

## Origins of the Ottoman Maritime Police (1883-1908)

### Osmanlı Deniz Polisinin Kökenleri (1883-1908)

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#### Abstract

This study examines the evolution of the Ottoman Maritime Police from the mid-XIX<sup>th</sup> century, when it was founded, to the early years of the Second Constitutional Era, highlighting the development of coastal security responsibilities within the Ottoman police structure. Initially managed by Ottoman military officers in the classical period, coastal security shifted to civilian roles such as safety boatmen and porters, especially after the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Legal reforms in the Union and Progress Era marked a significant restructuring aimed at addressing smuggling, etc., establishing the Maritime Central Office under the supervision of the Istanbul Police.

The primary responsibilities of the Ottoman Maritime Police included ensuring coastal security, preventing smuggling, and administering entry permits for travelers. With the inclusion of motorized vessels in their inventory, they have become an integral part of maritime security. This research emphasizes the role of the Ottoman Maritime

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Police in adapting to the security needs that have emerged within the framework of Turkey's modern law enforcement forces and their legacy. Using the Presidency of the State Archives, the Ottoman Archives, the General Directorate of Security Archives, and various periodicals, this article traces the development of the Ottoman Maritime Police, focusing on its duties, operational challenges, and organizational changes.

**Keywords:** Ottoman, Maritime Police, Coastal Security, Safety Boatmen, Modernization.

### Öz

Bu çalışma, Osmanlı Deniz Polis Teşkilatı'nın XIX. yüzyıl ortalarındaki kuruluşundan II. Meşrutiyet'in ilk yıllarına kadar geçirdiği dönüşümü inceleyerek Osmanlı polis teşkilatı içindeki kıyı güvenliği sorumluluklarının gelişimini vurgulamaktadır. Klasik dönemde Osmanlı askeri subayları tarafından yönetilen kıyı güvenliği, özellikle Yeniçeri Ocağı'nın kaldırılmasının ardından kol sandalcıları ve hamallar gibi sivil görevlilere devredilmiştir. İttihat ve Terakki dönemindeki hukuki reformlar, kaçakçılıkla mücadele gibi konuları ele almayı amaçlayan önemli bir yeniden yapılanmayı beraberinde getirmiş ve İstanbul Polis Teşkilatı'nın denetimi altında Deniz Polis Merkezi kurulmuştur.

Osmanlı Deniz Polisi'nin temel görevleri kıyı güvenliğini sağlamak, kaçakçılığı önlemek ve yolcular için giriş izinlerini düzenlemektir. Motorlu deniz araçlarının envantere katılmasıyla birlikte, deniz güvenliğinin ayrılmaz bir parçası hâline gelmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, Osmanlı Deniz Polisi'nin Türkiye'nin modern kolluk kuvvetleri çerçevesinde ortaya çıkan güvenlik ihtiyaçlarına uyum sağlama sürecindeki rolünü ve mirasını vurgulamaktadır. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri, Osmanlı Arşivleri, Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivleri ve çeşitli süreli yayınlardan yararlanılarak hazırlanan bu makale, Osmanlı Deniz Polisi'nin gelişimini, görevlerini, operasyonel zorluklarını ve örgütsel değişimlerini ele almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı, Deniz Polisi, Kıyı Güvenliği, Kol Sandalcısı, Modernleşme.

## Introduction

Until the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, coastal security in the Ottoman capital was managed by officers under the command of the *bostanji-bashi* (bostancıbaşı), the *Kapudan Pasha* (Kaptan-ı Derya), and the *topgis-bashi* (topçubaşı), as part of the classical Ottoman police bureaucracy. Later, this responsibility was assumed by *deniz kol sandalcıları* (hereafter: safety boatmen) and *hamûleciler* (hereafter: porters), primarily from Rize. After the abolition of the Janissary Corps during the modernization process, maritime policing was transferred to the 12<sup>th</sup> division of the police organization, which was being restructured to resemble a military model. In 1909, a legal regulation assigned responsibility for coastal safety and security to the *Deniz Merkez Memurluğu* (Maritime Central Office) under the Istanbul Police General Directorate. By 1913, coastal policing had become one of the duties of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department, 5<sup>th</sup> Branch of the *Emniyet Umûm Müdürlüğü* (Security General Directorate).

The Ottoman Sea Police, whose development we briefly outlined above, was undoubtedly established within the broader security organization. In fact, the first police unit was officially formed as a branch under the *Tophane-i Amire Müşirliği* (Artillery Command) through a regulation dated March 20, 1845<sup>1</sup>. Why was the police organization attached to the Tophane-i Amire Müşirliği? The answer lies in the presence of foreigners visiting the capital via the Galata Port. Their *Mürur Tezkeresi* (hereafter, trip permission) and other necessary procedures needed to be managed efficiently. Additionally, many of the entertainment venues frequented by foreigners were located around Galata and Beyoğlu. In 1849, the fledgling Ottoman police force was placed under the authority of the *Kapudan Pasha* (Kaptan-ı Derya), along with the *Liman Riyaseti* (Port Presidency) to handle similar duties<sup>2</sup>. The first police organization in the Ottoman State was structured within the military system until 1907. However, the police only truly gained its distinct identity during the Second Constitutional Era.

1 “In this regulation, the term “police” was not explicitly defined, and the term “inspection officer” was preferred. However, they are functionally the same. The term “police” was first used in the “Sadaret Memorandum” issued during the reign of Sait Pasha, during the reign of Abdulhamid II, dated 3 December 1879”. Halim Alyot, *Türkiye’de Zabitat Tarihi Gelişim ve Bugünkü Durum*, Ankara 2008, pp. 182-183 and Derviş Okçabol, *Türk Zabitat Tarihi ve Teşkilat Tarihi*, Ankara 2016, pp. 73-96.

2 Hikmet Tongur, *Türkiye’de Genel Kolluk Teşkil ve Görevlerinin Gelişimi*, Ankara 2016, pp. 149-152.

The Ottoman police bureaucracy sought to control the entry of foreigners into the country strictly. It became mandatory for both locals and foreigners traveling within Ottoman territories to obtain either a passport or a trip permission (*Mürur Tezkere*)<sup>3</sup>. In fact, foreigners were meticulously inspected at train stations and ports, which were regarded as the main entry points into the country<sup>4</sup>. When the security challenges encountered during the transformation process of Ottoman maritime trade, especially in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, and the various measures taken against these challenges are carefully examined, it is clearly seen that for maritime trade to develop, the security of maritime trade must first be ensured. Therefore, it is determined that the protection of Ottoman coasts and ports is important within the scope of the increasing need for security, and that this protection is also necessary to compete against foreign ships. It is understood that measures against smuggling were tightened in the context of maritime trade, especially in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, and new steps were taken to protect state security. Moreover, this fight was also carried out against foreign ships<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, *deniz zabıtası* (maritime police) were established to carry out inspections in these places. The fact that among the primary duties of maritime police was to prevent the entry of smuggled goods into the country can be associated with this changing economic conjuncture in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman world<sup>6</sup>.

The content and areas of authority of these duties are also included in documents from earlier periods. Indeed, the “Dersaadet Limanı Umur-ı Zabtiyesi Hakkında Layiha” (A Pleading on the Public Safety Board of Dersaadet Port) dated 1842 provides important clues about the duties and areas of authority of the maritime police at sea. The letter focuses on the job descriptions of the units directly responsible for port security and order. Maritime police are directly responsible

3 “The most important feature of the 14x28 cm mürur tezkere (the trip permission) was that the description of the permit holder was clearly and understandably stated. The description of the description also prevented the issuance of a forged transit document. These details were especially important for foreigners entering and exiting the country”. Mübahat Kütükoğlu, “Mürur Tezkiresi”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul 2006, pp. 60-61.

4 “Until the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, there was a special administration called the Passport Directorate in the Port Presidency. It would issue passports of foreigners residing in Turkey every three months and send them to the Police Department. Later, the Passport Directorate was abolished, and its work was transferred to the Police Department in İstanbul and to local administrations in the provinces”. Tongur, *ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

5 İlhan Ekinci, “XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Deniz Ticaretinde Değişim ve Tepkiler”, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, Vol. XXI/No. 2, December 2006, pp. 35-76.

