

Home / VOL. 6 / THE MESSAGERIES MARITIMES COMPANY IN THE HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION IN...

Süleyman Uygun

THE MESSAGERIES MARITIMES COMPANY IN THE HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION IN ISTANBUL

Messageries Maritimes' Istanbul Routes

Until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the French played a prominent role in Istanbul trade. Although severed by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Istanbul trade, which was concentrated in Marseille, began to flourish once again after 1815. All of the merchant ships which sailed under foreign flags stopped by the Istanbul Port were sailboats of various sizes. The *Swift*, the first English steamboat to enter the Istanbul harbor in 1828, was the harbinger of a new era in commerce. Just a short time after this event, in 1831, A. C. Comte de Guillemont (1774-1840), the French ambassador to Istanbul, negotiated a regular route between Marseille and Istanbul by steamboat; in the same year, English entrepreneurs started journeys using two steamboats along a route that stretched from Istanbul to Trabzon, transporting goods from Iran.¹

The French joined these enterprises with the *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat*, established in 1835. This Postal Company started up three voyages a month on a regular basis; the first voyage was completed using the steamboat *Scamandre* between Marseille and Istanbul in 1837.² In the mid-1840s, transportation companies from a variety of nations were involved in commercial activities in the Istanbul Port. Opportunities provided by the Treaty of Balta Limanı (dated August 16, 1838) undeniably played an important role in bringing about this situation.³ A traveler who visited Istanbul on the steamboat belonging to the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company in the 1840s stated that he saw Austrian, Russian, English, Greek and American steamboats anchored in the Istanbul Port.⁴



1- The emblem of Messageries (Archive de L'Association French Lines, 1997 002 5242)

Except for the *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat*, most of the foreign transportation companies entering Istanbul Port transported post, passengers or commodities. Because the main aim of the *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat* was to provide a connection between France and Istanbul, it had very few commercial concerns.⁵ *Rostand et Compagnie*, also known as *Compagnie des Paquebots à Vapeur du Levant*, attempted to meet the commercial transportation needs between Marseille and Istanbul.⁶ Having been granted permission by the Ottoman

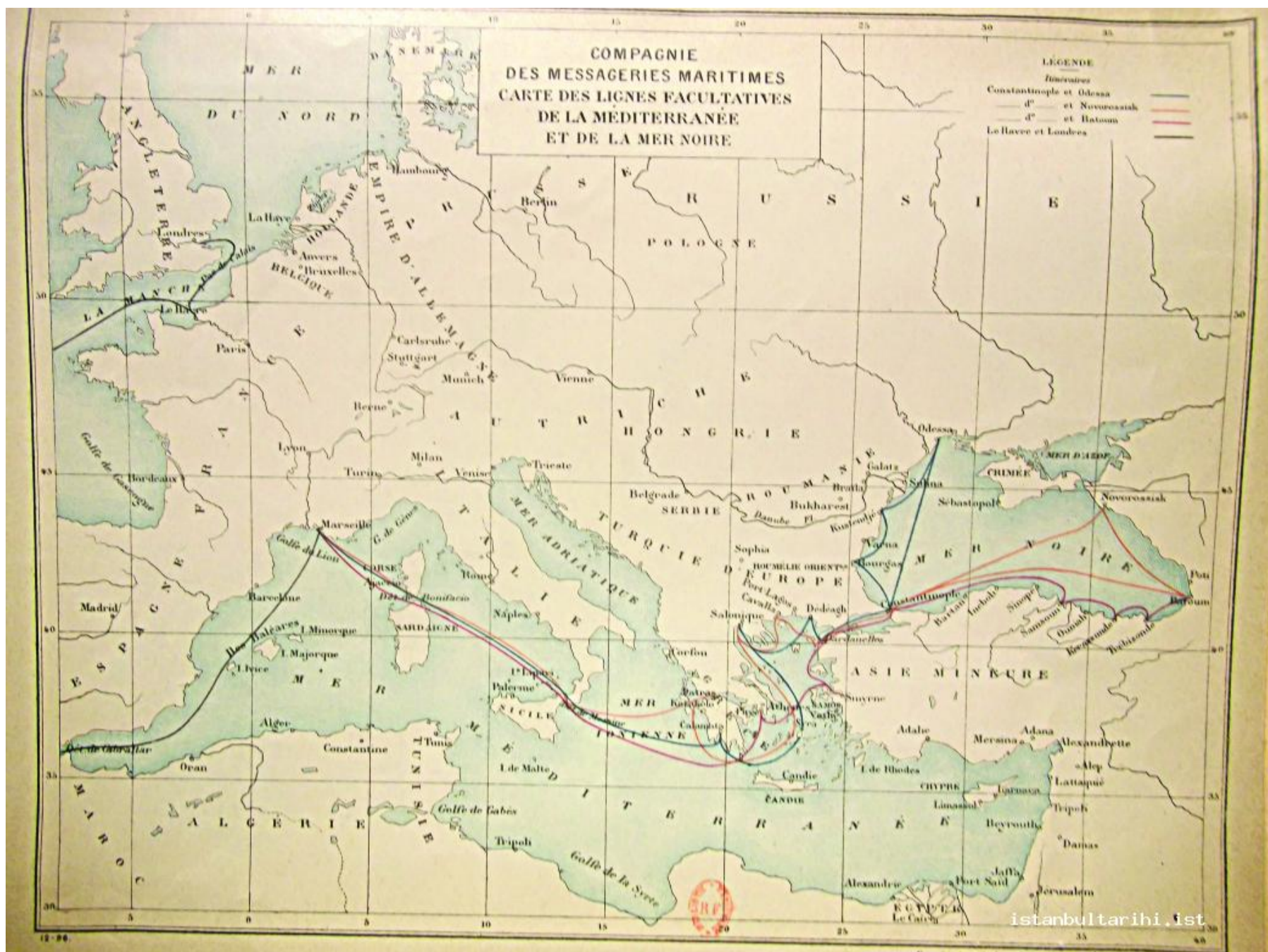
government⁷ to operate steamboats between Marseille and İzmir and Marseille and Istanbul, the Rostand Company carried out its first voyage with the *Hellespont* steamboat on July 11, 1846.⁸ However, negatively affected by competition with the Austrian Lloyd Company (Lloyd Autrichien), which was using the same route, from the last months of 1846 Rostand Company decreased their voyage frequency from twice a month to once a month.⁹



