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## When the railway reached Istanbul: the making of Sirkeci terminus, 1870–1888

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### ABSTRACT

Since its establishment as a capital city, the historical topography of Istanbul has witnessed significant changes, created not only by devastating earthquakes and fires, but also by the implementation of large-scale imperial projects. In the existing literature, the transformation of Istanbul's urban area in the nineteenth century has largely explored the topics of new urban regulations, institutions and their implication after the *Tanzimat* (reform) decree of 1839. This article aims to explore a lesser-known dimension of nineteenth-century developments of the city: the extension of the railway into the heart of Istanbul's historical peninsula, and the spatial change around the Sirkeci district due to the physical expansion of the terminus area. The construction of a larger terminus (inaugurated in 1890) is relatively well documented in architectural history, yet developments prior to this monumental construction have been less explored so far. Thus, this article also aims to investigate the project's development and implementation phases in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the city witnessed continuous urban reformation processes by focusing on the intertwined relations of different agents in the urban space.

### KEYWORDS

Railway terminus in Istanbul; urban transformation in Istanbul; railway stations; railway history; railway architecture; Ottoman Railways; Istanbul in the nineteenth century

### Introduction: arriving to Istanbul before the railways

The arrival at Constantinople made such an over-powering impression upon me as to almost efface what I had seen during the previous ten days' trip from Straits of Messina to the mouth of the Bosphorus. (7) The mist was now rapidly melting away, and in every direction there leaped into view mosques, towers, masses of green, tier above tier houses. The farther we advanced, the more the city unfolded before us her charming outlines, irregular, picturesque, sparkling, and tinged with every hue of the rainbow, while the Seraglio hill now emerged completely from the fog and stood out clear and distinct against the grey mass of cloud behind it. Four miles of city, that part of Stambul which overlooks the Sea of Marmara, lay stretched out before us, her black walls and many-coloured houses reflected in the limpid water as in a mirror. (21–2) (Edmondo de Amicis (1874) *Constantinople*)<sup>1</sup>

Edmondo de Amicis's description of his arrival to Istanbul on a foggy morning, marked by curiosity, imagination, and admiration, illustrates the mystified reaction of a European traveller approaching the city from the seaside. A European's visit to Istanbul was a unique experience, influenced by vague notions about the 'East' that could be at times clear, at times ambiguous or hazy. De Amicis's account was, for centuries, a testimony of both a struggle and reconciliation between the realms of imagination and reality. The silhouette of Istanbul – gateway to the East – remained

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<sup>1</sup>De Amicis, *Constantinople*, 7, 21–2.

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unchanged for centuries, with its cypresses and wooden houses scattered around the skirts of the hills, ancient city walls, and distinctive minarets. The arrival of the railway in the late nineteenth century was a striking intrusion. Three days after leaving Vienna, the late-nineteenth-century traveller, seated in the restaurant car, had the peculiar experience of entering the old city walls, passing through ancient neighbourhoods and round the edge of the outer gardens of the Topkapı Palace, before arriving at the terminus in the vibrant and colourful commercial centre of Istanbul. The railway station became the new entry point to the city, dramatically changing travellers' conceptions of time and space<sup>2</sup> (Figure 1).

In Istanbul's historical peninsula, where layers of settlements coexisted for centuries and crowded neighbourhoods were densely populated, it was challenging work to lay railway lines and construct a terminus alongside its technical and commercial facilities. Thus, by revealing the intricate story of this project, this article will offer a better understanding of fin-de-siècle urban developments in Istanbul's historical peninsula. So far, nineteenth-century developments in the urban area have been predominantly analysed as consequent to great fires that took place in the city, and the implementation of new plans after these events: Istanbul's metropolitan railway project has remained an unexplored subject in accounts of the region's urban transformation. Similarly, scholars have been inclined to study single buildings of the project, for example, by paying attention to the façade design of the Sirkeci Passenger Terminus Building, which exemplified Orientalist architectural notions that a foreign visitor would associate to the physical East.<sup>3</sup>

While this article focuses on the 1870–1890 period, when the railways extended into the intramuros city and a railway yard and shipping quay were used, it also aims to highlight a number of critical issues about this historical context in order to reveal how relations among different actors in the city were more complex than previously thought. Existing literature says very little about what happened during the years between 1870 and 1890, starting with the introduction of the metropolitan railways project and ending with the construction of the existing passenger station. This article seeks to shed light on this historical gap, so as to demonstrate the complexity of the urban transformation process in nineteenth-century Istanbul.

### **A royal railway tour in the west**

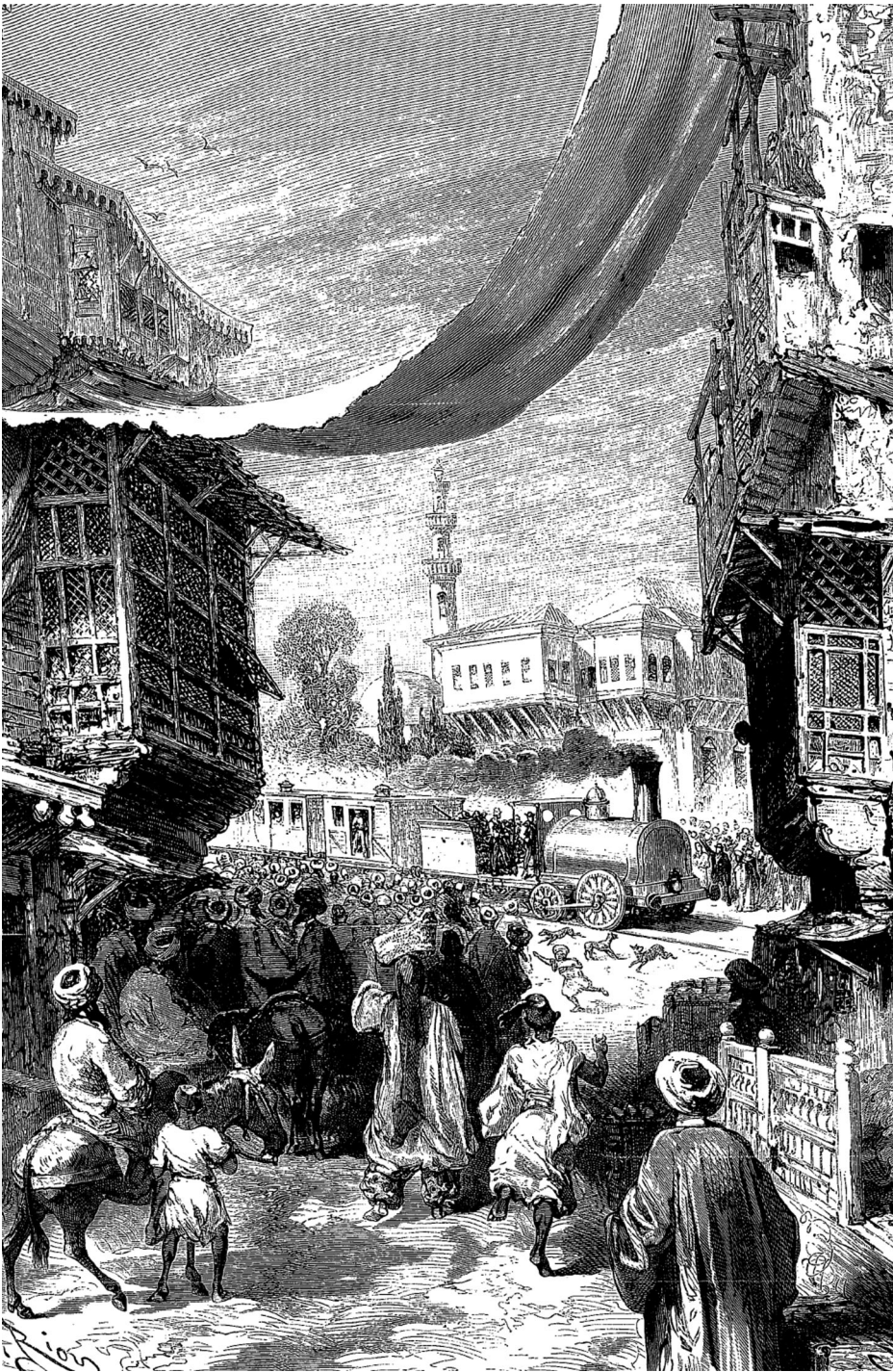
While Istanbul connected directly to the European railway network in the summer of 1888 (with a splendid ceremony), these railway projects had already been in circulation at Istanbul's state offices for more than half a century; some of these plans had been implemented and lines had been in use for about three decades. A group of investors, headed by the British Colonel Chesney, developed a railway scheme between İskenderun, near the Mediterranean Sea, and Birecik, near the Euphrates River, in 1830. The group sent a petition to the Sublime Porte to obtain a permission to build a railway to Birecik, as well as to run ferries on the Euphrates River towards the Persian Gulf. The main reason behind this initiative was to reduce the length of travel between Indian and British harbours, but it remained an unsuccessful attempt. In the 1850s and 1860s, British capitalists obtained the rights to operate railways in Anatolia, the Balkan Peninsula, and in Egypt; other European capitalists followed them in the successive decades.

