

Clément GOSSELIN, « Les ambulants postaux en France de 1844 à 1994 » (“The Travelling Post Office in France from 1844 to 1994”), Master thesis in contemporary history, under the direction of Pierre Zembri, University of Cergy Pontoise, 2011, 139 p.

The Master's degree's subject is the professional body of travelling post office in France from 1844 to 1995. This is an introductory study referred to: discovery of postal historiography, the history of the institution and a first research on partial archives. Centered on a social history, the research is based on understanding of a typical career in the postal workers and the relationship between the Postal Service and the railway companies.

The first result of this research is the segmentation of the period of travelling post office in three key periods:

- 1844-1879: the birth of the service and his first experiments with the rail system.
- 1879-1945: the peak of the service and its dominance in the transport and sorting of mail throughout the country.
- 1945-1995: the gradual decline and abandonment of the service meet the new modes of mail transportation and the fast development of sorting centers (mechanized and automated).

Master 2

The Master 2 is envisaged as the former DEA (Diploma of Advanced Studies) from the perspective of continuity PhD. The subject is the postal sorting in France and in UK from 1838 to 2014. This work focuses on a very broad subject that allows for judging whether or not the potential of the subject and its various possible research topics. The subject is the study of postal sorting in point of view of railway then in point of view of sorting centers in France and the UK. Both issues are addressed: the system of travelling post office and the system of sorting centers (railway-stations to industrial platforms). Comparative history is then discussed with the UK the first country to have implemented this system. The brief also tries to be a work of stripping and identification of available sources and the bibliography.

The postal sorting is at the center of this subject. It knows first experiences with the travelling post office, it is codified, and specific training is born. The staff is primarily sorter,

running in the train, or immobile in railway-stations. It is a sorting system at two levels. Development of it is similar in both countries despite some fundamentally different choices. Original themes are envisaged such as the link between innovation and tradition, the working conditions of staff, logistics developments and strategic choices of Posts, etc. This is a multidisciplinary working with history and geography, economics and logistics, but also a multi-thematic work. Only a comprehensive study provides an understanding of the evolution of the postal distribution in France and the UK. The comparison is chosen for reasons of similarity of territories, rail network and governance and profound differences regarding the decisions taken.