0	0.013	941	15.8	0.5
14. Workers in transport services	17	0.6	0.008	532	1.1	0.2
15. Commission trade	75	2.7	0.004	1332		0.7
16. General trade (including houses)	113	4.1	0.01	1302	2.7	0.6
17. Trading animals	15	0.5	0.01	142		0.07
18. Grain trade	64	2.3	0.03	2121	0.3	1.04
19. Trade of other agricultural products	401	14.4	0.2	5344	4.3	2.6
20. Trade of construction materials and petroleum	2	0.07	0.01	466	10.9	0.2
21. Trade of fabrics	25	0.9	0.01	1923	0.9	0.9
22. Owners of inns, restaurants and shops	187	6.7	0.09	468	3.9	0.2
23. Liquor trade	62	2.2	0.03	250	0.09	0.1

Source: *Pervaiá vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii*, 1897g., Vol. XLVII: Odessa, Moscow 1903.

interest, real estate speculation. Admittedly, the question of shelter grew more pressing for the in-coming population.

When restrictions on the settlement of Jews were abolished (1865), the migration movement became stronger and a large number moved from the northern and western provinces to the southern ones. Free settlement was allowed to Jews who exercised special professions, such as owners of workshops, mechanics and distillers.

The demand for accommodation in the city grew stronger, and many buildings were rented even before they were completed.<sup>27</sup> House-building in the early 1870s proceeded rapidly. Many of the old storehouses, which were numerous and appeared in every street, were converted into dwellings.<sup>28</sup> Such was the case of the big warehouses in the very centre of the city that belonged to the Greek exporter Constantine Pappudov. Moreover, new blocks of first-class houses were erected in the central quarters. Construction was motivated by the high rates of rent and capital investment by the increasing value of the land. The British Consul in Odessa reported that immense profits were made by the buying and reselling of landed property. He pointed out that one of his friends had realised a profit of 25,000 roubles on a house which he had purchased for 30,000 roubles.<sup>29</sup> Let us comment here that 25,000 roubles corresponds to the average annual net profit of a middle-sized export house.

In the 1870s the trade situation proved to be rather dull. Though from 1871 to 1873 there was great commercial activity, heavy losses were incurred by exporters due to the decline of prices in England and the damage to grain due to damp conditions. Tightness was apparent in the money market. Therefore, a change in entrepreneurial strategy was necessary. Greek merchants withdrew part of their capital from this unstable commercial sector and invested it in real estate.

The city's Guide of the year 1875 allows us to count the number of profitable buildings which contained numerous flats and belonged to the top Greek exporters of grain during the boom period of the 1830s to the 1860s: Gr. Marazlis possessed 10 blocks of flats, J. Ralli 16, Th. Rodochanaki 11, Mavrokordato 16, J. Voutsina 11, Koumbaris 5, Yannopoulo 4, Mavroviazi 3, and Papadopoulo 4.<sup>30</sup> Two prominent Jewish grain exporters also followed:

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<sup>27</sup> Foreign Office (FO), AS, Russia, London, Report by the Consul-General Abbott on trade in Odessa in the year 1872.

<sup>28</sup> FO, AS, Russia, Odessa, Report on trade and commerce for the year 1871.

<sup>29</sup> FO, AS, Russia, Report by the Consul-General Abbott on trade in Odessa in the year 1872.

Raffalovitch with 14 buildings and Efrousi with 5. These entrepreneurs, most of them ex- or still active merchants, or hereditary honorary citizens became rentiers as a main or as a complementary economic activity that guaranteed them huge and stable incomes. In the meantime, wages, food expenses and fuel prices had doubled, while the rent of the US Consul's flat had risen from 800 to 2000 roubles per year, in a period of six years.<sup>31</sup>

The social pressure caused by the rapid increase of population, the high cost of living and the economic recession in the 1870s created an unsettled situation that accentuated discontent and led to social turbulence. The pogrom proved to be the outburst of the above-mentioned problems. In a time of prolonged economic difficulties, strong ethnocentrism and crisis in the leadership of the Greek community, a growing dislike towards Jewish competitors was expressed. The same feelings were reproduced in the bosom of the urban society of Odessa, which took for granted the negative stereotypes towards the Jews and blamed them for the crisis and the increasing deterioration of their life. Jews were used as scapegoats in order to alleviate the discontent for the social crisis. Not only in the first pogrom of Odessa but also in the later ones, when there was no Greek participation, the same emotions and attitudes were exhibited between Russians and Jews and the same mechanism of accusation was activated against an ethnic community as a whole.

In this context, it is worth pointing out the similarities between the Odessa riots with those that broke out between the Greeks and Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1881.<sup>32</sup> Three main parallels can be discerned: firstly, the declining position of Greeks in the city's economic life; secondly, the crisis within the Greek community; and lastly, the problems of deteriorating housing, work and social integration of the lower strata of the society.