2- The free commercial lines of Messageries Maritimes Ferry Company without subsidies in 1895 in Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Archive de L'Association French Lines, 1997 002 5205)

Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat and the Rostand Company were established in order to transport mail and commodities from France to the Orient; however, this was far from being a satisfactory solution. *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat* was essentially a sub-unit of the French naval forces and had few commercial concerns, while the Rostand Company was a small family business that had only three steamboats in its fleet; thus, neither could satisfy the commercial needs for the route between Marseille and Istanbul.¹⁰ These two companies stood no chance against leading transportation companies like the English Peninsular & Oriental and the Austrian Lloyd Company. Hence, by 1850, *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat* had lost over 37.000.000 francs,¹¹ and the condition of the Rostand Company was no better.¹²

Realizing that it was not possible to compete with large transportation companies like the English Peninsular & Oriental or the Austrian Lloyd Company, but wanting to ensure commercial relations between Istanbul and the Levant, on February 28, 1851 the French government granted privileges for transporting mail to the Mediterranean to *La Compagnie Messageries des Nationales*, a land and maritime transportation company operating in France.¹³ The name of the company was *Compagnie des Services Maritimes des Messageries Nationales*;¹⁴ this was shortened to *Messageries Maritimes*.¹⁵ The company's Istanbul agency was managed by C. Beuf (1851-1856), Jules Girette¹⁶ (1856-1873), M. Grugoli (1873-1875), M. Bentraud¹⁷ (?-1883), Martin des Pallières (?-1891), Charles Dechaud (?-1907), M. Nicoulaud (1907-1909), Fernand Pican (1909-1910), Maurice Lecouflet (1910-1911) and Andrien Monge (1912-?).¹⁸



3- The ports that Messageries Maritimes Ferry Company stopped by in Mediterranean (Archive de L'Association French Lines, 1997 002 5205)

With the establishment of *Messageries Maritimes*, steamboats working on the Istanbul route belonging to *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat* and the Rostand Company joined the fleet of the new company. In 1851, thirteen of the sixteen existing steamboats (the *Eurotas*, *Leonidas*, *Lycurgue*, *Mentor*, *Scamandre*, *Tancrede*, *Sesostris*, *Osiris*, *Nil*, *Louqsor*, *Egyptus*, *Caire* and the *Telemaque*¹⁹) belonging to the *Le Service Maritime Postal de l'Etat* and the remaining three steamboats (*Hellespont*, *Bosphore* and *Oronte*) belonging to the Rostand Company were bought by *Messageries Maritimes*.²⁰ The number of steamboats operating with this company increased to forty in 1855 and sixty-seven in 1900.²¹ The administration of *Messageries Maritimes* designated Istanbul as the base of operations in the Levant. For this reason, Eastern Mediterranean routes were based in Istanbul.²² According to the agreement dated 1851 between the administration of *Messageries Maritimes* and the French government, the company's steamboats were to go from Marseille to Istanbul once every ten days, using a route from Malta, Siros, İzmir, Lesbos, Çanakkale and Gallipoli; once every twenty days they would go from Istanbul to Alexandria via İzmir, Rhodes, Mersin, İskenderun, Latakia, Tripoli, Beirut and Jaffa.²³

Table 1- Freight transported by *Messageries Maritimes* during the Crimean War on the Istanbul-Black Sea route

Year	Passenger		Commodities	
	Military	Civilian	Military (Francs)	Civilian (Francs)
1854	28.800	15.747	6.872.000	8.515.181
1855	53.128	35.985	9.768.000	16.975.436
1856	38.496	47.128	3.672.924	15.580.875

Source: AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1857*, pp. 33-36; AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1856*, p. 38.

In September 1851, the *Messageries Maritimes'* steamboat *Scamandre* completed its first voyage between Istanbul and Alexandria, while *Mentor* and *Erotas* carried out their first voyages between Marseille and Istanbul.²⁴ However, the onset of the Crimean War and France's involvement in this war changed the destiny of the company; it now entered into an array of agreements with the French Ministry of War to transport infantry, ammunition and wounded soldiers.²⁵ Additionally, while increasing services between Marseille and Istanbul, the Black Sea was added to the network of activity.²⁶ On March 31, 1855, with a supplementary agreement signed with the French Ministry of War, routes between Istanbul and Varna, Istanbul and the Crimean ports, Istanbul and Balaklava and Istanbul and Sevastopol were introduced; these voyages began to take place once a week on a regular basis.²⁷ The company's route between Istanbul and Alexandria was temporarily changed, now going from İzmir to Alexandria.²⁸ As a result of this change, the company's steamboats now went from Istanbul to Gallipoli, Çanakkale, Lesbos and İzmir, making 52 postal deliveries a year; they also followed the İzmir, Rhodes, Mersin, İskenderun, Latakia, Tripoli, Jaffa and Alexandria routes, making 26 postal deliveries a year. The French government subsidized the company for the Black Sea and Mediterranean routes.²⁹ *Messageries Maritimes* provided important logistical support, carrying civilian and military passengers, as well as commodities³⁰ during the Crimean War.³¹

