

OTTOMAN ISTANBUL IN FLAMES: CITY CONFLAGRATIONS,
GOVERNANCE AND SOCIETY IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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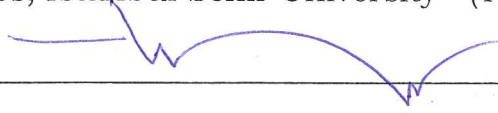
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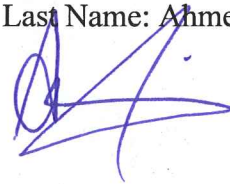
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ABSTRACT

OTTOMAN ISTANBUL IN FLAMES: CITY CONFLAGRATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND SOCIETY IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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This Master's thesis is an inquiry into the Ottomans' perception of fires and urban regulations. Analyzing official sources, such as court records and archival sources, this thesis aims to understand the Ottomans' role and mindset toward the city reconstruction after fires. Also, by cross-checking official with non-official sources, i.e. traveler accounts, the reports of diplomats (official, non-Ottoman records), drawings and secondary sources, this thesis provides a broader picture on the manner in which the Ottomans dealt with the outcome of fires in the capital.

Fires are significant to study due to the immense change they brought to urban life which make it possible to trace the policies, approaches, and regulations of the city rulers. When it comes to fires in the 18th century Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire's responsibility to return the city to pre-fire conditions, and bring normalcy to city life played a crucial role. However, the role of the society, reconstruction of the physical environment, rehabilitation of the social life, and affecting political regulations of the state was of great importance as well.

Looking at the socioeconomic effects of fires, and the way in which official politics dealt with the problem, the thesis aspires to answer the questions: how responsive were the Ottomans in dealing with the fires, and what was prioritized in the reconstruction of the city. Researching further into the social aspect of fires, and the social consciousness about the problem of fire, we attempt to understand the participation of society in the effectuating and establishing relevant regulations. The processes that took place in the aftermath of fires in different parts of the world was taken into consideration for the sake of approaching fires from a comparative angle. The thesis

contributes to the history of fires of the Ottoman Empire by focusing on the capital city, Istanbul (walled city) in the pre-modern period.

Keywords: Natural Disaster, Fires, Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire, GIS



ÖZ

ALEVLER İÇİNDE OSMANLI İSTANBULU: ERKEN MODERN DÖNEMDE ŞEHİR YANGINLARI, YÖNETİM VE TOPLUM

Tekin, Ahmet

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Bu yüksek lisans tezi, yangınlar ve şehir düzenlemeleri konusunda Osmanlıların algısına dair bir incelemedir. Bu tez, Şerhiye Sicilleri ve arşiv kaynakları gibi resmi devlet belgelerini incelemek suretiyle, yangınlardan sonra şehrin yeniden inşasına karşı Osmanlıların yaklaşımlarını ve rollerini anlamayı amaçlıyor. Bu tez ayrıca, resmi devlet belgelerini, seyahatnameler ve yabancı diplomat raporları gibi dönemin diğer kaynaklarını ikincil çalışmalarla birlikte okuyarak Osmanlıların başkentlerinde yangınların sonuçlarıyla nasıl başa çıktıklarına dair geniş bir perspektif sunuyor.

Yangınları, böylesi bilimsel bir çalışmanın konusu yapmak oldukça mühim; zira yangınlar şehrin yapısında ve toplumsal hayatta şehri yönetenlerin politikaları, yaklaşımları ve düzenlemelerinin izini sürmemizi mümkün kılan büyük değişimler meydana getirir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun toplumsal, iktisadi, ve siyasi hayatı yangın öncesi duruma döndürmedeki mesuliyeti ve şehir hayatını olağan seviyesine çekmedeki başarısı 18. Yüzyıl İstanbul yangınları söz konusu olduğunda hayati bir rol oynamıştı. Ancak, bu yangınlarda toplumun rolü, yangınlardan sonra fiziki çevrenin yeniden inşası ve toplumsal hayatın onarılması ile yangınlardan devletin siyasal düzenlemelerinin etkilenmesi de aynı derecede önemliydi.

Bu tez çalışması, yangınların sosyo-ekonomik etkilerine ve bu sorunla başa çıkmak için resmi politikanın nasıl şekillendiğine bakarak, Osmanlıların yangınlara nasıl tepki verdikleri ve şehrin yeniden inşasında neleri öne çıkardıkları gibi kilit sorulara cevap aramaktadır. Yangınların toplumsal yönü ve yangın sorunu hakkında toplumsal bilinç üzerine de olan bu çalışma, yangınlara neden olan ya da yangınlardan sonra ikame edilen düzenlemelerde, toplumun katılımını anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı

bir perspektif sunmak amacıyla, yangınlardan sonra dünyanın farklı yerlerinde yaşanan durumlar bu çalışmada özel bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu tez, erken modern dönemde pay-i taht İstanbul'un yangınlar tarihine mütevazi bir katkı sunmayı ummaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doğal Afetler, Yangınlar, İstanbul, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, GIS





To forget is blessing, but to be forgotten is devastating.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Sources	3
1.2. Literature Review	5
1.3. Outline	8
2. USING GIS AND MAPPING FIRES: LISTING AND VISUALIZATION OF ISTANBUL FIRES	10
2.1. GIS and Sources for Data	13
2.2. Fire Rating and Maps	21
3. ISTANBUL FIRES: REASONS, PERCEPTIONS AND PRECAUTIONS	28
3.1. Effects of Nature on Fire Behavior	32
3.2. Gunpowder and Fires	37
3.3. Smoking and Fires	37
3.4. Firefighters and Fire-starters in the Capital: Reasons, Motivations, and Punishments.....	38
3.5. Fires By Months: Did Fires Occur Mostly In Summers?.....	47
3.6. Perceptions and Precautions	48
4. DEALING WITH FIRES: FIREFIGHTING AND RECOVERY IN <i>TULUMBA</i> AGE	56
4.1. 18 th Century Hocapaşa and Cibali Fires	57
4.2. Firefighting: Corps and Techniques, Towers and Rewards	62
4.3. Alternative Approach to the City Fires: Diverse Aspects of Regulations after Fires	73
4.3.1. Tax Reductions until Completion of Reconstruction	79
4.3.2. Regulations on Sheltering.....	82
4.3.3. Building Codes	83

5. CONCLUSION	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95
APPENDICES	106
A. Refik Efendi's poet expressing how a burned house could be a misery for officers.....	106
B. The case of Waqf of Emine Hatun	107
C. The number of firefighters and tulumbas in Istanbul belonging to different corps, namely, the Janissaries, Cebeci, Topçu, Arabacı Topçu, Tersane-i Âmire, and Bostancı	108



LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Fire Ratings in Istanbul from the second half of the 15 th century to 1701	15
Table 2.2. Fire Ratings in Istanbul between 1701 and 1756	19
Table 4.1. Number of Firefighters and Tulumba	66



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Fire Ratings in Istanbul between 15 th and 18 th Centuries	25
Figure 2.2. Fire Locations between the 15 th and 18 th Centuries	26
Figure 2.3. Fire Ratings in Istanbul from 1701 to 1756	27
Figure 3.1. Bird's-eye view map-panorama representation of Constantinople	31
Figure 3.2. Number of Fires by Month in between 1751 and 1756	47
Figure 4.1. A depiction of Tulumbacıs in the 18th Century	62
Figure 4.2. Bayezid Fire Tower in the 19th Century	70
Figure 5.1. Number of Fires between the 15th and 18th Century	89



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the early modern period, even until the industrial age of coal and iron, wood was an inevitable material for everyday life and industry. Due to its widespread use, wood as a material holds fires over urban centers. It seems that in the pre-modern era cities were suffering a lot from conflagrations due to the high number of wooden structures, irregular spatial organization, insufficient firefighting, and nature (here I mean hot weather, wind and lightning). Pre-modern cities seem to fail adapting practicable and successful measures and developments against major fires. It seems that reduction of city fires became possible thanks to a more efficient firefighting techniques and tools in the 18th century however, any major fire outbreak in cities was not in the range of possibility to be extinguished effectively and immediately.

Fire was a double-edged sword in that on the one hand it disintegrated small and large structures and reduced them into ashes and smoke, on the other hand, fire created novel opportunities to recreate and reorganize a city and its structure. Yet, it is not possible to predict exactly whether or when a fire was a threat or an opportunity for cities. Whether in a negative or positive way, we can always argue, however, that fires brought immense changes to people's lives residing in a city. Since change is an indispensable ingredient for the discipline of History, fires are important to study the change they bring to city and social life, which makes possible to trace the policies, approaches, and regulations of city rulers. My study is about the reassessment of fires and their visualization, the causes and results of fires, and the practices and regulations in the aftermath of fires in Ottoman Istanbul (walled city).

By studying fires, the governors' and people's approaches to fires in terms of the reconstruction process should be put under the microscope. It is not hard to remark on the changes in the physical character or silhouette of a city as a result of the reconstruction process. Some places are resorted and repaired, some places are damaged too much and need to be reconstructed wholesale. However, the sole change is not in the physical character of a city and the residents who are affected in various ways. Decisions made by the governors regarding peoples' lives have an influence on

the livability of a city. Disaster assistance and policies in the aftermath might favor one segment of a population, while punishing others through an analysis of fires, it is possible to study the reconstruction of a city, its processes, regulations, and their influence in a city.

In my research, I study the fires of Ottoman Istanbul in the pre-modern period. The reason I selected this topic is firstly the gap in Ottoman studies regarding the issue and secondly my own curiosity. When we have a look at the literature, earthquakes and plague as disasters have been studied respectably comparing to fires until now.¹ Plagues and Earthquakes² were studied as interdisciplinary subjects by architects, engineers, art historians, biologist, physicians, and historians; however, it seems that fires did not draw such attention or were not found interesting. The dry description and determination of studies on fires failed to give a wider picture of the daily life in the

¹ For natural disasters in the Ottoman Empire, see Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Natural disasters in the Ottoman Empire: a symposium held in Rethymnon 10 - 12 January 1997* (Crete University Press, Rethymnon, 1999); Said Öztürk, *Afetlerin Gölgesinde İstanbul: Tarih Boyunca İstanbul ve Çevresini Etkileyen Afetler* (İstanbul: İBB, 2009). Also, for a general literature and references about natural disasters, see Fatma Ürekli, “Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul’da Meydana Gelen Afetlere İlişkin Literatür,” *TALİD İstanbul Tarihi*, 8/16, (2010): 101-130.

² Some plague and earthquake studies are as follows: Sırrı Akıncı, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Veba (Taun) Salgınları ve Yorumlanması” (Unpublished PhD. diss., İstanbul University, 1969); Daniel Panzac, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Veba (1700-1850)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997); Gisele Marien, “The Black Death in Early Ottoman Territories: 1347-1550” (Unpublished M.A thesis, Bilkent University, 2009); Andrew Robarts, “A Plague on Both Houses? Population Movements and the Spread of Disease across the Ottoman-Russian Black Sea Frontier, 1768-1830s” (Unpublished PhD. diss., Georgetown University, 2010); Birsen Bulmuş, *Plague, Quarantines, and Geopolitics in the Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Yaron Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, And Other Misfortunes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Nükhet Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). A considerable number of articles about plague can be found in the bibliography section of mentioned books. Studies concerning earthquakes are as follows: Deniz Mazlum, *1766 İstanbul Depremi: Belgeler Işığında Yapı Onarımları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2011); Sema Küçükalioğlu Özkılıç, *1894 Depremi ve İstanbul* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015); Bülent Terekli, “1912 Şarköy-Müreftede Depremi Ve Etkilediği Alanlar” (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara University, 2011); Deniz Aras, “Edirne’de 1912 Marmara Depremi Ve Afet Yönetimi” (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2013); N. Özer, “New Information on Earthquake History of the Akşehir-Afyon Graben System, Turkey, since the second half of 18th century,” *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*, 6/6 (2006): 1017-1023; Amit Bein, “The İstanbul earthquake of 1894 and Science in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44/6 (2008): 909-924; Selahattin Satılmış, “Osmanlı’da Bir Afet Yönetimi Örneği: 1883 Çeşme ve Urla Depremi,” *History Studies: International Journal of History*, 4/1 (March 2012): 503-527; N. Ambraseys, “Ottoman Archives and the Assessment of the Seismicity of Greece 1456-1833,” *Bulletin of Earthquake Engineering*, vol. 12/1 (2014): 5-43; Güçlü Tülüvelî, “Historical seismicity in the Middle East: new insights from Ottoman primary sources (sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries),” *Journal of Seismology*, vol. 19/4 (2015): 1003-1008; Damla Acar and Deniz Mazlum, “Timber Framed Houses Built for the Court Members After the 1894 Earthquake in İstanbul: Rationalization of Construction Techniques,” *International Journal of Architectural Heritage*, vol. 10/5 (2016): 604-619.

capital and the policies, regulations, and practices made by the state in the aftermath of fires.

I aim to study the fires in terms of the Ottomans' perception and regulations, to see the Ottomans' role, disaster assistance and policies as well as mindset toward the city reconstruction after these fires took place. In this sense, this study aims to present answers to the following questions: when a fire showed up and turned into a disaster, what the causes of fires were, how much damage the fires caused, how these fires spread over the city and affected the city, which areas in the city suffered most from the fires and how the spatial distribution of fires were, what the fighting technique of Ottomans against these fires were, what kind of extinguishing tools they had in this period, how these fires influenced life of people, and what kind of approaches, regulations and precautions Ottomans had against the future fires, and how they managed to reconstruct the eliminated and damaged structures and spaces.

1.1. Sources

Primary sources provide us first-hand information and direct evidence about a specific topic. Primary or contemporary sources, most of the time, were created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions; and therefore, they enable us to draw our own conclusions about the topic we wish to study. It is expected to find political, economic, cultural, social, or artistic achievement of the specific time period under investigation. Briefly, primary sources help us to reconstruct a more vivid past. In this research, I study mainly with two kinds of primary sources, namely official ones, such as archival documents, *Sicils* (sharia court records), and chronicles which have a state oriented point of view and non-official ones, such as traveler accounts and reports of diplomats (as non-Ottoman official sources), which have an external point of view.

Official documents offer answers of how the Ottoman Empire dealt with the problems the fires caused, how the daily life was regulated, how the city was reconstructed after fires, and how the Empire organized its facilities to fight and prevent future fires. Among these sources, Sharia court records are one of the most significant sources for the social, economic, and cultural history of the Ottoman Empire. *Sicils* give us information about the society not just the state, and though written by the state hand,

they allow us to reconstruct the past from “below”. Through them, questions such as, “What did ordinary people do? How did they interact with the state in their daily lives? What did they possess?” can be answered. Yunus Uğur, in his article³, briefly explains the information about these Sicil sources and describes both their weaknesses and strengths. His article is very succinct. Also, Dror Ze’evi in his article⁴ gives more details about these sources and explains the methods how Sicils could be used, with their advantages and disadvantages. I used the court records of branches in Istanbul, namely, Bâb, Ahi Çelebi and Istanbul dates back to the aftermath of 1755 Hocapaşa Fire and 1756 Cibali fires, which are available at *İSAM* (Center for Islamic Studies). Additionally, chronicles of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries such as *Tarih-i Naîmâ*, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, *Subhî Tarihi*, and *Vasîf Tarihi* enabled me to create a table/list of fires and they offer the perception of the Ottomans about these fires. I, at least, can expect that they would not oppose the official discourse. It is important to benefit from these sources to reconstruct and contextualize the 18th century, as well as to write biography of fires in that century.

As for non-official sources, traveler accounts include notes on buildings, markets, customs, and culture, which help me understand the daily life of people and the city. I am aware that the official sources have a very basic and simple interpretation about fires (sometimes they just mention the existence of a fire, but nothing more), as a consequence making a comparison of official sources with non-official sources offered me a more valid and representable set of information. Travelers’ notes and drawings represent outsiders’ views and make a comparative study possible. In some cases, I needed to use literary interpretations of these sources from different historians to understand and properly evaluate them. The reports of diplomats assisted in the same way as the traveler accounts.

In addition to these, I use visual materials such as paintings, drawings, diagrams, and maps. Zeynep Çelik and Diane Favro, in their article “Methods of Urban History”, state that several techniques and approaches have not been explored by urban

³ Yunus Uğur, “Mahkeme Kayıtları (Şer’iyye sicilleri),” *TALİD* 1/1 (2003): 305-344.

⁴ Dror Ze’evi, “The Use of Ottoman Sharī’a Court Records as a Source for Middle Eastern Social History: A Reappraisal,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 5/1 (1998): 35-56.

historians such as visual analysis.⁵ Though I cannot claim to be an urban historian as of yet, in this study, along with several drawings, by using fires' dates, size, and locations, mapping of fires in the city is conducted and comparison between the maps of different centuries enabled visual analysis. My hope is that it partly contributes to the field. In other words, I aim to materialize information available in primary sources and make them easily visible for analysis and comparison.

A comparison with the Ottomans' counterparts such as England, Japan, Russia, Spain, and Germany is attempted, though not deeply, but neither is it superficial. Throughout the thesis, in footnotes, it is traceable to read about firefighting, its techniques, and regulations, so that reader could put the Ottoman Empire in comparison with the rest of the world.

1.2. Literature Review

The studies concerning fires have been limited so far, therefore an examination of the relationship between the history of Ottomans and fires was needed. The dry description and determination of studies on fires failed to give a wider picture of the daily life in the capital and the policies, regulations, and practices made by the state in the aftermath of fires.

It is possible to trace the biography of fires from the chronicles of Ottomans. Although information concerning fires were not very frequent in the Ottoman sources until the reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566), chronicles such as *Solakzâde Tarihi*, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, *Tarih-i Naima*, *Tarih-i Raşidi ve Zeyli*, *Nusretname*, *Subhî Tarihi*, and *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar* are one of the principle sources for my study. The number of fires and fires' biographies will be mentioned in the coming chapter in a more detailed way.

When it comes to the secondary literature about fires, the field is not really fruitful. There are some articles about fires in the Ottoman geography including a several Istanbul fires which I mention in the coming chapters. Apart from articles, the studies of fires in Ottoman Istanbul could be classified into three groups. First group of studies

⁵ Zeynep Çelik and Diane Favro, "Methods of Urban History," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984), vol. 41/3 (Spring, 1988): 8, accessed August 22, 2015, doi: 10.2307/1424886.

on fires are composed of chronological and geographical determination with a brief description. Second group contains the studies about fires' influence on urban fabric and city planning. Third group contains the studies focusing analyzes of fires, regulations of the state and practice of law in the aftermath of fires.

One of the first research concerning the fires and natural disasters of Ottoman Istanbul was Mustafa Cezar's *Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Yapılarında Tahribat Yapan Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler* in which he narrates fires chronologically, starting from the 15th century to the 20th century as well as other natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and streaks of lightning. What makes Cezar's study remarkable is that it comprises the primary and secondary sources in the footnotes.⁶ Another study Reşad Ekrem Koçu's *Tulumbacılar*⁷ was firstly published in 1981, which includes information about the organization of firefighters in the Ottoman Empire, the profiles of considerable number of firefighters, and *tulumbacı* culture, is about the life of firefighters in the Ottoman Empire. Koçu at the end of his book gives a list of fires occurred in Istanbul from 1633 to 1921. He summarizes a few of big fires from different periods which seems that Koçu narrates those fires from the chronicles of the Ottomans. The weakness of the book is that there is neither any footnot concerning archival documents nor a bibliography concerning secondary sources.

In 1994, Hüsamettin Aksu transliterated and published a *risâle* (booklet) written by Derviş Efendi-Zâde Mustafa Efendi about the fire of 1782.⁸ However, this study could not achieve to present a wider picture of the society either. Rather than analyzing, determining or classifying the fire, this study only present Mustafa Efendi's advises in the aftermath of fire. In addition to the original text and its transliteration with a short simplified version, the study presents two pages of bibliography about Istanbul fires. In addition to these, I find Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu's colossal title *İstanbul Cehennemi: Tarihte Büyük Yangınlar*⁹ (The Hell of Istanbul: The Great Fires in History) very bold

⁶ Mustafa Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," in *Türk San'atı Tarihi Araştırma ve İncelemeleri I*, ed. Behçet Ünsal and Nejat Diyarbekirli et al. (İstanbul: İstanbul Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi Türk San'atı Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1963): 327-414.

⁷ Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2005).

⁸ Derviş Mustafa Efendi, *1782 Yılı Yangınları*, ed. Hüsamettin Aksu, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994).

⁹ Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, *İstanbul Cehennemi: Tarihte Büyük Yangınlar* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008).

for he does not use any critical method or analysis towards fires. He only states that Hocapaşa and Cibali were assumed as ominous neighborhoods due the frequency of fires. He adds that the great and destructive fires generally started from these places and ruined many people.

As a part of second group studies, Zeynep Çelik's book *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* covers the years between 1838 and 1908 can be considered. Çelik contributes to the "history of the fabrics of cities" and she focuses the city as it is an artifact, therefore social, economic and political conditions are not in the center of her book. In her third chapter, entitled "Regularization of Urban fabric"¹⁰, Çelik analyzes how Western ideas and concepts concerning building and planning were manifested in the Ottoman capital city. Çelik demonstrates that fire incidents of Istanbul in 1856 and 1865 helped Western-style redevelopment taking place in the Ottoman capital. She indirectly claims that fires were used for remaking the city by opening wide roads and boulevards, and constructing fire resisting buildings etc. Aksaray and Hocapaşa were two areas destroyed by fires and these two districts were redeveloped by Western urban preservation concepts. Çelik uses various plans and photographs to illustrate changing urban plan of Istanbul after fires.

Kemalettin Kuzucu's "Bâbîâlî Yangınları ve Sosyo-ekonomik Etkileri (1808-1911)"¹¹ titled dissertation is based on history of a specific building, Bâbîâlî which stood for the rank and office of grand vizier, but later Bâbîâlî will be appreciated as the state itself. He focused on three fires occurred in the 19th century, but particularly the 1839 fire and reconstruction of the building.

As a part of third group studies, Kenan Yıldız's unpublished PhD. dissertation¹² can be taken into consideration for it is an exception due to Yıldız's attempt to embrace socio-economic analysis of the 1660 Istanbul Fire. Yıldız in his dissertation firstly

¹⁰ Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (London: University of California Press, 1993): 49-81.

¹¹ Kemalettin Kuzucu, "Babiali Yangınları Ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Etkileri" (Unpublished PhD. diss., Erzurum Atatürk University, 2000).

¹² Kenan Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili" (Unpublished PhD. diss., Marmara University, 2012).

draws a general picture of Istanbul fires from the conquest of Istanbul up to the end of the 17th century. After presenting a thematic reasons of fires, in his first chapter Yıldız discusses developing problems and their solutions in the context of fires. In the second chapter, a variety of examples are presented about the rejuvenation of waqfs and many different cases in the aftermath of fires with regard to the situation of waqfs are discussed. In his dissertation, focusing mostly on the 1660 Istanbul fire through an extensive survey in Court Records, Yıldız clearly presents a sophisticated analysis on the reflections of state and public against this kind of catastrophic events. In other respect, his study is not a mere monograph either although it is on fires. Yıldız's study manages to discuss effects and results of Ottoman fires through primary sources rather than just repeating them with names and dates as previous studies did.

1.3. Outline

This thesis aims to contribute to the history of natural disaster, particularly fires, in the Ottoman Empire by focusing on the capital city, Istanbul. Apart from introduction and conclusion chapters, the thesis contains three main chapters.

The second chapter of the thesis is an attempt to map the locations of fires with the help of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) techniques, in order to form a first impression of fires' distribution in Istanbul (walled city) in the pre-modern period. By reassessing fires and preparing two lists of fires, it becomes possible to create maps via GIS techniques (Geographical Information System) and trace the spatial distribution and severity of fires which have the potential to afford a better understanding of the city fires. While these maps are not exhaustive, they note the locations of 121 fires in total, which probably represent an important percentage of the fires occurred in the early modern period of Ottoman Istanbul. Thanks to these maps, one can zoom in to concentrate on specific fires, districts or periods of time and one can see fire zones that I proffer. Asside from the possibility of seeing the frequency of fires, these maps offer an opportunity to detect any shift in fires locations and their severity.