6 *Polis Mecmuası*, “Mütenevvia”, Year: 1/Issue: 2, Dersaadet, 1913, p. 30.

for “controlling people traveling for commercial or other reasons. Checking the passports and permits of passengers coming and going to the port” is one of the basic functions of the police. The purpose of this control is not only to determine identity but also to address specific security concerns, such as “tracking vagrants, unemployed people and even murders.” Those coming and going to Istanbul are “subject to serious examination by the police.” Considering the density of foreign merchant ships on the coasts in particular, the detection and control of people who “do not present or do not want to present a permit” is very important “in terms of preventing unauthorized entry and exit” to Istanbul. The “expulsion of such people by means of a rowboat” is also within the scope of the police’s duties. The fact that “ships are obliged to anchor in places to be determined by the police administration” indicates that the police also ensure compliance with port regulations. The fact that it is stated in the draft that “the Police Ministry should designate a special place for each type of ship and each type of goods to be landed” indicates that the police also have the authority to determine and possibly inspect the points of embarkation and disembarkation. Furthermore, “it is absolutely forbidden to disembark passengers in places other than the designated places” and to monitor this prohibition is among the duties of the port police. However, “controlling the Bosphorus and the coast” shows that the port police undertake the duty of “patrol and surveillance” not only within the port but also in a wider geographical area. The fact that the bill mentions that goods are left unattended due to the lack of customs officers and that the heavy post on Mondays creates congestion and a need for personnel at the piers, although it is not the direct duty of the police, also reveals that the port police should be concerned with the effects of such operational disruptions on security and order or should cooperate in these matters. In short, the information in the bill indicates that the role of the Dersaadet Port police at sea and on the coasts covers areas such as security, immigration control, in-port traffic, and the supervision of operational arrangements. In particular, the fact that their duties include the identity and entry and exit checks of seafarers or traveling passengers and the implementation of rules regarding the use of port facilities, anchoring, passenger and cargo disembarkation and embarkation points brings with them a broad definition of duty<sup>7</sup>.

7 Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Presidency of State Archives Ottoman Archives [Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi] (Hereafter: BOA), Bâb-ı Âsafî Divan-ı Hümayun Mukavele Kısım (A.DVN.MKL), 72/2, 1-7.

In addition to these duties performed by the Ottoman maritime police in the field, it is understood that they were also involved in administrative and planning processes regarding port security and order. In this context, the maritime police, as the police force responsible for ensuring security and order in ports, participated in the commission established in the port room for the negotiation of police affairs. The maritime police are the police force responsible for ensuring security and order in ports, and an official document dated 1859 regarding the participation in the commission established in the port room for the negotiation of police affairs indicates that the maritime police not only performed actual duties in the field, but also took part in decision-making, planning and coordination processes regarding issues related to port security and order. It is understood that among the duties of the maritime police was not only to execute orders or to be present in the field, but also to actively participate in official platforms or commissions where security strategies in the port, problems encountered, and measures to be taken were discussed. Participation in the commission also means that the maritime police bring their knowledge of the situation in the port, their field experience, and expertise to these negotiations. This suggests that their duties include gathering information, conducting analyses, and proposing solutions. In other words, it adds to the duties and responsibilities of the maritime police the dimension of taking an active role in administrative and planning processes through participation in official commissions established to discuss port security and police issues. In addition to the operational duties of the maritime police in the field, such as managing and ensuring the security of maritime traffic, and their humanitarian and logistical support roles, such as the settlement of immigrants, it also clarifies that they are part of the administrative mechanisms where strategies related to these duties are determined, problems are discussed, and solutions are sought. This shows that the maritime police were not only a law enforcement force in the Ottoman world, but also a critical stakeholder in port management<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to the responsibility of the police force at sea to ensure security and order in ports, it was also necessary to implement special measures for the management of heavy sea traffic and navigation safety. A document dated 1859 states that among the duties of the port police at sea, there was also the need to take the necessary measures to prevent collisions in a critical area such as the bridge area, where large steamships such as company ferries and smaller and maneuverable

8 BOA, Hariciye Nezareti Mektubı Kalemi Evrakı (HR.MKT), 308/69, 1-2.

boats such as rowboats and boats were densely populated. This was undoubtedly a vital issue for both the safety of life and property and the smooth running of port operations. This duty could clearly be included within the boundaries of the port police or, more broadly, maritime police duties as an active security activity aimed at monitoring sea traffic, ensuring compliance with the rules, and reducing the risk of accidents. This measure could be seen as part of the physical security of the port, since accidents could damage the port infrastructure or paralyze traffic. The fact that the Minister of Trade himself pointed this out shows that the issue was perceived as an important security problem by the Ottoman government<sup>9</sup>.

On the other hand, during these years, Ottoman statesmen tried to learn about the legal infrastructure and practices of other states regarding the maritime police institution, which was still in the drafting phase. In particular, the fact that a memorandum in the form of an information note regarding the maritime police in Sardinia was sent to the Kapudan Pasha of the period, Mehmet Ali Pasha, is a serious clue that the exemplary practices in the Western world were carefully examined. In this respect, it is also possible to conclude that research on the establishment of the maritime police in the Ottoman state began during the Tanzimat period, when institutional renewal movements were most intense<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, the most important feature of the Tanzimat process was that security practices were tried to be included in the central system as much as possible or that security practices that were tried to be provided by many institutions until that period were reconsidered with a central understanding with the declaration of Tanzimat<sup>11</sup>.

The organization of the Ottoman Sea police in Istanbul, still in its infancy, forms the main focus of our research. We have sought to answer questions such as: What were their primary duties? What qualitative and quantitative information exists about them? Given the uniqueness of the topic, it is clear that this subject requires a more in-depth examination. This study serves as a resource for those interested in researching the Ottoman Sea police. The chronological framework of our study spans from 1883 to the early years of the Republic of Turkey. The documents

9 BOA, Sadaret Mektubı Kalemi Mühimme Evrakı (MKT.MHM), 168/89, 1-2.

10 *Belgelerle Türk Polis Tarihi*, Vol. 2, Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Belge Yönetimi ve Koordinasyon Daire Başkanlığı, Ankara 2014, p. 86.

11 Ali Sönmez, Osmanlı Devleti'nde İç Güvenliğin Dönüşümü, Zaptiye Teşkilatından Jandarmaya, *Ankara Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu ICANAS 38*, Vol. 6, Ankara 2007, pp. 2855-2865.

used were sourced from the Presidency of the State Archives, the Ottoman Archives, and the General Directorate of Security (EGM) Archives. Additionally, periodicals like *Polis Mecmûası* (Police Magazine) and various secondary sources were consulted.

### 1. The Wheel is Turning

A new directive regarding the duties of inspection officers was issued on July 25, 1867. The instruction stated: ‘To examine the status of individuals arriving by ship and boat from abroad, report any notable situations to government officials, and hand over to the relevant authorities any passengers without passports or permits, those who were not properly registered, and suspects traveling without guarantors’<sup>12</sup>. As a result, the inspection duties of the ‘inspectors’ in coastal areas became permanent. Such duties were part of the transformation of the responsibility for ensuring coastal and port security in the Ottoman State over time. Initially carried out by various military and civilian units, these responsibilities were gradually transferred to the police organization during the modernization process. Ports, in particular, had become critical points in terms of security, due to factors such as the entry of foreign visitors and the need to combat smuggling. This situation necessitated the establishment of specialized units and the definition of their duties to ensure security, order, and overall protection in the ports. On April 11, 1799, a decision was made to establish a port police station consisting of six officers, initially for a two-year period, in order to prevent thefts occurring on ships docked at the port. Subsequently, this six-person police station was expanded into a larger port guard unit composed of six teams. Their responsibilities were not limited to preventing thefts; they were also tasked with combating smuggling activities and maintaining security, order, and general protection at the port. In 1869, this guard unit was officially named the “Port Police,” and the number of personnel within the unit was gradually increased over time<sup>13</sup>. A news item published in *Rûznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* in late June 1869 draws attention to the measures implemented by the sultan to ensure order at sea. The report highlights the sultan’s determination to continue enforcing disciplinary actions, including the application of maritime regulations and rules of discipline, to maintain security in the maritime domain. The news item specifies the key locations where these security measures were to be enacted, including both the European (Rumelian)

<sup>12</sup> Tongur, *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>13</sup> *Polis Mecmûası*, Year: 4, Issue: 95, Dersaadet, 1 November 1917, p. 198.



and Asian (Anatolian) shores of the Bosphorus, as well as the Fenerbahçe Coast, the Üsküdar Coast, and even Kağıthane on certain days. To enforce security in these areas, three small patrol boats were deployed, which were regularly tasked with patrolling the specified coasts and the Bosphorus. The news item also provides details about the personnel aboard these boats, noting that both officers and privates were assigned to these vessels. These personnel were designated to maintain order and security while at sea. The report also includes a noteworthy observation from the police records, which state that the “police department was in a state of pleasure” upon the execution of these maritime security measures. This suggests that the public response to the sultan’s initiative was largely positive. In essence, three patrol boats (referred to as *kolsandık*) were dispatched to certain regions, accompanied by officers and soldiers, to ensure the maintenance of public order on the coasts and in the Bosphorus. This official intervention was recorded in the minutes, reflecting the public’s approval. The primary objective of this measure was to extend the disciplinary practices that had been applied on land to the maritime sphere, ensuring their continuity and effectiveness at sea<sup>14</sup>.