France's alignment with the Ottomans in the Crimean War secured great advantages for French companies, particularly for the *Messageries Maritimes*. In 1856, in response to complaints about lack of piers for steamboats made by the Istanbul representative of the company, Jules Girette,³² the Sublime Porte granted permission to the company in March, 1857 to build a dock, pier, warehouse and wharf near Kireçkapı in Galata.³³ However, this transaction occurred during a period in which it was not legal to sell property to foreigners; Istanbul residents protested the granting of this privilege to the company. In response, the Sublime Porte repurchased the dock, pier, warehouse, and wharf at a cost of 900,000 francs; the original price that the *Messageries Maritimes* had paid was 325,000 francs. The usufruct was leased to the company for 30,000 francs a year for a period of twenty-five years.³⁴

In this way, the company was able to establish the necessary infrastructure in Istanbul Port and made the temporary routes that had been established during the war permanent. After the war, the company's Danube and Black Sea routes from Istanbul were expanded to include the Lower Danube and Trabzon. According to an agreement between the company and the French government, dated May 29, 1857, the company's steamboats were to travel once every ten days on a regular basis from Istanbul to Trabzon and from Istanbul to Kalas and Braila.³⁵ The duration of the voyage to Trabzon was specified as lasting ninety hours; for Kalas and Braila it would be 120 hours. The length of these journeys would eventually decrease to twenty-four hours, thanks to technological developments.³⁶ Upon Jules Girette's request for permission for a trial postal route on the Istanbul-Kalas-Braila route,³⁷ the company's steamboats started to operate between Istanbul and Braila, Kalas and Tulcea.³⁸ The voyages that departed from Istanbul would stop at Sinop, İnebolu, Samsun, Ünye, Fatsa, Ordu and Giresun, ending at Trabzon;³⁹ however, these journeys could only begin on July 1, 1857 due to the Crimean War.⁴⁰ The creation of different routes and the opening of agencies, particularly in Samsun and Trabzon, was welcomed by the Sublime Porte.⁴¹ On September 1, 1858, the company started regular voyages between Istanbul and Volo (Thessaly) once every fifteen days; from December 8, a voyage between Istanbul and Thessaloniki, solely for commercial purposes, was begun. The French government included these routes as subsidized postal routes.⁴² With the increasing importance of Istanbul for the company, Kireçkapı Pier became the main stop for the steamboats, due to the new routes.⁴³

Upon the temporary cessation of the Austrian Lloyd Company services between Istanbul and Alexandria in 1859, this gap was filled by the *Messageries Maritimes*. However, the company's administration was forced to terminate this service in early 1860, as the French government had not subsidized the route, and the earnings did not compensate for the expenses quickly enough.⁴⁴

With the establishment of the Third Republic in France, the agreements that were signed between the company and the government were revised. With an agreement drawn up on July 15, 1875, the subsidy for the Black Sea routes was removed and the company's routes on the Black Sea and the Danube were converted to free-trade routes.⁴⁵ In addition to this, the postal service between Marseille, Thessaloniki and Istanbul was converted to a free-trade route and its frequency was decreased from once a week to once every fifteen days. In a similar manner, the postal route between Istanbul and Thessaly, which operated once every fifteen days, was also converted into a free-trade route. On March 20, 1875, the French government approved the establishment of a direct postal route between Istanbul and Odessa to replace the earlier routes.⁴⁶ In this way, the subsidized postal routes in the Mediterranean were

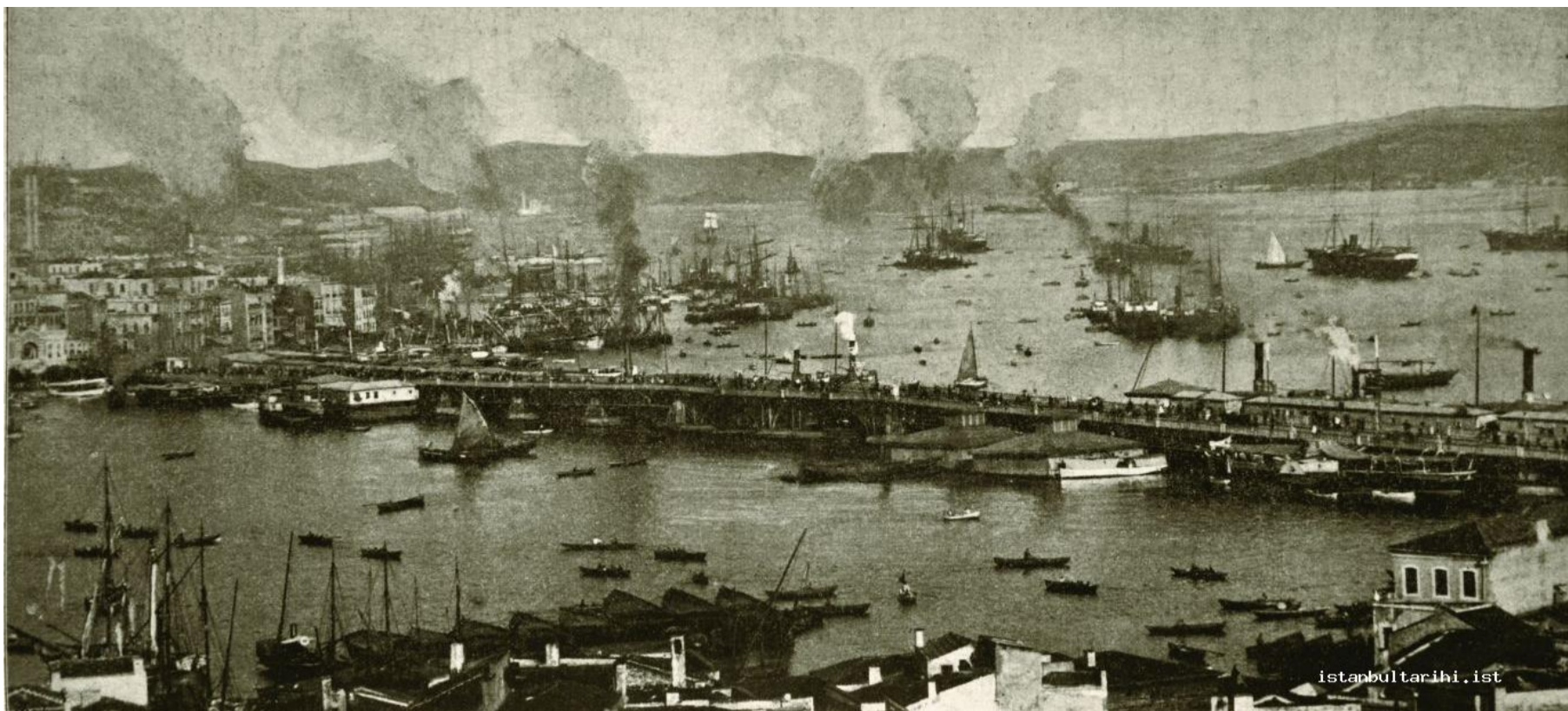
designated as a weekly, direct journey to Istanbul from Marseille, a return journey from Istanbul to Marseille every fifteen days via Piraeus, and a return trip every fifteen days via İzmir. Another postal route was to be established; this would go from Istanbul and Syrian ports to Alexandria and take place every fourteen days.⁴⁷