The third chapter is a general history of Ottoman Istanbul fires and their reasons, perceptions and precautions in the pre-modern period. Here, I analyse Ottoman chronicles, traveler accounts, and secondary sources and present many examples of

fires thematically. Also, the role of the Sultan, high officials, and the Janissaries are discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter is a detailed study and analysis of fires in the 18th century. In the pre-modern period Istanbul, Hocapaşa and Cibali were two neighborhoods which were not only important to be a scene for frequent fires, but they were residential and commercial zones of the capital. Therefore I write a biography of the Hocapaşa and Cibali fires in that period. In addition to these, firefighting techniques with their actors, equipment, and practices, and social aspects of fires with the Empire's policies and regulations are discussed. Moreover, the chapter is also an attempt to understand how the Ottomans reconstructed the capital, what governors' role was, how they solved the problems in the aftermath of fires.

The story of fires as outlined in this thesis is not an end. On the contrary, I hope this inquiry will give birth to new questions and studies. The future studies are needed to explore the fires of different times of the same places and different locations of the same time to consider fires in a different context. The thesis does not claim to present and draw all aspects of fires in Istanbul. Neither has it attempted to fully present the policies of the Ottoman Empire regarding the aftermath of fires because it focuses only on one city, the capital, in the pre-modern period.

CHAPTER II

USING GIS AND MAPPING FIRES: LISTING AND VISUALIZATION OF ISTANBUL FIRES

*From above a hill I watched you, glorious Istanbul, yesterday,
no spot did I catch that I hadn't visited, loved.
Settle down on the throne of my heart, as stands my day,
loving even one of your quarters is a life's worth.
Such brilliant cities one comes across in the world,
though you are the one that charming beauties carried.
"The one really lived," I would call "in the dream finest and longest buried!"
Who in you long lived, in you died and in you got buried.¹³*

Many people, poets, travelers, ambassadors, and emperors have lived in and visited Istanbul throughout the ages and there has been no one who has not fallen in love with the city. Istanbul was glorious by its geographical position, beauty, richness, and cosmopolitan atmosphere; however, as there is a price to pay for every beauty, Istanbul had to pay its price with natural disasters since its early days. Among these natural disasters there have been plague, earthquakes, occasionally scarcity, and fires.¹⁴ Fires have a special place in the history of the city. Although plague, earthquake and scarcity were not in the range of possibility to be stopped by humans, fires which damaged cities as much as the other disasters have the possibility to be extinguished. "Fire was the calamity of wooden built Istanbul. 'Istanbul's fire, Anatolia's plague' "¹⁵ was an important idiom to indicate how Istanbul and fire were, in a way, inseparable phenomena.

¹³ Yahya Kemal, *Aziz Istanbul*, (Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul, 1969), 4. I want to thank my dear friend Murat Can for his sincere help in translation of the poem.

¹⁴ For a chronologically detailed study about the natural disasters of Istanbul see: Said Öztürk, *Afetlerin Gölgesinde İstanbul: Tarih Boyunca İstanbul ve Çevresini Etkileyen Afetler* (İstanbul: İBB Çevre Koruma Ve Kontrol Daire Başkanlığı, 2010).

¹⁵ Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, vol. 1, part 2, (İstanbul: İBB Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), 1077.

Ottomans' Istanbul, from the chronicles, traveler accounts, and court records, seemed to suffer greatly from fires until the 19th century when a modern fire department was created. A *ferman* (imperial order) of 1572 shows how fires were intertwined with the life of the city. According to this ferman, dwellers of Istanbul were expected to have a ladder, which reached to roof, and everybody was required to have a big barrel of water in their houses, since Istanbul could not be imagined without fire. When a fire showed up, no one was allowed to run away, but was required to stay and fight to extinguish the fire. Neighborhoods, especially those regularly exposed to fires, were examined bimonthly. Those who did not have a ladder and a barrel of water in their houses were penalized.¹⁶ Fires were a part of daily life of the city such that James Dallaway wrote fires were so frequent one could not witness two subsequent months without one.¹⁷

Cities all around the world quite likely suffered from fires because of various reasons. “Between 1601 and 1867, there were 1,798 fires in Edo, including 49 large fires, whereas Osaka experienced only six large fires and Kyoto nine. Although it is open to the sea on the south-west, Nagasaki is surrounded by mountains, so the winds blow from the north-east to the south-west. There were smaller fires in Nagasaki, which is a smaller city than Edo, but the number of incidents was still high. Nagasaki suffered from 232 fires during the period 1633–1868, including those that occurred in suburban areas.”¹⁸ Also, fire was relatively one of the most occurring event in European cities. “Statistical studies on the frequency of urban fires show that barely one European city survived the early modern period without having fallen victim to a blast caused by war, arson, recklessness or lightning.”¹⁹

Istanbul undoubtedly played a crucial role in the history of Ottomans. Istanbul as the capital city was the sole center of imperial administration. Kuban says “just as all political power was concentrated in a single point, so all social and cultural activities were gathered in a single center. It was here, too, that the manifestation of economic

¹⁶ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1987), 91. Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 15.

¹⁷ James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancienne et Moderne* (Paris: Denné, 1799). Reprint: (Elibron Classics Replica Edition, 2005), 724.

¹⁸ Matsukata Fuyuko, “Fires and Recoveries Witnessed by the Dutch in Edo and Nagasaki: The Great Fire of Meireki in 1657 and the Great Fire of Kanbun in 1663,” *Itinerario*, vol. 37/ 03 (December 2013): 179.

¹⁹ Marie Luisa Allemeyer, “Profane hazard or divine judgement?: coping with urban fire in the 17th century,” *Historical Social Research* 32 (2007): 146.

power was displayed.”²⁰ Besides, Istanbul is important because the history of Istanbul is directly linked to the history of the Ottoman Empire, its rise, transformation, and decline. This city has been a home to various cultures, societies, religions, and empires. It was and still is one of the most important port cities along the Mediterranean Coast and has historically been a crucial area of connection between Europe, the Mediterranean, South Asia, Africa, and the Indian Ocean. Therefore, it is necessary to put fires under examination to understand the history of the city and the Ottomans’ culture, struggle, and achievements.

During the early modern period of Ottoman rule, Istanbul fires were noted to a certain extent in historical chronicles. The chronicles do not include all fires and they do not give us clear and detailed information about the severity of fires all the time, but they describe fires’ sizes by using words such as *azîm* (grand), *kebîr* (great) or *küllî* (catastrophic) and the number of losses. These sources somehow mention about the loss of properties, the number of victims (though not often) and the number of damaged architectural monuments and foundations such as imarets, public baths, mosques, fountains etc. Yet, no comprehensive list exist that would provide us an opportunity to quantify these fires either by location, by period or by severity. Such an attempt is crucial to understand the extent of fires, to imagine and to discuss their influence in the capital. Ultimately, such an attempt can promote new studies in the change of fires’ locations and severity. Also, to quantify fires can help further studies related with Ottoman studies since this attempt enables us to establish an important connection with urban development with regard to location of offices (politics), residential areas (architecture and society), commercial areas (economics) etc.

In this chapter, I created two lists of fires. One of the list includes fires from 1453 up to the beginning of the 18th century and the other one includes fires between 1701 and 1756. After listing fires, I created three maps named as figures in the thesis with the help of ArcGIS. These maps focus on the distribution of fires in space and they show change of fire locations as well as their severity over time. In addition to quantization of fires, insights about fires such as their outbreak reasons, adjuvant reasons, their spread and effect in the city are discussed in the next chapter.

²⁰ Doğan Kuban, *Ottoman Architecture*, trans. Adair Mill (London: Antique Collectors' Club, 2010), 67.

2.1. GIS and Sources for Data

GIS (Geographic Information System) is a technological system which integrates hardware and software to analyze, store, and map spatial data.²¹ One of the advantages of using this system is to create maps by using geographic data including locations or spatial concentrations of phenomena of interest. The use of GIS in this thesis aims to visualize the extent and clustering of fires in Istanbul. Thanks to creating maps, it is possible to see the locations of fires which enables us to understand prevalence and fire zones of Istanbul. In GIS,

The locational attributes of spatial data are formally expressed by means of the geometric features of points, lines or areal units (polygons) in a plane, or, less frequently, on a surface. This spatial referencing of observations is also the salient feature of a Geographic Information System (GIS), which makes it a natural tool to aid in the analysis of spatial data.²²

I use point patterns to show occurrences of fires at locations in Istanbul map. Anselin states that “point patterns represent a very appropriate perspective for the study of many phenomena in the social sciences”, which is fire in my study. Once the locations of fires are determined, a very detailed GIS proficiency is not needed to create maps.

My method in creating maps and pointing fire locations are very useful to see Istanbul’s fire-danger areas easily. However, pointing only fire locations would not be an original approach, for that reason I decided to increase the size of every point of fire between 1 and 5 (see a sub-title 2.2 of this chapter for explanations of these ratings), and colored them with reference to their centuries so that intensity and severity of fires could be seen in one visual source chronologically which also gives opportunity to see the shift of fires’ outbreak locations through the centuries.

Sources for the tables and three maps named as figures in the chapter include chronicles of Ottomans which offered the opportunity of creating the lists of fires. The chronicles of Ottomans vary from time to time as their writers die, dismissed or reassigned. For the first list named as Table 2.1 below, representing Istanbul fires from

²¹ Samantha Teixeira, “Qualitative Geographic Information Systems (GIS): An untapped research approach for social work,” *Qualitative Social Work* (2016): 1-15.

²² Luc Anselin, *Spatial Data Analysis with GIS: An Introduction to Application in the Social Sciences* (NCGIA Technical Report 92-10, University of California, August 1992), 4.

1453 up to the beginning of the 18th century, I benefit from *Solakzâde Tarihi*, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, *Tarih-i Naima*, and *Tarih-i Raşidi*.

Solakzâde Mehmed Hemdemî Çelebi's *Solakzâde Tarihi* (History of Solakzâde) covers the events that occurred from the beginning of the Ottoman state up until 1657. The fire of Hippodrome in 1489 is noted in History of *Solakzâde*, which is transliterated and prepared by Vahid Çubuk.²³

Selaniki Mustafa Efendi's *Tarih-i Selaniki* (History of Selaniki) covers the events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire between 1563 and 1600 in which Selaniki mentions 11 fire outbreaks in Istanbul. The first fire he mentions is the fire of 1569, the biggest fire of Istanbul in that period, which occurred in Jewish neighborhood in the reign of Sultan Selim II (1566-1574) and the last fire is the fire of Saraçhane in 1599 during the reign of Mehmed III.²⁴

Naima Mustafa Efendi's *Tarih-i Naima* (History of Naima) covers the events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire between 1592 and 1660 in which five fire outbreaks are mentioned in Istanbul. He notes one of the greatest fires of Istanbul as *harîk-i azîm* (great fire) dated 1633 in Cibali and noted three big fires and a small one (*harîk-i cüz'i*).²⁵

Raşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi's *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli* (History of Raşid and Zeyli) covers the events that occurred between 1660 and 1703, documented seven fires in Istanbul.²⁶

In addition to these sources, Eremya Çelebi Kömürçüyan's *İstanbul Tarihi* (History of Istanbul) really helped me to specify the neighborhoods' locations clearly.²⁷ Besides,

²³ Solakzâde Mehmed Hemdemî Çelebi, *Solakzâde Tarihi*, c.1, ed. Vahid Çubuk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), 409.

²⁴ Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), c.1, 76, 213, 246, 269, 316, 385, 416, c.2, 604, 739, 743, 795,

²⁵ Naima Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Naima*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007), c. 2, 754, c.3, 1064, 1356, 1427, and 1470.

²⁶ Raşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi, *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, prepared by Abdülkadir Özcan, Yunus Uğur, Baki Çakır and Ahmet Zeki İzgöer (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2013), c.1, 233, 234, 440, 450, 468, 561, and 604.

²⁷ Eremya Çelebi Kömürçüyan, *İstanbul Tarihi*, 2nd edition, trans. Hrand D. Andreasyan (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık ve Kitapçılık, 1988).

his *Yangınlar Tarihi* (History of Fires), which states social and economic circumstances of Istanbul, offers a different view from the chroniclers' accounts.²⁸ Also, İnci Tunay's *Istanbul Sur Kapıları* is a colorful book presenting information about Istanbul's gates together with photographs from the 1960s, helped me to locate the fire locations on the maps I prepared on GIS.²⁹ The table below shows the name fire locations and fires' ratings between the 15th and the beginning of the 18th centuries.

Table 2.1. Fire Ratings in Istanbul from the second half of the 15th century to 1701

Year	Fire Areas	Rating	Year	Fire Areas	Rating
15 th century	Around Fatih Mosque	1	1633	Cibali	4
1489	Hippodrome	2	1640	Balat	2
1515	Bedesten	3	1645	Bayezid	3
1539	Zindan Kapı	3	1652	Esir Hanı (Inn)	3
1540	The Old Palace	1	1652	Yenikapı	1
1546	Bedesten	3	1653	Odun Kapısı	3
1554	Baba Cafer Zindanı	2	1660	Ayazma/Odun Kapısı	5
1569	Yahudi Mahallesi	4	1665	Topkapı Palace	2
1574	Topkapı Palace	1	1673	Valide Inn/Mercan	2
1576	Unkapanı	1	1679	Fener	2
1588	Bedesten	3	1680	Mahmud Pasha	2
1590	Karaman Pazarı	1	1683	Taşantaşı (Close to Bayezid)	2
1590	Saraçhane	1	1683	Odun Kapısı	3
1591	Around Şehzade Mosque	1	1687	Around The Old Palace (Bayezid)	3

²⁸ Hrand D. Andreasyan, "Eremya Çelebi'nin Yangınlar Tarihi," in *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tarih Dergisi* 27 (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1973): 59-84.

²⁹ İnci Tunay, *İstanbul Sur Kapıları* (İstanbul: İBB Kültür A.Ş., 2014): 116-132.

Table 2.1. (continued)

1592	Around Ayasofya	2	1687	The Old Palace (Bayezid)	1
1593	Saraçhane	2	1688	Balık Pazarı	3
1594	Ayasofya	2	1691	Mısır Çarşısı	2
1594	Tavuk-bazarı	2	1693	Cibali Kapısı	3
1598	Around Fatih	1	1693	Ayazağa Kapısı	4
1598	Around Fatih	2	1693	Ayazma Kapısı	2
1598	Around Ayasofya	1	1695	Bedesten	1
1599	Saraçhane	1	1698	Istanbul Gunpowder, Şehremini	3
1606	Yahudi Mahallesi	3	1701	Bedesten	2

The table shows 46 fires that occurred from the 15th century to the beginning of the 18th century. Two fires from 1453 to 1500, twenty fires from 1501 to 1600, twenty four fires from 1601 to 1701, broke out in Istanbul. Kömürçiyân notes the following quote:

Fires. The most severe one of numerous fires in Byzantine Empire occurred during the reign of Emperor Justinian and especially Leon the Great. According to the Alexandre's Chronicles, with this fire, the city burnt out all the way between two coastlines. During Ottoman times, the catastrophe of fire continued with its all severity. Fires damaging only a few houses were taken as unimportant matter for Istanbul. Many times, people residing one side of the city did not hear about the burning of a few houses in the other side.³⁰

Although fires were so much part of daily life that people consider them unimportant in Ottoman Istanbul, the chronicles in the 18th century, which I benefited to create the second list named as Table 2.2 representing Istanbul fires between 1701 and 1756, do not include all fires and they do not give us clear and detailed information about the fires.

³⁰ P.Ğ. İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, 67.

It is not clear how chroniclers decided to write about a fire or not, but it is for sure they did not write about every fire.³¹ For example, Raşid Efendi did not note any fire other than the Gedikpaşa in 1720, but Cezar claims that there were three other fires as well by referring to Schneider and notes that especially the fire in March of the same year destroyed almost 1,000 houses around Fener and Balat.³²

As can be seen in Table 2.2 below, during the years of 1736, 1737, 1738, and 1739 there was not a single fire noted. Those were the years when the Ottoman Empire was at war against Austria and Russia until the treaty of Belgrade, which was one of the most important and beneficial treaties the Ottoman Empire had signed in the 18th century.³³ For the second half of the 18th century, a sharp decrease is observed in fires in the chronicles, which certainly does not mean fires were gone or successfully prevented, but it may mean that more important issues came to the forefront such as wars or serious political and military events.³⁴ For example, Ahmed Vasıf Efendi's history, in the second part, does not include even a single entry about fires between 1769 and 1774³⁵ when the Ottoman Empire was one more time at war against Russia until the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which ended the war with the severe disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire.³⁶

It is possible to speculate that chroniclers did not write about all fires due to the difficult economic, military, and political issues of the time and it seems that chroniclers preferred to write and focus mostly on these kind of issues rather than fires. However, one should keep in mind that the chronicler of the time went wherever the state governors went. Therefore, in times of war it is highly possible that there were no Sultan and state officials in the city during the war period and it seems as the actual

³¹ Selim Karahasanoğlu, *Kadı ve Günlüğü Sedreddinzâde Telhisî Mustafa Efendi Günlüğü (1711-1735) Üstüne Bir İnceleme* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 163.

³² Mustafa Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 349. Selim Karahasanoğlu in *Kadı ve Günlüğü Sedreddinzâde Telhisî Mustafa Efendi Günlüğü (1711-1735) Üstüne Bir İnceleme* notes five fires in 1720 (four of them named as harîk-i cüzî), but those fires were not only within the walled city, but throughout Istanbul, 170.

³³ For detailed information about the war and its results, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, vol. 4, part 1, 7th Edition, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011): 250-297.

³⁴ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 362.

³⁵ Nevzat Sağlam, "Ahmed Vâsif Efendi ve Mehâsinü'l-Asâr ve Hakâ'iku'l-Ahbâr'ı 1166-1188/1752-1774" (Unpublished PhD. diss., Marmara University, 2014), 327-588.

³⁶ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, vol. 4, part 1, 7th Edition (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011): 365-427.

reason of the absence of the fires in the chronicles. That is to say, chroniclers of that period were writing momentous events in which the state officials and Sultan appeared, thus unaddressed fires in the chronicles stemmed from Sultan's and higher officials's absence.

While benefiting from the chroniclers concerning the 18th century such as *Nusretname*, *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, *Subhî Tarihi*, and *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, I faced difficulty during the determination of fires' dates since the same fires were even noted by different chroniclers on different dates. Therefore, I made a cross check and gave the dates in order to present more accurate data.

Silahdâr Fındıklı Mehmed Ağa's *Nusretnâme* covers the events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire between 1695 and 1721 in which Mehmed Ağa mentions three fire outbreaks in Istanbul. The first fire he mentions is the fire of 1701, a fire that occurred in Kapalıçarşı in the reign of Mustafa II. The second fire, which is one of the biggest fires in Istanbul during the 18th century, is the fire of Bayezid in 1715. The last fire Mehmet Ağa mentions is the fire of Cibali in 1718, which considerably damaged the city.³⁷

The second and third volumes of Raşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi's *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli* (History of Raşid and Asım Efendi) cover the events that occurred between 1703 and 1722, documenting eleven fires in Istanbul.³⁸

Subhî Mehmed Efendi's *Subhî Tarihi* (History of Subhî) covers the events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire between 1730 and 1744 in which fourteen fire outbreaks are mentioned in Istanbul. He notes two of the fires as small fires (*harik-i cüz'i*) and for others he does not use any adjective to specify their size.³⁹

³⁷ Silahdâr Fındıklı Mehmet Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, ed. Mehmet Topal, (Unpublished PhD. diss., Marmara University, 2001), 512, 833, and 896.

³⁸ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 697, 779, 797, 927, 960, 1097, 1165, 1227, 1228, 1291, and 1292, and v.3, 1333, 1345, 1359, 1360, 1389, 1422, 1428, 1435, 1437, 1474, 1490, 1492, 1513, 1517, 1558, and 1559.

³⁹ Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi*, ed. Mesut Aydınar, (İstanbul: Kitapevi, 2007), 47, 153, 171, 179, 249, 256, 614, 656, 657, 712, 727, 729, and 755.

Ahmed Vasıf Efendi's *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar* covers the events that occurred between 1752 and 1774. Until 1756 twelve fires are mentioned in the chronicle. The first one is the fire of Langa in 1754 and the last one is the fire of Cibali in 1756. Two of these fires were the biggest ones, which Ahmed Vasıf Efendi called as *harîk-i küllî* and *ihrâk-ı kebîr*, five of them were small ones, and the rest were moderate-sized.⁴⁰

The table 2.2 below was created after scanning the above-mentioned sources and it shows the name of fire locations and fires' ratings. There were seventy-five fires between 1701 and 1756 and seven of those seventy-five fires were great ones.

Table 2.2. Fire Ratings in Istanbul between 1701 and 1756

Years	Fire Areas	Rating	Years	Fire Areas	Rating
1701	Kapalıçarşı	2	1732	Haliç Ayakapusu	2
1703	Alaca Hamam	2	1732	Bayezid	1
1707	Vezneciler Çarşısı	2	1733	Fatih	1
1708	Hocapaşa	3	1735	Unkapanı	3
1715	Bayezid	5	1735	Şehzâdebaşı	2
1715	Bayezid	3	1740	Bâbîâlî	2
1715	Saray-ı Âtik	1	1741	Ayasofya	2
1716	Karaman Çarşısı	2	1741	Sultanahmet	1
1716	Saraçhane	1	1741	Ayasofya	3
1718	Cibali	5	1741	Bayezid	2
1719	Gedikpaşa	4	1741	Kadırga	1
1720	Ayvansaray (Kazasker Mosque)	2	1742	Şehzâdebaşı	2
1721	Fener (Sultan Selim Mosque)	1	1744	Fatih Mosque	1
1721	Balat	3	1745	Fener- Balat	3
1722	Karaman Çarşısı	2	1746	Hocapaşa	2
1723	Karaman Çarşısı	1	1746	Balat	2

⁴⁰ Ahmed Vasıf Efendi, *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, prepared by Nevzat Sağlam (Unpublished PhD. diss., Marmara University, 2014), 28, 30, 33, 41, 45, 56, 58, 67, 76, 81, and 83.

Table 2.2. (continued)

1724	Cibali	1	1746	Samatya	3
1724	Bahçekapı	1	1750	Bahçekapı	1
1724	Süleymaniye	2	1750	Kapalıçarşı	3
1724	Cibali	2	1750	Küçükpazar (Ayazma Kapısı)	3
1724	Yedikule	1	1751	Büyük Karaman Çarşısı	4
1725	Hocapaşa	1	1752	Gedikpaşa	1
1725	Halicılar	1	1752	Bayezid	1
1725	Gedikpaşa	2	1752	Sultan Selim	1
1725	Hocapaşa	2	1752	Langa	2
1725	Fener (Sultan Selim Mosque)	1	1754	Yenikapı	3
1725	Edirnekapı	3	1754	Cibâli	2
1726	Tahtakale	2	1754	Şehzadebaşı	1
1726	Bayezid (The Old Palace)	1	1754	Aksaray	1
1726	Fatih (Çukur Hamam)	1	1754	Uzunçarşı	2
1726	Mahmutpaşa	1	1754	Sultan Hamam	2
1727	Avratpazarı	1	1755	Ayvansaray	1
1727	Kutucular	3	1755	Kadırga	2
1727	Zindankapı	2	1755	Hocapaşa	5
1729	Balat	4	1756	Samatya	1
1731	Şengül Hamam	1	1756	Alacahamam	1
1732	Koska	2	1756	Cibali	5
1732	Molla Gürani	2			

By processing Table 2.1 and 2.2 three maps (named as figures) of Istanbul fires were created. The figure 2.1 does not only illustrate the locations of fires or fire zones, but their sizes as well and the figure 2.2 shows the location of fires through centuries, which shows how fire locations shift from the main road to the Golden Horn. The figure 2.3 gives us an opportunity to make a comparison the fires occurred between

the 15th and the beginning of the 18th centuries with the fires occurred between 1701 and 1756.