After the Crimean War of 1853–1856, when the Ottoman Empire was considered a member of the European Concert, the strong cultural and social interaction with the Western World prompted

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<sup>2</sup>Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 33–44.

<sup>3</sup>Saner, *19. Yüzyıl İstanbul Mimarlığında Oryantalizm* and Batur, "Sirkeci Garı," 838–9.



**Figure 1.** An imaginary depiction of the arrival of the first train to Istanbul. Source: L'Univers Illustre, Paris, 3 February 1872.

Sultan Abdülaziz (1861–1876) to attend the Universal Paris Exposition in 1867. This was the first time that an Ottoman Sultan visited a European country; it is likely that Âli and Fuad Pashas, one of the enthusiastic reformist bureaucrats of the Tanzimat (Reform) era, influenced the Sultan's decision. The itinerary of the royal visit did not only include attendance to the Paris Exposition; they also visited Britain, Belgium, Prussia, and Austria, and they frequently used the railway system to travel between destinations. Finally, after a long cruise on the Danube River, the Sultan travelled on the first Ottoman Railway line in the Ottoman Balkans, between Ruse and Varna. This trip inspired and led the Sultan to order the establishment of a railway network in the Ottoman Balkans, although the idea of an extensive railway network, and its integration with the European lines, had already been put forward in previous years, yet had not been successful.

Given the efficient use of the railway system by European counterparts, by the mid-nineteenth century the Ottoman bureaucracy saw great potential in the creation of a rail network that would enable the utilization of territories in the Balkan Peninsula. The railway would not only connect cities, it would also increase mining and agricultural production in the region, by providing cheaper and faster transportation of raw materials from the mainland to the harbour cities. Further, the expansion of the rail system was a strategic military asset: troops and weapons would rapidly be transferred from one base to another, thus allowing for a much quicker suppression of wars and insurrections. The Ottoman government thus made this interest explicit in 1855, by issuing a public paper circulated among British capitalist circles. The proposed project envisioned a network starting in Istanbul, crossing regional centres, and connecting to the European system, with branches ending at the harbours of the Black and Aegean Seas. After extending this official invitation, the first warrant was granted to Edward Price in 1855, who was followed by a group of British investors headed by Thomas Page in 1860. Despite the fact that the Ottoman government was enthusiastic about the realization of the proposals, due to the low population density, limited capacity of agricultural production, and insurgency conditions in the region, ultimately the British did not consider this project to be a profitable one. Therefore, even the most ambitious investors were in favour of asking for payment guarantees from the state to compensate their basic wages and, until the end of the 1860s, the project remained merely as a draft in the government offices.<sup>4</sup>

In this respect, with its extensive geographical span and economic potential, the European network's expansion into the Balkan territories took a symbolic value as well. Indeed, the inauguration ceremony was also conducted to celebrate the integration of the state with the rest of Europe, a process that had lasted for approximately a century: the railway lines represented a tangible manifestation of the ideals of Ottoman reformers. Although a grand scale passenger station was still not in use at the time of the inauguration, for visitors it was surprising to experience the enthusiasm and curiosity of the citizens' welcome during the ceremony.

### **Changes in Istanbul's urban patterns in the late nineteenth century**

After its establishment as a new capital, following the imperial aspirations of Constantine I, Constantinople/Istanbul became the epicentre for the realization of several imperial projects for more than a millennium. Until the nineteenth century, although the city's public places changed considerably a number of times, spatial properties in residential neighbourhoods remained nearly intact for a long time. A major force that changed the appearance of the residential areas was the great fire of 1865; the neighbourhoods that perished were then rebuilt following the same style that had existed before

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<sup>4</sup>For a detailed account of the railway proposals see Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia, 1870–1912*.

the flames.<sup>5</sup> A number of regulations were then issued in the nineteenth century, which determined how to regenerate the urban fabric after fires, outlining the legal obligations for fire prevention in construction methods and building materials.<sup>6</sup> The existence of official regulations did not lead to revolutionary changes in the population's daily life, yet it can be said that we owe the emergence of new urban patterns in the nineteenth century to these legal documents. The governors of the city saw these fires as opportunities to re-organize the urban fabric according to the new regulations. In the mid-nineteenth century, there are two great fires referred to as the basis for large-scale urban planning projects: the Aksaray Fire of 1856, and the Hocaşa Fire of 1865. They brought new spatial regulations to the intra-muros city, such as the alignment and widening of street axes, opening up new streets, demolition of urban fabrics around monumental buildings, opening of new public places, and the application of a non-rigid orthogonal scheme for fire victim neighbourhoods.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it was not a coincidence that the extension of the railway lines into the city happened in regenerated areas.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the intra-muros city<sup>8</sup> partially lost its political and economic dominance to Galata, which was still the largest residential and commercial area of the greater city. The area stretching from Yalı Kiosk to Bahçekapı, where the railway passenger and freight terminus would be edified, was at the heart of the commercial centre of the city (including the Sirkeci and Eminönü neighbourhoods) and close to Topkapı Palace, and was connected with the old Sirkeci shipping area. The inner streets and districts acted as veins linking all the commercial activities that took place around the seafront. According to historical records, in this area there were also many religious buildings, properties of pious foundations, public offices, as well as private properties.

The Sirkeci district was densely populated by merchants of different trades; there were many storage buildings, inns, market places and trade offices scattered throughout the district. Before the construction of a harbour area for high tonnage ships, the seafront was crowded with porters and carts, and there were many small boats waiting for bigger freight ships. Starting from the old harbour, the skirts of the old acropolis hill gently led to a plain crowned by the Ayasofya (Hagia Sofia) Mosque and Sultan Ahmed Mosques. The slope facing north was allocated by the Sublime Porte (Ministries of the Empire) in the nineteenth century, during the reforms that restructured the existing institutions and established additional ones. Therefore, several mansions owned by new bureaucrats and governing elites since the mid-nineteenth century were found here.

### The Oriental Railways Company and design of the route

Shortly after the imperial visit to Europe, the final concession was granted to the Belgian Van der Elst Co. in 1867. The company inaugurated the earthworks between Yedikule and Küçükçekmece, but the Ottoman government cancelled the concession, given that the consortium could not meet the financial requirements of the convention on time.<sup>9</sup> In 1868, when the concession process tied itself up in knots, Ottoman Minister of Public Works Davud Pasha was sent to Europe to find reliable investors for the railway project<sup>10</sup> and, a few months later in April 1869, he was able to reach an

<sup>5</sup>Çelik, *Remaking of Istanbul*, 53.

<sup>6</sup>Yerasimos, "A Propos des Reformes Urbaines des Tanzimat," 17–35.

<sup>7</sup>Çelik, *Remaking of Istanbul*, 53–63.

<sup>8</sup>Although the name Istanbul corresponds to a wider geographical region including the historical peninsula, Galata, and Anatolian side and beyond, in the nineteenth century, Istanbul (or *Dersaadet* at the time) corresponded to the intra-muros city. The other districts were called *bilad-ı selase* (three towns) namely, Eyüp, Galata (Pera) and Üsküdar. Hereafter, otherwise stated, Istanbul will correspond to the intra-muros city of the nineteenth century.