Tablo 2- Passenger and commodity freight revenue of Messageries Maritimes Istanbul Agency in 1882-1883

Stops	Passenger Revenue (francs)		Commodities Revenue (francs)		Total (francs)	
	1882	1883	1882	1883	1882	1883
Çanakkale	3.556	2.992	1.211	899	4.767	3.891
İzmir	14.672	20.218	4.962	5.969	19.634	26.187
Syria	49.247	64.235	31.825	28.068	81.072	92.303
Syra	14.985	10.468	1.924	4.256	16.909	14.724
Piraeus	33.411	35.173	3.248	4.367	36.559	39.540
Napoli	17.307	19.192	15	35	17.222	19.226
Marseille	154.491	138.132	265.187	355.184	419.678	493.316
Odessa	11.193	6.025	5.546	1.710	16.729	7.735
İnebolu	4.877	6.315	4.399	5.578	9.276	11.893
Samsun	14.644	16.651	18.004	27.096	32.648	43.747
Giresun	6.108	10.232	6.969	6.387	13.077	16.619
Trabzon	20.845	28.974	29.568	48.360	50.413	77.334
Ordu	666	1.913	505	984	1.171	2.897
Sinop	380	626	823	1.286	1.203	1.912
Constanta	8.749	7.842	10.002	6.566	18.751	14.408
Sünne	910	920	2.352	1.881	3.262	2.791
Tulcea	1.533	964	2.627	2.102	4.160	3.066
Kalas	8.923	8.556	35.775	20.662	44.698	29.218
Braila	2.523	1.389	18.156	10.495	20.679	11.884
Dedeağaç	1.576	1.789	1.592	1.878	3.168	3.667
Port Lagos	7.571	8.232	6.393	8.367	13.964	16.599
Kavala	8.803	5.716	3.791	4.314	12.594	10.030
Thessaloniki	20.181	30.874	10.078	10.496	30.259	41.370
Mont Athos	16.711	14.798	971	1.101	17.682	15.900
Indo-China	---	---	1.114	491	1.114	491

Source: AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic.*

By the 1880s, most of the company's routes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea had been converted to free-trade routes. The premium law, passed in France on January 29, 1881, had a strong influence on the preference of the company administrators for trade routes over subsidized postal routes. According to this law, 1.5 francs would be given for every 1,000 miles of travel to steamboats made in French shipyards and 0.75 francs to steamboats made in foreign shipyards.⁴⁸ In addition, company administrators adopted the policy of allowing representatives to have autonomy, their salaries being regulated according to the annual earnings of the region in which they were operating. The reasoning for this was based on the principle of *laissez faire*. With the new system, Istanbul and Alexandria now became main agencies.⁴⁹ Agencies in the Black Sea, Mediterranean and Danube were affiliated with the main agency in Istanbul; small agencies, like Jaffa and Port Said, were affiliated with the main agency in Alexandria.⁵⁰ Thus, decisions, such as changing trade routes in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Lower Danube, as well as the addition of new voyages, were left to the initiative of the Istanbul agency. As Istanbul was the main stopping point, the agency's passenger and commodity revenue consisted of trade between Istanbul and Marseille and routes that were connected to Istanbul. The Istanbul agency also had connections with various European cities and with Indo-China.⁵¹ The table below gives a general idea about the relationship of the Istanbul agency with nearby cities and distant regions.



4- The port of Istanbul (*Malumat*)

According to an agreement made between the company and the French government on June 30, 1886, the route between Marseille and Istanbul became a free-trade route.⁵² In fact, due to political concerns the French government did not want to eliminate the Istanbul postal route; however, as far as the company was concerned, the connection between Thessaloniki and the railroads⁵³ had eased the influx of Central and Eastern European products to the Mediterranean, and thus the commercial importance of Istanbul was on the decline. As a result, the company's administration converted the Istanbul route to a free-trade route;⁵⁴ at first the frequency of voyages between Thessaloniki and Istanbul was decreased, and eventually, in 1888, the route was cancelled altogether.⁵⁵ In 1886 voyages between Istanbul and Trabzon were extended to include Batumi and Poti; these voyages were made once every fifteen days.⁵⁶ The company started to make weekly voyages along trade routes they had established between Marseille, Istanbul and Odessa and, alternately, between Istanbul and Batumi in 1892.⁵⁷