During the period of restructuring law enforcement units, police divisions were established to ensure the safety and security of Istanbul<sup>15</sup>. It was decided that the 12<sup>th</sup> division would serve as the maritime police, as there was no other law enforcement unit dedicated to coastal protection. These divisions were tasked with ensuring the safety of the coasts in the capital, preventing smuggling, and controlling passengers. In 1883, the *Deniz Polis Merkezi* (Maritime Police Center) was established under the Galata Bridge<sup>16</sup>. For this reason, contrary to what is stated in certain theses and research studies, the establishment of the Ottoman naval organization should be dated to 1883—not 1889—as documented in the *Salname-i Devlet-i Âliye-i Osmaniye*, the official state yearbook of the Ottoman

14 *Rûznâme-i Cerîde-i Havâdis*, Issue: 1180, 27 June 1869, p. 1.

15 ‘In order to ensure the security and order of Istanbul, police divisions began to be established. Over time, the number of police divisions was increased to thirty-nine divisions. In the following period, in parallel with the needs, additional divisions were established to close the security and order gaps and efforts were made to provide the security and order needs of Istanbul. Police divisions consisted of eight teams, and teams consisted of five police officers. In the evaluation made in line with these principles, division records were defined as the second soldier of the third team of the first division or the seventh soldier of the first division. The number of people in a division corresponded to fifty-five people, including the commissioner’. Hüseyin Hüsnü Gören, *Birinci Yüzyılda 1839-1938 Türk Polis Teşkilatının Tekâmül, Teşkilat ve Kadro Hareketleri*, ed. Ebubekir Açıkgöz, Ankara 2018, pp. 18-22.

16 *Salname-i Devlet-i Âliye-i Osmaniye*, Dersaadet, H. 1301 (1883), p. 431.

State<sup>17</sup>. The unit chief was Headquarters Officer İhsan Bey, who had been working at the same location for an extended period<sup>18</sup>. When space on the Galata Bridge became too limited, the Maritime Police Center first relocated to a building near Galata and then continued its activities in the old passenger hall of Galata Port. An official document from early 1888, regarding the inadequacy of the place where the Maritime Police resided in Galata for their duties, points to the “constant difficulties caused by the multitude of local and foreign passengers” as one of the main reasons for the disruption of work and the inadequacy of the residence. Considering that Galata was one of the main port areas of Istanbul at the time, it is understood that the heavy passenger traffic and the problems related to the management of this traffic made the duties of the Maritime Police difficult. This situation suggests that the operational center or residence of the police prevented them from working effectively in this density. Due to this problem, a search for a suitable place was initiated, and efforts were made to find a more suitable settlement and working area for the Maritime Police. As a possible solution, the transfer to another location of the Messageries Maritimes Line, which was of French origin and was residing in Kireçkapısı, and the use of more than 30 rooms that would be vacated for this purpose was put on the agenda. All these events show that the maritime police officers are constantly performing tasks such as managing order, security and passenger traffic in a busy and complex port environment within their daily and intensive port duties such as managing general domestic and foreign passenger traffic, but they encounter infrastructural problems while performing these important and difficult tasks. It is possible to say that inadequate living and working conditions, especially in a critical region such as Galata, disrupt the work of the maritime police officers, that these difficulties are related to the intense passenger traffic and that the state is looking for a place to solve this problem and is even considering reorganizing the use of existing buildings<sup>19</sup>.

The problem mentioned could not be solved in the following years, because an official document dated 1891 indicates that there was a Police Station at the Şarap İskelesi and that it was requested to be allocated for the residence of the maritime police officers. Still, this request was not found appropriate either. The existence

17 Bülent Akkaya, “Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Polis Teşkilatında Rütbeler”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8/5, Spring 2013, p. 63

18 Derviş Okçabol, “Polis Konuları Arasında: Deniz Polisi”, *Polis Emeklileri Polis Dergisi*, 11/145, İstanbul 1964, pp. 27-28.

19 BOA, Maliye Nezareti Emlak-ı Emirriye Müdüriyeti (ML.EEM.), 97/26, 1-2.

of a Maritime Police Station at a certain point such as the Wine Pier reveals that the area of Duty of the Maritime Police is not only large sea or port areas, but also certain piers and coastal points. Furthermore, it is understood that tasks such as port traffic management, passenger controls such as the murur permit or immigrant acceptance or immigration registration procedures are physically carried out at these points. The location of the Wine Pier and reasons such as the heavy passenger or cargo traffic made it necessary for maritime police to be positioned here. The request of the maritime police officers to reside at the station indicated that there was a need for accommodation close to their places of duty, and the duties of the Maritime Police, such as shift work, rapid response to emergencies, and inflexible working hours depending on ship departure times, required the personnel to reside in the duty area or very close to it. However, the fact that the residence request was not found appropriate indicates that the institution or the relevant government units faced certain restrictions in terms of resource allocation or that the request was rejected due to other priorities. This situation reveals that the Maritime Police faced not only operational difficulties but also bureaucratic approval processes and resource limitations in terms of personnel support such as logistics and accommodation<sup>20</sup>.

## 2. Duties of the Maritime Police

As a result, from 1883 onwards, coastal safety became an official duty of the police. The jurisdiction of the maritime police was not limited to operations in the sea area and ports but could also include administrative duties such as monitoring domestic land travel or controlling migration movements in certain cases. An example of this kind can be found in an archive document from the period. An official document dated 1886 includes information on preventing visitors and tradesmen from going to the fair held in Silivri on September 8th every year without a trip permission and issuing a trip permission from the Zabtiye Nezareti Mürur Şubesi (Permisson Branch of Ministry of Police) as well as from the Maritime Police Commissioner's Office in Üsküdar and Galata. While the maritime police had operational maritime duties related to maritime security, such as traffic control in the port and accident prevention, they could also perform administrative and general security or control functions, such as issuing passage documents to control the public's participation in certain events, such as fairs. This indicates that the institution functioned as a checkpoint not only at sea but also at key crossing points in the Ottoman capital,

20 BOA, Dâhiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi Evrakı (DH.MKT), 1859/69, 1-2.

such as Üsküdar and Galata. The role of the maritime police in this control mechanism shows that they are integrated into the task of not only ensuring security and order at sea or on the coasts, but also implementing general public order and security policies within the city. The fact that the Trip permit is given not only by the Permisson Branch of Ministry of Police, but also by the Maritime Police Commissioners is very important in terms of showing that there is a sharing of duties and coordination between different police or security units, that authorities can be distributed to different institutions on issues such as control of migration movements, and that the maritime police are a part of this system<sup>21</sup>.

Similarly, an official assignment made by the maritime police in late 1890 “regarding the necessity of examining the passports of passengers traveling from İstanbul to Trabzon” reflects another example of the effort to eliminate abuses experienced during domestic travels through the maritime police. Regarding the subject, it is understood from the archive sources of the period that this abuse was “the physical description, that is, the description, written in approximately 30% of the trip permissions did not match the person”. This situation shows that the permissions or passports could be fake, used in someone else’s name, or issued with false information. The passport examination gives the Maritime Police a specific document control authority, such as verifying the identities of passengers through an official document, such as the passport, and checking the validity of this document. The Maritime Police is the implementing force of this control mechanism in ports. Verifying the identity of travelers and their travel permits is an extension of the state’s monitoring and regulatory authority over its citizens. It points out that the Maritime Police are positioned not only to ensure general public order, but also as a precautionary mechanism against more specific security threats such as fraud, identity theft, or illegal crossings that can be carried out through the licence. While the trip permissions with false descriptions reveal the security gap and the importance of this control, on the other hand, this situation also provides a detailed example of the general police or security duties of the Maritime Police. In particular, the fact that the Maritime Police have to deal with a frequently encountered problem such as “those who submit trip permissions with false descriptions, and this is seen in almost one in three people” shows that they are an important security force in the implementation of the state’s control mechanisms and in the detection and elimination of problems in these mechanisms<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> BOA, DH.MKT, 1364/103, 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> BOA, DH.MKT, 1787/46, 1-3.

