

Gülersoy, Çelik. *Tramvay İstanbul'da*. İstanbul: İstanbul Kitaplığı, Kitapçılık ve Tic., 1989, 244pp.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Tram in Istanbul**

#### *Tramvay İstanbul'da*

This book narrates the history of the tram in Istanbul, which is still in use as a means of transport. The book is enriched by very good quality material from the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, such as photographs of trams travelling between neighbourhoods, old tram tickets, student passes and timetables, as well as comic strips relating to the tram and the rising cost of living.

The book starts with the history of the tram in 1869 and provides copies of contracts in Ottoman and French for tram construction and administration. The Dersaadet Tram Company was founded by the bankers of Galata in order to construct and manage the tramlines; the book includes a translation of the company's 1869 contract from Ottoman into modern Turkish.

The author describes the transition from horse-powered to electric tram, also covering ticket prices and destinations. There are lengthy quotes from literary figures of the time, such as Ahmed Rasim and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, who wrote on the tram. The author refers to the

defining political and economic events of the era and analyses their effects on the management of the tram.

During the Republican period, especially after 1938, the Tram Company started to fail in fulfilling its responsibilities, such as repairs, maintenance and opening of new lines. In addition, the company was pushing ticket prices up in order to increase its profits. During the first years of the Second World War, state control policies were gaining force and the nationalisation of the Tram Company was on the agenda. Eventually, both the Tram Company and the Electric Works were bought by the state and the Tram Company was abolished in 1939, as a major construction programme started in Istanbul.

The author criticises the fact that the state started such a construction programme in Istanbul right at the start of the Second World War, just as the crisis that had enveloped Europe arrived at the gates of Turkey. He explains that the state hoped to derive some funds for its construction plans from the newly nationalised tram company. In the 1940s, the troubles brought by the war affected Istanbul's transport provision badly, creating difficulties for the passengers. The author has included lengthy quotes from newspapers on stories and complaint letters regarding the tram.

As a conclusion to the book, the author talks emotively about the abolishment of tram services in the 1960s, to which he was a witness. Today, the tram is no longer one of the main elements of Istanbul's transport network as its use is very limited, however it is still much-loved as a token of old Istanbul. This is a book by a non-professional historian; nonetheless it includes very comprehensive and original information on the history of the tram.

Feryal Tansuđ

Translated by Aysu Dincer