The company established a direct trade route to Istanbul via London, Havre and Marseille on January 1, 1889.⁵⁸ In the following year, it removed the commercial voyages between Istanbul and the Lower Danube (Braila and Kalas).⁵⁹ By the 1890s, there were significant changes in the French government's Mediterranean and Black Sea policies. Removal of the subsidy from Istanbul postal routes and the limitation of the Eastern Mediterranean service caused the French public to protest.⁶⁰ Upon these protests, the French government revised the company's Mediterranean and Black Sea postal routes; based on an agreement that took effect on July 14, 1895,⁶¹ two postal routes to Istanbul were established. On the cyclical A route, a regular fourteen-day postal service was established, with the company steamboats coming to Istanbul via Marseille and then crossing from here to Piraeus and İzmir; the return voyage went from Istanbul to İzmir and Rhodes, or Samos, Beirut and Alexandria, finally docking in Marseille. On the cyclical B route, which started from Marseille, the steamboats went to İzmir and Istanbul via Alexandria, Beirut and Rhodes, or alternatively Samos; on the return journey, they went to Marseille via Istanbul, İzmir and then Piraeus. This route also operated once every two weeks. The company also connected Larnaca (Cyprus), Mersin, İskenderun, Latakia and Tripoli to Beirut in a way that coincided with the cyclical A and B routes. Moreover, in addition to the free routes between harbors in Marseille, Istanbul and the Black Sea, the company committed to a journey to the Thessaloniki Harbor once every two weeks, and in particular, promised to improve its services along the northern coast of the Black Sea.⁶² In the case of low commercial returns on the Marseille-Istanbul and Black Sea free-trade routes, such as the A and B routes, the company was offered subsidies.⁶³

Tablo 3- Passenger and commodity freight revenues of the Istanbul agency Messageries Maritimes between 1881 and 1883

Year	Passenger Revenue (Francs)	Commodities Revenue (Francs)	Total Revenue (Francs)
1881	491.392	436.804	928.196
1882	421.873	467.046	888.919
1883	442.214	558.143	1.000.357

Source: AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1881, 1882, 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic; Chapitre 6, Comptabilite.*

Post and Freight Transportation Offered by the *Messageries Maritimes* in Istanbul

By the end of the nineteenth century, although the steamboat traffic in the Istanbul Harbor was decreasing every day, the routes to Istanbul's hinterland started to decline. Most of the commodity freight that was shipped by the Istanbul *Messageries Maritimes* agency was from Anatolia and the Balkans. As a result of the Ottoman loss of Romania and periodic insurrections in the Balkans, some of the freight revenue associated with these regions was lost. In addition, Armenian revolts in Istanbul and Anatolia had a negative impact on Istanbul's economy, indirectly affecting the company's revenues. Due to all of these reasons, from the end of the 1880s to the early 1900s the company's passenger and commodity transportation revenues in Istanbul followed a fluctuating and ultimately declining course. By this time, the commercial activities of *Messageries Maritimes* in Istanbul consisted only of the transportation of passenger, commodities and post. Passenger and commodity revenues between 1881 and 1883 for the Istanbul agency can be seen in Table 3.

Table 4- *Messageries Maritimes'* passenger and commodity freight revenue in Istanbul, between 1901 and 1913

Year	Postal route round trip				Commercial route round trip				Total
	Passenger		Commodity		Passenger		Commodity		
	Number	Revenue (Francs)	Parcel	Revenue (Francs)	Number	Revenue (Francs)	Parcel	Revenue (Francs)	
1901	7.580	294.568	53.976	102.793	1.974	54.450	28.398	96.330	548.141
1902	7.034	292.040	56.493	90.020	2.809	89.467	48.008	136.954	608.481
1903	5.978	265.309	29.693	70.429	2.937	92.590	49.075	234.451	662.779
1904	4.892	205.870	19.569	65.659	2.194	69.123	57.922	308.968	649.620
1905	7.370	355.110	25.947	100.711	2.793	87.600	67.320	320.839	864.260
1906	7.286	322.044	37.767	115.649	3.455	114.682	89.976	290.527	842.902
1907	7.557	342.736	37.038	116.239	3.727	108.681	112.916	316.786	884.442
1908	8.568	356.788	30.259	98.350	3.393	91.458	83.508	240.070	786.666
1909	9.648	440.835	37.136	138.632	3.349	100.216	87.206	355.458	1.035.141
1910	13.213	600.016	42.559	193.949	4.385	118.610	62.520	317.695	1.230.270
1911	11.485	606.267	74.399	190.751	2.911	98.897	81.055	262.040	1.157.955
1912	9.375	411.973	21.399	115.105	4.309	146.470	108.573	262.040	935.588
1913	11.538	471.073	2.634	162.143	7.825	228.992	6.363	373.873	1.236.081

Source: AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1912, 1921 Chapitre 4, Trafic.*

The competition between the Istanbul agency and other steamboat transportation companies differed according to the route. The company competed with the Austrian Lloyd and the Italian companies on the Piraeus route, while on the Odessa route they faced the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company; their competitors were the Russian and Khedivate companies on the Syrian route.⁶⁴ Even though Austrian Lloyd and the Italian companies made regular weekly voyages to Thessaly and Piraeus, the *Messageries Maritimes* made voyages on this route once every fifteen days.⁶⁵ In order to increase its revenues, the Istanbul agency decided to organize additional voyages; it also signed an agreement in 1883 with companies that were working on the Thessaly route to fix prices for deck passengers.⁶⁶

This 1881 agreement, signed with Austrian Lloyd, French Paquet (*Compagnie de Navigation Paquet*), İdare-i Mahsusa (State Steamboat Management) and the Russian transportation companies with whom the Istanbul agency was competing on the Istanbul, Samsun, Trabzon route, greatly increased the company's revenues along this route.⁶⁷ The *Messageries Maritimes* greatest rival was the Russian transportation company on the Odessa route; this was a route that the company used to ship grain. As the competition along the route drastically decreased the freight revenue, in 1883 the amount of annual voyages was decreased from forty-nine to twenty-three.⁶⁸ The Istanbul agency was also in competition with the Russian company on the Syrian route. Because the *Messageries* carried passengers to Syria via İzmir instead of a more direct route, this journey was not attractive to passengers; they preferred a Russian company which made direct voyages once every two weeks.⁶⁹ Although the freight revenues of the *Messageries Maritimes* in Istanbul declined in the early 1900s, they started to rise again after 1908.