The jurisdiction of the Maritime Police is not limited to sea area and port operations, but in certain cases it can also cover administrative duties such as immigration control. An official document from the period mentions the awarding of Manolaki Kalici Efendi, the Second Commissioner of the Maritime Police. The reason for awarding Manolaki Kalici Efendi was the services he provided during the settlement of the immigrants. Considering that the immigrants generally came to the country by sea, it is not surprising that the Maritime Police undertook duties such as initial reception, registration, or guidance at ports or coastal areas. It is understood that Manolaki Kalici Efendi, who was useful in the transportation of the immigrants to the designated locations, “provided the transportation of these immigrants to the designated locations at a low cost and also duly fulfilled a broader service that included the settlement of the immigrants in their new locations and the provision of this settlement.” In short, it provides concrete evidence that the Maritime Police is not only a maritime law enforcement force, but also undertakes tasks such as logistical support, reception, coordination of transportation or assistance with settlement in other important public tasks such as large-scale social and immigrant settlements, and of course, how diverse their range of duties is<sup>23</sup>. Apart from this specific example, it is understood that the maritime police were also responsible for the registration of immigrants. The fact that the maritime police “immediately registered immigrants arriving at border accidents and the maritime Police Office and reported them to the Migrants’ Commission” adds another important dimension to their job description. Duties such as “conducting the military procedures of immigrants without any dispute and determining the migration dates” show that the maritime police played an active role in the implementation of basic policies, such as ensuring control and follow-up on immigrants and regulating the military obligations of immigrants in the Ottoman world. The instruction that the prepared records should be “reported to the Migrants’ Commission” reveals that the Maritime Police’s work on this issue was carried out in coordination through the Migrants’ Commission and that “the Maritime Police was obliged to provide a regular flow of information to this commission”. This situation shows that the Maritime Police was not only a field unit, but also part of a hierarchical structure reporting to the relevant higher authorities. This mission demonstrates the critical role given to the Maritime Police in the implementation of the state’s immigration policies and indicates that

23 BOA, DH.MKT, 1465/54, 1.

the organization not only provides operational and logistical support, but also has an important information gathering and reporting function<sup>24</sup>.

Safety boats, which refer to maritime police, patrol, or security units, played a crucial role not only in maintaining general safety and order but also in combating theft and smuggling. These units were entrusted with a variety of operational duties, including responding to emergencies such as rescuing individuals who had fallen into the sea and saving lives. A news report from 1891 illustrates this role in action, describing a maritime accident in which four bargemen from Eminönü fell into the sea after their safety boat collided with a smaller boat while traveling from Karaköy to Eminönü. The safety boat swiftly intervened and rescued the men from the water<sup>25</sup>.

A document from mid-1898 highlights one of the sea police's duties in ensuring coastal security. In June 1898, following a collision between Şirket-i Hayriye's ferry number 32, en route from the bridge to the Bosphorus, and the military transport barge Şileli Ahmet, one of the soldiers stationed at the bow of the barge fell into the sea and was nearly drowned. Fortunately, he was rescued by the police maritime patrol<sup>26</sup>. A news report from 1899 details a rescue incident that occurred at sea off Maltepe. The incident took place on a Friday evening, around eight o'clock, when a fishing boat began to drift rapidly towards the Princes' Islands due to the combined effects of the wind and current. Upon realizing the perilous situation, the individuals aboard the boat began shouting for help. Fortunately, a nearby safety boat intervened and successfully rescued both the drifting vessel and its occupants<sup>27</sup>. In another instance, Ragib Bey, the Sub-Governor of the Maritime Police, slipped and fell into the sea while traveling to the Karaköy Pier. However, he was swiftly rescued by his commissioners, Ahmed Tevfik Efendi and Giridli Arif Efendi<sup>28</sup>.

It is evident that the Maritime Police Center, a key unit within the 12th Division, had responsibilities that demanded the full utilization of its operational capacity, including ensuring the security of statesmen during their sea voyages. Particularly ports and coasts became crucial points of focus due to the increased passenger

24 BOA, DH.MKT, 1647/114, 1.

25 *Tercüman-ı Hakikât*, Issue: 3872, 12 June 1891, p. 3.

26 BOA, Yıldız Parekende Evrakı Zabtiye Nezareti (YPRK.ZB), 21/51, 1.

27 *Ma'lumât*, Issue: 751, 26 June 1899, p. 2.

28 *İkdâm*, Issue: 2292, 14 November 1900, p. 3

traffic and the presence of state officials. A newspaper article from this period offers a concrete example of how the maritime police effectively fulfilled their duties in securing statesmen and maintaining order in crowded maritime environments. In this instance, the deployment of police boats and motorboats highlights the operational capacity of the maritime police at the time and underscores the necessity of such security measures amid heavy sea traffic. A newspaper article provides detailed information about the duties of the maritime police during the ceremony held in front of Yedikule during the reign of Sultan Mehmed V, marking the sultan's return to Istanbul from his Anatolian tour. The article highlights the significant role played by the maritime police in maintaining security during this event. A large number of steamers, tugboats, and boats gathered along the Marmara Sea's shores in front of Yedikule to welcome the sultan. Prior to a band performance on a tugboat rented by the inhabitants of the Islands, the *Ertuğrul* steamer anchored at Yedikule. It was followed by the *Istanbul* steamer, and then the *Izzeddin* steamer, each anchoring one after the other. Additionally, a steamer rented by the Municipality, carrying members of the city and a local society, also anchored in the area. The *Istanbul* steamer, in particular, was carrying princes, Mahmud Şevket Pasha, and several viziers. Given the dense crowd formed by the influx of various sea vessels and people gathered to welcome the sultan, the maritime police were assigned crucial duties to protect state officials, maintain order, and prevent accidents. Police boats and motorboats, brought from Yıldız and assigned to the Maritime Police, were continuously deployed in front of Yedikule. In sum, during the large and bustling gathering of vessels and people, the maritime police played an active role in preventing potential accidents and ensuring the smooth flow of events<sup>29</sup>. When all this information is evaluated together, duties of the Maritime Police Center are as follows: To ensure coastal safety and security by policing, to ensure the safety of state dignitaries during sea voyages, to catch all kinds of items that are attempted to be smuggled by sea, to combat sea pirates, to prevent those who attempt to dismantle shipwrecks without permission, to monitor large and small motorboats, sand and fishing boats in ports, to monitor speedboats and water skiers near beaches, to gentrify navigation at sea according to port regulations, to supervise the transportation of explosive, flammable and corrosive substances in accordance with the legislation<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Tanin*, Issue 415, 29 October 1909, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Eyüp Şahin, "Türk Zabıta Teşkilatının Tarihi Gelişimi", *Polis Dergisi*, Issue: 38, Year: 10, 2004, p. 96-198.

### 3. Issues of the Maritime Police During Their Duties

Despite their very intensive and critical duties, it is also understood that maritime police officers sometimes experience serious equipment shortages and are faced with shortages of maritime vehicles and equipment, especially dinghies. Consequently, assistance was requested from the *Tersane-i Humayun* (Imperial Arsenal) to build boats and safety boats of suitable quality, as the existing safety boatmen were insufficient for effective coastal policing. Specifically, four safety boats with five pairs of oars each and eight additional safety boatmen were requested. Additionally, 6,000 piastres were added to the 1887 budget to cover these necessary expenses<sup>31</sup>. In an official letter dated 1887 and numbered 467/15, which was found among the police department documents of the period, it is mentioned that the rowboats in the maritime police office “were repaired this year, one or two of them, the other four were not repaired and even those that were repaired were not yet in working order.” This situation sometimes indicates that there was a serious deficiency or dysfunction in the basic operational tools of the maritime police. The inadequacy of the physical infrastructure and especially the rowboats required for the maritime police to carry out their duties such as security patrols in the port or serious administrative control, especially issuing warrants, directly negatively affected the operational capacity or the inadequacy of such tools directly prevented the maritime police from effectively performing their duties. In other words, although the job descriptions of the maritime police were quite broad, there were times when the tools required to carry them out were missing or inadequate. This archive record mentions that “due to the boats not being repaired, the inspection of the ships that were going to depart could not be done properly, and the delay in these inspections led to serious consequences.” Furthermore, attention was drawn to the concrete consequences of the difficulties experienced in carrying out the inspections of the ships due to this technical inadequacy and lack of vehicles, the weakening of traffic safety in the port, and the failure of the maritime police to properly fulfill their duty of inspection on the shores and control over the ships leaving the port. The inadequacy of the boats increased the security risks on the shores and weakened the control of unauthorized entry into the country from the shores. It is also understood that “some vagrants and unknown people who do not have a trip permit, namely military deserters and criminals and criminals, have started to threaten general