<sup>9</sup>Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia*, 42.

<sup>10</sup>Engin, *Rumeli Demiryolları*, 50.

agreement with a German investor before returning to Istanbul. Davud Pasha and Baron Maurice De Hirsch (1831–1896), who was a banker in Brussels at that time, signed the draft text for the new concession. This agreement was the final episode of the search for an entrepreneur, after two decades of failed attempts. Baron Hirsch took over the rights to establish a railway network. According to the convention, the concessionaire would build a main line starting from Istanbul, through Edirne, Sofia, Sarajevo, and leading to the Austrian border. In addition, branches would be extended towards the Aegean and Black sea coasts: the first from Edirne to the Aegean Coasts near Ainos (Enez) or another suitable location, the second from Plovdiv to Burgas at the Black Sea coast, the third of from Pristina Salonica. The period of construction was fixed for 7–10 years, except in extreme cases. For the construction and operational expenses, an annual payment of 22,000 francs per kilometre was fixed: the Ottoman government would pay 14,000 francs, and the remaining 8000 francs would be compensated by the operation company. The duration of the concession was fixed to 99 years. The company was also granted the right of exploiting the mines and trees located at both sides of the railway line, to a certain distance limited to the construction period.<sup>11</sup>

In April 1869, another convention was ready to be signed. Baron Hirsch was negotiating with the Southern Austrian Railway Company (*Société des Chemins de fer du Sud de l'Autriche*), governed by Baron Alphonso de Rothschild, on the operation of the lines.<sup>12</sup> He was in favour of having a clear distinction between the construction of the network, a task he wanted to keep for himself, and its operation, for which he wanted to engage with the Southern Austrian Railway Company.<sup>13</sup> In the second half of 1869, an unexpected end awaited Baron Hirsch and the Ottoman government: although the general assembly of the Southern Railways of Austria approved the convention, it was never ratified because of the political differences within the administrative board of the Austrian company. Therefore, Baron Hirsch was practically forced to establish an operating company by himself. The Paris-based European Turkey Railway Operation Company (*Compagnie Générale pour l'Exploitation des Chemins de Fer de la Turquie d'Europe*) was founded in January 1870, using Austrian and French capital after the establishment of the European Turkey Railways Imperial Company (*Société Impériale des Chemins de fer de la Turquie d'Europe*) as the contractor of the project.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1869 is not only remarkable for the railway concession to connect Istanbul to European capitals, but also because of other important concessions in Istanbul's urban landscape. The first was the tramway concession granted to a group of investors represented by Constantin Crepanos,<sup>15</sup> and the other was the underground metropolitan railway concession granted to Henri Gavand<sup>16</sup> to connect the residential and commercial districts of Galata. It can be said that the historical topography of Istanbul was challenged as never before by the simultaneous arrival of trams, underground and inter-city railways, infrastructures that would shape the urban topography for decades.

The first section of the line constructed by Baron Hirsch's company opened for service at the beginning of 1871. It was only 15 kilometres long and extended from Yedikule (Seven Towers) near the ancient city walls to the southwest corner of the city, where the terminus station would be erected in the town of Küçük Çekmece.<sup>17</sup> While the construction works were taking place at different points of the route, downtown station access became an increasingly serious problem for citizens and visitors. Horse-drawn cars had previously been the only option to travel to the central

<sup>11</sup>Anon, *Actes de la Concession des Chemins de fer de la Turquie d'Europe*.

<sup>12</sup>Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia*, 42–3.

<sup>13</sup>Hertner, "The Balkan Railways," 6.

<sup>14</sup>Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia*, 43 and "The Roumelian Railway Scheme" in *Levant Herald*, 6 September 1869.

<sup>15</sup>Engin, *İstanbul'un Atlı ve Elektrikli Tamvayları*, 39–47.

<sup>16</sup>Gavand, *Chemin de fer Métropolitain Constantinople*, 13–14.

<sup>17</sup>*The Levant Herald*, 5 January 1871.

districts, which was a weary experience for the passengers since the physical condition of the streets was very poor. They were narrow and geometrically non-aligned, and the surfaces were rough and hard to travel on. Soon after, as an obligation of the tramline concession, a branch line for tramcars coming from the direction of Eminönü and Beyazıt was envisioned. Further, the route of the tramline would be paved, enlarged and aligned by the concessionaire company, and this would probably promote the other means of transportation between the station and commercial centre of the city. Yet, the citizens expected a permanent solution and, shortly after their complaints echoed in the corridors of the Sublime Porte; the idea of having a monumental terminus in a central location of the city, and extending the railway lines to that location, gained weight, as opposed to having the existing one at the peripheries.

After establishing his operational company, Baron Hirsch was looking forward to finding new opportunities to increase the profitability of the line. At the end of 1870, the company submitted two petitions to the Sublime Porte. The first one was to construct a new pier close to Yedikule, since the company was using the facilities of the Fevaid-i Osmaniye Ferry Company to disembark machinery and construction materials; this had led the possessor company to become uneasy about the shared utilization of the facilities. The second proposal involved extending the line from Yedikule into the heart of the city, and having a railway compound in a suitable location between Sarayburnu and Bahçekapı.<sup>18</sup> The first proposal put forward the development of an independent pier to serve all means of construction material transportation. They also expected that this pier would become a larger shipping and storage area, to be operated by the company in the future. The second proposal was a petition and its addendums. It was dated December 1870, and includes a summary report and a number of drawings prepared by the company. It was signed by Mr. Outrey, the representative of the company in Istanbul, and is addressed to the Ministry of public works.<sup>19</sup> The petition was submitted with a number of attachments including: the general itinerary of the station scale of 1/10,000 in accordance with article 4 of the specifications; a summary report explaining the itinerary of the railway; a detailed plan for the section between Yalıkapı and the new bridge; a special detailed plan indicating the required land in the garden of the royal palace.

The petition and its attachments were prepared after a demand by the special commission working for the itinerary, formed by the order of the Grand vizier. The petition lists public buildings to be taken over by the company around the Bahçekapı region, where the railway compound would be constructed,<sup>20</sup> and the summary report describes the itinerary. It started from Yedikule station; the route went along the sea inside of the city wall through Yeni Bostan, then the small and great Langa Gardens, near the edge of the Yenimahalle neighbourhood, through the Yenikapı neighbourhood and heading to Kumkapı and Çatladıkapı. Finally, it entered the gardens of old palace near Balıkhane Gate. It is strongly emphasized that throughout this route, the itinerary mostly crossed gardens, areas that were affected by fires, and poor neighbourhoods, and that it did not touch any significant building. Further, in order to reduce the expropriation costs and to smooth the geometry of the track, the itinerary cut the old city walls at several points, such as the Samatya gate, Yenikapı and Ahırkapı. Inside the gardens of the palace, the route would be delineated by the sea and the

<sup>18</sup>BOA, İ.DH 620/43155 (11 September 1870) and İ.MMS 41/1659 (14 December 1870).

<sup>19</sup>BOA, İ.MMS 41/1659 (14 December 1870). Among the documents mentioned, it is the summary report that still remains in the archive folder. Other three valuable drawings are missing.

<sup>20</sup>Listed in the petition are buildings belonging to the School of Medicine at that time, two buildings belonging to the ministry of war, and a marble kiosk owned by the Sultan. Daye Hatun Mosque was preserved and was used by Muslim workers and passengers for years to follow.

garden towpath. From Yalı Kiosk to Bahçe Kapı (gate) the sea was the natural boundary of the northern are of the station.

Based on the above description, the bottleneck of this proposal was the need to install tracks in the imperial gardens of Topkapı Palace, although this did not turn into a conflict since the Sultan was personally supporting the realization of the project. Further, since the royal family had moved to Dolmabahçe Palace more than a decade before, and Topkapı remained abandoned, it was probably not a difficult decision to make for the Sultan. In many sources, as a rumour, it is often stated that when the Sultan was asked for his order for the design of the route, he decisively replied, ‘The railway must come to Istanbul, even it has to pass through my own back’ (Figure 2).