Table 5- 1909-1912 arasında İstanbul'a en fazla un taşıyan yabancı şirketler

Companies	1909 (Sacks)	1910 (Sacks)	1911 (Sacks)	1912 (Sacks)
Messageries Maritimes	250.833	130.090	87.818	37.750
Paquet	102.104	122.704	41.745	28.247
Fraissinet	47.664	27.890	5.128	500
Germans	42.139	5.461	3.975	---

Source: AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1912, Chapitre 4, Trafic.*

Most of the Istanbul agency's freight revenue came from passenger transport. While the passengers carried by the company's steamboats from other regions to Istanbul were mostly deck passengers, two-thirds of the passengers embarking from Istanbul were first and second class cabin passengers.⁷⁰ The *Messageries Maritimes* exported silk, silk chrysalis, second class silk, wool, wine, olive oil, tobacco, rags, hardwood, beeswax, salts, aniseed, toads, horn, mohair, leather, chickens, opium, eggs, hazelnuts, beans and other goods from Istanbul. The company also imported flour, cotton, dresses, hats, silk, oil, shoes, fabric scraps, perfume, hardware, alcoholic beverages, sugar, tea, coffee, building materials, nails, bolts, cutlery, porcelain and tiles.⁷¹ A large portion of these products were procured from Marmara and Mudanya. Starting in 1902, with the establishment of direct but irregular commercial voyages, firstly between Mudanya and Hamburg, and later between Le Havre and northern European harbor cities, the steamboats of the *Messageries Maritimes* started to make voyages at irregular intervals to Mudanya.⁷²

As the most populous city in the Ottoman State, Istanbul's commerce was based more on import. Istanbul's need for food was met by the Rumelian and Anatolian railroads; however, with regulations that were introduced in different periods in order to equalize internal and external custom tariffs, the food requirements started to be met more easily and cheaply via sea transportation.⁷³

Table 6- Post carried from Istanbul by the postal delivery companies between 1906 and 1912

Year	Messageries (Parcels)	Lloyd (Parcels)	Ottoman Company (Parcels)	German Company (Parcels)
1906	1.918	-	-	1.445
1907	1.863	505	309	1.216
1908	1.520	843	957	1.975
1909	1.074	708	1.022	1.174
1910	2.106	1.076	1.190	951
1911	1.723	628	781	1.557
1912	1.744	1.217	676	-

Source: AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1911, 1912, Chapitre 4, Trafic.*

The *Messageries Maritimes* was one of the leading companies in the transportation of food products like flour and livestock to Istanbul. The company's steamboats procured the grain they transported to Istanbul from Russian or Danube ports or sometimes from Mersin, İskenderun (grain from Konya) or the Marseille ports. For this reason, products that were declared as import freight by the agency were sometimes bought from abroad, or from different provinces.⁷⁴ The most important reason why Istanbul imported flour and not grain was the high cost of transporting and storing the grain, purchased at a reasonable price, which was sent to Istanbul from distant regions. For example, at the start of the 1900s, one kg of wheat could be transported to Istanbul from Constanta at eight *kuruş* and from the steamboat to the mill at twelve *kuruş*. Because of these prices, the importation of flour was more attractive.⁷⁵ The transport of processed flour by the Istanbul agency of the *Messageries Maritimes* increased significantly after

1908. The need for flour in Istanbul increased to such an extent that almost all of sea transportation companies started to transport flour after 1908.⁷⁶ The amount of flour carried by the companies which played an important role in satisfying Istanbul's need between 1909 and 1912 can be seen in Table 5.

Another commercial item that made up a significant share of the company's Istanbul imports was cattle. Their steamboats carried 3,979 cattle to Istanbul in 1909, 5,569 in 1910, 2,634 in 1911 and 4,535 in 1912.⁷⁷ Messageries Maritimes also took revenue from items other than passengers and commodities.⁷⁸ The amount of post shipped by the Istanbul agency was another important source of revenue for the company. Post carried by the four large steamboat transportation companies that were in competition for postal delivery in Istanbul between the years of 1906 and 1912 can be seen in Table 6.

The post revenues of the *Messageries Maritimes* were 309,000 francs in 1908, 368,000 francs in 1909, 477,000 francs in 1910, 601,650 francs in 1911, and 814,000 francs in 1912.⁷⁹ In addition, the agency earned income from the debarkation of passengers and commodities, and benefited from the exchange rate difference; however, they had numerous expenses that had to be taken account of, such as coal, traffic, hospitals, lighting, repairs, mooring tax, worker and bargeman salaries, and payments to middlemen for the supply of passengers and commodities.⁸⁰ Armenian merchants like the Kassapian Brothers, the Gülbenkyan Brothers, Essefian, Uncıyan, Karagözyan, Mazlumiyan, Arslanian, Telfelyan and Basmacıyan provided the company with passengers and commodities.⁸¹