31 BOA, DH.MKT, 1414/67, 1.



internal security and public order by taking advantage of the weakness such as the failure to repair the boats on time.” In this official record of the period, it is emphasized that the inadequacy of the boats prevented the inspection of ferries, which was one of the basic duties of the maritime police, and this seriously reduced the effectiveness of the institution, and therefore, due to dangers such as the facilitation of travel by vagrants, fugitives and criminals, it was “necessary to repair the boats immediately”<sup>32</sup>. It is understood that this problem was not solved in the following years either. An official document regarding the “Repair and Expenses of the Maritime Police Boats” in mid-1888 contains financial and administrative details about the repair of the boats used by the maritime police organization and the expenses to be made in this regard. This document describes a financial and administrative process that planned to make an expenditure from the current budget (5300 kuruş) for the maintenance of the 11 boats of the maritime police, and to pay for the excess repair expense (3400 kuruş) from the previous year by adding it to the budget deficit. It states that “the amount deemed necessary as a result of the examination or determination made for the repair of these boats is five thousand three hundred kuruş (piastre). This repair expense should be covered from the repair allowance included in the current year’s budget.” In other words, it is envisaged that 5300 piastre will be spent from the budget item allocated for repairs. On the other hand, the document mentions “a total of 3400 piastre spent more than the repair allowance of the previous year.” This amount indicates an expenditure exceeding the previous year’s repair budget. It is stated that this excess expenditure should be paid by adding the surplus of the previous year’s allocation and the previous year’s budget deficit. This situation explains how a repair debt or an additional expenditure remaining from the previous year and remaining outside the budget will be covered within the framework of the current year or existing budget arrangements<sup>33</sup>.

At the very beginning of 1892, “the 12 rowboats and 34 rowboatmen under the management of the Maritime Police Commissionerate were insufficient for the inspection of steamers coming and going to İstanbul, the policing of some local Samatya and Salacak ports, Kabataş and Çengelköy, Göksu and Üsküdar piers, and patrol and patrol services, and therefore, the purchase of 3 more rowboats at the expense of 6115 piastre and the additional employment of 10 rowboatmen

32 BOA, DH.MKT, 1461/50, 1-3.

33 BOA, İrade Dahiliye (İ.DH), 1084/85076, 1-2.

at the expense of 30400 piastre and the addition of this money to the police allocation were requested by the Ministry of Police.” This request actually both concretizes the duties of the Maritime Police, such as the inspection of steamers coming and going to İstanbul, passenger traffic management, document or identity control, and security inspection, and also clearly shows that the Maritime Police sometimes do not have sufficient resources to fulfill their duties to their full capacity. Because the policing and security of certain piers and ports, such as Samatya, Salacak, Kabataş, Çengelköy, Göksu, Üsküdar, are specific application areas of general “police” duties, and the patrol and watch services indicate the provision of continuous surveillance and security presence in the maritime area. All of these duties require physical presence at sea or on the shore, mobility, and manpower; in other words, boats and boatmen are the basic tools in the execution of these duties. The fact that the number of 12 boats and 34 boatmen is insufficient in the face of the intense maritime traffic of Istanbul and the Bosphorus, and the security and control needs on the wide coastline is a concrete indicator of the operational difficulties faced by the organization. This situation suggests how challenging tasks such as intensive passenger traffic, immigrant registration, or settlement procedures spread over a wide area can be with the limited resources available<sup>34</sup>.

Another official correspondence dated mid-1894 emphasizes that “Although 9 rowboats for the Maritime Police officers are repaired every year, since they are too old to be repaired, it would be possible to manufacture the aforementioned 9 rowboats at the Imperial Shipyard for 7400 piastre.” This actually reveals that the inadequacy of equipment in the Maritime Police is not only a numerical deficiency, but also that the physical condition of the existing equipment, especially the rowboats, is seriously problematic. The fact that 9 of the existing 12 rowboats are too old to be repaired means that the actual number of rowboats that can be used may be much lower than the stated 12. This situation makes the problem of “*insufficient*” resources that we mentioned earlier even more critical. When we consider that the duties of the Maritime Police include the inspection of ferries, pier police, and patrol and patrol services, all of these duties depend on mobile sea vehicles, primarily rowboats. The fact that 9 boats are unusable or constantly malfunction directly prevents these basic duties from being performed uninterrupted and effectively. Ferry inspections may be disrupted, security may

34 BOA, DH.MKT, 1904/53, 1-3; BOA, Şûra-yı Devlet Evrakı (ŞD), 1289/2, 1-2.

be compromised at the piers, or patrols in the sea area may be insufficient. The fact that “*the cost of the new 9 boats is 7400 piastre*” is also important in terms of making the financial burden required for this renewal concrete for us. On the other hand, the fact that 9 boats are beyond repair suggests that the actual operational capacity of the existing fleet of 12 boats mentioned earlier is very limited. This situation shows that the organization faces very serious difficulties in performing its basic duties such as ferry inspection, pier policing, and patrolling, and that the effectiveness of these duties is directly related to the condition of the equipment. In other words, this situation is an important detail that helps us understand that the Maritime Police struggles not only with its job descriptions and responsibilities, but also with the critical infrastructure and equipment problems it needs to perform these duties<sup>35</sup>.

With the strengthening of the sea police, navigation along the coasts, ports, and natural bays in the capital became safer, and smuggling decreased. Over time, the Maritime Police Center was equipped with 12 safety boats and 34 safety boatmen (for details on Safety Boatmen and Porters, see Table 1). Despite these improvements, the resources were still inadequate for Istanbul, which has one of the largest ports in the world. The sea police were responsible for the security and patrol service of the Samatya and Salacak Ports, as well as the Kabataş, Çinili Village, Göksu, Üsküdar, and Kadıköy Piers. Additionally, the maritime police were tasked with coastal policing along the Marmara coast as well as the Bosphorus<sup>36</sup>. As is evident, there was a significant imbalance between the number of personnel and the area they were responsible for. Therefore, a request was made for 10 additional safety boatmen to be assigned to the maritime center<sup>37</sup>.

During this period, the sea police were continuously reinforced in terms of human resources. For instance, in 1900, a new organization titled *Deniz İlave Komiserleri* (Additional Maritime Commissaires) was established. Thirteen cavalry police officers serving in Istanbul, Beyoğlu, and Üsküdar were reassigned to this new organization, resulting in a reorganization of their positions. A total of 39 third commissaires were employed in the sea police, including those who had been transferred from other positions, along with an additional 26 third commissaires<sup>38</sup>.

35 BOA, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı (Y.MTV), 96/46, 1-2.

36 BOA, Bab-ı Asaî Mektubi Kalemî (A.MKT), 23/80, 1.

37 BOA, DH.MKT, 1904/53, 1.

38 Gören, *İbid.*, p. 22.

On the other hand, the Deniz Zabıtası Müfettişliği (Maritime Police Inspectorship) was established in 1899 to oversee the employees of the sea police. Sait Bey was appointed as the Maritime Police Inspector in 1903<sup>39</sup>. Additionally, a gendarmerie major was appointed as the acting head of the unit<sup>40</sup>.

Starting in 1883, the sea police practices implemented in the capital city were gradually extended to coastal provinces, and safety boatmen were assigned to these areas<sup>41</sup>. In fact, there was also demand from coastal settlements. For instance, in 1892, a request was made for a safety boat and crew to oversee the policing of Trabzon Pier<sup>42</sup>. The request was made because the security and order of the Istanbul Ports and the Bosphorus were managed by safety boatmen. Additionally, 3,600 piastres were allocated to the sea police for the pursuit and capture of unknown individuals traveling on foreign ships at Mersin Port<sup>43</sup>. It is evident that the sea police had a dynamic structure adapted to emerging needs. Passengers and goods arriving in Dersaadet but not stopping at the ports were monitored by safety boatmen and the sea police, who also worked to prevent smuggling. A news report from the end of 1889 highlights the freedom granted to merchants to transport their trade goods, contingent upon their adherence to the regulations set forth by the port police. The report emphasizes that this freedom should extend to the transportation of goods from ships to carts or to land, from land to ships, or even from one ship to another, using any means the merchants deem appropriate. It argues that, as long as they comply with port regulations, merchants should have the right to choose the method of transporting their goods. The report asserts that restricting this right would be unjust and contrary to the principles of commercial freedom<sup>44</sup>. In mid-1892, the *Rüsumat Deniz muhafaza memurları* (General Directorate of Customs and Maritime Conservation Officers) submitted a request to the Grand Vizier, asking for the revolvers found in the port office to be transferred to the police by the Ministry of Police. Notably, the correspondence highlighted that these revolvers were unsuitable for police use and underscored the security

39 *Salname-i Devlet-i Âliye-i Osmaniye*, Dersaadet, H. 1321 (1903), p. 502.