2.2. Fire Rating and Maps

Before discussing about the figures and their importance it is needed to make “fire rating” clear. The problem I faced was not easy to overcome. Starting from the 16th century, chroniclers of the Ottoman Empire named fires as *hariki kebir/ekber*, *ihraki kebir* (*great fire*) and sometimes *harîk-i cüz’i* (*small fire*), to remark the severity of fires. However, I could not rate fires in the maps according to these adjectives because primary and secondary sources do not always include these adjectives to remark a fire. Furthermore, fires named as great or small did not always have the same amount of damage. The sources did not always either describe fires’ starting points or spread area, therefore I could not draw a line between a start point and stop point of fire to calculate its range and rate them from 1 to 5. Instead, I read all fires and realize that all fires somehow mention about the loss of properties, the number of victims (though not often) and the number of damaged architectural monuments and foundations such as imarets, public baths, mosques, fountains etc. so I rated fires according to these criteria.

The fires I rated as 1 are the ones which mostly started and ended in the same place and extinguished immediately or at most destroyed tens of houses around it. For example, the fire of 1574 in Topkapı Palace was extinguished with the help of the Janissaries before it spread over the city.⁴¹ Another example is the fire of 1725 which broke out in Hocapaşa, around Hocapaşa Mosque. While firefighting was ongoing, a heavy rain started and stopped the fire.⁴²

Fires I rated 2 are the ones which destroyed more than hundred buildings, spread around slightly and caused death or destroyed some buildings which were assumed valuable. The fire of Hippodrome in 1489 sets an example. A strike of lightning hit Güngörmez Church in Hippodrome, which was used as a gunpowder storage. “A lightning struck down the high dome of the church. It exploded that solid building, tore it down, destroying even its foundations. It destroyed to the grounds the four

⁴¹ Cezar, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul’da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler,” 334.

⁴² Ibid., 351-352.

adjoining neighborhoods around. All the residents thereof perished and merged into soil all at once.”⁴³ Another fire rated as 2 is the Topkapı Palace fire on July 24 of 1665 set by a female slave, caused a massive destruction and burnt down the entire the Tower of Justice, Kubbealtı building in which the divan meetings gathered, outer treasury, upper Defterhânes, the gate of Dârüssaâde, Chief Black Eunuch’ rooms, Vâlide Sultan part, and the kitchens, as well as the harem itself.⁴⁴

Fires I rated as 3 are generally the ones which spread around and considerably damaged the city, caused death, destroyed several hundred of houses and burned for a while. The fire around Bayezid in 1645 is one of them. Fire occurred and increased its influence because of wind. The fire spread over the buildings rapidly and reached Yenikapı, Langa, Kumkapı, and the city walls and lasted for thirty hours.⁴⁵ The fire destroyed non-Muslim districts, especially districts of Armenians and Rums. Eremya saw the fire scene in person and wrote them down later. He stated that the Armenian Church of Asduadzadzin and four Rum churches burned down in this fire. When Sultan İbrahim (1640-1648) visited the fire scene, he immediately ordered his grand vizier to start rebuilding these churches.⁴⁶ Another example is the fire of Şehremîni in 1698. The fire occurred because of a spark at the gunpowder storage. 310 *kantar*⁴⁷ gunpowder blew up, which caused 7 laborers and 22 packhorses to perish and approximately 425 houses were devastated.⁴⁸

Fires I rated as 4 are mostly the ones which could not be stopped by human efforts and destroyed a remarkable scale of the city. The number of destroyed structures were

⁴³ Solak-zâde Mehmed Hemdemî Çelebî, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, v. 1, ed. Vahit Çabuk, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), 410.

⁴⁴ Nazire Karaçal Türkal, “Silahdar Fındıklı Mehmet Ağa, Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065-22 Ca.1106/1654- 7 Şubat 1695)”, (Unpublished PhD. diss., Marmara University, 2012), 408. Murat Kocaşlan, in the final chapter of his book, refers in detail to the fire that occurred in 1665 in the Topkapı Palace. Kocaşlan benefited from various sources for the fire and he discusses post-fire restoration and reconstruction issues and the amount of various materials brought from different regions in this process together with their cost to the state. Aside from discussing architectural and economic dimensions of the reconstruction process, Kocaşlan states that reconstruction process indicates political power/legitimacy, that’s why Turhan Sultan revealed the political power and authority during the post-fire restoration. See: Murat Kocaşlan, *IV. Mehmed Saltanatında Topkapı Sarayı Haremi: İktidar, Sınırlar ve Mimari*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2014), 178-263.

⁴⁵ *Tarih-i Naima*, v.3, 1064.

⁴⁶ Andreasyan, “Eremya Çelebi’nin Yangınlar Tarihi”, 64-65.

⁴⁷ 1 *kantar* is 56,449 kg, which means in this fire 17.499,19 kg gunpowder did explode. For converting *kantar* to kilogram

see, <http://kubbealtilugati.com/sonuclar.aspx?km=kantar&mi=0> (accessed on 06.03.2015)

⁴⁸ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.1, 561.

mentioned with thousand, dismissal of some officials took place and the fires influenced the politics, economy, and social life deeply. The example of 1569 fire in Istanbul which occurred in Jewish neighborhood was one the biggest fires of the capital.⁴⁹ Since Cafer Ağa (Agha of the Janissaries) was ill, the Janissaries turned this situation into an opportunity and watched for their own benefit (filling their purses), let alone to work properly in order to extinguish the fire. As a result, Cafer Agha was dismissed and Siyâvuş Agha became the new Agha of Janissaries.⁵⁰ Hammer noted according to foreign representatives' reports, 36,000 houses burned down in this fire. Although the number seems exaggerated, it is still formidable.⁵¹ Another example, the fire of 1633, noted by Naima, is known as one of the greatest fires in the capital. The fire occurred in Cibali and it spread all over the city because of the wind. Although the Sultan was out there helping to extinguish fire, he, with the Janissaries, could not do anything. Naima called this fire *Harîk-i Azîm* (the great fire) and noted that all of these people were helpless and there was nothing to do, but praying. The fire lasted for 24 hours⁵², but Eremya Çelebi wrote that the fire lasted three days and nights.⁵³ The fire stopped when wind slowed down, but by then fire already damaged or destroyed poor houses, wooden palaces, *konaks* (mansion), minarets, mosques, madrasas, and Janissary barracks.⁵⁴ Kâtip Çelebi wrote this fire destroyed 1/5 of the capital.⁵⁵

Fires I rated as 5 are the biggest fires of the city which includes dismissal of officials, destruction of public properties, loss of markets, tens of thousands of houses, loss of urban fabric, interruption of social, political and economic life. These fires are also the ones which spread almost all over the city and burned down a major part of the capital. The fire of 1755 and 1756 set good examples. The fire of 1755 broke out in a house affecting a larger area and continued to burn in the area for thirty-three hours. The Sultan and Grand Vizier were at the fire scene, but they could not help in anyway due to a strong wind. The fire affected Bahçekapı, Mahmutpaşa, Cağaloğlu, Soğukçeşme,

⁴⁹ Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, v. 1., 76, 213, 246, 269, 316, 385, 416, v. 2: 604, 739, 743, 795,

⁵⁰ *Tarih-i Selaniki*, v.1., 76-77.

⁵¹ Joseph von Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, v. 6, trans. Mehmet Ata, (İstanbul: Üçdal Hikmet Neşriyat, 1983), 234.

⁵² *Tarih-i Naima*, v.2., 754-755.

⁵³ Andreasyan, "Eremya Çelebi'nin Yangınlar Tarihi," 62.

⁵⁴ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 335. *Tarih-i Naima*, v.2, 755.

⁵⁵ Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, v.1, (İstanbul: Ceride-i Havâdis Matbaası, 1287), 154 transferred by Kenan Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili," 21.

Divanoğlu, and Hagia Sophia. “The lead on the dome of Aya Sofya melted and the city seemed like an ocean of fire, fed by rivers of lava”.⁵⁶ Among the burnt buildings were Muhsinzade Palace in Bahçekapı, the Sublime Porte buildings, *Defterhâne* (the offices of the treasury), *Mehterhâne* (military band corps) buildings in Sultanahmet, and Çuhacılar Inn in Mahmutpaşa. The houses of both the government officials and ordinary people burned down.⁵⁷ Baron de Tott who witnessed the fire wrote that flames moved towards the center of the city and from there it spread into three branches. After a while, these branches united and Istanbul became a sea of flames.⁵⁸

In 1756, a fire broke out in Cibali and reached until Cerrahpaşa.⁵⁹ The flames spread out in different directions after reaching the fortress. The fire reached from Unkapanı to area covering Kaptan Pasha Bathhouse in Süleymaniye district, from Vefa Square to Şehzade Mosque direction and from here to Langa and to Saraçhane, Aksaray and from Aksaray to two different directions, namely, Avretpazarı and Yenikapı. Thus, the fire starting around the bay of the Golden Horn rested in Marmara Sea by-passing the center of Istanbul. Hammer wrote that the number of burnt structures was approximately eight thousands including 580 mills and bakeries, 70 bathhouses, 1 inn, 200 mosques, and 1,000 shops. The city was so ruined that the Vizier was spending most of his time on the reconstruction of the capital.⁶⁰

It is worth to note that quantification, visualization, listing of fires as well as claim of fire zones in this thesis are the first attempt concerning the history of Ottoman fires, thus “rating fires” can change when new fires, according to their severity and damage, are identified in the future studies.

The figure 2.1 below is the visualization of the data in Table 2.1, which enables us to see in which parts of the city fires were intense and which parts of the city mostly experienced the fires. It seems that the Golden Horn is the area where the frequency of fires were highest. Undoubtedly, the high frequency was not coincidence since high

⁵⁶ Philip Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World Desire, 1453-1924* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1995), 225.

⁵⁷ *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, 67.

⁵⁸ Baron de Tott, *Türkler ve Tatarlara Dair Hatıralar, Memoires Sur Les Turcs Et L Es Tartares Amsterdam 1784*, trans. Mehmet Reşan Uzmen (İstanbul: Kervan Kitapçılık, 1978), 20.

⁵⁹ P.Ğ. İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, 68-69.

⁶⁰ Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, v.15, 195.

population, spatial organizations of the area and wind played an important role in this. It appears from this data that there were three fire zones in Istanbul. First fire zone was from *Balat* to *Cibali*, second zone was from *Odunkapısı* to *Sirkeci* and the third one was from *Bayezid* to *Mahmutpaşa*. It is important to keep in mind that these areas were the commercial and residential areas of Istanbul where one could imagine the level of destruction, though slightly, from different angles.

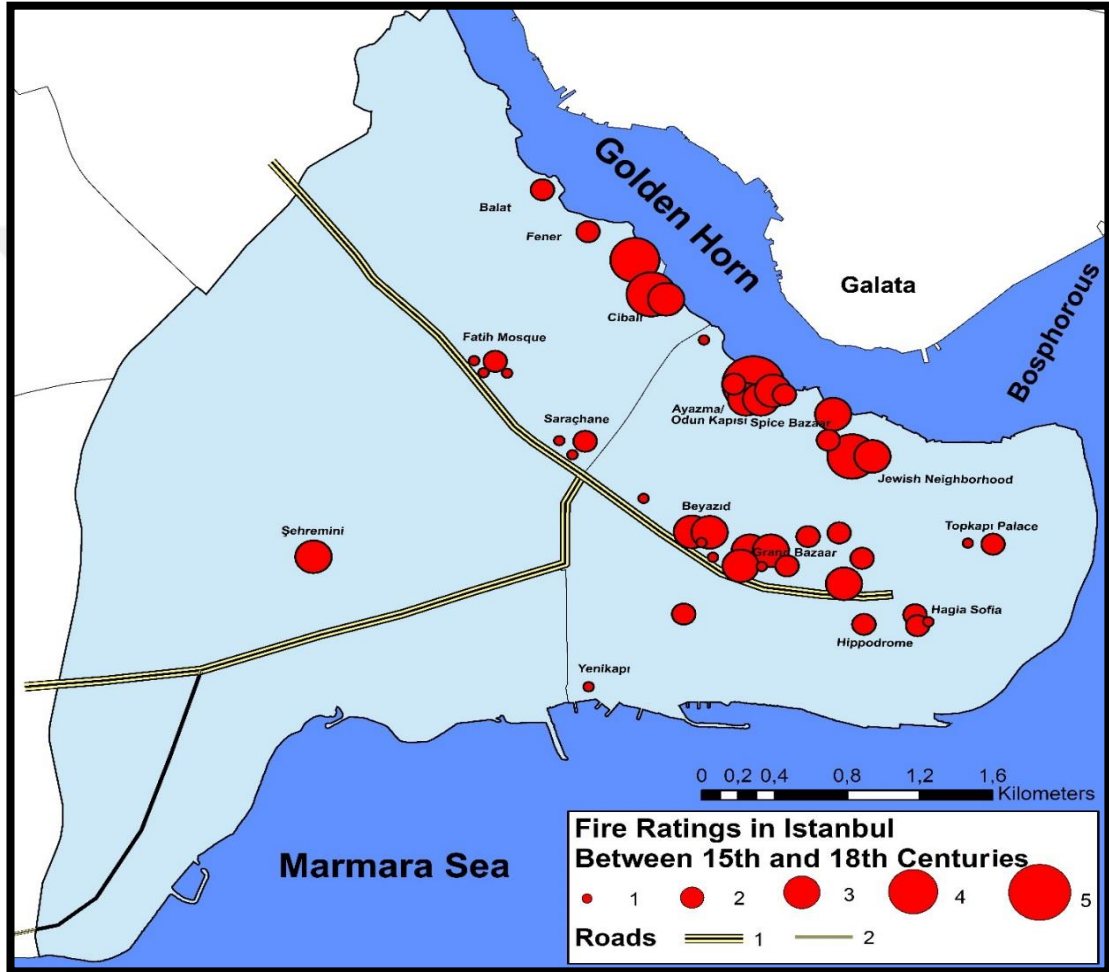


Figure 2.1. Fire Ratings in Istanbul between 15th and 18th Centuries

From figure 2.2 below, it is seen that the period following the conquest of Constantinople, fires mostly occurred in the center of the city, the main road which Byzantines called *mese* and the Ottomans called *Divânyolu*. Along with the migrations, fire locations seem to shift in the 17th century. Only the fire zone three (*Bayezid-Mahmutpaşa*) seems to suffer from fires chronically. In figure 2.1 and 2.2, it is seen where and when fires mostly occurred and thanks to fire rating attempt, the

severity of fires can be seen in figure 2.1. The reasons of fire occurrences and their locations will be discussed precisely in the next chapter.

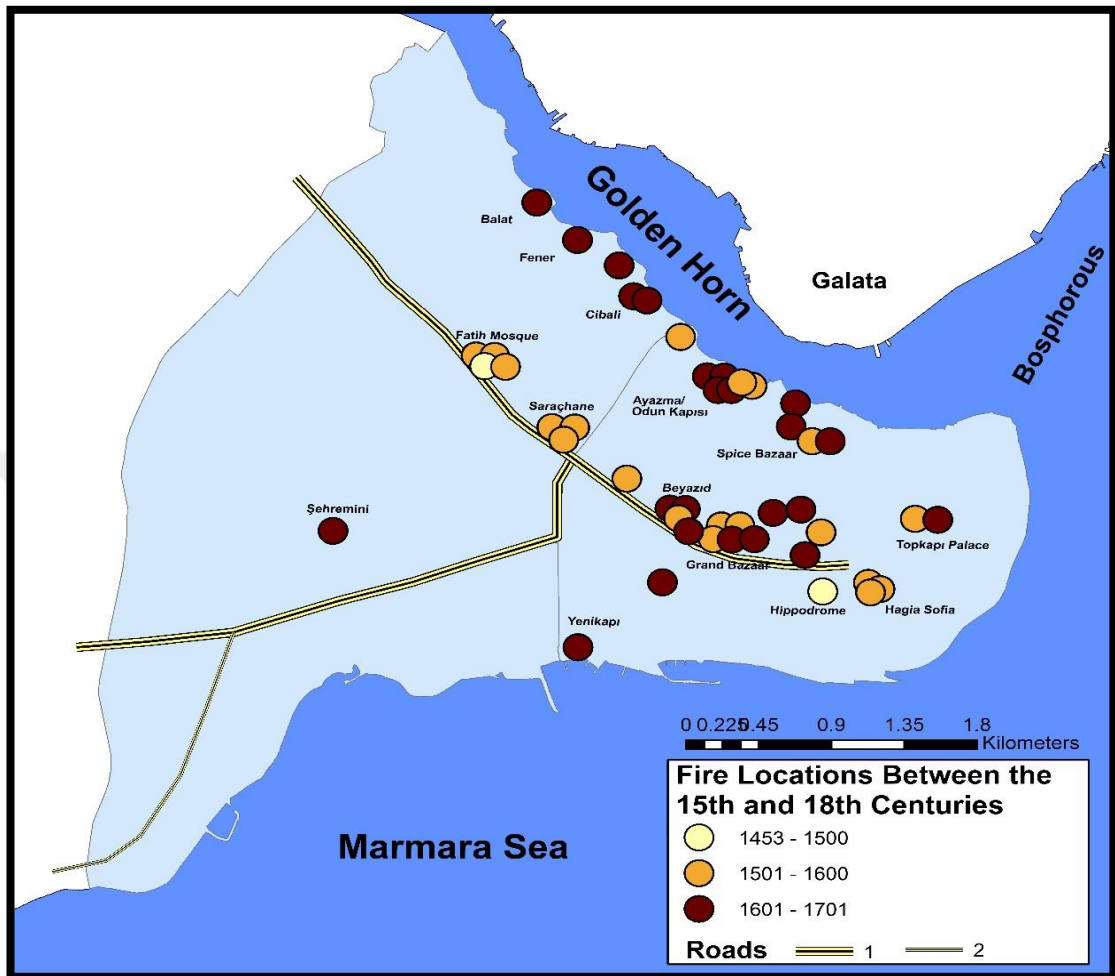


Figure 2.2. Fire Locations between the 15th and 18th Centuries

When it comes to the 18th century, Istanbul was in flames. The frequency of fires and their severity increased in the city. The figure 2.3 below shows most of the fires occurring in the area of the Golden Horn. The figure enables us to see in which parts of the city fires were quite destructive and which parts of the city mostly experienced the fires.⁶¹ In addition to three fire zones in the earlier centuries, a fourth zone appears in the 18th century on the opposite side of Mahmutpaşa, namely Gedikpaşa. Also, apart from the increase in the frequency of fires in zones and other locations in the capital, a number of fires with serious destructive power occurred in the city through the years.

⁶¹ A population boost in the commercial and residential area of Istanbul, which includes the Golden Horn districts, in the 18th century caused more devastation, poverty and misery. See, Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700/1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 33.

One may follow this difference by checking all the figures. By comparing tables and figures, it appears that the total number of fires occurred between the 15th and the beginning of 18th centuries was forty-six, while the number of fires occurred between 1701 and 1756 reached seventy-five. Additionally, among the forty-six fires until the 18th century, there was only one fire rated as a 5 and three fires rated as 4. However, between 1701 and 1756, there are four fires rated as 5 and three fires rated as 3. Thus, claiming that the Ottoman Istanbul was surfing on the waves of flames in the first half of the 18th century would not be wrong. The reasons of these fires were several and it seems that the Ottomans suffered from fires considerably which created the Ottoman perception towards fires and triggered prescriptive precautions.

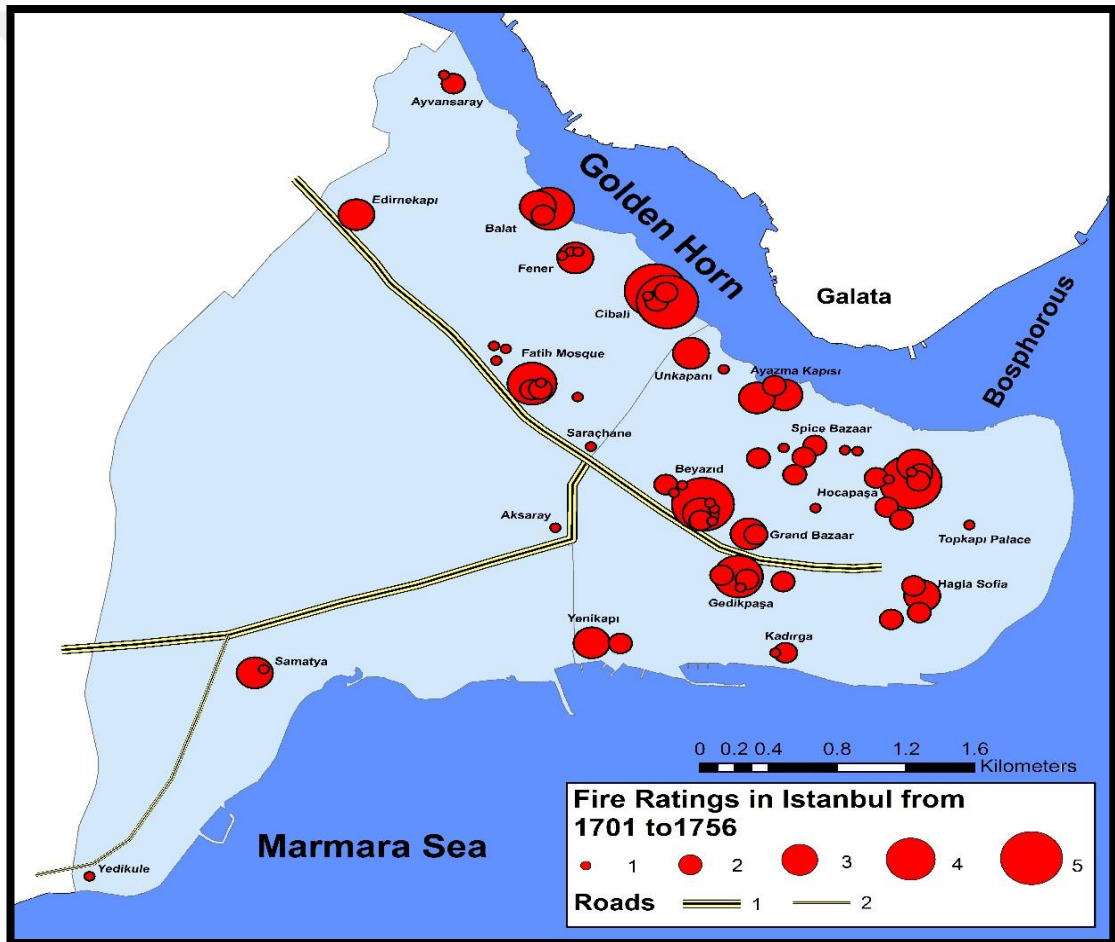


Figure 2.3. Fire Ratings in Istanbul from 1701 to 1756

CHAPTER III

ISTANBUL FIRES: REASONS, PERCEPTIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

Istanbul is the land of sparkling lights and beautiful fragrances; Bosphorus the blue lace filter of these lights and fragrances that flow from one side to the other between Europe and Asia; the Golden Horn, the Inner Harbor, the pool where the beauties flowing in from the Bosphorus have their last bath. This city, no doubt, is a corner of Paradise. I am staying here because I love the Turks. They are a matchless people befitting this matchless land which is a corner of Paradise. Their nature has a heavenly dignity and their kindness is more modest than of the angels. I am afraid of forgetting my fatherland amongst this great Nation. Fatherland, thou art dear, very dear! Yet the Turk, thou too art dear, very dear!

Comte de Boenneval

Information concerning fires were not very frequent in the Ottoman sources until the reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566). The first fire's date in the capital was not specified in the records, which occurred around Fatih Mosque/Sultan Pazarı, and burned down 123 *dükkan* (shops), 16 *oda* (rooms), and some other *dükkan* close to the site.⁶² The current firefighters and tools were not sufficient and useful to stop the fire and it considerably damaged the city.