### ***Criticism of the route and place of the terminus station***

Proposals about different routes for the extension of the line were communicated in the government offices and local press. Some advocated a route from the north of the peninsula, from Ayvansaray to Eminönü, and to have a very large railway compound with high capacity docks and separate merchandise and passenger stations. Others proposed another route parallel to the city walls near the



**Figure 2.** Proposal for the extension line along with the first tram routes and underground line on Stolpe’s Map of 1882. Legend: (a) proposed terminus (in Sirkeci), (b) proposed Kumkapı Station, (c) proposed Samatya Station, (d) proposed Yedikule (Narlıkapı) Station, (e) Karaköy station of the underground line, (f) Galata station of the underground line, (g) end of tramline at Azapkapı, (h) end of tramline at Topkapı. Source: Author’s collection.

Marmara Sea in the south, reaching the Sirkeci district bypassing the old Royal Palace, with a tunnel starting from the Langa gardens.<sup>21</sup>

In February 1871, through an imperial decree (*irade-i seniyye*), the Oriental Railways Company was granted the right to extend the line to Sirkeci Pier, which was one of the prominent commercial centres of the city.<sup>22</sup> During and after the correspondence between the parties of the concession, the recent news became one of the major topics circulated and was criticized by many, as can be observed in the daily newspapers of the time. An article published in *La Turquie* shortly before the issue of the imperial decree, briefly addressed the common criticisms and some of the public's opinion and reactions.<sup>23</sup> According to the author, there are many topics that would be either violated or sacrificed by the realization of the project. The first one is the violation of the concession of the Tram Company, which was meant to operate the omnibuses and trams between Yedikule and Bahçekapı, and was guaranteed by the state that no other public or private investors would run alternative transportation businesses on the proposed routes. For the author, this was a clear violation of the terms of the concession. According to him, Seraglio Point was one of the most wonderful sites on the world and it would be sacrificed after the realization of the project. Instead, he suggested building a public park around Seraglio Point and the Topkapı Palace gardens for locals and foreigners 'to admire the incomparable beauties of Golden Horn'. His second concern revolved around the physical consequences of the railways; he argued that due to the smoke, vapour and noise of the locomotives, the neighbourhoods between Bahçekapı and Ayastefanos (St. Stephanos) would be abandoned. Finally, the author draws from European examples to show that, in many major cities, stations were located outside the city walls and services inside the city were provided by cars or omnibuses.

This article reveals the conflict and tension between two concessionaire companies as well. Indeed, the third article of the convention signed with the tramline concessionaires in August 1869 states that any private or public entrepreneur is obliged to operate any regular transport business on the routes run by the Istanbul Tramway Company, and the extension of the railway line from Yedikule to Bahçekapı, according to the tram company, was a clear violation of their rights.<sup>24</sup>

The arguments of the Tramway Company issued on *La Turquie* echoed in another journal. A Levant Herald columnist virulently criticized the claims of the *La Turquie* author, and stated that the extension became a necessity demanded by the passengers and merchants. He further argued that operating Yedikule as the terminal station would have reduced the passenger and goods traffic, and would be beneficial only for the interest of tram companies. Further, the author questions the other arguments of the *La Turquie* columnist, responding in the following way:<sup>25</sup>

The monopoly secured to Mr Caraphanos, it need not to be said, is simply that of street passenger traffic, which is in no way analogous to, and cannot possibly compete with railway transport. But apart from this 'question of law', which the writer of the article assumes to be clearly in his favour, we are told that the 'intolerable smoke and noise' of a railway carried round the south-eastern sea-front of the city would inevitably drive away the whole population of the neighbourhood, while establishment of a station at Seraglio Point would destroy the 'antique cachet' of this 'most marvellous site in the world'; – yet in the very next sentence the writer withdraws all objection to a measure which would thus equally outrage law and aesthetics – on condition that the Railway Company will suppress Narli-Capou station, and not compete with the omnibuses for passenger traffic between the

<sup>21</sup>*La Turquie*, 3 February 1871.

<sup>22</sup>BOA, İMMS 41/1659 leaf 8, 27 Za 1287 (18 February 1871)

<sup>23</sup>*La Turquie*, February 3, 1871.

<sup>24</sup>BOA, ŞD. 496/16, 13 M 1288 (4 April 1871)

<sup>25</sup>Le Levant Herald, 4 February 1871.

Seven – Towers and the Horn. And then, close after this, we have the astounding statement that ‘in nearly all the great cities the railway stations are established outside the town, the interior service being performed by omnibuses or carriages’. Does the author of so audacious a fallacy know anything of London, into the very hearth of which four great railways penetrate, or of Paris, Brussels, or half a dozen other great continental cities, which have all their intramural stations? If he does not, he should leave this topic to other pens; if he does, then he is simply stating what he knows to be untrue. Clearly, not only has the Government the legal right to sanction the extension which has been accorded to Baron Hirsch, but in doing so it has acted with due regard to every major interest concerned. On such a point further argument would be a mere waste of words.

Although the counterarguments of the journalist reveal the contradiction between the companies and differences in public opinion and interest, they also highlight details about how the people appropriated their city, and their level of communication with other major cities about urban developments and major projects increased. This can be also read as an indication of concern for city aesthetics, citizens’ welfare, and the significance of public spaces, at least among intellectuals. The conflict between the two concessionaire companies would become a matter of dispute and be sent to court.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, each company went on carrying passengers and goods between Bahçekapı and Yedikule, and the integration of different means of transportation provided citizens with the opportunity of accessing the terminus station from different parts of the city.

Further objection came from the residents living in the neighbourhoods where the railway route was to be built. The proposed route included the construction of more than four kilometres of railway passing through many densely populated areas and terminating at Sirkeci, where many public and private properties were located. Further, the owners of these properties were generally prominent figures and had influence in state offices<sup>27</sup> (Figure 3).

After the route was designed, a special commission was set up to identify the expropriated buildings and plots that the route interfered with, and to decide the amount of expropriations needed.<sup>28</sup> However, the commission was working under strenuous conditions since they had to deal with objections about the expropriation value.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, notable property owners were consistently trying to put the expropriation process to a halt, or demanding higher values for their properties. This slowed down the construction process and delayed the project’s completion.<sup>30</sup> The commission also had to cope with financial difficulties: the commission exceeded the stipulated budget reserved for the expropriations. The state thus had to apply for loans in order to provide additional funds to conclude the expropriations.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, on the route there were many properties belonging to pious foundations. According to a registry record documenting the location, value and physical descriptions of these premises, there were more than 500 such properties registered, which have the total expropriation cost more than 19 million *kuruş* (piaster). *Le Levant Herald* reports the demolition of 1000 houses and their properties in total.<sup>32</sup> The demolitions were not only limited to properties of residents and religious foundations, but many ancient Byzantine buildings also had to be demolished, including sections of the sea walls, as well as some parts of the Boukoleon

<sup>26</sup>BOA, HR.TO. 453/71, ŞD 496/16, ŞD. 2878/42 and ŞD. 682/13.

<sup>27</sup>*Le Levant Herald*, 12 January 1872 and BOA, A.ŞMKT.MHM 448/74, 29 Z 1289 (27 February 1873)

<sup>28</sup>*Le Levant Herald*, 15 November 1871.

<sup>29</sup>A comment published in *Le Levant Herald* describes this straightforwardly:

“The continuation of the suburban section of the Roumelian railway from Seven Towers into Stamboul is, we understand, making slow progress, the government having undertaken to defray the cost of expropriation of the property through which the line is to pass, and being just at present but ill-prepared for the outlay.” *Le Levant Herald*, 9 March 1871.

<sup>30</sup>*Le Levant Herald*, 12 January 1872.

<sup>31</sup>BOA, İ.DH. 634/44088 (20 June 1871) and İ.MMS 45/1874 (30 December 1872)

<sup>32</sup>BOA, EV.D. 36661 and *Le Levant Herald*, 6 September 1871.



**Figure 3.** Bahçekapı- Sirkeci Pier Region in 1850s. Panoramic view of Istanbul by James Robertson and Felice Beato. Source: Author's collection.