40 *Salname-i Devlet-i Âliye-i Osmaniye*, Dersaadet, H. 1317 (1899), p. 346.

41 Eyüp Şahin, “1890-1894 Yılları Arasındaki Zaptiye Nezaretinin Yapılanmasında Görev Alan Kadın Çalışanlar ile İlk Polis Memuru Fitnat Hanım”, *Polis Dergisi*, Issue: 43, Ankara 2005, p. 96-123.

42 BOA, DH.MKT, 1999/15, 1.

43 BOA, DH.MKT, 322/26, 4.

44 *Saadet*, Issue: 1467, 21 October 1889, p. 3.

concerns and equipment deficiencies faced by the police organization at that time. The request emphasized the need to send the existing weapons to the Tophane-i Amire, the Ottoman army's ammunition depot, for examination. Key issues included how the weapons would be distributed among units in need and the restrictions on their use, which were crucial for effective weapons management. Additionally, this correspondence shed light on the processes of procuring weapons between the police and military units, the internal security issues of the period, and the functioning of the military hierarchy<sup>45</sup>. Salaries were as crucial for personnel as budgets were for institutions. However, the Ottoman police organization faced several issues related to salary payments, the most prominent being delays in disbursement. This problem became especially pronounced during the reign of Abdulhamid II, when numerous decrees were issued to ensure the timely payment of police salaries. One such decree, dated September 13, 1897, ordered an increase in the number of police officers -particularly maritime police- in order to maintain public order in Istanbul. It also emphasized the regular payment of their salaries and an increase in their hidden allowances<sup>46</sup>.

Additionally, measures were implemented in the Mediterranean to enhance coastal security and prevent smuggling. Customs and maritime protection officers were assigned to the ports of Izmir, Beirut, Thessaloniki, and Iskenderun. Each officer was also issued a Martini rifle and 100 cartridges. The instructions are as follows:

It was decided that the chiefs and their subordinates who would be employed in the safety boats, the sea border guards, would be given a martini rifle or a rifle of similar value with 100 cartridges each, and the sea border officers would be given a new type of rifle. In accordance with the

45 *Belgelerle Türk Polis Tarihi*, Vol. 4, Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Belge Yönetimi ve Koordinasyon Daire Başkanlığı, Ankara 2021, p. 125.

46 In the following years, the problems of irregularity and delays in the payment of maritime police salaries intensified, reaching a peak within the Ottoman administration. In response, the government frequently intervened to address the issue. For instance, imperial decrees issued in 1901 and 1903 ordered that these salaries be paid promptly, even if it required reallocating funds from other ministerial budgets. Nevertheless, despite these administrative and financial reform efforts, the problem persisted, ultimately necessitating the issuance of yet another decree in 1908. Yücel Yiğit, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Polis Maaşları (1865-1937)", *Osmanlı İktisat Tarihi Çalışmaları (Mehmet Genç Anısına)*, I, ed. Fehmi Yılmaz, İstanbul 2023, p. 114; İbrahim Yılmaz, "Osmanlı Polis Teşkilatında Lojistik İmkanlar: Selanik Vilayeti Örneği", *Karatay Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Issue: 3, 2019, pp. 124- 125.

decision, a request for permission was made upon written notification from the Rüşumat Umûr-ı Celile. In return for the permission, on December 1, 1901, with the declaration of the will of the Exalted Caliphate, the honor of which was revealed, and the conveyance of the decree of the trust to those who were entrusted with the Messenger of Allah, in this regard, with the communication that took place with the Exalted Marshal, with the notification of the permit numbered 302, dated 22 January 1902, coming from the trust of the exalted caliph regarding the necessary legislative speeches of the exalted caliph, and its dispatch, for the fulfillment of its requirements and the establishment of its quality, the publication of the most appropriate publication of the exalted caliph, undersecretary of his excellency<sup>47</sup>.

It was decided that 20 Martini rifles, or equivalent firearms, along with their cartridges, would be issued to the guards assigned to the 9 boats designated for the protection of the coasts and ports<sup>48</sup>. Because of the strategic commercial significance of these ports, it was essential to maintain at least a moderate level of security. The need for such security became urgent due to increasingly uncontrolled situations observed along the ports and coastlines. In this context, the regulation of sea borders in port cities -particularly those with critical economic importance, such as Thessaloniki- and the elimination of security weaknesses were identified as urgent administrative priorities by the Ottoman state. The inadequacy of existing control mechanisms at the coasts and ports, and the resulting security issues such as smuggling, led both central and local authorities to examine the matter in detail. As part of this institutional response, a commission was established in Thessaloniki in 1904, consisting of the district governor, police inspector, police chief, head of

47 BOA, Bâb-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO), 1941/145534, 1.

48 This regulation not only illuminates the decision to arm personnel tasked with the protection of sea borders in the Ottoman state but also sheds light on the implementation of this decision. It is evident that the captains and crew assigned to the boats were equipped with firearms "similar to those of sea border guards". The specification that the boatmen's weapons were "either a Martini rifle or a rifle of comparable value with floating cartridges" likely reflects the practical consideration that such firearms were designed to function even when exposed to water. Furthermore, the regulation also addressed the distribution of new types of rifles to sea border officers, following a similar pattern of outfitting. In sum, the bureaucratic process of equipping the maritime police with specialized cartridge Martini rifles or comparable weapons, alongside the corresponding decisions, interdepartmental correspondence, and the Sultan's decree granting permission, offer valuable insights into the state's commitment to ensuring the security of its maritime borders. BOA, BEO, 1941/145534, 1.

the police disciplinary board, and the president of the commercial court. The commission conducted a comprehensive investigation into law enforcement practices in the port and along the coastline of Thessaloniki, culminating in a report dated February 4, 1904. According to the report, given the size of the port and the density of maritime traffic, the existing police force's operational capacity was limited to overseeing passenger passport procedures. It was emphasized that no control measures were in place for inspecting ship crews, documents, or cargo and that this lack of oversight had significantly facilitated the smuggling of both people and goods. The commission identified one of the structural causes of the security gap as the police organization's lack of access to sea vehicles such as safety boats and small boats. It argued that merely increasing personnel would not offer a lasting solution. In light of these findings, the report proposed several concrete measures: increasing the number of police officers stationed at the port from five to ten; assigning an additional ten gendarmerie officers; placing one police officer and one gendarmerie officer on each of the existing safety boats—originally operated by the tax office and used for sea patrols, and transferring the management of these boats entirely to the police department<sup>49</sup>.

In an official document dated to the end of 1906, it is emphasized that police should be assigned with small boats, namely lifeboats, to prevent the theft of commercial goods on barges and barges located between two bridges within the port, and it is mentioned that “preventing such thefts is the responsibility of the Rüşumat Deniz Müfettişleri (Maritime Inspectors of the Customs) and maritime police”. In fact, this situation points to a very specific and detailed field of application of the duty of the maritime police, who perform the “police” duty at the piers and ports.

49 Article 64 of the police regulation, which came into force in 1907, is based on security at the country's maritime borders and the fight against smuggling. This article stipulates that all sea vessels, especially those sailing in the sea areas of Istanbul and other coastal provinces, should be strictly controlled. The aim is to prevent the entry of people, weapons or any kind of goods into the country illegally and to prevent smuggling activities at sea in general. In order to achieve these goals, it has been determined as a legal obligation to assign a sufficient number of police patrols at sea. For detailed information, see: İbrahim Yılmaz, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Deniz Polisi”, *10. Uluslararası Bilimsel Araştırmalar Kongresi, Proceeding Book*, April, Ankara 2021, p.25; While it remains unclear to what extent these recommendations were implemented or how effective they were in practice, by 1909, the Thessaloniki police were known to be conducting sea patrols to combat smuggling and similar offenses. It was also reported that the police made use of both safety boats and small boats for these operations, and that a motorboat was procured from Istanbul in 1912 via a negotiated purchase to further enhance their operational capacity. These developments can be interpreted as concrete steps toward addressing the security needs outlined in the commission's report. Yılmaz, *ibid.*, 131.