The company's Istanbul-based routes were divided into two parts: postal and trade. These routes were designated sometimes according to the political interests of France, while at other times they were designated according to the economic interests of the *Messageries Maritimes*. Due to this variety of interests, the passenger and commodity revenues of the company on Istanbul-based routes showed huge fluctuation while it operated from the Istanbul harbor between 1852 and 1913. Because *Messageries Maritimes* was also France's economic representative in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, it campaigned for influence in Istanbul and its hinterland to ensure the commercial interests of France.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 W. Müller-Weiener, *Bizans'tan Osmanlı'ya İstanbul Limanı*, tr. Erol Özbek, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt yayınları, 2003, pp. 94-95.
- 2 *Moniteur Universel*, 24 Mars 1835, p. 599; Archive de L'Assaciation French Lines (AFL.), 1997 002 5015, *Les 75 Ans d'Existence des Messageries Maritimes*; H. Grout, *Les Services Maritimes Postaux en France*, Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière, 1908, pp. 20-22; P. Bois, *Le Grand Siècle des Messageries Maritimes*, Marseille: Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Marseille, 1992, vol. 7, p. 163.
- 3 Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme, İktisat Politikaları ve Büyüme*, İstanbul Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007, pp. 29-31.
- 4 M. Angelo Titmarsh, *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Cairo by Way of Lisbon, Athens, Constantinople and Jerusalem*, New York: Putnam, 1846, pp. 58-59.
- 5 Grout, *Les Services Maritimes*, pp. 21-23.
- 6 R. Caty and E. Richard, *Armateurs Marseillais au XIXe Siècle*, Marseille: Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Marseille, 1986, vol. 1, pp. 27-28.
- 7 BOA, DMA, Şura-yı Bahriye (Naval Council), 4/78A, February 21, 1847.
- 8 Paul Bois, *Histoire du Commerce et de L'Industrie de Marseille, XIX-XXe. Siècles, Armements Marseillais Compagnies de Navigation et Navires à Vapeur (1831-1988)*, Marseille: Chambre de commerce et de l'industrie de Marseille, 1988, vol. 2, p. 63; H. Giraud, *Les Origines et l'évolution de la navigation à vapeur a Marseille (1829-1900)*, Marseille: Société anonyme du sémaphore de Marseille, 1929, p. 37.
- 9 Bois, *Le Grand Siècle*, vol. 7, p. 13; Bois, *Histoire du Commerce*, vol. 2, p. 63.
- 10 Marie-Françoise Berneron-Couvenhes, *Les Messageries: l'Essor d'Une Grande Compagnie de Navigation Française, 1851-1894, Pups*, Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007, p. 58; Bois, *Histoire du Commerce*, vol. 2, p. 63; Giraud, *Les Origines et l'évolution*, p. 37.
- 11 M. Louis Girard, "Les Grandes Compagnies Maritimes sous le Second Empire", *Les Origines de la Navigation à Vapeur*, ed. Michel Mollat, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970, p. 107.
- 12 Bois, *Histoire du Commerce*, vol. 2, p. 63.
- 13 R. Musnier, *Les Messageries Nationales*, Paris 1947, pp. 98-100; Roger Carour, *Sur Les Routes de la Mer avec Les Messageries Maritimes*, ed. A. Bonne, Paris: A. Bonne, 1968, p. 22; Giraud, *Les Origines et l'évolution*, p. 46.

- 14 In official Ottoman records, the name of the company is usually recorded as *Mesajeri Maritim Kumpanyası* (Messageries Maritimes Company) or *Mesajeri İmperyal Kumpanyası* (Messageries Imperial Company).
- 15 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie des Services Messageries Maritimes des Nationales, Convention du 28 Février 1851*, p. 42; *Moniteur Universel*, 17 Juin 1851, Seances des 12, 14, 16, pp. VIII-IX.
- 16 *Guide des Services Maritimes des Messageries Imperiales Dans La Méditerranée*, Marseille: Impression à l'identique de l'édition d'origine, 1856, p. 6.
- 17 AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1881-1883, Chapitre 1, Personnel*.
- 18 AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1907, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, Chapitre 1, Personnel*.
- 19 Bois, *Le Grand siècle des messageries maritimes*, pp. 162-166.
- 20 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 28 Mai 1853*, p. 16.
- 21 In the 1850s, the tonnage of the company's steamboats were 1,200; in the 1860s the tonnage was 1,500 and 2,600 in the 1870s. In the 1880s the tonnage went up to 3,400 and 5,000 in the 1890s and at the beginning of the 1900s. The steamboats produced in the early years used 160 hp, in 1857 this increased to 800 hp; in the 1860s the horsepower was 1,600 and 2,900 hp in the 1870s, 4,000 hp in the 1880s, 7,000 hp in the 1890s, and 7,200 hp in the 1900s. (AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 28 Mai 1853*, pp. 4-5; AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1864* p. 7; AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 28 Mai 1897*, p. 10; AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 25 Mai 1908*, p. 11).
- 22 AFL. 1997 002 4857, *Compagnie des Services Messageries Maritimes des National, Convention du 28 Février 1851*, pp. 1-2.
- 23 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie des Services Messageries Maritimes des National, Convention du 28 Février 1851*, p. 5; *Moniteur Universel*, Seances des 12, 14, 16, p. VIII-IX.
- 24 Bois, *Le Grand siècle des messageries maritimes*, pp. 162-163.
- 25 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie Services Maritimes des Messageries Imperiales, Convention Pour l'Extension des Services Postaux, Le 25 Février 1854*, p. 3; AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Convention du 13 Juin 1854*.
- 26 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie Services Maritimes des Messageries Imperiales, Convention Pour l'Extension des Services Postaux, Le 25 Février 1854*, p. 3.
- 27 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Convention du 31 Mars 1855*, pp. 2-6.
- 28 AFL. 1997 002 4857, *Convention du 28 Février 1854*.
- 29 AFL. 1997 002 4857, *Convention du 28 Février 1854*.
- 30 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1857*, pp. 33-36; AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1856*, p. 38.
- 31 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1857*, pp. 33-36; AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1856*, p. 38.
- 32 BOA, HR.MKT, 136/17 (January 9, 1856).
- 33 BOA, HR.MKT, 136/17 (January 17, 1856); BOA, İ.DH, 376/24867 (April 17, 1857).
- 34 BOA, ŞD, 567/6 (May 25, 1885).
- 35 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie Services Maritimes des Messageries Imperiales Convention pour l'Organisation des Services Postaux dans la Mer Noir (Ligne du Danube et de Trebizonde) Modificative de la Convention du 28 Nov. 1854*, p. 1; Commandant Lanfant, *Historique de la Flotte des Messageries maritimes-1851-1975*, Cholet: Hérault, 1997, p. 20.
- 36 R. C. Cervati, *Guide horaire général international pour le voyageur en orient, Constantinople*, Paris: Cervati et Ce., 1909, pp. 245-255.
- 37 BOA, HR.TO, 319/9 (dated July 12, 1856, the letter written by Messageries representative Jules Girette to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Pasha).
- 38 AFL. 1997 002 5199 *Assemblée Générale du 28 Mai 1857*, p. 12.
- 39 AFL. 1997 002 5242, *Compagnie Services Maritimes des Messageries Imperiales Convention pour l'Organisation des Services Postaux dans la Mer Noir (Ligne du Danube et de Trebizonde) Modificative de la Convention du 28 Nov. 1854*, p. 4.
- 40 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale des Actionnaires, du 5 Novembre 1857*, pp. 7-9; *Annales du Commerce Exterieur Turquie*, Faits Commerciaux, N° 12, 1844-1859, Librairie Administrative de l'Aul Dupont, Paris 1860, pp. 12-13.
- 41 BOA. HR.MKT, 198/8 (July 18, 1857).