Until the Tanzimat period the causes of fire outbreaks were several in the capital such as bolts of lightning, arsons, use of tobacco, paucity of water and materials used for heating, cooking, and illumination (candles and oil lamps).⁶³ Aside from diverse reasons of fire outbreaks in Istanbul, there were reasons increasing the strength of fires which were the geography of Istanbul, high population of Istanbul, its urban fabric, and materials used in the buildings. Due to the high population of Istanbul, buildings were mostly made of wood, built close to each other and streets were narrow, which expedited the spread of fires. Goodwin states that "between the great mosques, palaces and bazaars ran narrow, twisting streets of wooden houses, very prone

⁶² Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 327-328.

⁶³ Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili." 4. For additional information about the causes of 19th century fires see, O.N.Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, 1079.

to disastrous fires which usually started under cooking pots."⁶⁴ According to traveler Thévenot's account, all houses of Istanbul were made of wood, and therefore fires were frequent. If the weather was windy, fire spread quickly and burned down everything.⁶⁵ Fires did not mostly break out accidentally or they did not occur because of misfortune. According to James Dallaway, the reason for much of the fire damage was due to the materials used in construction. The main material was wood, not stone or other fire-resistant ones, which caused even little fires to turn into a conflagration. He added that major fires did not occur where buildings were made of stones or fire-resistant material.⁶⁶ But sometimes even buildings made of *kârgir* (stone or brick) could not stand up against flames. When a fire occurred in 1569 in a Jewish neighborhood, buildings made of *kârgir* also could not prevent flames, says Selaniki, the chronicler of the Empire.⁶⁷

The wooden houses of the capital brought death, as well as the pleasures of nature, closer to daily life.⁶⁸ One might ask why in such a city people still kept building their houses from wood. Especially, wooden structures increased after the earthquake of 1509 in the reign of Sultan Bayezid and were in high demand, therefore the city turned completely wooden in a short time.⁶⁹ The city kept its wooden characteristic for centuries and transition of the building materials from wood to *kârgir/kâgir* structures could not be achieved until the 19th century.⁷⁰ The reason behind this delay could be underlined as the geography of Istanbul, which was quite vulnerable to earthquakes, difficulty of the transportation of stone, and the exclusive cost of labor for construction. In addition to these, wooden structures were easy to heat and feasible for new modifications.⁷¹ What we need to keep in mind is that wood enabled for quick

⁶⁴ Jason Goodwin, "Istanbul City of the Sultans," in *The Great Cities in History*, ed. John Julius Norwich (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 165.

⁶⁵ Jean Thévenot, *Thévenot Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Stefanos Yerasimos, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2014), 58.

⁶⁶ James Dallaway, 726.

⁶⁷ *Tarih-i Selaniki*, 76. *Ve işbu 976 senesinde İstanbul'da kazâ-i nâgehânî ile bir gice âteş-i azîm olup, ihrâk-ı küllî vakî oldu. Bir gün bir gice tutuşdu. Yahûd tâ'ifesinin kârgir binâları hâ'il olmadı.*

⁶⁸ Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World Desire, 1453-1924*, 224.

⁶⁹ Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 17-18.

⁷⁰ For the 19th century Istanbul, see: Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*.

⁷¹ Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili," 5.

and cheap rebuilding right after the extinguishing of a fire.⁷² Besides, “in spite of the prohibition on the use of wood because of the danger of fire, it remained the basic material for the dwelling houses of the common people as well as members of the court. This trend was nourished by a very rich tradition of domestic architecture, beside the advantages offered by the rapidity of construction made possible by the use of wood.”⁷³ However, Uğur Tanyeli strongly claims what have been written about the highly use of wood structures in the literature is deficient. Tanyeli claims that in Ottoman Istanbul, the construction type called *himiş* (half-timbered) construction was more popular. The elements used in *himiş* construction were adobe, wattle, brick, and stone fill. In this type of constructions, wood was used so that building would be capable of bearing the weight. Furthermore, wood was expensive in the early modern era Istanbul because wood was brought to Istanbul as a finished product which was highly expensive to buy and transport to the capital. Only in the 19th century the wood was cheaper thanks to the developments in technology.⁷⁴ Starting from the conquest of Istanbul by Mehmet II, the building project of the city took place along with bringing many people from different corners of Anatolia and Balkans, and the transformation of the city began.⁷⁵ The population of Istanbul, at the end of Mehmed II’s reign, was approximately 100,000.⁷⁶ In the coming centuries the population of the city kept increasing. Cristobal de Mansionon, a Spanish slave in the Mansion of Sinan Pasha around the middle of the Suleymanic era, calculates the population of Istanbul as 550,000.⁷⁷ Traveler John Sanderson, who visited Constantinople in 1594, stated the population of city as 1,231,207.⁷⁸ This information might be exaggerated since Cem Behar, in his study uses different sources and estimates the population, which seems more accurate than Sanderson’s. According to this study, the population of

⁷² Robert Mantran, *17.Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul*, c.1, trans. Mehmed Ali Kılıçbay and Enver Özcan, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1990), 35.

⁷³ Doğan Kuban, *Ottoman Architecture*, 563.

⁷⁴ Uğur Tanyeli, *İstanbul 1900-2000: Konutu ve Modernleşmeyi Metropelden Okumak* (İstanbul: Ofset Yapımevi, 2005).

⁷⁵ See: Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and The Construction of The Ottoman Capital*, (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2009). Halil İnalçık, *The Survey of Istanbul, 1455*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 1-11. Aptullah Kuran, “A Spatial Study of Three Ottoman Capitals: Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul”, *Muqarnas*, Vol. 13 (1996), 122-130.

⁷⁶ Halil İnalçık, “İstanbul: Türk Devri” in *TDVİA*, vol. 3 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, İstanbul, 2001), 233.

⁷⁷ Halil İnalçık, *The Survey of Istanbul, 1455*, 392-393.

⁷⁸ John Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1585-1602*, ed., Sir William Foster, (London: Ashgate, 2010), 82-83.

Istanbul was 145,000-150,000 in 1477, 400,000 in 1520-1530, 700,000 in 1571-1580, 1,000,000 in 1640, 800,000 in 1681, and 600,000-750,000 in 1690.⁷⁹

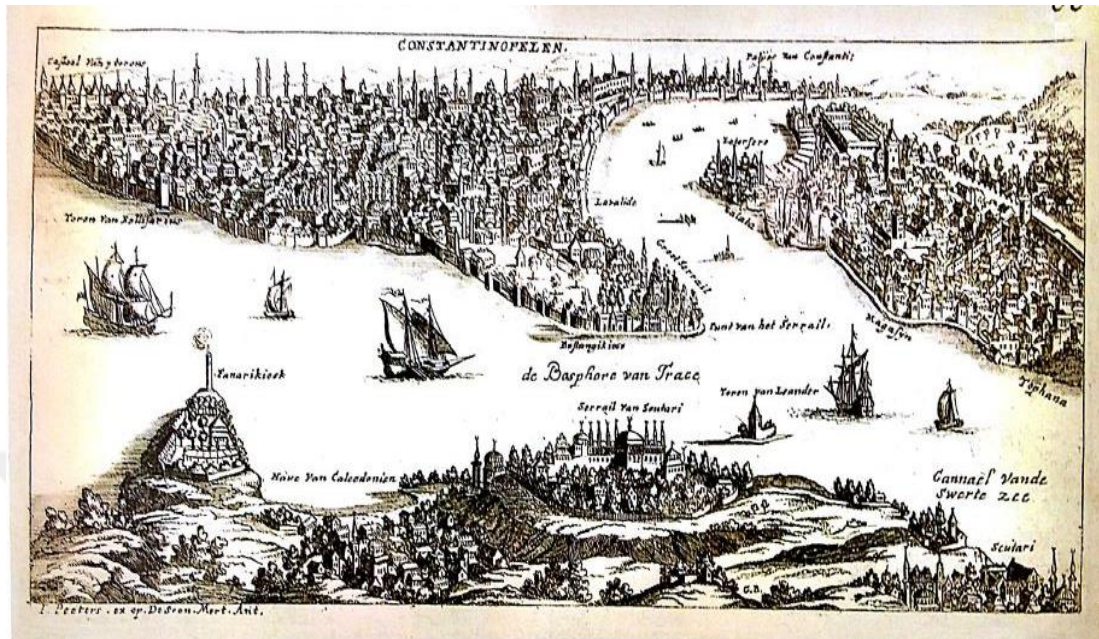


Figure 3.1. Bird's-eye view map-panorama representation of Constantinople by Joseph Grelot, published in 1680 in Paris. (Ayşe Yetişkin Kubilay, *Istanbul Haritaları 1422-1922/Maps of Istanbul 1422-1922*, (Denizler Kitapevi, Istanbul, 2010), 59.

Grelot's map (see Figure 3.1) is one of the most important representations of the city for the 17th century. "The striking feature is how crowded the city appears, both in the number of buildings and in the population of its inhabitants."⁸⁰ Mantran describes Istanbul as the most populated city in Europe in the 17th century.⁸¹ When the population increased, the city became crowded in neighborhoods where people lived in close proximity in wooden houses and narrow streets, which caused incredible suffering in case of a fire. It was not coincidence that major fires in the history of the city mostly occurred in such crowded neighborhoods. The state assumed therefore population growth and overcrowding in one area as one of the reasons causing fires in the city.⁸²

⁷⁹ Cem Behar, *The Population of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey 1500-1927* (Ankara: State Institute of Statistics, 1996), 69-70.

⁸⁰ Ayşe Yetişkin Kubilay, *Istanbul Haritaları 1422-1922/Maps of Istanbul 1422-1922*, (İstanbul: Denizler Kitapevi, 2010), 59.

⁸¹ Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul*, c.1, 9.

⁸² Halil İnalçık, "İstanbul," *TDVİA*, v. 23, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 234.

An increase in the number of fires parallel to the population growth shows that the authorities were not wrong in their assumption. Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, the chronicler of the Empire, documented 17 major fires in the capital in his history covering the years between 1563 and 1600.⁸³ Afterwards, Mustafa Naima the chronicler of the Ottoman Empire in his history, which covers the years between 1591 and 1659, noted one of the great fires of Istanbul as *harîk-i azîm* (great fire) dated 1633 and noted three big fires and a *harîk-i cüz'i* (small one).⁸⁴ Raşid Mehmed Efendi, the chronicler of the Ottoman Empire, documented seven fires in the capital in the years between 1660 and 1703.⁸⁵ As the years passed, the number of fires increased in parallel to the population of the capital. In the 15th century there were only two fires, in the 16th century number of fires were 20, and in the 17th century 24 fires occurred. The biggest fires occurred in the most crowded districts of the capital such as Cibali, Balat, and Unkapanı.

Starting from the 16th century, chroniclers of the Ottoman Empire named fires as *hariki kebir/ekber*, *ihraki kebir* (great fire) and sometimes *harîk-i cüz'i* (small fire), which indicate the impressiveness of fires. Fires influenced the city so deeply that chroniclers could not ignore to mention them. In the words of an Ottoman proverb, “Were it not for the fires of Istanbul the threshold of its houses would be paved with gold”⁸⁶, which shows how Istanbul and fires were as close as two coats of paint. When we look at the number of fires occurring in the city through ages, this data validates the proverbs told for the capital city of the Ottoman Empire.

3.1. Effects of Nature on Fire Behavior

Geographical position of Istanbul is open to winds, especially *poyraz* (north-east wind) and southerly winds, especially *lodos* (south-west). Among these two, *poyraz* was the most influential one as adjuvant reason for fires. In Istanbul, where especially the north-east winds were frequent, it was an inevitable situation that a fire starting in the *Haliç* (Golden Horn) coast quickly could entirely dominate the city, since this wind, blowing on the direction north-east, formed a current to the direction of *Suriçi* (the

⁸³ Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, “Great fire in the metropolis: The case of the Istanbul conflagration of 1569 and its description by Marcantonio Barbaro,” in *Mamluks and Ottoman: Studies in honour of Michael Winter*, ed., David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon, (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 134.

⁸⁴ *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 2, 754, c. 3, 1064, 1356, 1427, and 1470.

⁸⁵ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v. 1, 233, 234, 440, 450, 468, 561, and 604.

⁸⁶ Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World Desire, 1453-1924*, 224.

walled city) and *Kumkapı*, located in the northern shore of Marmara Sea. As a result, throughout history, the cause of almost all of the fires that broke out in the Golden Horn and spread to the inside of the city was the blowing north-east wind. The district in question can thus be considered as the starting point of great fires.⁸⁷ Cem Behar indicates that almost all recorded big fires in the city broke out around the Golden Horn districts such as *Balat*, *Fener*, *Unkapını*, *Cibali*, and *Ayazma* and the city center such as *Fatih*, *Ayasofya*, *Aksaray*, *Sirkeci*, and *Hocapaşa* where the intensity of population, trade, and *imalathane* (workshops) were high. Classifying fire zones into three may give us a clearer picture of the city fires and their axis, namely, *Balat-Cibali*, *Odunkapısı-Sirkeci* and *Bayezid-Mahmutpaşa*. Some devastating fires that broke out in these areas, with the influence of northeast wind, intensified quickly and damaged the city seriously.⁸⁸ Even if there was only the existence of spark, the northeast wind could immediately turn it into conflagration. All chroniclers of the Ottoman Empire and travelers who witnessed fires in the city emphasized the influence of the northeast wind as one of the most important adjuvant reasons for fires.⁸⁹

The fire of 1633 is known as one of the greatest fires in the capital. Naima explains how wind influenced the fire. To underline its importance, Naima uses terms such as *rüzgar-ı şedid* (violent wind), *şedid poyraz rüzgarı* (violent north-eastern wind), and *hiddet-i rüzgar* (fury of wind). The fire broke out in Cibali, a residential area “famous” with its fires, and it expanded all over the city because of the wind. Although the Sultan was out there helping to extinguish fire, he, with the Janissaries, could not do anything. Naima called this fire *Harik-i Azîm* (the great fire) and noted that all of these people were helpless and there was nothing to do, but praying. The fire lasted for 24 hours

⁸⁷ Yıldız, “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili”, 20.

⁸⁸ Cem Behar, *Bir Mahallenin Doğumu ve Ölümü (1494-2008): Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Kasap İlyas Mahallesi*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2014), 100.

⁸⁹ The city of Edo, today known as Tokyo, and Nagasaki were two cities suffered from wind-fueled flames more than other cities in early-modern Japanese which did not especially face the Pacific Ocean or the East China Sea. “Edo lies in the center of Kanto plain, there is nothing to prevent strong winds. The geographical setting of these two cities, among others, is one of four factors that contributed to many of the fires in Japan. The winter monsoon from the north or northwest caused by the Siberia anticyclone is steady and powerful from December to February, and the first summer monsoon from the south, called *haru ichiban* (the first wind of spring) in March or April is also quite strong. During these months, the combination of dry air, strong winds, and individual fires set to keep homes warm create fire hazard conditions. Even today, the season when most fires occur is winter.” See, Matsukata Fuyuko, “Fires and Recoveries Witnessed by the Dutch in Edo and Nagasaki: The Great Fire of Meireki in 1657 and the Great Fire of Kanbun in 1663,” in *Itinerario*, v. 37, (December 2013), 172.

and people stood back to watch *El-hükmü lillah* (the judgment is to Allah).⁹⁰ According to Eremya Çelebi the fire lasted three days and nights.⁹¹ The fire stopped when wind slowed down, but by then fire already damaged or destroyed poor houses, wooden palaces, *konaks* (mansion), minarets, mosques, madrasas, and Janissary barracks.⁹² It is not in the range of possibility to know the cost of material and wealth lost in the fire. Christians were not affected by this fire since their neighborhoods were not in the range of the fire.⁹³ Kâtip Çelebi wrote this fire destroyed 1/5 of the capital. “Only Allah knows the number of houses, shops, *hamams* (baths), *fırın*s (bakeries), and mosques burned down.”⁹⁴

In 1645, another fire occurred around Bayezid close to *Darphane* (royal mint), and it was poyraz that increased the fire’s effect and expanded it. The fire spread until Yenikapı, Langa, Kumkapı, and the city walls and lasted for thirty hours.⁹⁵ This fire is important because of the damage it brought to the historical artifacts of Istanbul.⁹⁶ Eremya Çelebi was 9 years old when this fire occurred. The fire destroyed non-Muslim districts, especially mahalles of Armenians and Rums. Eremya saw the fire scene in person and wrote them down later. He stated that the Armenian Church of Asduadzadzin and four Rum churches burned down in this fire, which caused a deep sorrow among the people. When Sultan İbrahim (1640-1648) visited the fire scene, he saw the situation and ordered his grand vizier to immediately start rebuilding these churches.⁹⁷

In 1652, another fire started and spread throughout the capital with the influence of the wind. The fire occurred in Esir Inn (around the Column of Constantine) and continued from the night to morning and from morning to night. The fire was all over and it

⁹⁰ *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 2, 754-755. *Sa’adetlü padişah-ı âlem-penah bî-had bostancılar ile ve cümle Yeniçeri ve vüzerâ bi-esrihim hâzır olmuşlar iken Hak te’âlâ ibâdının aczin izhâr için muktezâ-i kudretin infâz edip hasbe’l kudre çok sa’y ve dikkat ettiler, itfâsı mümkün olmayıp cümlesi âciz kaldılar. Tazarru’u du’âdan gayri bir nesne ile müdâfa’ya imkan kalmadı. ... nâ-çâr geri çekilip “El-hükmü lillah” diyerek seyirci oldular.*

⁹¹ Andreasyan, “Eremya Çelebi’nin Yangınlar Tarihi,” 62.

⁹² Cezar, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul’da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler,” 335. *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 2, 755.

⁹³ Andreasyan, “Eremya Çelebi’nin Yangınlar Tarihi,” 62.

⁹⁴ Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, v.1, (İstanbul: Ceride-i Havâdis Matbaası, 1287), 154 transferred by Kenan Yıldız, “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili,” 21.

⁹⁵ *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 3, 1064.

⁹⁶ Cezar, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul’da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler,” 336. Yıldız, “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili,” 22.

⁹⁷ Andreasyan, “Eremya Çelebi’nin Yangınlar Tarihi,” 64-65.

spread until Kadirga where it turned into *ihrâk-ı azîm*. In this fire, Tavuk Pazarı and *Bedesten* (bazaar) burned. Also, *Sedefçiler Çarşısı* (a bazaar where mother of pearl made products were sold) was completely burned down.⁹⁸

In the beginning of 1683, a fire occurred in the house of Defterdâr (treasurer) Hasan Efendi around Tavşantaşı, which caused the burning of big and high mansions, and extended the range of its influence with the help of the wind. In this fire, the spire of Bayezid Mosque's left minaret caught fire and was burning like a candle for an hour.⁹⁹

In 1735, a fire broke out again in Unkapanı at the Golden Horn coast and started to spread because of strong winds. The fire successfully was stopped thanks to the great effort of the Janissaries. The agha of the Janissaries Abdullah broke his fingers and Cebecibaşı Mustafa was injured on his face during the firefighting efforts, for which they were honored by the Sultan with five hundred *dinar*¹⁰⁰. The pier side was completely burnt.¹⁰¹

On July 1751, a fire occurred in Büyük Karaman Çarşısı around the Fatih Mosque and wind-fueled flames went towards the At Pazarı and then Kızıtaşı where it burned down any building on its way. After Kızıtaşı, the fire headed towards Yeni Odalar (The Janissary barracks) where many buildings were burned as well. The Sarıgez and Halıcılar mansions were burnt down in this fire, which lasted for eighteen hours. Some of the Janissaries were billeted in other barracks and military buildings. Since a fire in the late 17th century destroyed the barracks and only could be rebuilt in four years, this time the needed money for rebuilding was provided after a week. Furthermore, the Sultan ordered the restoration of religious buildings at once. According to Schneider, this fire destroyed seven thousands houses and three thousand shops.¹⁰²

As seen in the mentioned incidents of fires, started the time during strong winds blew, could destroy all the city from beginning to the end in three days and nights, especially 50-70 thousand wooden houses. During non-windy

⁹⁸ *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 3, 1427.

⁹⁹ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v. 1, 233.

¹⁰⁰ İlhan Ayverdi, *Misalli Büyük Türkçe Sözlük* vol. 1 (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2016), An old coin that was worth a quarter of the gold. See online version of İlhan Ayverdi's *Misalli Büyük Türkçe Sözlük*, <http://www.kubbealtıugati.com/sonuclar.aspx?km=dinar&mi=0> (accessed 07.12.2015)

¹⁰¹ *Subhî Tarihi*, 249. Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 474.

¹⁰² Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 359.

weather, and especially after the invention of fire pump, it is now not possible that fire spreads so much.¹⁰³

Wind was very influential in some city fires of Europe and Asia as well. It could increase or decrease a fire's strength and sometimes even stop the fire. For example, in 1758 London Fire, at the London Bridge, "the conflagration brake out suddenly from the two ends of the Wooden Bridge, which, having been dried by several days of bright sunshine" And wind behavior influenced the spread and severity of the fire. "... as the wind providentially blew the whole time at East,—tho' all the day before it had blown strong from the Southward,—it did no damage to any of the houses at either end."¹⁰⁴ Another example is Edo city which was the center of Japan in the 17th century (today's Tokyo). Since Edo was in the center of the Kanto plain, there was nothing to stop strong wind. "Between 1601 and 1867, there were 1,798 fires in Edo, including 49 large fires... Nagasaki is surrounded by mountains, so the winds blow from the north-east to the south-west."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, a flame immediately could turn into a conflagration due to north-east wind and it was the main reason of unstoppable large fires.

In Istanbul, there are some cases in which the nature, in the form of wind, was the adjuvant reason for larger fires and sometimes in the form of rain, it was the inhibitor. The number of fires spreading all over the city because of wind was remarkable in the 18th century, as well. I described some of the biggest fires from the 18th century, in which the wind had an important role on the fires' behavior. However, the role of nature, as the form of rain, sometimes played an important to stop fires. When a fire broke out in 1715 in Galata, the grand vizier in early morning was trying to reach there, but since there was a storm in the sea, he could not do so by sea and instead, he tried to round the Golden Horn to go by land. However, the fire was stopped by a heavy rain before his arrival and the danger was avoided.¹⁰⁶ In 1725, a fire broke out in Hocapaşa, around Hocapaşa Mosque. While firefighting was ongoing, a heavy rain started and stopped the fire, which could have spread all over the city.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ P.Ğ. İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, 70.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Thompson, *Chronicles of London Bridge* (London: Smith & Elder, 1827), 527-528.

¹⁰⁵ Fuyuko, "Fires and Recoveries Witnessed by the Dutch in Edo and Nagasaki," 172.

¹⁰⁶ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 1076.

¹⁰⁷ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 351-352.

3.2. Gunpowder and Fires

The date was 1489 when a strike of lightning hit Güngörmez Kilisesi (church) in *At Meydanı* (Hippodrome), which was used as a gunpowder storage, “A lightning struck down the high dome of the church. It exploded that solid building, tore it down, destroying even its foundations. It destroyed to the grounds the four adjoining neighborhoods around. All the residents thereof perished and merged into soil all at once.”¹⁰⁸ Another fire occurred in 1698 because of a spark at the gunpowder storage of *Şehremini*, which was founded ten years prior. 310 *kantar*¹⁰⁹ gunpowder blew up, which caused 7 laborers and 22 packhorses to perish and approximately 425 houses were devastated. Additionally, the upper part of high buildings and mosques around Aksaray, Fatih Mosque, and Silivrikapı were damaged.¹¹⁰ From these experiences it was determined that the storage of gunpowder was very dangerous within the city, therefore a new gunpowder storage was decided to be found in the garden of İskender Çelebi in Bakırköy as a precaution.¹¹¹

3.3. Smoking and Fires

The consumption of tobacco was remarkable in Istanbul and it was believed smoking was one of the main reasons of fires in the capital because just a cigarette was able to destroy many lives by causing a fire. Thévenot stated that fires occur easily because Turks smoke even in their beds where they fall asleep which triggers a fire.¹¹² The smoking ban started in 1633¹¹³ when the great fire broke out nearby Cibali at *kalafatçı* (caulker) shop. Then, complaints claiming that fires occur because of smoking, increased in the capital. “Kadı-zâde Efendi assumed the reason of *ihrâk-ı kebir* (the great fire) as smoking and explained the situation to Murat IV.”¹¹⁴ Sultan Murad IV

¹⁰⁸ Solak-zâde Mehmed Hemdemî Çelebî, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, ed. Vahit Çabuk, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), v. 1, 410.