Palace near the Marmara Sea (built in the fifth century) during the earthworks of the railways.<sup>33</sup> In following years, building intermediate stations at Kumkapı and Samatya was also put forward; new expropriations would be necessary to create this additional space.

As explained above, by following the southern coast of the peninsula the railway was expected to enter the Topkapı Palace site by passing through the walls surrounding the palace at Ahırkapı. This was the old acropolis hill of Byzantium and, throughout the Ottoman reign, it was the site of many residential, leisure and ceremonial units; further, the physical area of the royal palace complex had increased gradually through the initiative of many sultans. The outskirts of the hill near the Marmara Sea and Seraglio Point were also adorned with summer kiosks, vegetable gardens and rose bushes.<sup>34</sup> Among them, the most notable was the summer palace (*sahil sarayı*), which was erected at Seraglio point in the eighteenth century. Comprised by a number of smaller buildings, it was in use until 1862, until a great fire destroyed the majority of the buildings. After the fire, the area was left empty until the construction of the railway. Based on old descriptions, it appears that there were other notable buildings at this location, namely: İncili (Pearl) Kiosk, Mermer (Marble) Kiosk, Sepetçiler Kiosk and Yalı Kiosk. These were used by the Sultans and their servants for imperial ceremonies, meetings, and leisure activities since the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

Around these kiosks there were barns, storage buildings, a zoo, and a number of smaller gardens that seemed to be re-designed in the European fashion in the late eighteenth century. Among many engravings and drawings of single buildings, I refer to Barbié Du Bocage's Topkapı Palace and its surroundings plan (Figure 4) to demonstrate the physical setting of the outer gardens in relation to the main buildings of the royal palace.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul*, 225–8.

<sup>34</sup>Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 210.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 218–40.

<sup>36</sup>Du Bocage's drawing is based on Kauffer's famous map of Istanbul.

### ***Building the railway yard***

The site works on the route began in February 1871. The line was designed as single gauge, but it was projected to have a second line in the future, therefore all the expropriations were carried out accordingly. In Sirkeci, the preliminary issues included the defining of the boundaries of the railway compound, identifying its relation with modern harbour facilities, and designing the various administrative and technical buildings in the railway yard. In principle, the Ottoman administration expected to have the company's estate integrated to dockyard facilities along with a monumental passenger station and large capacity warehouses. The company had similar aims; however, the conflict revolved around the funding of the construction, since a recent convention signed between the parties (in 1872) made things more complicated. Baron Hirsch asked for some amendments in the concession and the new document dramatically changed the roles of the actors. First, having promoted both the construction and the future operation of the railway since 1869, Baron Hirsch's company was reduced to the role of an ordinary contractor, paid by the Ottoman government for the construction of the lines, but without any relation with the operating company. Therefore, the Ottoman government became the owner and main contractor of the lines. Secondly, the operating company would not be the tenant of the Imperial Company, as in 1869, but would become the tenant of the Ottoman government. Third, the construction company had to complete the sections under construction within a period of 20 months, but the Ottoman government would assume responsibility for the construction for the new lines (around 1300 kilometres).<sup>37</sup> The construction company thus did not have to build a network of around 2500 kilometres, as was established in 1869, but only partial and non-integrated lines with a total length of 1274 kilometres, and it was the government's responsibility to build complementary lines that would allow the connection to European networks.

The new convention also formulated the construction of the harbour areas in Dedeagatch (Alexandroupolis), Varna, Salonica and Istanbul, and the passenger stations for Istanbul and Edirne. According to this document, the Ottoman government was obliged to spend 5 million Francs for the harbour in Dedeagatch, 2.5 million Francs for the Varna harbour and another 2.5 million francs for the Salonica harbour along with stations, loading and unloading facilities. The concessionaire company would draft the projects for these harbours.<sup>38</sup> In addition, in order to increase the railway's revenues, the government would carry out the construction of modern harbour facilities close to the site of the railway concession in Istanbul. The company would prepare the projects of the harbour area, and the government would start the project within a year, after official inspection and approval. According to the convention, after the completion of the project, the company would administrate these docks and warehouses and may charge fees for their use.<sup>39</sup> It can be said that the new conditions of the 1872 convention turned the Ottoman government and the Operation Company to a building contractor and a project developer respectively. In order to fulfil their responsibility, the Operation Company commissioned the development of Istanbul and other harbours to Louis-Julien Barret (1828–1887), who was the engineer behind the construction of the Harbour of Marseille in 1872. His design included a 315-metre long quay, organized with rows of dock sheds, warehouses, freight terminal and passenger terminal.<sup>40</sup>

One of the articles of the new convention is about the station buildings, and states that the concessionaire company is obliged to demonstrate a great interest to the station buildings in Edirne and

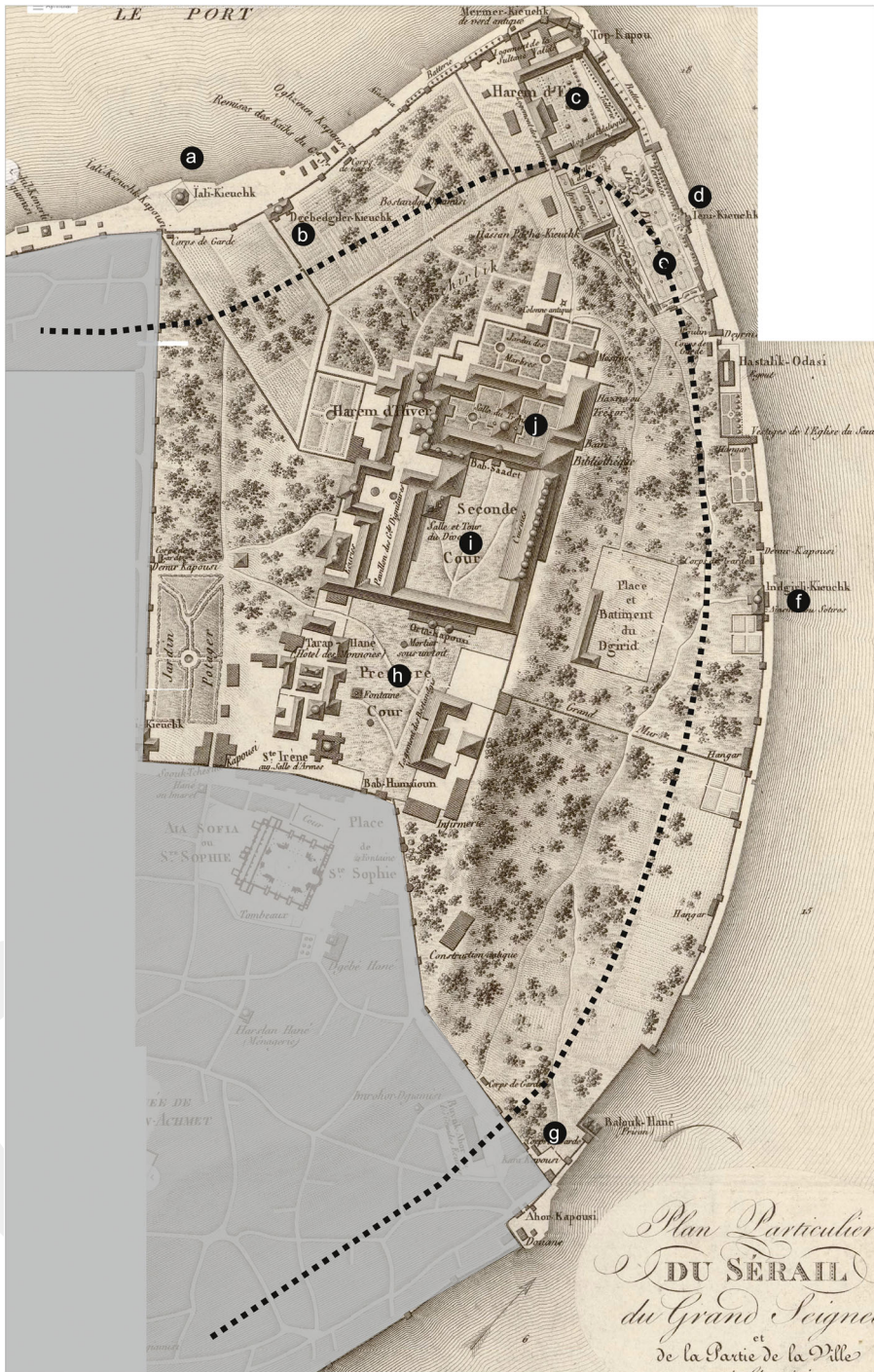
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<sup>37</sup>Anon, *Actes de la concession des Chemins de fer de la Turquie d'Europe*, 5–29.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, *Convention of Exploitation*, Art. 12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, Annex C, Art. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Hastaoglu-Martinidis, "The Building of Istanbul Docks," 88–9.