- 42 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1857*, p. 11; Adolphe Joanne-Emile Isambert, *Itinéraire de L'Orient*, Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1861, p. 353.
- 43 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1859*, p. 14; AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 28 Mai 1857*, p. 25.
- 44 AFL. 1997 002 5199, *Assemblée Générale du 3 Juin 1861*, pp. 6-7.
- 45 *Journal Officiel*, 8 Aout 1875, Seance du 23 Juillet 1875, p. 6521; AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 27 Mai 1876*, pp. 14-15.
- 46 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 27 Mai 1876*, pp. 14-15.
- 47 *Journal Officiel*, 8 Aout 1875, Seance du 23 Juillet 1875, p. 6521.
- 48 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1890*, p. 14; *Journal Officiel*, 30th of January 1881, pp. 529-530.
- 49 Carour, *Les Routes de la Mer avec Les Messageries Maritimes*, pp. 159-160.
- 50 Couvenhes, *Les Messageries: l'Essor d'Une Grande Compagnie de Navigation Française*, pp. 481-485.
- 51 AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 52 R. Thery, *Les Services Contractuels des Messageries Maritimes Devant la Crise Mondiale*, Paris 1936, p. 12; Bois, *Le Grand siècle des messageries maritimes*, p. 62.
- 53 Ali Akyıldız, *Anka'nın Sonbaharı* [Fall of the Phoenix] , Istanbul 2005, pp. 107-146; Vahdettin Engin, *Rumeli Demiryolları* Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1993, pp. 207-208; P. Fesch, *Abdulhamid'in Son Günlerinde İstanbul*, tr. Erol Üyepazarıcı, Istanbul: Pera Turizm ve Ticaret, 1999, pp. 513-515.
- 54 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale Ordinaire & Extraordinaire du 31 Mai 1887*, p. 22.
- 55 "Ministère du Commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies", *Bulletin Consulaire Français Recueil des Rapports Commerciaux, Par les Agents Diplomatique et Consulaires de France à L'étranger*, 1890, vol. 20, 2. Semestre 1890, p. 323.
- 56 *Journal Officiel*, 8 Juillet 1887, Assemblée Nationale, seance du 1 Juillet 1886, Annexe 996; *Bulletin des Lois de la République Française*, 1888, XII. Serie, Deuxieme Semestre de 1887, p. 158.
- 57 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale des Actionnaires du 31 Mai 1892*, p. 8; *Journal Officiel*, 8 Juillet 1887, Assemblée Nationale, seance du 1 Juillet 1886, Annexe 996.
- 58 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1890*, p. 22.
- 59 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale du 31 Mai 1891*, p. 23.
- 60 Carour, *Les Routes de la Mer avec Les Messageries Maritimes*, p. 146.
- 61 AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale des Actionnaires du 31 Mai 1895*, p. 13; AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale des Actionnaires du 31 Mai 1897*, p. 15; *Bulletin des Lois de la République Française*, 1894, II. Serie, Dexieme Semestre de 1895, p. 189; *Chambre de Commerce et D'Industrie*, 1re Année, N° 54, Paris 1894, pp. 3-4.
- 62 *Bulletin des Lois de la République Française* (1894), II. Serie, Dexieme Semestre de 1895, p. 190.
- 63 *Bulletin des Lois de la République Française*, (1894), II. Serie, Dexieme Semestre de 1895, p. 193; AFL. 1997 002 5200, *Assemblée Générale des Actionnaires du 28 Mai 1897*, pp. 9-12.
- 64 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 65 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1881, 1882, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 66 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 67 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 68 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 69 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, 1883, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 70 AFL. 1997-002-4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1912, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 71 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1911, Chapitre 4, Trafic*; AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, Chapitre 5, Contentieux*.

- 72 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1904, Chapitre 2, Secretariat*; Fesch, *Abdulhamid'in Son Günlerinde İstanbul*, pp. 543-544.
- 73 Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme* [Globalization from Ottomans to Republic], p. 37.
- 74 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1907, Chapitre 2, Secrétariat*; AFL. 1997 002 4443, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Mersina, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1887, Chapitre 2, Secrétariat*; AFL. 1997 002 4389, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence d'Alexadrette, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, 1991, 1910, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 75 *Liman Mecmuası*, 1927, no. 1, pp. 2-3.
- 76 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, Chapitre 2, Secretariat*.
- 77 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1012, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.
- 78 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1882, 1883, 1910, 1911, 1912, Chapitre 6, Comptabilite*.
- 79 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1911, 1912, Chapitre 6, Comptabilite*.
- 80 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1910, 1911, 1912, Chapitre 6, Comptabilite*.
- 81 AFL. 1997 002 4404, *Compagnie de Messageries Maritimes Agence de Constantinople, Rapport Général de Service Exercice 1911, Chapitre 4, Trafic*.

This article was translated from Turkish version of History of Istanbul with some editions to be published in a digitalized form in 2019.