¹⁰⁹ İlhan Ayverdi, *Misalli Büyük Türkçe Sözlük* vol.2. 1 (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2016). Kantar is 56,449 kg, which means in this fire 17.499,19 kg gunpowder did explode. For converting kantar to kilogram see online version of İlhan Ayverdi's *Misalli Büyük Türkçe Sözlük*, <http://kubbealtilugati.com/sonuclar.aspx?km=kantar&mi=0> (accessed on 06.03.2015)

¹¹⁰ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v. 1, 561.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 561.

¹¹² Thévenot, *Thévenot Seyahatnamesi*, 58.

¹¹³ Ahmed Refik, *Eski İstanbul Manzaraları 1533-1839*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1998), 30.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30. *Tarih-i Naima*, v. 2, 756. *Şeyh Kadı-zâde Efendi dahi men'leri bâbında mübâlağa edip ihrâk-ı kebirin vukû'ı dahi karibü'l-ahd olmağın bu makûle ihrâkların ekseri meyhânelerde ba'zı füssâkın bî-hûş yatıp duhân içmeğe piş-hân-ı harâbat üzre pür-ahkerden hudûs eder deyü padişâh hazretlerine söyleyip kahvehânelerin hedmine ve duhânın men'ine sebep oldu. Ol mecma'-ı zurefâ olan kahvehâneler yevm-i vâhidde yer ile yeksân olup bekâr odaları ve debbâğ ve na'l-band odaları yapıldı.*

(1623-1640), towards the end of his reign, had coffeehouses closed and banned smoking due to its potential for causing fires.¹¹⁵ The smoking ban lasted for five years.¹¹⁶ Although it was known the fire occurred in a *kalafatçı* shop, Sultan Murad IV made use of this fire and banned smoking and coffeehouses.¹¹⁷ Also, Naima said that coffeehouses were banned because the Sultan wanted to prevent the possibility of any kind of rumors concerning his reign after *harîk-i azîm* of 1633.¹¹⁸

3.4. Firefighters and Fire-starters in the Capital: Reasons, Motivations, and Punishments

Ayalon states that firefighters were supervised by the grand vizier or the sultan and paid regularly after each fire they extinguished.¹¹⁹ From the sources it seems that the Janissaries played a crucial role in the capital both to start and to fight fires. They were rewarded when they managed to stop a fire, however, sometimes they set fires themselves and/or allowed fires to run free so that they could plunder whatever remained in the ashes. The reasons Janissaries let fires to spread could vary, but generally it was for plundering, revenge, and showing dissatisfaction about their salaries.¹²⁰ Yet, from the chronicles it is seen that until the mid-16th century Ottoman chroniclers did not mention the Janissary opportunism, thus we may claim that this behavior of the Janissaries did not exist from the beginning. Especially in the 18th century, the Janissaries were not seen as active as in earlier centuries. We do not know whether the chroniclers did not know them as arsonists or they did not prefer to write them down as arsonists. Or, as it will be seen below, there were arsonists, but they were not the Janissaries. However, “several times it is even hinted that the Janissaries were not only unwilling firemen, but also that they were among the worst arsonists”.¹²¹

In 1569, a fire occurred in the Jewish neighborhood, when Cafer Ağa (Agha of the Janissaries) was ill. The Janissaries turned this situation into an opportunity and

¹¹⁵ Kâtip Çelebi, *Mîzânü'l-Hakk fî İhtiyâri'l-Ahakk: En Doğruyu Sevmek için Hak Terazisi*, ed. O.Şaik Gökyay, (Ankara: MEB, 1972), 40.

¹¹⁶ Refik, *Eski İstanbul Manzaraları 1533-1839*, 31.

¹¹⁷ Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 456.

¹¹⁸ *Tarih-i Naima*, v.2, 755.

¹¹⁹ Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire*, 89.

¹²⁰ Yıldız, “1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili,” 6.

¹²¹ B.J. Slot, “The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives,” in *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, v. 4-5, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1976), 48.

watched for their own benefit (filling their purses), let alone to work properly in order to extinguish the fire. As a result, Cafer Agha was dismissed and Siyâvuş Agha became the new Agha of the Janissaries.¹²² Hammer noted that according to foreign representatives' reports, 36,000 houses burned down in this fire. Although the number seems exaggerated, it is still formidable.¹²³ Marcantonio Barbaro was a Venetian diplomatic representative (*Bailo*) in Istanbul between 1568 and 1574 who witnessed the great fire of 1569. In his letter written in Pera, he wrote that since there had been no rain for five months, all these houses were parched and dry when fire occurred. The fire spread quickly and one could say "And the night has become like day in its brightness." Marcantonio recorded the roles of the Janissaries in the fire as well. He wrote "...blames and complaints against his excellency Mehmed Pasha are reaching the sky. For usually, when a great fire breaks out, the Janissaries bring a handkerchief or another sign to the Grand Vizier or to their Agha, to indicate their presence, and afterwards, each one turning to identify his own sign, they are gratified with raises in their pay." Although it was believed that the Janissaries helped to extinguish the fire after being encouraged and promised by a certain rise in their allowance, Marcantonio claimed it was wind which pushed the fire towards the burned part of the city and made it die out all by itself.¹²⁴

The fire of 1574 in Topkapı Palace was extinguished with the help of the Janissaries before it spread over the city. Since the Janissaries were determined and diligent to extinguish the fire they were rewarded with *timar* and 200 *akçes*.¹²⁵

When the Janissaries were on their way to extinguish a fire which occurred in 1591 at Tophane, they were informed that the fire died down. What is impressive is that the Janissaries on their return set a fire to the mansion of Deli İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Diyarbakir whose mansion was nearby the Şehzâde Sultan Mehmed Mosque. The Janissaries revenged one of their fellows who died because of İbrahim Pasha's violence and cruelty. In this fire, the Janissaries did not only revenge their fellow by

¹²² *Tarih-i Selaniki*, v.1, 76-77.

¹²³ Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, v. 6, 234.

¹²⁴ Minna Rozen and Benjamin Arbel, "Great fire in the metropolis; The case of the Istanbul conflagration of 1569 and its description by Marcantonio Barbaro," 155-157.

¹²⁵ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 334.

setting a fire, but they also plundered everything. Selaniki noted they were shouting *fırsat ganîmetdür* (opportunity is booty) during the plundering.¹²⁶

Ernst Brinck who was the secretary of the first Dutch ambassador in Istanbul between 1613 and 1614 wrote of the role of Janissaries in the fire of May 1613 as follows:

The janissaries started to make a rebellion together with some Spahis and Azamoglans because they wanted augmentation of their pay and the right to plunder the surrounding houses. The Grand Vizier appeared, but he was almost chased away by the throwing of stones.¹²⁷

Although The Grand Vizier ordered them to extinguish the fire they answered him to bring the water in which he drowned the Janissaries. It is possible that the Janissaries were really trying to take revenge for their fellows, but it is clear that they were legitimizing their actions through their fellows' deaths. The privilege to plunder the burning houses and the houses the Janissaries pulled down was given to the Janissaries. It seems that in some cases the Janissaries were abusing this privilege and when several Viziers and Pashas tried to prohibit this, the Janissaries chased them away with stones. Hasan Pasha, a former grand vizier and Agha of the Janissary, confessed that to keep his position as the Agha, he gave consent to the Janissaries when they asked to start a fire. These fires sometimes could cause thousands of houses, people, and animals to entirely burn down.¹²⁸

The Janissaries were being punished by the authorities in case of their misbehaviors and sometimes they died because of their greed. In the fire of 1607, Murad Pasha tried to stop the Janissaries plundering, but could not stop them. "The Janissaries found in the shop of a Jew a lot of bottles with acid and thinking that it was wine, stole them and drank from them. Most died thereafter."¹²⁹

One of the greatest fires in the capital of the Ottoman Empire occurred on the 24th of July in 1660 around Ayazma at the Golden Horn. *Bostancıbaşı* (chief security officer), Janissaries, and governor Süleyman Pasha tried to extinguish the fire and prevent its

¹²⁶ *Tarih-i Selaniki*, v. 1, 247.

¹²⁷ B.J. Slot, "The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives," 47-48.

¹²⁸ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları I* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1988), 83.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 83

spread before destroying the unburnt structures, but he could not do anything.¹³⁰ The Janissaries could not respond to the fire in time and it spread quickly all over the city and continued for more than forty hours.¹³¹

While the fire was ongoing, the Janissaries and some others who were supposed to extinguish it, began robbing in 1729 Balat fire and let alone trying to stop the fire, they caused it to spread over the city.¹³² When it comes to the fire of 1750 in Kapalıçarşı, the Janissaries were the main reason for its spread all over the city. They began robbing and vandalizing people and craftsmen more than fighting the fire.¹³³

In the capital, the Janissaries were not the only ones responsible of some fires. Sometimes regular slaves to free themselves or to damage their masters set fire to the house, mansion, or even palace. The Topkapı Palace fire on July 24 of 1665 stands out among others since it caused the harem turn into its current state. The fire, set by a female slave, caused a massive destruction and burnt down the entire the tower of justice, Kubbealtı building in which the divan meetings gathered, outer treasury, upper *Defterhânes*, the gate of Dârüssaâde, Chief Black Eunuch' rooms, Vâlide Sultan part, and the kitchens, as well as the harem itself. During this fire, the people of the harem were transferred to Çayir Mansion and then to the Old Palace. In the aftermath of the fire, the female slave was taken to Edirne and was handed over to *Bostancıbaşı*, after which she was executed by being tossed in the *Tunca* (Tundzha) River with a stone around her neck.¹³⁴

On February 4 of 1673, a Saturday, a female slave was persecuted by her master in Istanbul by being beaten on her soles many times as a result of which she fell into such despair and sorrow that she set fire to the house first and then hanged herself, in order to punish her master and to set herself free. The fire spread around the house and caused about eighty shops to burn down in the direction of Valide Inn. Some residents

¹³⁰ Andreasyan, "Eremya Çelebi'nin Yangınlar Tarihi," 73.

¹³¹ For a detailed study about the fire of 1660, see Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili."

¹³² Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 353.

¹³³ Ibid., 358-359.

¹³⁴ Nazire Karaçal Türkal, "Silahdar Fındıklı Mehmet Ağa, Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065-22 Ca.1106/1654- 7 Şubat 1695)" (Unpublished PhD diss., Marmara University, 2012), 408. For a detailed study about the fire and reconstruction of the palace see Murat Kocaaslan, *IV. Mehmet Saltanatında Topkapı Sarayı Haremi: İktidar, Sınırlar ve Mimari* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2014), 209-241.

who could not flee burnt in the house. The fire did not expand more due to the wind being not severe and died down a few hours later. This example could arguably yielded beneficial results for miserable female slaves, since it formed a warning to the masters who showed cruel violence to their slaves as they could face the same end, if they kept on.¹³⁵

Since it was important to make sure that a fire is extinguished and the Janissaries worked determinedly, “it was a legal obligation for the Agha of the Janissaries and Sadrazam to go to fire scenes.”¹³⁶ Julia Pardoe states that every Pasha who lived in the capital or around it had to go to a fire scene and help to extinguish it.¹³⁷ Edirne, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire before Istanbul, also sets examples in terms of Sultan and officials to be in fire locations. “Fires were significant occasions in which both officials and city residents worked together. The sultan and the high-ranking bureaucracy personally watched these big fires, which were responsible for the demolition of thousands of shops and houses; the palace subsequently conducted a survey in order to help those affected by them.”¹³⁸

In the 18th century Istanbul, the Sultan and important officers were seen at the fire scenes more than before, especially in some cases they were trying to extinguish fires and sometimes they were even injured. In 1703, just after becoming the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730) went to a fire scene, Alacahamam, but his presence did not help much to extinguish the fire.¹³⁹ In 1719, Sultan Ahmed III and Nevşehirli İbrahim Pasha with some high state officials were at the fire of Gedikpaşa to supervise those who were trying to extinguish it.¹⁴⁰ In 1720, a fire broke out around Kazasker İvaz Efendi Mosque in Ayvansaray. Since the grand vizier was sick, *sadaret kethüdası* who was the right hand of the grand vizier and responsible for internal affairs, supervised where the Agha of Janissaries, *Defterdar* and some other high state officials were helping to extinguish the fire. When they were all under the

¹³⁵ Antoine Galland, *Istanbul'a Ait Günlük Anıları (1672-1673)*, 3rd edition, v. 2, ed. Charles Schefer, trans. Nahid Sırrı Örik (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1998), 14.

¹³⁶ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları I*, 83.

¹³⁷ Julia Pardoe, *Sultan Şehri İstanbul*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 427.

¹³⁸ Yunus Uğur, “The Historical Interaction of The City With Its *Mahalles*: Ottoman Edirne in The Late Seventeenth And Early Eighteenth Centuries” (Unpublished PhD. diss., Boğaziçi University, 2014), 82.

¹³⁹ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 697.

¹⁴⁰ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 1165.

roof of the building, the roof suddenly collapsed and the high state officials get trapped under the rubble. Except for *sadaret kethüdası*, no one was seriously injured.¹⁴¹ In 1725, another fire occurred in Gedikpaşa where the fire could not be stopped easily, although Sultan Ahmed III and his grand vizier were there because the streets were narrow and houses were wooden.¹⁴² Sultan Mahmud I (1730-1754) was around to support firefighters when the grand vizier's palace caught on fire in 1740.¹⁴³ When a fire broke out between Balat and Fener in 1782, Sultan Abdulhamid I watched over closely firefighting efforts during the night by changing his location from one place to the other.¹⁴⁴

In the 18th century, although sometimes fires were paltry, they were noted by the chroniclers, but only when fire outbreaks were in notable people's houses which is not a coincidence. Thinking those fires were coincidences and chroniclers noted them randomly would be a very naïve approach. On the other side, if a fire was one of the biggest ones and spread all over the city, chroniclers, in this instance, noted the burned houses, pavilions, or palaces of important people in these fires as well. There are a considerable number of examples, but I will give a few of them here. Pavilion of Bahayi was burned down in 1716 fire of Karaman Çarşısı in Fatih.¹⁴⁵ In 1718, during the great fire of Cibali, mansions of *Reisülküttab* (chief of the scribes) Ebubekir Efendi, Vizier Mustafa Pasha, and Numan Pasha in Vefa, palace of Vizier İsmail Pasha, old grand vizier Yusuf Pasha, and Amcazâde Hüseyin Pasha in Aksaray, and sultanic palace of Numan Pasha in Zeyrek were burned down.¹⁴⁶ In 1729, during the great fire of Balat, the house of Abdurrahim Efendi in Fatih, the house of Mirzazâde around Karagümrük, the house of old *Kazasker* of Rumeli (chief military judge over the European part of the Ottoman Empire) Sahafzâde Efendi in Edirnekapı, the house of dismissed Kazasker of Anatolia Hamidzâde, and the house of dismissed Kadı of Istanbul Sunullah Efendi were destroyed.¹⁴⁷ In 1742, the fire of Şehzadebaşı, palace of

¹⁴¹ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 349.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁴³ *Subhî Tarihi*, 614.

¹⁴⁴ Mehmet Ali Beyhan, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Yangınları," in *Afetlerin Gölgesinde İstanbul: Tarih Boyunca İstanbul ve Çevresini Etkileyen Afetler*, edited by Said Öztürk, (İstanbul: İBB Çevre Koruma ve Kontrol Daire Başkanlığı Çevre Koruma Müdürlüğü, 2009), 215.

¹⁴⁵ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 346.

¹⁴⁶ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 1097.

¹⁴⁷ Silsile-i vukuat-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'de zapt edilmeyen 1142 (1729) senesi vukuatı, part 4, (Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası, 1908), 258 transferred by Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 353.

Ahmed Pasha was burned down and nothing was saved.¹⁴⁸ In 1750, the fire of Bahçekapı, a fire broke out in *Şeyhülislam*'s (head of religious affairs for Muslims in the Ottoman Empire) pavilion and the fire did not spread around, but completely burned the pavilion down.¹⁴⁹

An assumption made by Robert Mantran that acts of arson by rebellious janissaries and artisans were the cause of smaller fires could be true.¹⁵⁰ Arson was a serious crime since the fires of Istanbul could potentially burn down whole neighborhoods and parts of the city. Thus, fire-starters were accused by treason and arsonists were considered as traitors of the state and religion.

The seventeenth-century London was a fire-trap of a city".¹⁵¹ Agent Hubert was hanged after confessing that he began the dreadful fire of London in 1666.¹⁵² In the 18th century, fires were still a big problem for London. A devastating fire occurred at the London Bridge on the 11th of April, 1758 which destroyed this building along with the whole of the works around it.

This was the fatal FIRE ON THE TEMPORARY BRIDGE, which burst out about eleven o'clock, in the night of Tuesday, April 11th. From these accounts, we learn that the conflagration brake out suddenly from the two ends of the Wooden Bridge, which, having been dried by several days of bright sunshine, appeared instantly to be in flames, entirely preventing any approach to suppress it. Though Sir Charles Asgill, the Lord Mayor, came very early to the spot, and remained there almost the whole time of the fire, exerting himself exceedingly to stop its progress...¹⁵³

London was suffering from fires due to its wooden structures, wind and arson. There were watchmen and others around who stated that around eleven o'clock, they saw lights in a few places under the Bridge and immediately afterwards, the whole building caught fires.¹⁵⁴ Arson was the reason of that fire in the London Bridge which only

¹⁴⁸ *Subhî Tarihi*, 755.

¹⁴⁹ Cezar, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul'da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler," 358.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Mantran, *İstanbul Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 250-253.

¹⁵¹ Daniel H. Winer, "The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850" (Published PhD. diss., University of Delaware, 2009), 26.

¹⁵² Adrian Tinniswood, *By Permission of Heaven: The True Story of the Great Fire of London* (New York: Riverhood Books, 2004), 264-265.

¹⁵³ Richard Thompson, *Chronicles of London Bridge* (London: Smith & Elder, 1827), 521-522.

¹⁵⁴ Thompson, *Chronicles of London Bridge*, 521-523.

could be discovered during the erection of the building.¹⁵⁵ One may create a conclusion paragraph that arson was one of the reasons of fires in London and the arsonists were punished with a death penalty to discourage possible future fire-starters.

In Early Modern Spain, there were several penalties concerning arson and incendiaries. Especially for those who set fire to forests. If a slave was included in arson, the punishment was harder. Authorities may pay two or three times more than slave's value to his master if he or she died.

Anyone who burns a grove belonging to another or any pine or fig tree, or any other tree... shall be arrested by order of the judge; shall receive a hundred lashes; and shall render pecuniary satisfaction for the injury done;... If a slave should commit this offence without the knowledge of his master, he shall receive a hundred and fifty lashes. Where the master is unwilling to render satisfaction for the act of his slave, he shall surrender him, in full amends for the same, even if the loss occasioned by said slave should amount to double or triple his value.¹⁵⁶

Alfonso X, in his well-known and often-quoted decree ordered anybody who started a destructive and unlawful fire to be thrown into the flames.¹⁵⁷

In Russia, arson was one of the most common reasons of fires and it was assumed as a way of protest. In Russia, if the community considered this action as sinful, then person could be punished. For instance, if a person tried to damage one person's house or property and destroyed it by arson without fire being spread, he could get rid of any punishment by the support of community which disguised that person. The only punishment came when arson caused debilitating hardship and killing of God's creatures because those actions were considered as sinful. In Russia, if a fire spread and destroyed houses and stocks, it was considered as unacceptable guilt and sinful wrongdoing. There is no way for such people to be excused.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ "...the Bridge was re-opened for foot-passengers, on Wednesday, the 19th of April; and the whole of the new wooden edifice was ready for carriages in less than a month after the fire. During the erection of this building, there seemed to be discovered an additional proof that the last conflagration was not accidental." Thompson, *Chronicles of London Bridge*, 529.

¹⁵⁶ John T. Wing, *Roots of Empire: Forests and State Power in Early Modern Spain, C. 1500-1750* (Leiden & Boston: Brill Academic Pub., 2015), 60.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁵⁸ Cathy A. Frierson, *All Russia Is Burning: A Cultural History of Fire and Arson in Late Imperial Russia* (USA: University of Washington Press, 2002), 150-151.

In the Ottoman Empire, even if a person threatened someone with arson, let alone attempting to arson, but could not achieve it, he/she was sentenced and sometimes executed as a warning or deterrent to others. Therefore, in the Ottoman Empire, there was no tolerance for such actions. In Istanbul, Vizier Mustafa Pasha was ordered in 1718 that arsonists should be punished appropriately, since they made attempts against lives and act of arson was treachery.¹⁵⁹ Even if a fire did not break out, in some court records there are examples of such small arson attempts, which were not tolerated by the authorities. For instance, “Hasan entered the house of his former wife, Ayşe, at night, dressed as a shepherd, planning to set fire to it with combustibles. He was arrested by the night watchman who, together with the neighbors, testified about his attempted arson.” In August 1723, Hasan, a convicted thief, was sentenced after confessing his crime.¹⁶⁰

Sometimes violent men threatened their neighbors with arson and were sentenced. An interesting court record between two Jewish men in Balat sets an example. “This was the case in May 1720 when the Jewish residents of Piri Paşa quarter in Balat presented a petition to the court against Sahak [Ishak?], a Jewish man, claiming that he had threatened them with arson and murder. He was eventually arrested and sentenced to the galleys for ten days.”¹⁶¹

An interesting example from History of Raşid is worth mentioning. In this story, it seems that some bakeries wanted to eliminate their rivalries and for that purpose they preferred arson. The bread made by Vezneciler Bakery became very popular, which surpassed the products of Koska’s path. Therefore, the chief of Koska Bakery paid 40 kuruş to the dough maker of Vezneciler Bakery to set a fire, but incendiaries were found before starting a fire and the plot was extinguished. According to the dough maker’s statement in 1721, he had put one arson within the baker and another one somewhere around the bakery. When the dough maker testified the event, the chief of Koska Bakery denied it and since there was no clear evidence to blame him, he did not get a serious punishment, but he was not able to clear his name and the dough maker

¹⁵⁹ Leyla Toraman, “128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri (Değerlendirme-Transkripsiyon-Dizin),” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Fırat University, 2005), article no: 125, 66.