**Figure 4.** Topkapı Palace Exterior Gardens before the fire of 1862 as shown in Barbier du Bocage’s drawing (dotted line indicate the route of the line). Legend: (a) Yalı Kiosk, (b) Sepetçiler Kiosk, (c) Summer Palace, (d) Yeni (New) Kiosk, (e) Yeni (New) Gardens, (f) İncili (Pearl) Kiosk, (g) Ahır Kapısı (Royal Stable Gate), (h) First Court of Topkapı Palace, (i) Second Court of the Topkapı Palace, (j) Third Court of the Topkapı Palace. Source: Barbier du Bocage, *Plan de la ville de Constantinople*, 1819.

Istanbul; it further states that the company will spend 1,000,000 Francs for the terminus station in Istanbul, and a further 250,000 Francs for the one in Edirne. If the total amount of expenditures exceeds the indicated values, the Ottoman government may consider defraying the cost.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, while the Ottoman government was the patron of the construction works for the harbours' railway compound and related facilities, the concessionaire company had to spend 1 million francs on the station building specifically.

In December 1872, the company submitted the project for the railway yard designed by Barret with a petition by Mr. Outrey.<sup>42</sup> The government was not satisfied with the proposal, and Grand Vizier Esad Pasha ordered an alternative project for the same area. The new project was submitted in May 1873, and was intended to have larger buildings for passengers and other commercial facilities.<sup>43</sup> Although the government was in favour of the second project due to its scale, the government's primary concern was the construction and expropriation costs, and they had to content themselves with a compact passenger and freight terminus. However, in official correspondences, it was strongly emphasized that a grand scale, spacious and elegant passenger station should be built as the terminus of the Oriental Railways.<sup>44</sup> However, disputes on financial issues caused mistrust between the parties, and the first project was chosen instead.

Until the middle of 1872, the expropriations in the sites of the railway concession were partially completed, but there was no approved project for the passenger station. Before the inauguration of the line, the contractor company erected two multi-storey masonry buildings for basic administrative services, and added two timber buildings on the right and left sides of the former structures (Figure 5). One was designed for third class passengers, and the second was for first and second-class passengers; the facilities were used as temporary shelters until the construction of the permanent buildings came to an end. Some of the existing buildings in the expropriated area were kept and were briefly used for administrative and technical purposes. Meanwhile, the line from Sirkeci to Çatalca was inaugurated in July 1872 with a ceremony.

The earliest physical depiction of the railway terminus area is documented by a drawing dated 1875.<sup>45</sup> It depicts the route of the railway passing around the outer gardens of the palace parallel to the city walls, and terminating near Sirkeci pier. Furthermore, it also depicted the current state of the expropriations for the railway yard, showing that there were several building lots south of the old terminus building which were still inhabited, and the exterior walls of the palace complex were partially demolished around Bahçekapı. Station services were available in four buildings, and were labelled as part of the railway station (*demiryolu mevkifi*). Two public buildings were also found near the station: Daye Hatun Mosque (b) and Beşir Aga Madrasa (c)<sup>46</sup> (Figure 6).

Access to the station was located on a street facing the southern facades of the buildings, with a small square in front of the station for the horse cars and porters to wait for the passengers. The strip between the sea and railway tracks was located adjacent to industrial facilities and storage areas. The Yalı Kiosk Factory (k) and Royal Steamer Factory (*İdare-i Mahsusa Fabrikası*) (j) were in the railway compound. To the east, there were storage areas (l), a porters' shed (*hamalçı ocağı*) (m), a boatyard (n) and, at the tip of Seraglio Point, the Yalı Kiosk guard office (*karakolhane*) and provision storage were found. South of the railway track there were buildings and gardens attached to Gülhane

<sup>41</sup>Anon, *Actes de la concession des Chemins de fer de la Turquie d'Europe*, Annex C, Art.6.

<sup>42</sup>BOA, A.MKT.MHM 457/81, 7/Ca/1290 (3 July 1873).

<sup>43</sup>BOA; A.MKT.MHM 454-18, 15/Ra/1290 (15 May 1873).

<sup>44</sup>BOA, A.MKT.MHM 457/81, 7/Ca/1290 (3 July 1873).

<sup>45</sup>IBB TAK, # Hrt\_003143. The drawing is a part of a map set initially introduced by Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi in 1958. The date and author is not indicated; most probably it was drafted in R.1292-93 (1875) by military engineers.

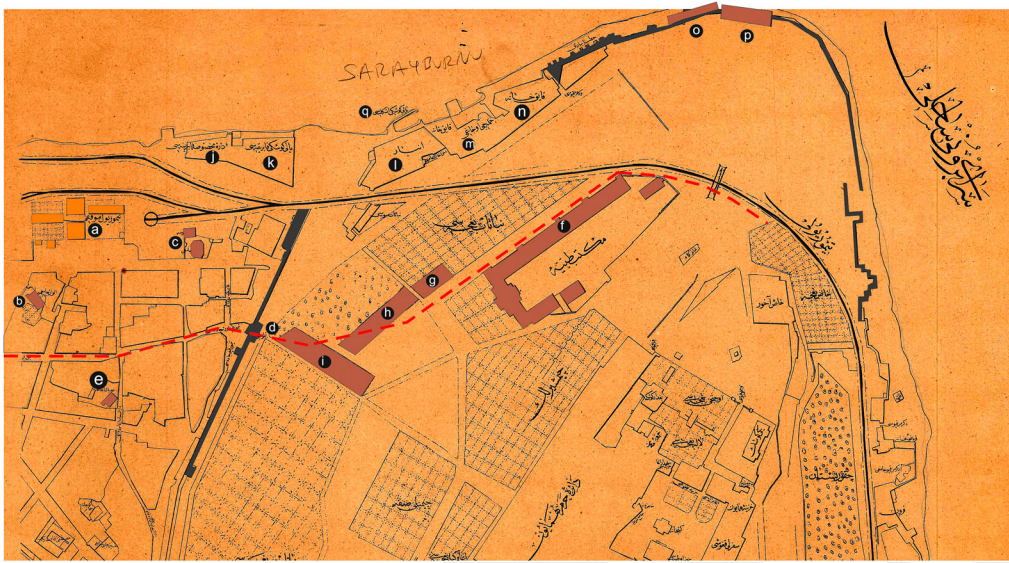
<sup>46</sup>In the original map, the mosque is named as Elvan Mosque by mistake.



**Figure 5.** Passenger waiting halls and office building from platform side (up) and from main entrance side (down). Source: Author's collection.

Medical School hospital (f), and among them the clinics (g) and patients' shelter (h, i) are noticeable. The empty area between the buildings and railway tracks are marked as vegetable gardens on the drawing.

