



The Building of Istanbul Docks 1870-1910. Some New Entrepreneurial and Cartographic Data

Vilma HASTAOGLOU-MARTINIDIS, Professor
School of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
vilma@arch.auth.gr

During the second half of the nineteenth century an intense activity of harbour building took place in the Golden Horn. The incorporation of Eastern Mediterranean region to the Western economy, following the opening of the Suez Canal, resulted in a tremendous increase in trade, which in turn triggered various processes of modernisation. Harbour works were undertaken for all important towns of the region, such as Alexandria, Beirut, Smyrna, Salonica and Piraeus, as well as for smaller sea-trade centres such as Patras, Chios, Syra, Rhodes, Dedeagatch, Varna, Bourgas, Samsoun, Trebizond, Alexandretta, Jaffa etc. Minor improvements at busy spots in the Golden Horn started in 1840, imposed by the growth of steam navigation. However, it was only after the operation of the Oriental railway, in 1872, that the construction of modern docks was proposed by the railway company, and a plan was drawn by its engineer, Louis Barret from Marseille, for docks, near the rail terminal of Sirkedji; this project was finalised next year by Hilarion Pascal, the chief engineer of the Ponts et Chaussées and of the port of Marseille. However, it took a few more years for the Porte to issue the concession to the Empire's General Administrator of Lighthouses, the Frenchman Marius Michel Pasha, and the Société des quais, docks et entrepôts de Constantinople was constituted in 1890. The work started in 1892, but was repeatedly delayed. Eventually, only 1,128 m of docks was implemented by 1900, on the Galata and on the Sirkedji sides. Some years later, in Skutari, at Haydar Pasha, the railhead of the Anatolian railways, and the works for modern harbour installations were granted in 1900 to the Société du Port de Haidar Pacha, a German company subsidiary of the railways. The project, implemented by 1903, and between 1905 and 1909 large warehouses, silos and the new railway station were built on the large landfill in front of the rail lines.

The paper will attempt the cartography of harbour works carried out between 1870 and 1910:

- a. In the first place, it will stress on the traditional physical structure of the shores before the age of harbour building, and their lack of transit trade infrastructure.
- b. It will examine the preparation of the harbour building enterprise, the part played by the consuls of European powers, it will analyse the involvement of newly emerging urban agents, to obtain the management of the projects.
- c. It will highlight Istanbul harbour works within the broader network of innovations set up by foreign contractor firms and their engineers: French in their majority, formed in the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées, they worked in various cities: Hilarion Pascal in Istanbul, Salonica, Varna, Patras, Syra etc.; Adolphe Guérard in Istanbul, Salonica, Varna, Bourgas, Costanza, and Jaffa; Louis Barret in Istanbul, Salonica, Trieste and the Black sea; Dussaud brothers in Istanbul, Smyrna, Chios, Rhodes and Trieste, etc.
- d. Special emphasis will be accorded to fact that contracting firms acted at the time as the main agent for the transformation of the traditional port-cities, since harbour works constituted by far the major urban innovation undertaken at the time, fostering various transformations in the old physical and social structure of the city. As in other Eastern Mediterranean port-cities, the new docks matched by railway building and other infrastructure facilities reshaped the image of the city, and initiated a new urban management process that was to be raised to the level of public utility.
- e. The last topic will be include the analysis of the technical aspects of the enterprise (the harbour projects and buildings) and will stress on the urban and architectural innovations that this entailed for the city, restructuring radically three major spots: the Sirkedji, Galata and Haydar Pasha areas. Harbour building acted as a gateway to multiple changes for the traditional city. The sustenance and renewal of the urban space gradually became a driving force of economic development, and the new docks restructured the traditional urban patterns, and reordered urban functions introducing at the same a new architectural aesthetic and modern construction technology, both of which influenced the conception of the buildings within the city.

The paper draws from an extensive research, based mostly on unpublished material, located in various archives in Greece, Turkey, France and Britain.

KEY WORDS: Istanbul, harbour works history, urban innovations, urban reshaping.