¹⁶⁰ Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700/1800*, 114.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

was executed at Parmakkapı.¹⁶² In another example, a slave set fire on her/his master Sipahi Çavuş Mehmed's house in 1727 and the punishment was being executed in front of the owner's house.¹⁶³

3.5. Fires By Months: Did Fires Occur Mostly In Summers?

Selim Karahasanoğlu, in his analysis, figured out that between 1711 and 1715, fires by month noted in Sadreddinzade's diary shows us fires mostly did not occur in summer. Most of the fires occurred in winter within those years.¹⁶⁴ In this way, he refutes Osman Nuri Ergin's argument according to which most of the fires broke out in June, July, and August, namely, in summer because of carelessness in kitchens. For winter, Ergin claims that sparks were causing fires when people use stoves for heating and knocking over lambs were both in summer and winter were the causes of fires.¹⁶⁵ When I analyzed fires occurring within the walled city between 1701 and 1756, it seems that most of the fires occurred in summer. (See Figure 3.2)

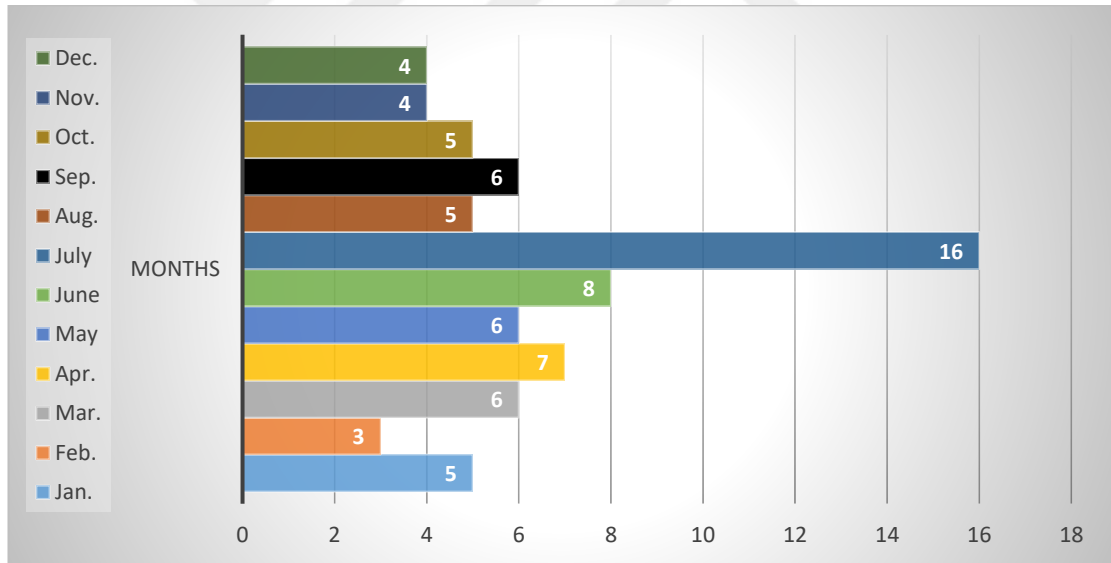


Figure 3.2. Number of Fires by Month in between 1701 and 1756

The distribution of fires by season is 12 in winter, 19 in spring, 28 in summer, and 15 in autumn. It is clear the summer is the season when most of fires occur, but it is not

¹⁶² *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v. 2, 1229. For more detailed information about bakers and their life, see Mehmet Demirtaş, *Osmanlıda Fırıncılık* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008).

¹⁶³ Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 473. Wing, *Roots of Empire: Forests and State Power in Early Modern Spain*, 36.

¹⁶⁴ Karahasanoğlu, *Kadı ve Günlüğü*, 161-162.

¹⁶⁵ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, 1080.

persuasive enough to claim the reason as carelessness in the kitchen, since we then would be unable to explain considerable number of fires that occurred in other seasons. Also, there are some who claim most of the fires occurred in Byzantine time of the city because of riots and uprisings, but mostly because of carelessness, toppling candlestick, smoking, or inexperienced boys in shops in the Ottoman Empire's capital¹⁶⁶ could be superficial. The attempt for arson in Vezneciler bakery and the arson in Avratpazarı by a slave, and arson attempt by Hasan against his former wife were in the summer. In addition to this, according to Sadreddinzade's diary, the time of fires were not in the broad daylight, but mostly at night or at dawn.¹⁶⁷ The reasons of fire were various, but such cases enable us to question if arson could most likely be the reason of fires in the summers.

3.6. Perceptions and Precautions

In Islam, people believe Allah knows everything even before it comes into being and what will happen afterwards. Anything happens is in his knowledge, good or bad. Believers do not know what could happen afterwards, but they believe that there is a hidden cause and philosophy to everything that happens. A natural disaster was perceived by the Ottomans as a punishment from God for their crimes and unmoral behavior. From the chronicles of the Ottoman Empire, it seems that the sins of believers were placed within the framework of natural disasters within the city, which seriously crippled Istanbul's social, economic, and political life.

Before the 16th century plague as one of the disasters Ottomans faced was understood that "God inflicted epidemic diseases upon humankind, and only he had the power to lift this ill"¹⁶⁸ and plague was related with apocalyptic thought. When it comes to the 16th century, plague became a merciful figure when Ottoman chronicler Selaniki believed that plague was the blessed. He called it as the blessed disease or the blessed plague.¹⁶⁹ In the Ottoman society, discussions and discourses were circulating about

¹⁶⁶ Kemalettin Kuzucu, "Osmanlı Başketinde Büyük Yangınlar ve Toplumsal Etkileri," in *Osmanlı*, v. 5, ed. Güler Eren, (İstanbul: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 687. Kemalettin Kuzucu, "Kızıl ve Beyaz Afet Dönemlerinde Toplumsal Hayat," in *Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, v. 4, eds. M. Akif Aydın, Coşkun Yılmaz et al, (İstanbul: İBB Kültür A.Ş., 2015), 389.

¹⁶⁷ Karahasanoğlu, *Kadı ve Günlüğü*, 159-160.

¹⁶⁸ Nükhet Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 210.

¹⁶⁹ *Tarih-i Selaniki*, v.1, 229.

the disease. Varlık states that “Ottoman society simultaneously drew from and strove to reshape as it produced a distinct body of knowledge with which to understand and explain this phenomenon.”¹⁷⁰ In addition to circulating discussions and discourses, action of the state to stop and to prevent the spread of disease is needed to be underlined. Kadı and grand viziers advised street-cleaning, ordered slaughterhouses and tanneries to move outside of the city to improve hygiene as a measure to prevent plague.¹⁷¹ Ayalon claims “Islamic principles were always in the background of state action in the face of calamities, and it was so even when these actions were motivated by practical or pragmatic concern unrelated to religious matters.”¹⁷²

Earthquakes were also one of the disasters considered as punishment of God in the Ottoman society, but it does not seem to be accepted as “blessed”. The frequency of earthquakes in Istanbul was high and this was considered as a warning for humans’ unmoral behaviors. Just like fires, earthquakes created serious problems and causing a disabilities in the city life such as leaving people homeless and ending many lives. Sultans sometimes ordered to cover the expenses of reconstructions from the Imperial Treasure.¹⁷³ After the earthquake of 1766, Sultan Mustafa III ordered that expenses, for the repair of Fatih Mosque and those who needed help and who lost their houses, to be met from the Imperial Treasure.¹⁷⁴

Natural disasters were understood in Medieval Europe and also in the 18th century England in the same way. “In medieval Europe, the view of calamities as God’s punishment for human sins was hardly disputed... The London earthquake of 1750 prompted many to argue that earthquakes were an expression of God’s wrath or a providential warning from Him.”¹⁷⁵ After the conflagration of 1760, fire clubs of Boston argues the article below:

That in case it should please Almighty GOD to permit the breaking out of Fire in Boston, where we dwell, we will be helpful to each other in

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 229.

¹⁷¹ For detailed precautions see, Ibid., 248-291

¹⁷² Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire*, 63.

¹⁷³ Deniz Mazlum, *1766 İstanbul Depremi: Belgeler Işığında Yapı Onarımları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2011), 35.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

¹⁷⁵ See Yaron Ayalon, “Plagues, Famines, Earthquakes: The Jews of Ottoman Syria and Natural Disasters” (Published Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2009), 35.

extinguishing Fire, or in saving and taking Care of each other's Goods or Estate.¹⁷⁶

This kind of references might point that fires were perceived as occasions of God's pleasure or wrath. Boston fire clubs seem to help their members and they were expressing that fires were "visitations and manifestations of divine order."¹⁷⁷

In Istanbul, when fires are concerned, the chroniclers usually wrote terms and phrases such as *kazâ-i ilâhi* and *kazâu'llâh* to express a fire start with will of Allah or '*avn-ü inâyet-i cenâb-ı Ehadiyyet* to express a fire did not spread around with help and favor of Allah, or *itfâ kerde-i lutf-i Rabb-i*, '*avn-ı Hüdâ yâver*, *destyârî şefkat-i Rabbü'l-ibâd*, and *Fazl-ı Hakk* to express a fire stopped with the clemency, grace, and help of Allah, or a fire could be stopped, *bi-inâyeti'llâh ta'âlâ*, with the help of Allah. When Selaniki wrote of the Ayasofya Fire in his chronicle, he noted at the end "this event is a sign for us".¹⁷⁸ When a fire broke out in a tavern of Samatya, Ahmed Vasif wrote that the worshiper of fire, who was the owner of the tavern, was punished in this world.¹⁷⁹ (Both worshipping anything else than Allah, let alone fire and alcoholic beverages are forbidden in Islam.)

Behaviors of men and women could be different after a fire. They do not seem to accept what had just happened, but sometimes cry for their belongings or for their dashed lives. James Dallaway writes that a rich man whose house was destroyed by fire making him poor in a moment could not express his emotions clearly. He said that God is great, and believed that this fire that caused misery will be converted to richness again. Women do not have the same philosophy.¹⁸⁰ A group of people gathering around the Sultan could express their complaints and they even could accuse him. People could yell at the Sultan when he came to the fire scene. Although women

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 300.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 305.

¹⁷⁸ *Tarih-i Selaniki*, 416.

¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Vasif Efendi, *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, 76. In the 17th century Europe, fires were also claimed to happen because of believers sinful behaviours. "A sermon by Eilhard Thalen, composed after the great fire of Oldenburg in 1676 paints a dazzling picture of all the condemnable sins he saw rampant in his town. To him, haughtiness takes the first place of the sins that have caused the urban fire, even before prodigality, blasphemy, swearing, unchastity and desecration of the Sabbath." See Marie Luisa Allemeyer, "Profane hazard or divine judgement?: coping with urban fire in the 17th century", 148-149.

¹⁸⁰ James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancienne et Moderne*, 725.

clamored and spoke with the worst vocabulary after a fire, they were not punished for their behavior.¹⁸¹ They were probably excused due to their sufferings.

From the 17th century to the beginning of the 18th century fires, in what we called today Germany, were regarded as a punishment inflicted by God similar to epidemics, famines, wars and other disasters. People were trying to extinguish fires, but efforts were considered useless by the authorities.

Matthias Priestaff, Rostock councilor and witness to the great urban fire of 1677, described the incident and particularly his own part in the fight against the fire, in his diary. Priestaff also considers the fire to be a divine punishment. He claims, these allegations are unfounded, as the fire was not an ordinary but a fire of wrath, and under these circumstances, all extinguishing tools and fire protection measures could not have had an effect anyway.¹⁸²

“First pray and then extinguish” was the perception in the pre-modern era of the society in general. Did the belief that disasters were unavoidable mean that no action was to be taken to prevent or escape damage? The answer is no for Ottomans. There were different kinds of precautions and actions to prevent fires, as well as policies for recovery and reconstruction. As Çokuğraş and Gençer states that the state issued various orders at different times regarding roofs and eaves, the height and materials of buildings as well as many regulations to protect public order and restrain disputes among neighbors.¹⁸³

According to Eremya Çelebi, in the aftermath of capturing the city from the Byzantines, the Ottomans did not pay much attention to the construction of fire-proof stone buildings like the non-Muslim constructions in Galata, or as in the cities like Amid (Diyarbakır), Aleppo, Damascus, or Jerusalem. The Ottomans administered Istanbul and the state through the taxes they collected from many population, however they were never much concerned about their houses getting burnt.¹⁸⁴ However, given the sources at hand, claiming that Eremya’s comments neither reflect nor contain any reality would not be inquisitive. It is not that the Ottomans did not try to minimize the damage of fires in the capital. In the capital of the Empire, after every fire the analyses

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 726.

¹⁸² Allemeyer, “Profane hazard or divine judgement?: coping with urban fire in the 17th century,” 154.

¹⁸³ Işıl Çokuğraş and C.İrem Gençer, “Urban regulations in 18th century Istanbul: Natural disasters and public dispute,” in *ITU A/Z*, 13/1 (2016): 185.

¹⁸⁴ Andreasyan, “Eremya Çelebi’nin Yangınlar Tarihi,” 59.

were made about what could have been done or what should be done to put an end to fires and to ease its destruction. Fires always influenced the life of the city as well as its dwellers and to prevent or to minimize the influence of these fires various edicts were formulated by the authorities.

The ferman of 1560 concerning Galata is about the prohibition on the construction of eaves in houses that were built to replace houses destroyed by fire.¹⁸⁵ The construction of eaves was prohibited because they enabled flames to easily pass from one house to another. Aforementioned *ferman* in 1572 to the *kadı* (a judge ruling with Islamic rule) of Istanbul, ordered residents of Istanbul to have a ladder, which reached to roof, and to have a big barrel of water in their houses since Istanbul could not be imagined without fire. When a fire showed up, no one was allowed to run, but had to stay and fight to extinguish the fire. Neighborhoods, especially those commonly being exposed to fires, were examined bimonthly. Those who did not have a ladder and a barrel of water in their houses were punished.¹⁸⁶ Twenty-eight days after this *ferman*, another order was sent to the chief architect, Mimar Sinan, noting that unqualified carpenters and architects should not be employed to build a house, since early fires occurred in the kilns of structures built by such people.¹⁸⁷ Another *ferman* in 1594 to the chief architect ordered wooden structures should not be built as an extension to Inn of Ali Pasha for the reason that a fire on the site would cause a complete destruction. Therefore, the chief architect was ordered to remove any wooden structures on his arrival.¹⁸⁸

A *ferman* addressed to Osman Pasha, the governor of Istanbul, in 1696 made it obligatory that the houses and shops in Istanbul be built with stones.¹⁸⁹ It further obliged the places, the houses and shops that burned down to be built with stone, lime,

¹⁸⁵ Altınay, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı*, 89.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁸⁸ Altınay, *Hicrî On Birinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1000-1100)* (İstanbul: Enderun Kitapevi, 1988), 17.

¹⁸⁹ In Japan, after the great fire of Meireki 1657 in Edo, there was a reverse situation than the Ottoman Empire. Fireproof buildings were not recommended after the fire. "On the contrary, houses roofed with tiles were prohibited, although they were more fire-resistant than straw or wood. The reason for this was because roof tiles proved to be heavy and dangerous when they fell during the Great Fire. Permission for and the promotion of fireproof roofs were not reintroduced until the beginning of the eighteenth century." See Fuyuko, "Fires and Recoveries Witnessed by the Dutch in Edo and Nagasaki," 179.

and mud, just like the buildings in Aleppo, Damascus, and Anatolia. It was, through the same *ferman*, that everyone, both in Galata and in Istanbul, to build with lime and mud according to their conditions (which might be financial means) and Osman Pasha saw to it.¹⁹⁰

Another *ferman* dating back to 1755 was sent to the Kadı of Istanbul sets an interesting example about the approach and perception towards fires. In this order, it is said people should be careful in their homes and be sure they clean their ovens to prevent possible fires. Also, they should be careful about candles and oil-lamps they use in their houses. These warnings should be announced not just in Istanbul, but Galata, Üsküdar, Kasımpaşa, and Tophane as well. Even if a fire breaks out after precautions, then it is the will of Allah. However, anyone who ignores the warnings and have risky behaviors and a fire breaks out because of candles, oil-lamps, or ovens those should be determined by the Imam and get the appropriate punishment.¹⁹¹

In England, as a preventative measure against fires; the use of tile or stone as a roofing material was implemented. Another precaution was to remove commercial and industrial areas such as tanners, chandlers, brewers, and black-smiths which required furnaces. Besides, straw and turfs in back yards or inside of properties were to be removed in out-buildings at a safe distance.¹⁹² In the 17th century, an engineer William Gosling prepared an almost full “to-do list” for Londoners. In his list, he proposes that

¹⁹⁰ Altınay, *Hicrî On İkinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100-1200)*, 21.

¹⁹¹ *Istanbul Bâb Sicilleri 208*, 87/B1. (22 Zilhicce 1168 / 29th September 1755)

Istanbul kadısı fazîletlü Efendi

İrâde-i kâti 'a-i İlâhi te'alluk eylediği kazâ-yı mübrem beher hâl evkât-ı mukaddiresi hulûlünden zuhûr etmemek emr-i muhâl ve tedâbir-i ukûl-i beşeriye ile sarf ve tahvili adîmü'l-ihtimâldir lâkin ...halet herkes salâh hâline müte'allik umûrda irâdet-i cüz'iyenin sarf ile me'mûr olup bu belde-i azîme dâhiye-i harika mübtelâ ve bu esnâda sıkça sıkça vukû'u mezzâr-ı ibâd-ı İlâhî müstelzim ve ocak süpürülmek ve mum ve kandil ve tenevvür misillü şeyleri adem-i muhâfaza-i harika sebâb-ı âdi menzilesinde olmağla imdi dâhil-i ...sicillinizde mahfûz mahallâtın eimmelerinin basîret ve vüs'leri mertebe-i muhâfazalarına ikdâm eylemeler için hâne ve hânût sâhiblerine muhkem tenbîh eylesünler bu husûs için Kasımpaşa ve Tobhâne ve Galata ve Üsküdar'da dahi mahsûs buyrulduklar yazılmışdır evkât-ı sâire gibi tenbihât-ı mücerrede zannetmesinler iyâzen billâh bunlardan sonra her ne mahalde harik zuhûr eder ise sebebi tetebbu' olunur eğer irâdet-i cüz'iyenin medhali olmayan kazâ-yı nâgünâhîde ise el-hükümü lillahdenür ve mum ve kandil makûlesinden mücerred ashâbının müsâhele ve te'âmilerinden nâşî olur ise mezâd-ısebeb oldukları için bilâ-mühletin cezâ-yıtertîb ve imamlar tenbihâtında kusûr ve yâhud mütenebbih olmayanları haber vermekde ihmâl ederler ise cihetleri âhara verileceğini teshîm eyleyüp mûcibi ile amel ve hilâfından dahi tevakkî eylesesiz deyu buyruldu fî 22 Zilhicce sene 1168

¹⁹² C. J. Kitching, “Fire Disasters and Fire Relief in Sixteenth-century England: the Nantwich Fire of 1583,” *Historical research: the bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 54/130 (November 1981): 171.

one person in the houses must be responsible to construct chimneys and hearths, to carry out maintenance and control potential fire disasters every night. He also describes how to suppress a chimney fire; disclose where exactly smells and sounds comes from and indicate smoldering materials or flames so that it can be extinguished easily.

In British colonies the struggles and precautions were similar to those cities in England. In the aftermath of Charleston fire of 1740, precautions were adopted including dangerous chimneys and ruins to be pulled down, houses to be built of brick or stone, and wooden shingles to be replaced by fireproof materials. Moreover, wooden structures were to be destroyed within five years in order to prevent profiteering. In addition to these, “prices were regulated for bricks, lime, cypress and pine, and shingles and for the labor of carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, and plasterers; customs duties were remitted on all lumber or bricks that might be imported within the next twelve months; dangerous places of business as of distillers, candle makers, and soap makers were to be removed from certain parts of town.”¹⁹³

Goudsblom states that “the fire of Chicago in 1871 destroyed 17,500 houses”.¹⁹⁴ The city of Chicago suffered a lot from the fire since flames were fed by thousands of wooden structures. “The disaster stimulated a wave of public demand that the Board of Aldermen pass a law to prohibit the construction of frame structures in the city”¹⁹⁵, but the Board could not achieve to pass the ordinance, neither the water system was improved nor were the number of wooden structures diminished.

In 1872, another fire occurred in one of the American cities, Boston. Aside from massive population triggered fires and enormous casualties, the structures and narrow streets were the cause of fire’s spread and influence, therefore Bostonians demanded betterment in the building code, including the streets to be widened to create an

¹⁹³ Kenneth Scott, “Sufferers in the Charleston Fire of 1740,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (1963): 207. In the Ottoman Istanbul, Mahmud I assigned the Kadı of Istanbul to prohibit the construction of bakeries because of fire incidences in the Kantarçılar bazaar in 1756. See, Zarinbaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700/1800*, 33.

¹⁹⁴ Johan Goudsblom, *Fire and Civilization* (London: Penguon, 1996), 176.

¹⁹⁵ Christine Meisner Rosen, *The Limits of Power: Great fires and the process of city growth in America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

effective area for firefighting and for advancing traffic flow, and the water distribution system.¹⁹⁶

Those two great fires were followed by a wave of public demand that people take advantage of the destruction to rebuild better than before. Business leaders, public officials, and other concerned observers called for a wide range of environmental improvements in the burnt district, including redevelopment of the district's street, its harbor, its electrical utility system, its water system, and its buildings.¹⁹⁷

In the pre-modern era, the Ottoman perception of fires and their responses might be similar to its counterparts from some angles, however there are certain differences, I may even claim a kind of "uniqueness". The reasons and steps to prevent fires were well understood by Ottomans, even though fires were perceived as the work of Allah. A human factor played an important role in outbreak of fires, especially in the 18th century Ottoman Istanbul and arson was one of the first reasons of fires. It seems that Ottomans, in terms of terminology, considered man-made fires and natural fires the same. Since a fire broke out and stopped with the will of the creator, it did not matter if the starter is human or not. However, once all efforts to extinguish fires were done, if the arsonist was caught, she/he was executed. It may seem a little intrigued, but to explain the Ottoman perception of fires, I claim that Ottomans possessed a religious rationalization which was unique to them. That's why explanation and responses to fires were different than its counterparts. Laconically, answer to the question of fires' reasons was related with religion, but to extinguish fires no one sat down and waited for direct help from the creator, though when it is extinguished the credits went to the creator as well.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 4.

CHAPTER IV
DEALING WITH FIRES: FIREFIGHTING AND RECOVERY IN TULUMBA
AGE

Bu şehir-i Sitanbûl ki bî-misl-ü behâdır
*Bir sengine yekpâre Acem mülkü fedâdır*¹⁹⁸
Nedîm

Istanbul, the city of Sultans, from 1453 to the 20th century, suffered from fires and those fires in total destroyed a remarkable area. Many people lost their lives and fortunes because of the frequent fires. When Julia Pardoe visited both houses of Turks and Greeks in Istanbul, she writes how she was really surprised of the reasons why terrible fires did not occur every week in the city. She stated fires were so common in the city and it was impossible to ignore them because every night you could hear the sound of the man in charge by beating ground with a long wooden pole with an iron spike tip and the shouting of the fire watcher who tried to report the location of fires.¹⁹⁹ However, no one starved in such a city since there was always enough facility to feed people, claims Karl Kienitz.²⁰⁰

Most of the fires started around the Golden Horn in crowded neighbors such as Balat, Fener, Cibali, and Hocapaşa, which headed toward to Fatih, Şehzadebaşı, Vefa, Laleli, Kapalıçarşı, and Mısır Çarşısı and took an enormous toll on the city both economically and socially. The fires just between 1722 and 1724 in Istanbul seriously damaged the city. Fires did not only lead to heavy economic losses, but also cost the life of very important personalities of the period. In other words, many fires occurred at the Golden Horn and mostly spread until the southern coast of Istanbul and innumerable houses belonging to scholars and other prominent people of the Empire were damaged along

¹⁹⁸ *O city of Istanbul, priceless and peerless!*

I would sacrifice all Persia for one of your stones!

The translation is from Philip Mansel's *Constantinople: City of the World Desire, 1453-1924*, 80.

¹⁹⁹ Julia Pardoe, *Sultan Şehri İstanbul* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 424-427.

²⁰⁰ Fredrich Karl Kienitz, *Sultanların Şehirleri*, trans. M.Haydar Cümbüş, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2014), 278.

with the palace of the Aga of the Janissaries and their barracks, warehouses, and mills.²⁰¹ That is what happened in the great fires many times.

The fires of Istanbul are as old as its history, but they occurred more frequently and claimed more victims in the 18th century because of various reasons such as high population, overbuilding, and arson. Some districts were famous with the frequency of fires and some great fires were associated with their names such as the great fire of Hocapaşa and the great fire of Cibali.²⁰² As seen on the Map 3, Cibali and Hocapaşa were two fire zones in which the frequency of fires was remarkable and the most of the great fires between 1701 and 1756 occurred there. “An increasing number of rural migrants settled in the commercial and industrial area of the Golden Horn ... Fires and the plague caused more devastation in these areas than in the suburbs, causing more poverty and inviting more government regulation and policing than was present in other areas”.²⁰³ The 18th century experienced worse fires than the 17th century. Slot claims that “The Dutch embassy building burnt down two times, in 1700 and in 1767. There were larger fires that destroyed considerable parts of the town in 1756 and 1782”.²⁰⁴

Through the data I presented so far shows that the most frequent and devastating fires occurred in Golden Horn area, especially in Cibali and Hocapaşa. Cibali was residential area of Istanbul and Hocapaşa, aside from being very close to the palace and administration structures, was commercial area. Therefore, it is important to look closer the fires of Cibali and Hocapaşa to understand the havoc of Ottomans.