Ensuring the security of commercial goods on floating vehicles such as barges and barges within the port shows that the Maritime Police is responsible not only for general order but also for directly ensuring the security of commercial goods, which is a critical part of economic activity. On the other hand, this situation also indicates that the areas of responsibility of the Maritime Police do not only cover the general maritime area, but also geographically determined specific areas within the port, and that they undertake special duties in these areas. It also makes one think about how difficult it would be to fulfill this specific duty of preventing theft with the existing inadequate and old fleet of boats, rowboats, and lifeboats. This duty to prevent theft does not only belong to the Maritime Police, but also to the Maritime Inspectors of the Customs. Maritime Inspectors of the Customs generally deal with the entry, exit, and taxation of commercial goods; in this context, the security of the goods also falls under their domain. The Maritime Police, on the other hand, is responsible for general public order and security. This situation is very critical in that it indicates that the two institutions should cooperate or clarify their areas of authority for this specific task. The duty to prevent theft of commercial goods shows that the Maritime Police is not only a unit that fights crime, but also has a share in ensuring that trade progresses safely and smoothly and that economic relations in ports continue without disruption<sup>50</sup>. Despite the extensive job descriptions and operational responsibilities of the maritime police, it is important to recognize that they were also vulnerable to ordinary crimes in the crowded and populous areas where they operated. A notable example of this is found in a newspaper article from the end of 1910, which reports the theft of money from a retired maritime police officer. The officer fell victim to a pickpocketing incident while preparing to board a ferry at the bridge. This incident highlights that, in addition to their duties at sea, the maritime police were also tasked with addressing general security concerns and maintaining public order in the land-connected port and pier areas where they worked<sup>51</sup>.

50 BOA, Zaptiye Nezareti Evrakı (ZB), 314/30, 1-2

51 *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, Issue: 444, 18 December 1910, p. 3.



## Conclusion

From the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the police organization became closely integrated with the *Ẓaptıye Teşkilatı* (Ministry of Police), reflecting its military-inspired origins. This close association was largely due to the lack of personnel and experience. In classical Ottoman history, responsibility for the Bosphorus and the coasts in the capital was initially assigned to the *kapıkulları* (sultan's household troops) under the command of the *bostancı-bashi*, the *Kapudan Pasha*, and the *topçis-bashi*. Later, the roles of safety boatmen and porters became more prominent.

Fighting smuggling and controlling passports and the trip permissions have always been among the most crucial tasks of the general police. As these responsibilities grew in importance during the modernization process, the control function was gradually transferred to the sea police. While military-inspired police divisions were established to ensure the security and order of the capital, the 12<sup>th</sup> division was specifically tasked with coastal protection. The 12<sup>th</sup> police division, which underwent annual changes in its numbers, was organized rapidly. Despite its vast area of responsibility in the capital, the Ottoman Sea police often proved insufficient. Consequently, staff were frequently reassigned from other divisions to address these shortfalls.

Initially, the institution addressed the human resources problem before modernizing the sea vehicles needed for navigation. In the early periods, the Ottoman Sea Police relied primarily on manual labor and human-powered sea vehicles. Coastal security was subsequently enhanced by introducing motorized vehicles, including steamboats and motorboats. The organization was restructured in accordance with the Tensikat Law enacted by the Unionists, leading to the dismissal of inefficient safety boatmen. These vacancies were filled with new personnel and restructured police units.

As the effectiveness of the maritime police in the capital grew, their operations were expanded to include all coastal provinces. Technical equipment was upgraded in key ports such as Izmir, Beirut, Mersin, Trabzon, and Jaffa to combat smuggling and prevent the entry of individuals who could cause problems. By the eve of World War I, the maritime police had become a formidable force under the Unionists. However, during the war, they faced significant challenges, particularly in the occupied capital. Ottoman and other institutional archives provide detailed

information on the administrative restructuring, personnel recruitment, equipment supply, and operational needs of the Ottoman maritime police during the Second Constitutional Era. At the same time, the institutionalization of the maritime police during the War of Independence and the Early Republican Era, their duties (port security, combating smuggling, passport control), and their logistical support role in national processes such as the War of Independence are among the subjects suitable for examination. The comprehensive treatment of administrative, personnel, operational and legal aspects of both periods shows that the subject provides sufficient depth and scope for an independent scientific article.

### Author Contributions

Conceiving the Study	Author-1 (%70) - Author-2 (%30)
Data Collection	Author-1 (%80) - Author-2 (%20)
Data Analysis	Author-1 (%60) - Author-2 (%40)
Writing up	Author-1 (%60) - Author-2 (%40)
Submission and Revision	Author-1 (%35) - Author-2 (%65)

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**Table 1:** Safety Boatmen and Porters List under the Ministry of Police 1890-1894  
(H. 1308-1312)<sup>52</sup>

No	Salary	Inauguration	Dismissal	Name	Job
1	200			Rizeli Hacı Salih Efendi	Porter
2	200	14 September 1299		Giritli Mustafa Ağa	Porter
3	200	10 December 305	26 July 309	Rizeli Mehmet Efendi	Porter
4		26 July 309		Rizeli İbiş Efendi	Porter
5	200	17 March 304	9 February 306	Rizeli Yunus Efendi	Porter
6		9 February 306	2 September 309	Rizeli Osman Efendi	Porter
7		7 September 309		Rizeli Rıfat Efendi	Porter
8	200	7 July 301		Erzincanlı İsmail Efendi	Porter
9	200	15 August 304	5 August 307	Rizeli Ali Efendi	Porter
10		6 August 307	24 September 308	Rizeli Ahmet bin Temel	Porter
11	200	26 September 308		Rizeli Ali bin İlyas	Porter
12	200	9 September 300	2 June 307	Arhavili Ahmet bin Mehmet	Porter
13		2 June 307	6 December 309	Salih bin Mustafa	Porter
14		6 December 309		Rizeli Ali bin Temel	Porter
15	200	3 September 304	30 May 307	Rizeli Osman bin Hasan	Porter
16		30 May 307	19 June 307	Rizeli Rıfat bin Salih	Porter
17		19 June 307	12 October 308	Rizeli Ömer Lütfi bin İlyas	Porter
18		12 October 308	10 July 309	Rizeli Mustafa bin İbrahim	Porter
19		10 July 309		Erzincanlı Salih bin Mustafa	Porter
20	200	1 August 304	23 July 307	Eğinli Mehmet bin Süleyman	Porter
21		23 July 307	1 August 308	Rizeli Eşref bin Osman	Porter
22		25 August 308	11 October 308	Rizeli Halim bin İbrahim	Porter
23		11 October 308	21 January 308	Rizeli Kadri bin Mustafa	Porter
24		30 January 308		Rizeli Mustafa bin Ali	Porter
25	200	31 August 305	26 August 307	Rizeli Ali bin İlyas	Porter
26		26 August 307		Rizeli Recep bin Ali	Porter
27	200	27 September 304	22 July 306	Rizeli İsmail bin Süleyman	Porter
28		22 July 306	6 December 309	Rizeli Ali bin Mehmet	Porter
29	200	6 January 309		Rizeli Mustafa bin Ali	Porter
30		13 August 304	7 August 306	Üsküdarlı Hasan Tahsin	Porter

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31		14 August 306		Bolulu Mahmut bin Osman	Porter
32	200	31 October 305	12 September 306	Rizeli Ali bin Hasan	Porter
33		12 September 306	25 October 306	Rizeli Seğmen	Porter
34		25 October 306		Erzincanlı Osman bin Yusuf	Porter
35	200	4 August 303		Mehmet bin Abdah	Porter
36	200	1 October 303	12 August 306	Rizeli Osman bin Mustafa	Porter
37		14 August 306	5 September 309	Rizeli Roş bin Ali	Porter
38		5 September 309		Rizeli Mustafa bin Osman	Porter
39	200	24 August 301	12 May 308	Rizeli Kerim bin Süleyman	Porter
40		12 May 0308	20 April 309	Rizeli Salih bin Süleyman	Porter
41		22 May 309		Kanlıcalı Mehmet bin Ali	Porter
42	200	22 July 303	27 July 307	Rizeli Mustafa bin Recep	Porter
43		27 July 307	22 February 307	Rizeli Nazif bin Emin	Porter
44		22 February 307		Rizeli İzzet bin Mehmet	Porter
Safety Boatmen					
45	200	1 September 304	1 October 306	Rizeli Recep bin Ali	Porter
46		1 October 306	26 August 308	Rizeli İlyas bin Ali	Porter
47		26 August 308	1 September 309	Rizeli İlyas bin Ali	Porter
48		1 September 309		Rizeli İbrahim bin Osman	Porter
49	200	5 September 305	1 August 306	Rizeli Eyüp bin Hasan	Porter
50		1 August 306		Asitaneli Ömer	Porter
51	200	29 July 305	16 August 306	Rizeli Hasan bin Ahmet	Porter
52		16 August 306	27 August 307	Rizeli Mustafa bin İbrahim	Porter
53		27 August 307	30 December 307	Rizeli Zahir bin Osman	Porter
54		30 December 307	24 December 308	Rizeli Hakkı bin Mehmet	Porter
55		24 December 308	24 January 309	Rizeli Osman bin Mehmet	Porter
56		25 January 309		Rizeli Hakkı bin Mehmet	Porter
57	200	13 November 304	1 August 305	Erzincanlı Süleyman bin İbrahim	Porter
Safety Boatmen Porters					
58		1 August 305	5 August 307	Rizeli Hüseyin Hüsni	Porter
59		5 August 307	22 September 307	Rizeli Eşref bin İbrahim	Porter
60		22 September 307	26 August 308	İzmirli Mustafa bin Mehmet	Porter
61		26 August 308		Rizeli Mecit bin Mehmet	Porter
62	200	14 August 305	6 February 307	Rizeli Hasan bin Yunus	Porter