All these elements make up the dark side of societies that were thought to be cosmopolitan and prosperous. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that despite ethnic competition and conflicts, the multi-ethnic and multilingual city of Odessa also presented revealing signs of acculturation, not only among the Greek population but also within the Jewish community. As S. Zipperstein

<sup>30</sup> K. Viskofski, *Putevoditel Po Gorodu Odesse S Podrobnym Planom*, Odessa 1875.

<sup>31</sup> NACRO, Dispatches from the US Consul Smith in Odessa, Russia, to the Secretary of State, Washington, letters of 28-3-1871 and 14-10-1871.

<sup>32</sup> Chr. Chadziiosif, "Πάσχα στην Αλεξάνδρεια. Λαϊκές προλήψεις και διανοητικές διαμάχες στην Αίγυπτο στα τέλη του 19ου αι." [Easter in Alexandria: folk prejudices and intracommunal conflicts in Egypt in the late nineteenth century], *Τα Ιστορικά* 12-13 (June-Dec. 1990), pp. 121-148.

explicitly says, Odessa's Jews, though still traditional, kept most of their shops open on the Sabbath, sent an increasing number of their children to secular schools instead of their ethnic religious ones, and demonstrated high participation in liberal professions and scientific occupations (mathematicians, physicians). Religious observance was erratic.<sup>33</sup>

Though there was little relaxation of the social barriers separating ethnicities, the tendency towards acculturation was apparent in the well-educated and wealthy of most ethnic groups. Statistical data from the 1897 census show that among the Greeks, for instance, ethnic exogamy was an ascending tendency, as well as mixed residence with other ethnic groups. Many children attended Russian schools instead of the Greek ones.<sup>34</sup> Cosmopolitanism affected the wealthy sector of the Greek commercial strata.<sup>35</sup> In his memoirs the son of the first guild Greek merchant Eleftherios Papadopoulos wrote:

The block of flats where we lived was one of the most luxurious in Odessa. It was situated in the heart of the city opposite to the Cathedral, a place that corresponds to Constitution Square in Athens. It had an elevator, something extremely rare for its time, and two doorkeepers in livery. Our flat was more than 200 square metres.

On the ground floor one could see the biggest pharmacy of the city, Apteka Gaievskaya. The building was three-storied with shops on the ground floor. We lived on the second floor and our living-room windows looked onto the central boulevard. Next to us lived a Jewish doctor, Mr Warsawsky. All flats on the first floor were rented by commercial agencies.<sup>36</sup>

From this flat at the corner of the central streets of Preobrazenskaya and Sandovaya, Yiorgios Papadopoulos watched as a young pupil the military parades, the visit of the Imperial family during the Russo-Japanese War (1904) and the first revolutionary upheavals while he was taking private lessons with his French tutor. His father, a Greek merchant from the Pontic region, worked in the dry fruit trade and was married to an Italian lady who had received a Russian education and Italian culture. Their three children went to Russian

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<sup>33</sup> S. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881*, Stanford 1986.

<sup>34</sup> Evridiki Sifneos and S. Paradisopoulos, "Οι Έλληνες της Οδησσού το 1897", pp. 102-104.

<sup>35</sup> On the cosmopolitan character of the Greek commercial diaspora see also E. Sifneos, "Cosmopolitanism' as a Feature of the Greek Commercial Diaspora", *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (March 2005), pp. 97-111.

<sup>36</sup> Papadopoulos Family Collection, Memoirs of Yiorgios Papadopoulos. Special recognition and thanks to Cate Papadopoulos for acquainting me with the family archive.



private schools, visited Switzerland for their summer holidays and frequented curative baths in Austria. In order to avoid the revolutionary climate of Odessa, the eldest son was sent to study at the Zurich Polytechnic. The children knew no Greek. Greece's ethnic "imaginary" entered their lives after the victorious Balkan Wars, and the parents began to talk to their children about Greek culture and civilisation only after the liberation of Thessaloniki (1912) and its incorporation into the Greek state.

The openness of the ethnicities of the city to the larger world, to the intrusion of modernity and to the adoption of the European lifestyle defined what was called "the Odessan style", a way of thinking and acting that proved Odessa's uniqueness.<sup>37</sup> As Isaac Babel put it in his novel *Odessa's Scent*, the character of the city resided in its capacity to assimilate people and ethnicities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Oleg Gubar and P. Herlihy, "The Persuasive Power of the Odessa Myth", Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, paper online <http://www.2odessa.com/wiki>; R. P. Sylvester, "Making an Appearance: Urban 'Types' and the Creation of Respectability in Odessa's Popular Press, 1912-1914", *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (Winter 2000), pp. 800-824.

<sup>38</sup> Isaac Babel, *Το άρωμα της Οδησσού* [Odessa's scent], Athens: Roes, 2004, pp. 64-65.

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