In this period, in order to meet the requirement of the convention, the Yalı Kiosk Factory and Steamer Factory (*İdare-i Mahsusa Fabrikası*) were assigned to the company and many facilities of

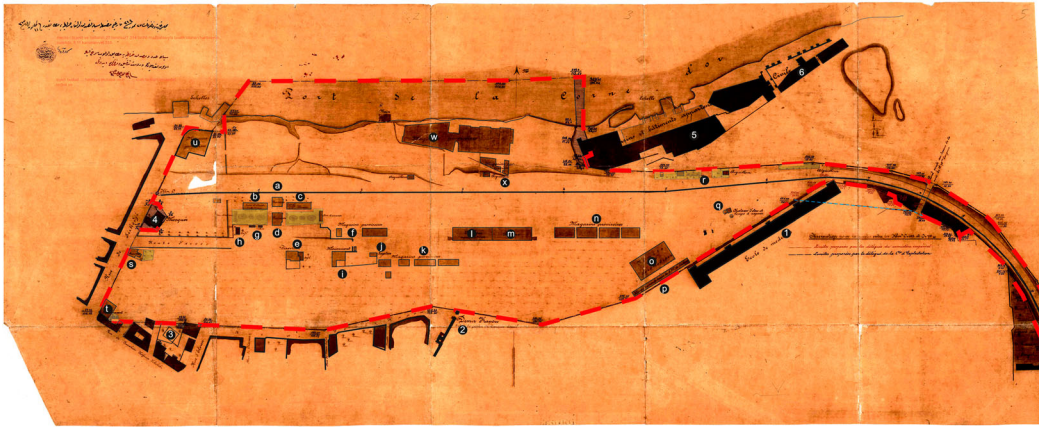


**Figure 6.** Plan of Seraglio Point and surrounding environments, no scale, c. 1875. Source: Anon, *İstanbul – Pafta No: 1, Sarayburnu*, 1875.

the Gülhane Medical School, including the gardens, some of the clinics, and the patients' shelter were also torn down to expand the site of the railway concession. After demolition, the facilities were transferred to the Imperial Medical School at Galatasaray. On the other hand, the civil buildings around the temporary station were torn down after expropriations, including the Elvan and Daye Hatun Mosques. After these operations, the large area at the south of the temporary station was cleared and made available for construction. Contrary to the continuous attempts of Ottoman bureaucrats to realize the second plan, and against the desires of the grand-viziers, the Oriental Railways Company implemented the first plan, and the 1870s witnessed the construction of a number of buildings in the railway compound.<sup>47</sup> These include the general directorate building, the traffic control building, and a number of storage spaces. They were located on the southern side of the station square, surrounded by the passenger station from the north and opening to Sirkeci Street from the west (Figure 7). According to the drawing, there was a gate opening to the square at the eastern side, and there were a number of commercial and technical buildings on the other side of the gate; these are provisional storage buildings (f, k) and a long single storey rectangular building was constructed. It was divided into almost two equal pieces. The left side was the merchandise shed (l) and the right side was the custom-house (m). Next to this long building there were four identical smaller sheds at the east and west used for provisional storage (n).

A comparison with the previous drawing reveals some physical changes. The lots at the south and east of the station were evacuated and new buildings were constructed. Further, the Daye Hatun Mosque and Beşir Aga madrasa, the clinics and patients' shelters around the Medical School, which had remained in the railway yard boundary, were demolished; the Yalı Kiosk and Royal Steamer Factories were taken over by the company and used as provisional storage buildings (w). Finally,

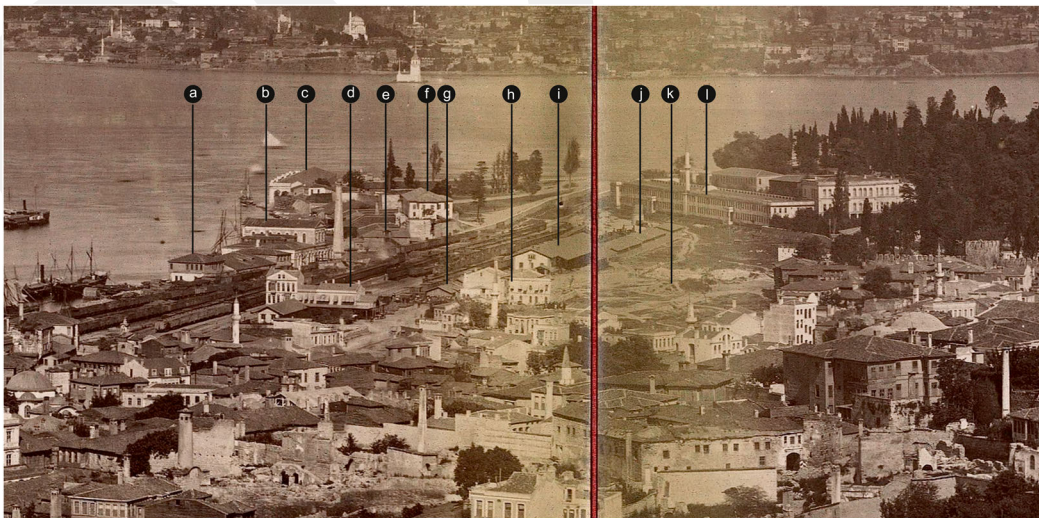
<sup>47</sup>IBB TAK # Hrt\_006557.



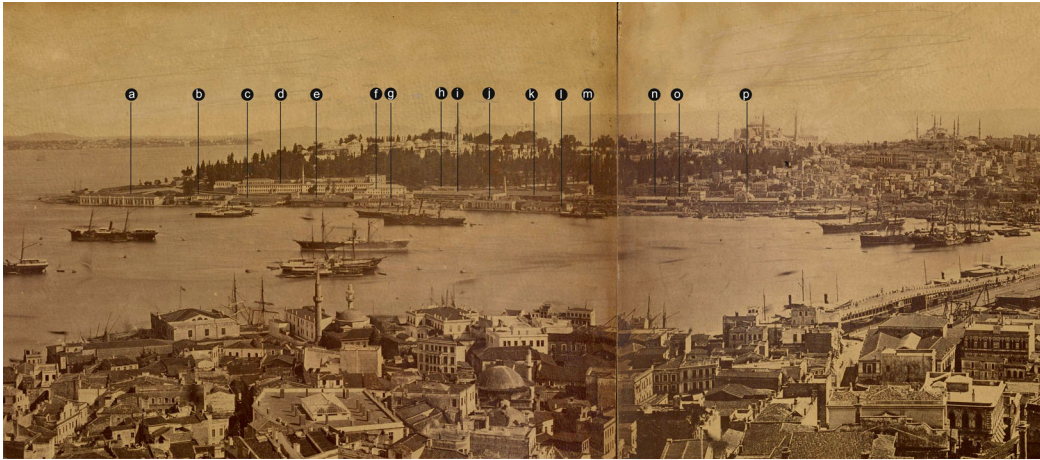
**Figure 7.** Plan of the railway area at Sirkeci. No scale. Source: Anon, *Eminönü – Sirkeci dekovil hattını ve civarını gösterir istikamet haritası*.

a long boundary wall was built parallel to the seaside façade of the Gülhane Imperial Medical school building, and a locomotive shed (o) and a special shed for the Sultan’s private wagons (p) were constructed where the old clinic building and patients’ shelters were once located.

G. Breggen’s Istanbul Panorama, dated 1875, depicts the physical conditions of the railway compounds of its time (Figure 8). The four buildings, containing passenger halls and offices, seemed to be unified and formed a four-armed structure, with each block at different heights, and shows different architectonic characteristics (d). Based on the information acquired from the previous drawings, many of the other buildings can be distinguished by referring to this image. They are the director’s office (h), provisional storages (g, j), merchandise shed and customhouse (i), and old factories at the waterfront (a, b). However, although the area for the locomotive shed and sultan’s wagons shed



**Figure 8.** Panorama of Istanbul from the Bayezid (Seraskeriyat) Tower capturing the railway compound, 1875 by G. Berggren. Source: Author’s collection.



**Figure 9.** Panorama of Istanbul from Galata Tower capturing the railway compound, 1870s by P. Sebbah. Source: Author's collection.

seems to be evacuated, there were no new buildings on the site. On the other hand, the lots south of the station buildings were expropriated and evacuated (k), yet that area would have remained empty until the construction of the new terminus, administration building, and passenger platforms.

The panorama of the historical peninsula and Golden Horn by P. Sebbah (Figure 9) depicts the seaside view of the same area. The terminus building (p) and the director's office in its posterior part, traffic control office (o), provisional storage (n), and old factory buildings at the seafront (j,l) are discernible. The image also includes a merchandise shed and customhouse (k), and the other provisional storage buildings (i), storages (g), boatyard (e), wood storage (c) and the Yalı Kiosk security office (*karakolhane*) (a), located next to each other at the seafront.