4.1. 18th Century Hocapaşa and Cibali Fires

The fires occurred in the most residential and commercial areas of Istanbul, namely Hocapaşa and Cibali, in the 18th century were 1708, 1725, 1746, and 1755 Hocapaşa fires and 1718, 1724, 1754, and 1756 Cibali fires. Three of those, 1718 and 1756 Cibali fires and 1755 Hocapaşa fire were the great fires, which seriously destroyed the city.

²⁰¹ B.J. Slot, “The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives”, 55.

²⁰² Kemalettin Kuzucu, “Osmanlı Başketinde Büyük Yangınlar ve Toplumsal Etkileri,” 690.

²⁰³ Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700-1800*, 33.

²⁰⁴ B.J. Slot, “The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives,” 48-49.

The fires started around Cibali, the center of trade where most of the ships approached the port, and went towards Yenikapı. Generally, if a fire broke out along the Golden Horn, it most probably cost the city dearly.²⁰⁵ Hocapaşa was almost at the center of governance and close to the bazaars. Moreover, Hocapaşa was literally at the heart of the Empire and very close to the palace of Sultans. A fire breaking out in Hocapaşa was therefore potentially dangerous not only for the daily life of the city, but could endanger the appropriate and stable governance as a whole.

Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu states that Hocapaşa and Cibali were assumed as ominous neighborhoods due to the frequency of fires. He added that the great and destructive fires generally started from these places and ruined many people.²⁰⁶ I find Banoğlu's colossal title *Istanbul Cehennemi: Tarihte Büyük Yangınlar* (The Hell of Istanbul: The Great Fires in History) very bold for he does not use any critical method or analysis towards fires. Instead of labelling a place ominous because of the frequency of fires, I think it would improve more our understanding to look carefully for the reasons for the frequency and the regulations in the aftermath of the fires. Also, one should keep in mind reasons for the fires were various, but when Cibali and Hocapaşa were concerned, arson might be the primary reason because these two neighborhoods were where high state officials, scholars, and notable people lived.²⁰⁷

One of Hocapaşa fires occurred in the house of Benli Ali Agha near Hubyar Mosque in 1708 and it branched out towards two directions. One of the branches towards the Bathhouse of Mahmutpaşa burned down structures, including the fountain across the bathhouse. Another branch went towards to Cağaloğlu Palace and then to Rüstem Pasha Madrasa and devastated Daye Kadın Mosque, together with the houses and shops around the area.²⁰⁸

Another fire broke out around Hocapaşa Mosque on the night of March 15th, 1725. Since the houses of neighborhood were wooden and high-rise, in addition to the narrow streets, the fire expanded easily. While extinguishing efforts were ongoing, a

²⁰⁵ "İstanbul" in *Yurt Ansiklopedisi*, v. 5, (İstanbul: Anadolu Yayıncılık, 1982), 3815.

²⁰⁶ Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, *İstanbul Cehennemi: Tarihte Büyük Yangınlar* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), 16-17.

²⁰⁷ Karahasanoğlu, *Kadı ve Günlüğü*, 160.

²⁰⁸ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.2, 797.

downpour stopped it from becoming a disaster.²⁰⁹ The second fire of the city in the same year broke out in an Armenian inn on the night of 27th July. The fire expanded and burned seventy-eighty large and small houses. Among the burnt buildings, there was an inn and Sahaf Süleyman mosque.²¹⁰ On the 13th January in 1746, a fire occurred in Hocapaşa in Hobyar neighborhood and it burned down about ten grand mansions.²¹¹

On the 29th of September in 1755, a fire that broke out in a house around Demirkapı affected a larger area and continued to burn in the area for thirty-three hours. Although the Sultan and Grand Vizier were at the fire scene, they could not help in anyway. It was due to a strong wind, the wooden houses, and narrow streets that the fire spread so much. The fire affected Bahçekapı, Mahmutpaşa, Cağaloğlu, Soğukçeşme, Divanoğlu, and Hagia Sophia. “The lead on the dome of Aya Sofya melted and the city seemed like an ocean of fire, fed by rivers of lava”.²¹² Among the burnt buildings were Muhsinzade Palace in Bahçekapı, the Sublime Porte buildings, *Defterhâne*, *Mehterhâne* buildings in Sultanahmet, and Çuhacılar Inn in Mahmutpaşa. Although the properties of the Sublime Porte were saved from the fire, it was hard to preserve the rescued documents. Therefore, until the establishment of a new building, the documents were kept in a palace of one of the daughters of Ahmet III, Esmâ Sultan Palace, which was temporarily assigned to the Sublime Porte. The houses of both the government officials and ordinary people burned down.²¹³ After the fire, Ebubekir Efendi, the official responsible for the dockyard, was assigned to the post of reconstruction and the necessary provisions were taken. The samples of the necessary type of nails to be procured were attached to an order dated October 1755.²¹⁴ Another order addressed to the Governorship of Kocaeli stated that Ebubekir Efendi, the appointed construction official, was sent to the city for the provision of sufficient amount of timber and also demanded the immediate shipping.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.3, 1422.

²¹⁰ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.3, 1437.

²¹¹ Cezar, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul’da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler,” 358.

²¹² Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World Desire, 1453-1924*, 225.

²¹³ *Mehasin’ül Asar ve Hakaik’ül Ahbar*, 67.

²¹⁴ BOA, C.DH. No: 59/ 2939. (Fî evâhir-i R. [1]168/ Early February 1755)

²¹⁵ BOA, C.DH. No: 261/ 13036. (Fî evâhir-i R. [1]168/ Early February 1755)

Baron de Tott arrived in Istanbul in 1755 as the dragoman of the French Ambassador and stayed in the city until the death of Mustafa III (1757-1774). Soon after his arrival, he witnessed one of the biggest fires in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. He was in Pera when he first saw the flames of the 1755 great fire around the walls of Topkapı Palace where the influence of *poyraz* caused it to spread towards the Sadrazam's Palace.

When the flames were approaching Agha Sophia, people thought the fire would stop. However, flames melted the dome of this great structure and turned into a conflagration. After this moment, efforts were not to stop the fire, but its expansion, so structures in the route of wind were destroyed, but this time wind changed its direction and run to east of the city.²¹⁶

As he narrates, flames moved towards the center of the city and from there it spread into three branches. After a while, these branches united and Istanbul became a sea of flames.

Some of the Janissaries burned in the flames while demolishing the structures in the route of flames. The cries of the women and children who were subject to the same fate with those unfortunate people amidst the maelstrom of fires mixed with the screams of the ones who struggle to save their belongings so as not to suffer from a disastrous poverty. The woods' roaring on fire, and the demolished buildings which altogether caused an indescribable and unspeakable terror.²¹⁷

A fire broke out in Cibali from a Jewish house on the night of 17th of July 1718, around 7 a.m., which could not be stopped and caused great suffering and misery.²¹⁸ After burning the Unkapanı Mosque, first, from the east direction, it burned the Arablar Mosque, a public bath, and reached to Zeyrek, burned the palace of Numan Paşa (one of the earlier Sadrazams), from there it turned upwards, and burned the Sultan Mehmed Mosque, passing there without burning the Saraçhane, burned all the way from Hüseyin Pasha Mosque to Horhor by passing Molla Gürani and stopped at Çınar Mosque. From the west direction, it burned Unkapanı, Ayazma Kapusu, Hacı Ali Pasha Inn, and Yeni Inn, directed towards Ağa Kapusu, behind the Süleymaniye Imaret, and burned some important houses belonging to the elites of Istanbul. From there, it burned the old barracks of the Janissaries, Kara İbrahim Pasha Palace, Langa

²¹⁶ Baron de Tott, *Türkler ve Tatarlara Dair Hatıralar*, 19.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

²¹⁸ Leyla Toraman, "128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri," 72-73.

to Davutpaşa Mosque, and then stopped.²¹⁹ İnciciyan notes that this fire lasted for 34 hours and burned down 50,000 houses and killed 15,000 people. The church of Surp Asduadzadzin was burnt down in this fire one more time.²²⁰

A fire broke out across the Küçük Mustafa Pasha Bathhouse in a bakery around Cibali in 1724. The fire did not spread over the city and after burning the bakery, two shops and one house, the fire stopped.²²¹ Another fire broke out in Ayakapusu around Cibali, which destroyed some houses and caused misery among the people in 1754.²²²

In the summer of 1756, a fire broke out in Cibali and spread over the city, which reached until Cerrahpaşa.²²³ The date was the July 6th, 1756, when the fire broke out at one of the Jewish houses and turned into a conflagration in a short time. The flames spread out in different directions after reaching the fortress. The fire reached from Unkapanı to area covering Kaptan Pasha Bathhouse in Süleymaniye district, from Vefa Square to Şehzade Mosque direction and from here to Langa and to Saraçhane, Aksaray and from Aksaray to two different directions, namely, Avretpazarı and Yenikapı. Thus, the fire starting around the bay of the Golden Horn rested in Marmara Sea by-passing the center of Istanbul. Many buildings such as houses, shops, mansions, and mosques were destroyed. However, in the chronicle of Vasıf Efendi, which is the primary source of the time, I could not find any information about the names of burned buildings except the spread of fire, bazaars, and the Janissary barracks.²²⁴ The mosque of Şeyh Ebü'l-Vefa complex had an essential restoration in 1757 in the last days of Osman III, which makes one to conceive the mosque was seriously damaged in the fire of 1756.²²⁵ Another structure burned and damaged by the fire of 1756 Cibali was Masjidi of Mi'mar Ağa in Vefa, very close to the mosque of Şeyh Ebü'l-Vefâ complex, and reconstructed with an additional minaret by Koca Mimar Mehmed Ağa in the same year.²²⁶ According to Hammer, the number of burnt structures was approximately eight

²¹⁹ *Nusretnâme*, 896-897.

²²⁰ İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, 68.

²²¹ *Tarih-i Raşid ve Zeyli*, v.3, 1345.

²²² *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, 30.

²²³ İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, 68-69.

²²⁴ *Mehasin'ül Asar ve Hakaik'ül Ahbar*, 83.

²²⁵ Aziz Doğanay, "Ebü'l-Vefâ Külliyesi," in *İstanbul: Şehir ve Medeniyet*, ed. Şevket Kamil Akar (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004), 150.

²²⁶ *Ayvansarâyî Hüseyin Efendi, Hadikatü'l- Cevami*, ed. Ahmed Neziha Galitekin (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2001), 260.

thousands including 580 mills and bakeries, 70 bathhouses, 1 inn, 200 mosques, and 1,000 shops. The city was so ruined that the Vizier was spending most of his time on the reconstruction of the capital.²²⁷ Neither firefighting nor reconstruction was easy in such a city, which was surfing on flames.

4.2. Firefighting: Corps and Techniques, Towers and Rewards

Istanbul's firefighting was entrusted to dwellers of the city until the first quarter of the 18th century when *Tulumbacı Ocağı* (fire brigade) was established. A turning point for the Ottoman Empire's capital was the invention of *tulumba* (pump) to extinguish fires which was produced by French-origin Davud Ağa. After achieving success, especially in the 1720 fire of *Tophane* (a district of armory close to Galata), Davud Ağa drew the attention of Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha, the grand vizier of Ahmet III, and asked his permission to establish *Tulumbacı Ocağı*. At the end of this process, Davud Ağa was assigned with a ferman to establish a *Tulumbacı Ocağı* and he formed the first brigade within the Janissary corps, which fought against fires until 1826, the abolishment of the Janissaries.²²⁸



Figure 4.1. A depiction of *Tulumbacı*s in the 18th century. (T. Klaus, *Türkische Gewänder und Osmanische Gesellschaft im Achtzehnten Jarhhundert*, (Graz, 1966), 104-105)

²²⁷Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, v.15, 195.

²²⁸ Yüksel Çelik, "Tulumbacı," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 41, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2012), 369-771. Kenan Yıldız, "Yeni belgeler ışığında tulumbacıbaşı Gerçek Davud Ağa ve tulumbacı şeritçileri esnafı," *Kitaplara Vakfedilen Bir Ömre Tuhfe: İsmail E. Erünsal'a Armağan*, vol. 1, (İstanbul: Ülke Yayınları, 2014), 558-559. Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 21-22.

Although James Dallaway states that a pump was really small to extinguish a fire and just two persons were enough to carry it²²⁹, İnciciyan reveals that after the invention of the tulumba, fires could not spread over the city and damage it as easy as earlier.²³⁰ Robert Mantran states that since the foundation of *Tulumbacı Ocağı*, it is believed that the intensity of fires decreased in the city, but the thinning of houses might have been another reason for this decrease.²³¹ When the tulumba was invented it enabled Ottomans to fight against fires, although in some cases when the strength of fires was too high, there was nothing the tulumba could do against.

On the grounds that the experiences at hand firmly reveal that extinguishing with tulumba the ever-present fires in a city akin to Istanbul with predominantly wooden construction is not, and will not be possible, and that, the greatest evidence thereof is that, let alone decreasing in number, the greatest fires occurred specifically in its aftermath, the benefit of tulumba has been limited.²³²

However, Küçükçelebizade İsmail Âsım Efendi, who was the chronicler in the 18th century, wrote that before the tulumba many houses burnt down, many rich became poor in a second, and many became orphans. When the tulumba was invented and started to be used in fire incidents, many fires were extinguished from their starting point. “Elders and youngsters, poor and rich people should be grateful for the invention of the tulumba.”²³³

A turning point in history of Istanbul’s fires was the invention of tulumba, so to periodize Istanbul’s fires into three phases would be convenient, namely, the pre-tulumba period covering the 15th and 17th centuries, the tulumba period covering the 18th and 19th centuries, and the post-tulumba period covering the 19th and 20th centuries when a modern fire-fighting department was formed.

Working for a regular salary under the name of Padişah, the *Baltacı* corps (halberdier) were ready to stop fires. When a fire occurred, the *Baltacı* corps were to destroy neighbors’ houses in order to stop fire’s expansion. Since fires sometimes expanded

²²⁹ Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancienne et Moderne*, 725.

²³⁰ İnciciyan, *XVIII. Asırda İstanbul*, trans. Hrand D. Andreasyan, (Istanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1956), 70.

²³¹ Mantran, *İstanbul Tarihi*, trans. Teoman Tunçdoğan, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, , 2005), 251.

²³² Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, 1098.

²³³ Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 23.

quickly, the *Baltacı* corps did not directly destroy next door's house, but twenty or thirty house next to fire's location.²³⁴ To act before flames, the Janissaries were moving frantically around and trying to destroy buildings that some say they damaged more buildings than any fire could possibly do.²³⁵ "When there is a fire in Constantinople, the Janissaries have the exclusive right to extinguish it. And they do not extinguish it with water, but they just pull down the houses, on both sides of the fire that have not been attacked yet, in order to make it impossible for the fire to spread" noted, the secretary of the first Dutch ambassador, Ernst Brinck.²³⁶ Fire pump was invented in Holland by Jan van der Heyden in 1672, which can be assumed a turning point for the history of firefighting. However before than that in Europe the same techniques were used. Different techniques can be traced in England only after the great fire of London, 1666. Also, in France after the fire of 1720 in Rennes firefighting techniques began to change. Before, building demolition was the most used technique.²³⁷ The fact remains that the invention of fire pump does not mean in those countries building demolition technique was abandoned immediately. It is not clear how long it takes to adapt to new techniques and construct the cities in a way that no need should be felt to demolish buildings.

Since plundering was easier when covered up with reasons of saving neighboring houses, and the events of setting fires happened particularly due to plundering, the government forbade extinguishing until the janissary officers arrived in order to prevent these terrible events, which lengthened the duration of extinguishing fires. This practice was abolished in the 18th century and the number of the *tulumbacı* units increased. Military corps were provided with *tulumbacı* units.²³⁸

The *Baltacı*s were normally and usually master builders, which enabled them to know the special points of buildings to destroy them easily and swiftly.²³⁹ According to

²³⁴ Thévenot, *Thévenot Seyahatnamesi*, 58.

²³⁵ Schweigger, *Sultanlar Kentine Yolculuk*, 103.

²³⁶ Slot, "The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives," 48.

²³⁷ Kenan Yıldız, "Yeni belgeler ışığında tulumbacıbaşı Gerçek Davud Ağa ve tulumbacı şeritçileri esnafı," in *Kitaplara Vakfedilen Bir Ömre Tuhfe: İsmail E.Erünsal'a Armağan*, ed. Hatice Aynur, Bilgin Aydın and Mustafa Birol Ülker (İstanbul: Ülke Yayınları, 2014), 564.

²³⁸ Baron de Tott, *Türkler ve Tatarlara Dair Hatıralar, Memoires Sur Les Turcs Et L Es Tartares Amsterdam 1784*, 21.

²³⁹ Beyhan, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Yangınları," 189.

Tournefort, “in Istanbul at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the only way to prevent fire from spreading and eating up the whole city was to knock down all buildings on its way”.²⁴⁰ Fire extinguishing equipment were various, but axe, grappling hook (*kanca*), barrel (*varil*), and bucket (*kova*) were the main ones.²⁴¹ Firefighting techniques began to change with the invention of the *tulumba* and the direct intervention to fires came into the prominence.²⁴² However, twenty years after the invention of the *tulumba*, a considerable amount of above-mentioned equipment were still in use by the corps. A document from (29 L 1154) the 7th of January 1742, tells that 1920 big axes and grappling hooks were to given to the Janissaries, *Cebeci*, *Topçu*, *Top Arabacı*, and *Hassa Bostancı* corps in order to extinguish fires.²⁴³ In addition, the same equipments were expected to be delivered to *Mehterhâne* to use in case of a fire.²⁴⁴ *Sakalar* Corps, who were water carriers in the time of fires, were another group of soldiers helping firefighters. *Sakalar* were carrying water on horseback to the fire scene before and after the invention of *tulumba*.

A considerable amount of firefighters with their equipment, including different types of *tulumbas*, were ready in Istanbul as understood from the document dating back to 1755. The Table below shows the number of firefighters and *tulumbas* in Istanbul belonging to different corps, namely, the Janissaries, *Cebeci* (a military subunit of Ottoman Army's artillery corps), *Topçu* (the artillery division of Ottoman Army), *Arabacı Topçu* (subunit of *Topçu*), *Tersane-i Âmire* (the Imperial Arsenal), and *Bostancı* (one of the imperial guards of the Ottoman Empire).²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*, Vol. 3, (Paris, 1717), 470, transferred by Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman İstanbul*, 80.

²⁴¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları 1*, 82. Yıldız, “Yeni belgeler ışığında tulumbacıbaşı Gerçek Davud Ağa ve tulumbacı şeritçileri esnafı,” 562-563.

²⁴² Yıldız, “Yeni belgeler ışığında tulumbacıbaşı Gerçek Davud Ağa ve tulumbacı şeritçileri esnafı,” 563.

²⁴³ BOA, C.AS., no: 783/33178. (29 L 1154/ 7th January 1742).

²⁴⁴ BOA, C.BLD. No: 85/4236. (20 L 1154/29th December 1741).

²⁴⁵ BOA, C.BLD. No: 67/3319. (1168/1755). See Appendix C.

Table 4.1. Number of Firefighters and Tulumba

Name of the Group	Number of Firefighters	Number of Tulumba
Tulumbacı of the Janissaries	156	14 ²⁴⁶
Tulumbacı of Cebeci	109	5 ²⁴⁷
Tulumbacı of Topçu (The Artillery corps)	40	2 ²⁴⁸
Tulumbacı of Arabacı Topçu (the Artillery wagoners)	30	3 ²⁴⁹
Tulumbacı of Tersane-i Amire (the Imperial Arsenal)	63	5²⁵⁰
Tulumbacı of Bostancı	63	2 ²⁵¹
Total	461	31

The Janissary Corps were the most crowded group with 156 privates and 14 *tulumbas* and the *Cebeci* Corps follow them with 109 privates and 5 *tulumbas*. In total, there were 461 privates and 31 *tulumbas* in Istanbul to extinguish fires. These were the organized squads to extinguish fires. Before, what is called *itfaiye*, a modern fire department, these were responsible for firefighting in the city.

In addition to these, there was an exceptional example in firefighting, *arayıcılar* (searchers). These men were responsible to search what was left from a conflagration,

²⁴⁶ Three of these Tulumbas belong to Üsküdar, Galata and Beyoğlu. Tulumbas with their privates could be assigned in a case of need. It is interesting that in the literature, we do not have different kind of tulumbas and it is generally just *tulumba* to refer pump. In this BOA, C.BLD. No: 67/3319 document, we have twelve different kind of tulumbas such as *Tulumba-i Kebir*, *Tulumba-i Yekta*, *Tulumba-i Burmalı Kazgan*, *Tulumba-i Eski Kılavuz*, and *Tulumba-i Büyük Kazgan* etc. It seems that their names were given according to their size, style or ornament.

²⁴⁷ In a case of need, five of them with their privates could be provided.

²⁴⁸ Those two tulumbas are called *Mükemmel* (Excellent) and *Kebir* (Great) Tulumba and in a case of need, two of them with their privates could be provided.

²⁴⁹ Only one of those three tulumbas could be provided in a case of need.

²⁵⁰ Only three of those five tulumbas could be provided in a case of need. Two of them stays for forethoughtfulness.

²⁵¹ Those two tulumbas are called *Mükemmel* (Excellent) and *Kebir* (Great) Tulumba and in a case of need, only one of those tulumbas could be provided. One of them stays for forethoughtfulness in the palace.

but only if a burning structure belonged to someone important. An order issued to the Kadı of Istanbul to appoint *arayıcılar* to search for what is left and what can be saved among the debris of the Vizier Numan Pasha's palace. Numan Pasha, who was a *mutasarrıf* (a governor) in Cyprus and Bosnia as well as responsible of soldiers in Bosnia, had his palace burned down in Istanbul after the great fire of Cibali in 1718. Nothing was saved and most of the household goods went to waste. Therefore, searchers were expected to find anything copper, silver, or golden and the Kadı was to write them in a notebook. Then, a salvage to be delivered with the notebook and authorities were warned not to let even a single piece be wasted.²⁵²

It seems that the authorities were trying their best to be able to respond a fire as soon as possible. In addition to what was going on in Istanbul, the walled city, an order was sent to re-establish a fire pump unit consisting one head of *tulumbacı* and seven men in Boğazkesen fortress, known as Rumelian Castle, in order to function in case of fires which would occur in Rumelia, Anatolia and the surrounding coastlines so that in these areas they could respond to the fires immediately until the arrival of fire pumps from Istanbul.²⁵³ Besides, when one of the *Topçu* corps' *tulumba* was broken during a fire, an order was sent to produce a new one and the Privy Armory (Cebehâne-i Âmire) bore the expense.²⁵⁴ Besides, since *tulumba* was needed in the capital, an order was sent to place fifty one *tulumbas* in various *mahalles* in 1763.²⁵⁵ All actions show two things clearly, frequency of fires in the capital and efforts to fight and decrease number of fires and their influence.

Some of the Ottoman counterparts in the pre-modern era were unorganized in terms of firefighting which included casual efforts of using hooks, ladders, and water buckets. For example, Londoners were trying to extinguish a fire by throwing water on flames, climbing ladders to reach chimney and pulling down the houses. Nonetheless, these kind of insufficient efforts were not even close to control a fire, let alone extinguishing it.²⁵⁶ Absence of an organized firefighting caused a need for the insurance companies

²⁵² Toraman, "128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri," 67.

²⁵³ BOA, C.BLD. No: 49/2410. (29 Z 1159/ 12th January 1747).

²⁵⁴ BOA, C.BLD. No: 76/3784. (5 Recep 1170/ 26th March of 1757).

²⁵⁵ BOA, MAD.d. 10362. (28 Ca 1176/ 14th January 1763). In the same document, it was ordered six *tulumba* to be placed in various *mahalles* of Edirne to be used in case of a fire.