63	200	1 August 304	11 August 306	Rizeli Salih Bin Şakir	Porter
64	200	12 August 306	3 October 306	Rizeli Zülküflü bin Salih	Porter
65	200	2 October 306	5 September 307	Erzincanlı Ahmet Bin Mustafa	Porter
66	200			Rizeli Mustafa Bin Hamit	Porter
67	200	6 September 307	10 May 308	Rizeli Ahmet Bin Süleyman	Porter
68	200	15 August 309		Rizeli İlyas Bin Mehmet	Porter
69		6 February 307	25 April 309	Rizeli Arif bin Mehmet	Porter
70		25 April 309		Rizeli Mehmet bin Hüseyin	Porter
71	200	18 August 304		Rizeli Mecit bin Mehmet	Porter
Safety Boatmen					
72	200	11 September 305	14 May 307	Erzincanlı Mehmet bin İbrahim	Porter
73				Rizeli Yunus bin Ali	Porter
74	200	14 May 307	2 October 307	Rizeli Salih bin Arif	Porter
75		2 October 307	6 December 309	Rizeli Dursun bin Arif	Porter
76		7 December 309		Rizeli Salih bin Ahmet	Porter
77	200	7 September 303	01 May 306	Rizeli Ömer bin İlyas	Porter
78		02 May 306	12 February 307	Rizeli Muharrem bin Dursun	Porter
79		20 May 308		Rizeli Şaban bin Ali	Porter
80	200	20 September 306	20 August 307	Büyük Limanlı Halil bin Mehmet	Porter
81		20 August 307	30 December 308	Rizeli İlyas bin Mehmet	Porter
82		30 January 308		Rizeli Akif bin Mehmet	Porter
83	200	30 September 306		Sürmeneli Hasan bin Hüseyin	Porter
Safety Boatmen Porters					
84	200	30 September 306	4 January 307	Rizeli Tayyar bin Osman	Porter
85		13 January 307	3 August 308	Rizeli Mustafa bin İbrahim	Porter
86		5 August 308	25 October 309	Rizeli Yunus bin Ali	Porter
87		26 October 309		Rizeli Cemal bin Ahmet	Porter
88	200	20 September 306	27 August 308	Rizeli Ahmet bin Ali	Porter
89		27 August 308	23 August 309	Rizeli Ali bin Ahmet	Porter
90		23 August 309		Rizeli Temel bin Ahmet	Porter
91	200	20 September 306	1 October 308	Rizeli Ahmet bin İbrahim	Porter
92		1 October 308		Rizeli Kerim bin Süleyman	Porter

93	200	20 September 306	3 January 307	Erzincanlı Rıza bin İsmail	Porter
94		13 January 307	29 September 308	Rizeli Dursun bin İbrahim	Porter
95		29 September 308		Rizeli Ali bin Yunus	Porter
96	200	20 September 306	28 July 308	Rizeli Mecit bin Yakup	Porter
97		15 August 308	31 July 309	Rizeli Yahya bin Mehmet	Porter
98	200	20 September 306	11 August 307	Rizeli Mehmet bin Osman	Porter
99		11 August 307		Rizeli İsmail bin Halil	Porter

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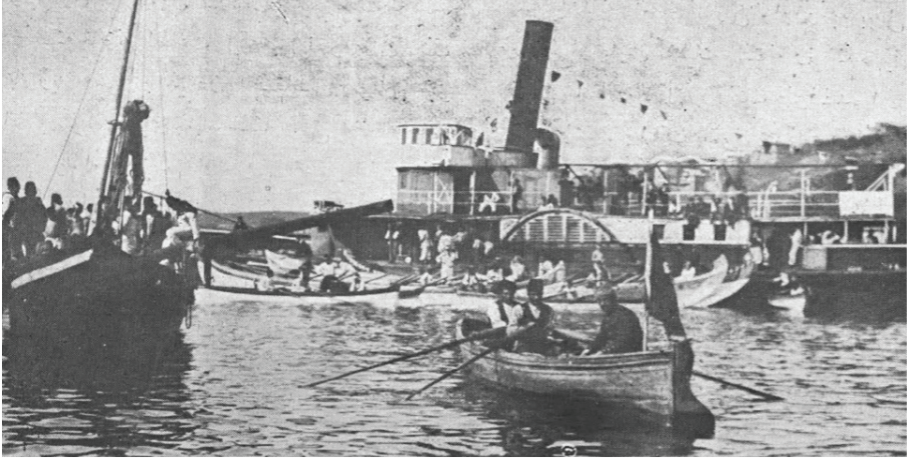
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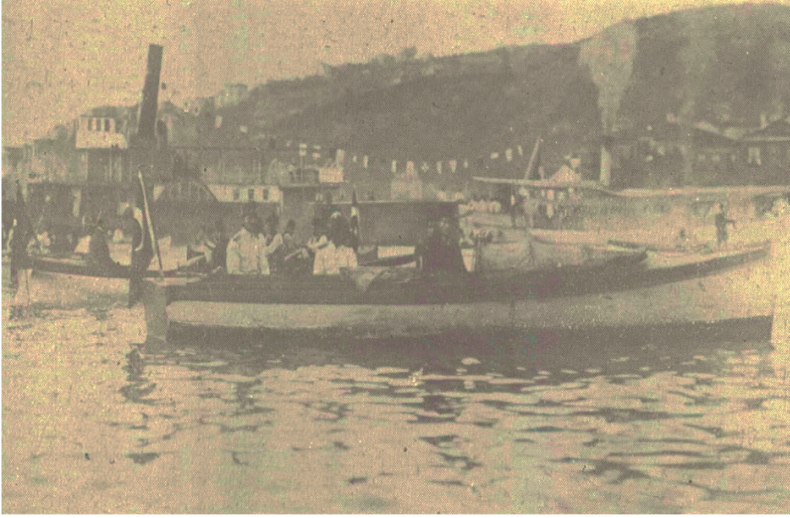
**APPENDICES****Appendix 1:** Sea Safety Boatmen on Patrol**Appendix 2:** Ottoman Period Sea Safety Boatmen/Sea Police



**Appendix 3:** Ottoman Period Sea Safety Boatmen/Sea Police



**Appendix 4:** Samuel Izisel



**Appendix 5:** A Sea Police Motorboat

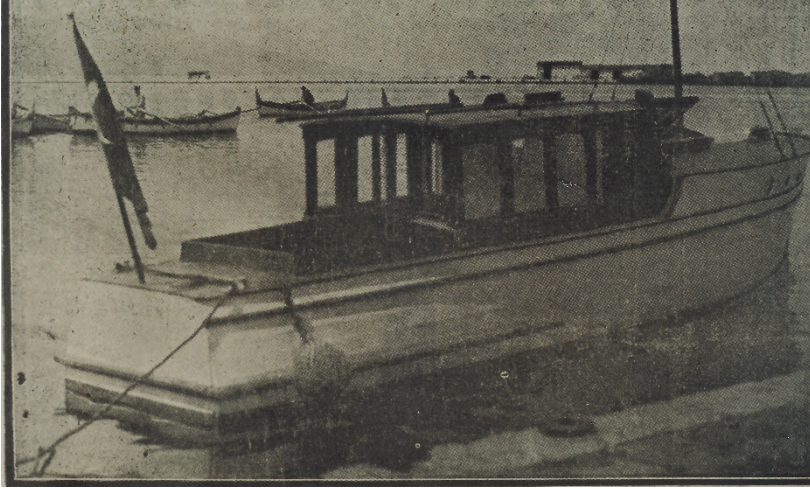


**Appendix 6:** A Sea Police Steamboat





**Appendix 7:** A Police Boat/Bandırma



**Appendix 8:** Police Safety Boat/İzmir