In earlier years, most of the technical services were provided by the factory and the workshops located at Yedikule station, which had been designed to be the preliminary terminus station area. Later, due to the increasing capacity of the railways, commercial, technical, and administrative buildings were constructed in Sirkeci during the 1880s and 1890s. Among them, a locomotive shed was built at the southeast of the railway concession site, close to the Imperial Medical School Building. Then, another shed for the cars was constructed south of the provisional storages. Concurrently, a number of provisional storages were also erected close to the existing ones due to the increasing demand, and in order to increase the capacity of merchandise storage (Figures 10, 11 and 12).

The new passenger station were the epitome of site works in the Sirkeci railway terminus. In June 1887, the company submitted a design proposal to the Sublime Porte. The new design reveals a symmetric, two-storey station building showing eclectic properties in terms of façade composition. The first, second and third class waiting halls are located at each flank. In the middle of the building there is a spacious entrance hall covered with a steel structure vault. In this proposal, the upper floor is reserved for the offices (Figure 13).

The Ministry of Commerce and Public Works approved the project, and the site works began after the issue of the Imperial Decree in February 1888.<sup>48</sup> During the excavations, the construction company reported that the loadbearing capacity of the soil was not sufficient to carry a two-storey

<sup>48</sup>Yavuz, "Mimar August Jasmund Hakkında Bilmediklerimiz," 181–205 and Yavuz, "Mimar August Carl Frederich Jasmund ve Mimari Faaliyetleri," 187–209.



**Figure 10.** Commercial buildings near the Istanbul Terminus Station viewed from Topkapı Palace. Legend: (a) The new passenger station under construction, (b) the old passenger station, (c) provisional storage, (e) merchandise shed and customs house, (f) old Yalı Kiosk Factory used as a storage then, (g) provisional storage. Source: Author's collection.

building due to proximity to the waterfront, and asked for changes in the project.<sup>49</sup> The project was altered by reducing the height of the parts between the corner towers and the main entrance hall to one floor. On the other hand, the façade organization of the main entrance hall and roof structure was also subject to changes, and the new façade reflects the typical eclectic character of its age.<sup>50</sup> Since most of the administrative offices were excluded from the project, an independent building for administrative facilities was constructed near the passenger station (Figure 14).

In less than two years, the construction of the new passenger station came to an end and was inaugurated on 3 November 1890 with a glorious ceremony. The administrative building next to the new passenger building opened for service a few years later.

### Conclusion: a destructive modernist project in Istanbul

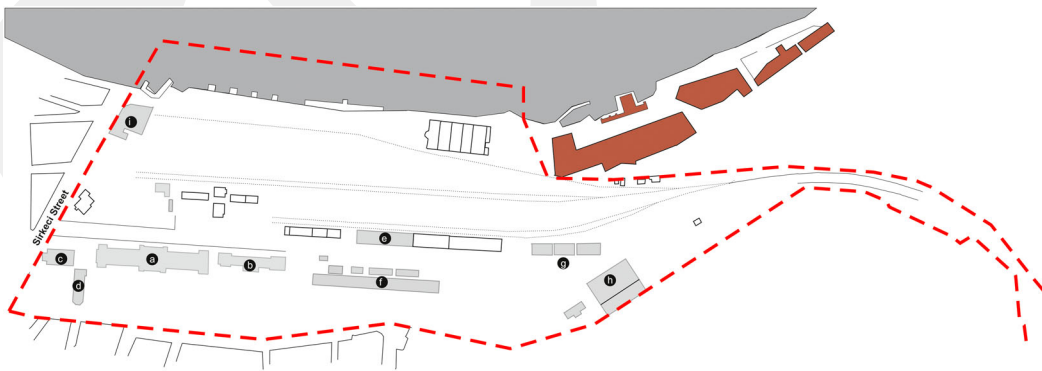
The arrival of railways to the centre of Istanbul went beyond the construction of a terminus station, and highlights many details about the mechanisms of physical change of the city in the nineteenth

<sup>49</sup>Araz, "Impact of Political Decisions," 80–1.

<sup>50</sup>Saner, *19. Yüzyıl İstanbul Mimarlığında Oryantalizm*, 83.



**Figure 11.** Commercial and technical buildings in the railway compound. Legend: (a) Locomotive shed, (b) provisional storage, (c) merchandise shed and customhouse. Source: Istanbul University Rare Materials Collection, 91545/008.



**Figure 12.** The buildings constructed in railway compound after the construction of the new storages. Legend: (a) new passenger station, (b) new administrative building, (c) post and telegram office, (d) service building, (e) extension of merchandise shed, (f) train car shed, (g) provisional storages, (h) locomotive shed, (i) provisional storage. Source: Based on *Eminönü – Sirkeci dekovil hattını ve civarını gösterir istikamet haritası*, redrawn by the author.



**Figure 13.** The earlier passenger station proposal elevation drawing submitted by the Oriental Railways. Source: TCDD Museum in Ankara Collection.



**Figure 14.** The inauguration of passenger station, 1890. Source: Author's collection.

century. It emphasizes the ambition to connect the empire to the European network by all means and, to do this, it normalized the demolition of many historical buildings and caused permanent changes in old neighbourhoods. Therefore, similarly to many such attempts, it can be conceptualized

as a destructive modernist intrusion into the historic tissue. However, at a time when ideas of conservation at urban scale had not yet emerged, it was typical to change the existing physical conditions of the city.

Like its counterparts, in the nineteenth century, Istanbul was a metropolitan centre of contesting ideas and conflicting interests. This is revealed when analysing newspaper columns of the time; some articles addressed a general sensitivity towards the physical qualities of the city, and also reveal the competition and conflict among different concessionaire companies, as it concurrently happened in other cities of the period. The confrontation presented here enables us to comprehend various facets of the change driven by the enthusiastic administrators, and the social reactions against the pace of change due to the clash of interests. On the other hand, it also implies that little is known about the period and the micro histories of the single buildings and built environments. So far, the history of the Sirkeci Terminus has been written focusing on the inauguration of the new passenger station and characteristics of railway architecture. However, it has been shown that the history of the railway passenger and freight terminus is much more complex than previously thought, and the relations to be deciphered are not limited to the stylistic implications about its eclectic and 'Orientalist' style. As shown in this article, the construction of the railway compound was a long and tortuous path; the construction of the greater passenger station was delayed for nearly two decades, for instance. Furthermore, due to the disputes and territorial changes in the Balkan region, the integration to the European network was delayed, and did not take place until the 1880s.

Being nearly parallel to its European counterparts, interpreting the modernization attempts of Istanbul's transportation infrastructure together with those of Europe would be crucial to understand the physical and social change of the city at the end of the nineteenth century. Ferry lines, railway, trams, and underground trains did not physically transform the city immediately, but they pushed other agents to trigger physical and social change. In addition to its indirect impact, railways reconceptualised the time and space considerations of ordinary citizens: after the railways started to operate, regularly printed railway timetables in daily newspapers indicate that Istanbulians began to use 'mechanized time', concurrently to using different clocks and calendars. The presence of railway time helped to disrupt the experience of time and space based on the solar cycle, replacing it with a uniform and mechanized one. Further, villages found along the route, such as Makriköy (later Bakırköy), Ayastefanos/St. Stephanos (later Yeşilköy), and Florya, became more accessible and crowded thanks to regular train services, and later turned into suburban towns linked to the metropolitan area.

The period stretching from 1870 to 1890 is too long to neglect in railway history and, as introduced here, it accommodates a great deal of construction work depending on countless negotiations between the parties involved. In the nineteenth century, when the pace of change in cities' physical realm increased dramatically, laying the tracks in Istanbul's old town, opening up space, and construction of a railway passenger and freight terminus in the heart of the city also gave rise to the inevitable question of appropriating modernism in the nineteenth century.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes on contributor

*Dr Ahmet Erdem Tozoğlu* received PhD degree from Middle East Technical University (METU) Architectural History Graduate Program in 2013. He is currently working at Abdullah Gül University Department

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