²⁵⁶ Winer, "The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850," 27.

to create a brigade to diminish losses from fires. “The insurance companies generally hired watermen already working on the River Thames as their firemen; they were paid by the insurance companies per fire attended.”²⁵⁷ The capital city of the British Empire suffered a lot from fires in the 18th and 19th centuries despite Londoners’ efforts to reduce the number of fire outbreaks and to minimize the damage caused by fires. As to prevent fire spread over the city, pulling down houses in the path of fire was the way to stop it. William Gosling warned his readers to be wary of minimizing about the suffering and loss resulting from fires with punctual and well-organized responses that exactly increased the well-being of the population.²⁵⁸

British colonies in America were not exception in terms of suffering from fires. A fire broke out in Charleston in 1740 spread with the help of north-west wind and immediately turned to be a conflagration. Dwellers of the city and British Navy crew tried to extinguish the fire by destroying and pulling down the houses in the path of fire; however these efforts could not save many shops and warehouses in the center of the city from completely burning down. The number of houses burned down in this fire is estimated more than 300.²⁵⁹

When a “great fire” on the 20th of March, 1760 broke out in Boston city, it destroyed more than 200 houses, 125 shops and warehouses and nine ships.²⁶⁰ The fire began in Cornhill, in the center of town, and swept south and east in the direction of Fort Hill.²⁶¹ Any kind of efforts, including fire clubs’, were not enough to stop it and the flame kept on its course against every attempt to extinguish the fire²⁶² and at the end 214 inhabitants reduced to poverty by the fire.²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Jennifer Anne Carlson BA, “The Economics of Fire Protection: From the Great Fire of London to Rural/Metro,” *Discussion Paper* for In the 9th IEA Institute of Economic Affairs (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 10-11.
<http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/upldbook354pdf.pdf> (Accessed 26.07.2016).

²⁵⁸ Winer, “The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850,” 28-29.

²⁵⁹ Scott, “Sufferers in the Charleston Fire of 1740,” 203-211.

²⁶⁰ *Boston Gazette*, and *Country Journal*, March 24, 1760.

²⁶¹ William Pencak, “The Social Structure of Revolutionary Boston: Evidence from the Great Fire of 1760,” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 10/2 (Autumn, 1979): 268.

²⁶² Winer, “The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850,” 297.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 269.

Fire clubs in the Britain colony could be defined as associations aiming to provide mutual assistance to its members in case of a fire.

Fire clubs, which were mutual-aid societies adapted to fire protection, were not unique to Salem and Boston but existed in only a few other American cities. Parallel to the fire clubs were fire companies, each responsible for a specific firefighting apparatus. As fire companies evolved into a full-fledged fire department, fire clubs continued their activities, which diminished in their relevance to firefighting, but not in providing a means for the self-selecting fire club members to express their status.²⁶⁴

In the 16th century English towns, fire was more than a risk, it was a regular incident. 17th century was not less risky than the previous century in terms of conflagrations. “Seventeenth-century London and its liberties were a crowded mass of houses, commercial buildings, churches, docks, and warehouses separated by narrow streets and even narrower lanes and passageways, some of which ran like tunnels under the built-out upper stories of buildings that nearly touched each other.”²⁶⁵ The city was “packed with buildings constructed from cheap and highly flammable materials.”²⁶⁶ “Houses and out-buildings were timber-framed and with thatch roofs, in serried ranks and narrow streets”²⁶⁷ were the reason of fires turning into conflagrations. The fire of 1666, broke out in the middle of the night in a baker’s shop, spread and fostered by the dry summer weather and a strong wind, and in a short period of time it was completely beyond human control.²⁶⁸ In the 17th century, an engineer William Gosling recommended that signs of fire must be continuously monitored in the city during night and day, and when a fire breaks out, alarms were to ring out from church bells to stimulate people.²⁶⁹

In Ottoman Istanbul, apart from firefighters and their equipment, there were cornerstones of the city in fighting fires: fire towers. Towers played a crucial role to

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 311.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 26.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁶⁷ C. J. Kitching, “Fire Disasters and Fire Relief in Sixteenth-century England: the Nantwich Fire of 1583,” *Historical research: the bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 54/130 (November 01, 1981): 171.

²⁶⁸ Johan Goudsblom, *Fire and Civilization* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 177.

²⁶⁹ Winer, “The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850,” 28-29.

detect fires' locations and announce them to people. Thanks to fire towers, watchers warned people in advance to save their lives and belongings in the case of a fire spread.



Figure 4.2. Bayezid Fire Tower in the 19th Century (Istanbul Memory in Personal Arcives: Taha Toros Archive, Istanbul Şehir University. ID: 001560012008)

There were two fire towers in the city, namely, the Galata and Bayezid or Serasker tower. The Galata Tower was constructed by the Genoese in the 14th century. It was not built to watch fires, but in the Ottoman Empire one of its functions was to watch and announce fires.

A fire tower known by different names was built to watch and announce fires within the walled city is as Baedeker described “The Serasker Tower, about 200 feet (61 meters) high, built by Mahmud II, who died in 1839, of white marble from the island of Marmara, affords a magnificent view of the city”.²⁷⁰ However, the first fire tower, a wooden one, in 1749 was built on the third hill of Istanbul where once there was an

²⁷⁰ Karl Baedeker, *The Mediterranean, seaports and sea routes: Handbook for Travelers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1911), 551.

Eski Saray (The Old Palace).²⁷¹ According to Ekrem Koçu, the first fire tower of Istanbul, as he names as *Yangın Köşkü*, was built after the fire of Küçükpazar, which destroyed the third hill of the city quickly with the help of a wind.²⁷² The date of construction is confused, but the common point is the fire of Küçükpazar, which occurred in February of 1750 according to İzzi, the chronicler of the 18th century.²⁷³ Therefore, it seems more accurate to date the construction of the fire tower as 1750. This fire tower was built with wood in Bayezid, where today we have the stone one, but it burned down in the fires of 1774 Cibali and was rebuilt. Banoğlu argues that the wooden tower was burned because of the Janissaries action. Their main intention was actually to kill some people whom they expected to come to the fire scene, but since their intention was known, it did not happen and what remained was a burned tower.²⁷⁴ “When fire tower was burned, one of the Süleymaniye Mosque’s minarets was used for watching”.²⁷⁵ In 1826, the tower was destroyed within the abolition of the Janissaries, but when a fire occurred two days after the abolition, it was decided to rebuild the fire tower with stone. Before the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826, watchers called *dideban*²⁷⁶ were informing announcers called *köşklü*²⁷⁷ about fires’ location who were informing *gece bekçi* (night watchman) to make it known by people. Julia Pardoe’s notes inform us about its outlook and function. Serasker Tower had windows on all sides and fire watchers changed the guard once every two hours and it does not matter how detached they were, one could hear their shouting because there was always a fire. “In high towers of the city, there were night guards and used a kind of instrument to announce a fire’s spot”.²⁷⁸ “There was not a single week you could stay in your bed without hearing the shouts of fire watchers such as “fire in Galata!” Or “fire in Üsküdar!”²⁷⁹ The tower, which is 85 meters high, had a crucial role in the

²⁷¹ Özkan Ertuğrul, “Bayezid Yangın Kulesi,” *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 6, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1992), 54; Sercan Özgencil Yıldırım, *Symbolic Maps of the City Istanbul in Engravings* (İstanbul: Kitabİstanbul, 2008), 133; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, v. 3, (Ankara: MEB Yayınları, 1993), 604.

²⁷² Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacıları*, 471.

²⁷³ Cezar, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul’da Yangınlar ve Tabii Âfetler,” 358.

²⁷⁴ Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu, *Tarih ve Efsaneleri ile İSTANBUL*, (İstanbul: Ak Kitapevi, 1996), 191.

²⁷⁵ Beyhan, “Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Yangınları,” 190.

²⁷⁶ Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, v. 1, 450.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁷⁸ Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancienne et Moderne*, 724.

²⁷⁹ Pardoe, *Sultanlar Şehri İstanbul*, 427.

history of the city and even today, the tower is still used by the fire department of Istanbul municipality.²⁸⁰

When there was a fire, the Janissaries went to fire spot on horseback or on foot²⁸¹ though they were not only ones running to fire locations. The Sultan and high officials hurrying to be there as well. They were not in hurry only to watch what was going on or to give solace to people, but the most important reason was to make sure the firefighters did their best and no plundering occurred.²⁸² To do so, the person in charge at the location and head of those who were responsible for extinguishing fires was dispensing Ottoman coins, money on the back of a donkey to those who were expected to fight fires.²⁸³

Sometimes, after a fire, money was also dispensed to those who fought against the fire or helped the Janissaries. Anyone who had an effort in extinguishing fire got their reward. The case of Üsküdar in 1758 sets an example. Although only fire fighters were paid during the Balat Fire, it was ordered that the ones who helped the firefighters should also be paid for their efforts in Üsküdar.²⁸⁴ It seems that the same practice was valid in the 19th century as well. The Üsküdar Fire in 1840 sets an example. This document reports that those who served to extinguish Üsküdar fire such as Tulumbacı, *Sakas*, construction workers, Hookers, and others who helped them should be awarded with 3,139 kuruş in total and treasury is to bear the expense.²⁸⁵

The state did not ignore those injured for serving in firefighting while rewarding. It is stated that 22 privates from Cebeci Corps be paid who were injured during the Balat Fire.²⁸⁶ An interesting example from the archive depicts the Ottoman Empire protecting those from Tulumbacı Corps who get old and sick. When Halil Ahmet, after the great fire of Cibali, asked to be retired in 1756 because he was old, in poor health,

²⁸⁰ Ertuğrul, "Bayezid Yangın Kulesi," 55.

²⁸¹ Metin And, *16. Yüzyılda İstanbul Kent-Saray-Günlük Yaşam* (İstanbul: YKY, 2011), 89.

²⁸² A similar hurry was at issue in London. It was crucial to form bucket brigades for accessing to burning buildings and for the very reason officers of the city militia dispatched quickly to prevent looting to keep order in the streets. See Daniel H. Winer, "The Development and Meaning of Firefighting, 1650-1850," 28-29.

²⁸³ Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancienne et Moderne*, 725.

²⁸⁴ BOA, C.BLD. No: 8/360 (1 C 1171/10th February 1758).

²⁸⁵ BOA, C.BLD. No: 66/ 3286 (7 Z 1255/11th February 1840).

²⁸⁶ BOA, C.BLD. No: 93/4623 (8 L 1154/ 17th December 1741).

and not able to do work, authorities took his request seriously and let him be retired with a daily wage of 15 akçe.²⁸⁷

It seems that through distributing money and rewarding firefighters and those who helped them, the Ottoman Empire was trying to both immediately respond to a fire and to prevent plundering in the aftermath of a fire. Also, the advantage of such practices might be the encouragement of people to behave in that way as a precaution for subsequent fires. When it comes to taking care of old, injured, or unhealthy firefighters, it seems that the Empire takes responsibility.

4.3. Alternative Approach to the City Fires: Diverse Aspects of Regulations after Fires

Setting aside Kenan Yıldız's doctoral dissertation as an exceptional study about 1660 Istanbul fire, most of the fire studies about Ottoman Istanbul up to now did not pay much attention to the state's policies and regulation as well as to the society's response and consciousness about fires. In this part, instead of dry description of fires and their locations, I present an alternative approach to earlier studies to understand how the state managed post-fire periods in the 18th century Istanbul and to comprehend if the society was "static" or it was learning from earlier fires.

Fariba Zarinebaf claims "the state only invested in the repair of mosques and palaces and lacked a program to help the majority of victims during fires, earthquakes, and plagues"²⁸⁸, however in the 18th century it seems that the state regulated society in the capital by various policies and regulations such as price controls on the necessities, tax reductions, and building codes so that necessities could be provided sufficiently, and frequent fires and overcrowding could be stopped, and restorations and reconstructions could be more easily achieved. One of the basic rules about those regulations was according to Islam in which the subjects were "*vediatullah* (a trust from Allah)". Therefore, "the majority of victims" were concerned by the whole society where the Empire's first priority was to protect and help them to live.²⁸⁹ Mehmet Genç states that

²⁸⁷ BOA, AE. SOSM.III. No: 74/5607 (24 Rebiyülevvel 1170/ 17th December 1756).

²⁸⁸ Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700-1800*, 32.

²⁸⁹ Mehmet Genç, "Introduction: The Classical Ottoman Economic Social System and the Environment," in *Environment and Urbanism in the Ottoman Empire*, (İstanbul: Republic of Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation & Istanbul Medeniyet University, 2016), 13.

“it was in this way, the Ottomans felt, that this trust could be carried out in the best possible way.”²⁹⁰ The Empire’s goals were achieved many times though there were difficulties in the capital and frequent regulations issued to the authorities concerning “the majority of victims” could be assumed as the key factor for such achievements.

Due to the intense and great number of fires, Istanbul had difficulties to meet bricks, tiles, and lime needs of the inhabitants. “At those times Hora (Makri Köy), Yalova, Darıca and İznikmit (İznik) were the main providers of these materials”.²⁹¹ Along with the construction materials, the need for, and prices of the necessities such as wood, food, rent, and clothes were increasing in the aftermath of fires. Wood demand had always existed in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. “Werner Sombart’s comment that the pre-industrial era was above all the ‘wooden age’ is rightly celebrated and repeated”.²⁹² No doubt that wood was the most crucial material, and primary matter of the society for everyday life, which concerned the Empire. Every single order sent from the capital to other cities after the fires included a warning against an increase in prices, which would crush people under such circumstances and the immediate delivery of the needed materials to the capital to help fire victims.

After the great fire of Cibali in 1718, an order was sent to the Kadı of İznik, Kadı of Düzce, Kadıs of Black Sea Region, and the Janissary officers, asking to send timber for reconstruction of houses and shops in Istanbul. Those in charge of the concerned areas were to be very careful about the prices of various kinds of timber so that different kinds of timber could be provided with their pre-fire values. The same attitude should be adopted for bricks, tiles, and lime. And it is clearly stated that those who ignore these orders were to be severely punished.²⁹³ Ten days after this order, a new one was sent to Bolu this time, asking to send available tiles immediately to the capital since tiles were needed after the fire.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 14.

²⁹¹ Altınay, *Eski İstanbul Manzaraları 1533-1839*, 60.

²⁹² Paul Warde, *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

²⁹³ Ömer Bıyık, “124 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (H.1128-1130)” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Ege University, 2001), article no: 342, 336. (Fî evasıt-ı Ramazan 1130/ Late July-Early August 1718).

²⁹⁴ Ibid., article no: 351, 343.

Some orders were sent to different parts of the Empire for necessities and some orders, sent the walled city, with the same warnings such as price control over necessities and aid for people, are important indicators to see the consistency of the authorities. An order sent to Sadrazam of Istanbul and Bostancıbaşı in 1718 stated that profiteers should not be allowed in the city and cereals in storages to be sold from their pre-fire values. Also, timber artisans were told not to increase the prices and to help people in their restoration of houses.²⁹⁵ Besides, Kaymakam and Kadı of Istanbul were appointed to watch over the market very carefully to make sure that timbers, bricks, and tiles were not sold for higher prices than the pre-fire period.²⁹⁶

The orders sent to different parts of the Empire after the great fire of Hocapaşa in 1755 and Cibali in 1756 it becomes clearer how the Empire's supervisory role attempted to help people and produced solutions for the problems the city faced. An order issued to the Kadı, the governor, the Janissary officer of Kocaeli stated that all available timber should be immediately sent to Istanbul with pre-fire prices so that the Sadrazam's Palace (*Babiali known as Sublime Porte*) could be reconstructed. The cost of timber was expected to be calculated by the *Tersane emini* El-hac Ebubekir, the chief fiscal officer of Arsenal, and the necessary amount be sent to İznik. Then, all kinds of timber were to be shipped and sent to Istanbul. Meanwhile, profiteers were, for sure, to be identified for taking advantage of the disaster and increasing prices, so that they would be executed. On the other hand, the people in charge were told to keep sending available timber in mountains before winter and those who did not send them and wait for the prices to increase would be punished. The Empire neither accepted any excuses nor laziness.²⁹⁷ Another order with the same date was sent to the Kadı of Samako and Lofca and Tatarpazarı (parts of today's Bulgaria) to ask for needed nails for the reconstruction of Sadrazam's Palace, *Derterdar Dairesi* (building of the official in charge of the finances of the Empire), and the houses around them before winter. In this case, samples of different kinds of nails were sent from the capital and these places were expected to produce the same ones. However, if there are already matching nails with the samples, they were to be sent immediately by any method. The production of nails was advised to start immediately and people were warned to avoid laziness and

²⁹⁵ Toraman, "128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri, 70-71.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., article no: 144, 74.

²⁹⁷ BOA, C.DH. No: 261/ 13036. (Fî evâhir-i R. [1]168/ Early February 1755).

making up excuses.²⁹⁸ Another order sent to the Anatolian part of the Black sea region to Sinop, a city at the northernmost point of the Black Sea coast, to provide timbers and pillars to Istanbul. It is stated that the great fire of Hocapaşa on Sunday night, September 18th, 1755, destroyed the Sadrazam's Palace, *Derterdar Dairesi*, some notables' houses, and the houses around them, therefore immediate need of timbers and pillars should be provided for reconstruction. The needs were to be sent under the supervisory of *Mübaşir*, the official who was formerly sent to carry out the orders. All timbers in stocks or vaults should be brought to the capital with the company of the owners or the men they employed. The capital asked if the stock of timbers were not enough to meet the requested need, some men to be sent to mountains before winter. And, people were warned to avoid laziness and disobedience as usual.²⁹⁹

When the flames of the great fire of Cibali in 1756 almost consumed the city, the authorities were looking for quick restoration. An order was issued to the people in the charge of Şehirköyü, Havre, and Gelibolu to send all available tiles at the pier and tile shops immediately by the sea. Reconstruction was not completed because of winter and people began to go back to their homes and it was seen that tiles were needed more than before. Melânîzâde Ali was appointed from Istanbul to secure the order. He was for this time only ordered not to punish, but to warn and threaten those who did not obey the order. Besides, he was expected to activate all closed tile shops in order to ensure sufficient amount of tile sent to the capital. At the end of the order, just like other orders people were warned to avoid laziness and making up excuses.³⁰⁰

Necessities were not limited to construction materials. Since the city as a whole suffered, necessities for survival such as cereals were needed. An order was sent to the Kadışip of Üsküdar after the great fire of Cibali to provide flour to Istanbul until the mills were reconstructed. It is stated that since Üsküdar was very rich with their watermills and flourmills, they could support the poor and miserable people efficiently. So, day-by-day Üsküdar was expected to send flour to *Dakik-i Kapan*, which is the flour exchange and stock center, located at the Golden Horn.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ BOA, C.DH.No: 59/2939. (Fî evâhir-i R. [1]168/ Early February 1755).

²⁹⁹ BOA, C.BLD. No: 121/6050. (Fî evâhir-i Zilhicce 1168/ Late September-Early October 1755).

³⁰⁰ BOA, C.BLD. No: 54/2684. (Fî evasıt-ı Recep 1170/ Early April 1757).

³⁰¹ *İstanbul Üsküdar Şeriye Sicilleri 441*, 91/ B3. (10 Şevval 1169/ 8th July 1756).

To prevent an increase in prices, the Empire's responsiveness played a crucial role. Warnings, threats, and punishments in orders particularly against profiteers were not a coincidence. On the contrary, it fits the principle of *iaşe* (provisionism), "the policy of maintaining a steady supply of goods and services, which had to be cheap, plentiful, and of good quality".³⁰² An order issued to the Kadı of Istanbul, Agha of the Janissaries Mehmed Agha, Bostancıbaşı and the chief architect Ahmed may give us a clue about the issue. İznik was sending timbers after fires to Istanbul, under the supervision of the chief architect who determined prices and delivered them to timber artisans and İbadullah Bey who owned buildings around the pier. Those artisans were supposed to sell timber at the determined prices. What worse was the ships, before coming to Istanbul, stopped by some mahalles and mansions to make profit by selling timber for higher prices and, because of those profiteers, timber shortages occurred in the capital. Therefore, to meet all the needs of residents in Istanbul, profiteers had to be stopped, the captains were warned not to stop anywhere and timber not to be sold over the determined prices. The chief architect was appointed to determine the prices and the Agha of the Janissaries was appointed to spy in disguise and ensure continuity.³⁰³

We know the orders sent to different parts of the Empire to bring necessities to Istanbul, however it is not very common to find the response, reaction or approach of the artisans in the capital who struggle with losses and selling their products. An order after the great fire of Hocapaşa sets an example. Timber artisans of İznik were asked immediately and carefully to bring all the timbers they have to Odun Kapısı, Istanbul, located at the Golden Horn, by sea without increasing the prices in order to help the people. When they were asked to bring out the unsold timbers to the square of Odun Kapısı, the Kadı of İznik respectfully asked not be interrupted by the timber artisans of Istanbul and artisans of İznik were guaranteed.³⁰⁴

The fires damaged the city so seriously that sometimes the number of skilled workers or master carpenters were not enough for reconstruction. An order was sent to Kadı of Maydos and Midilli to inform that people began to live in burnt houses and shops

³⁰² Mehmet Genç, "Economy and Economic Policy," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 192.

³⁰³ BOA, C.BLD. No: 55/2708 (Fî evâyil-i Cemâziyelâhir 1170/ Late February- Early March 1757).

³⁰⁴ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 208, 87/ B2. (Evasıt-ı Muharrem 1169 / Middle October 1755).

because of inconvenient winter conditions after the fire breaking out in Istanbul. The lack of master carpenters was a big problem for the city. Therefore, it was ordered all master carpenters of Maydos and Midilli were to be sent to Istanbul immediately.³⁰⁵ Another order was sent to Kayseri for the same reason, ordering master carpenters to be sent to Istanbul.³⁰⁶ It could be interpreted that the demand for carpenters and workers were in an increase, which could be one of the reasons influencing the purchasing power, and the Empire ordered master carpenters to come to the capital. The situation shows how the Empire was concerned for the reconstruction of the capital and how Istanbul was repeatedly destroyed and devastated by the fires.

Construction works were increasing because of fires in the 18th century Istanbul and it made workers and carpenters to demand more wages, which were normally regulated by the state according to their capacity and ability.³⁰⁷ Şevket Pamuk analyzes the purchasing power of laborers in 500 years and creates a graphic in which 50%-60% percent of his data belongs to *neccar* group, a group of skillful laborers in construction work.³⁰⁸ In the first half of the 18th century, purchasing power of skilled laborers was on the increase. No doubt, Pamuk's interest was not the reasons in these fluctuations of his graphic, but I might speculate that an increase in the purchasing power of these groups cannot be a coincidence in the first half of the 18th century and natural disasters, especially taking into consideration the frequency of fires, which played a crucial role. When the second half of the 18th century is taken into consideration in terms of the frequency and destruction of fires, which were not comparable to the figures in the first half of the century, my speculation does not seem ungrounded and seems to be verified by further detailed studies.

Thanks to this understanding and the mindset of Ottomans, which was to return the city to its pre-disaster conditions without violating any property owner rights, they created such regulations and policies, not only after fires, but any kind of disaster. For example, the similarities between recovery process of the city after fires and earthquakes emphasize Ottomans' mentality about the recovery. After an earthquake,

³⁰⁵ Ömer Bıyık, "124 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (H.1128-1130)," article no: 349, 342. (fî evahir-i Ramazan 1130/ Middle-Late August 1718).

³⁰⁶ Ibid., article no: 350, 342-343. (fî evahir-i Ramazan 1130/ Middle-Late August 1718).

³⁰⁷ Altınay, *Eski İstanbul Manzaranı 1533-1839*, 61.

³⁰⁸ Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye İktisadî Tarihi 1500-1914* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 185.

construction workers from Anatolia were asked to come Istanbul immediately for recovery of the city. Also, imperial orders were sent to different parts of the state to meet necessities such as iron, wood and nail for reconstruction.³⁰⁹ One of the most important similarity is *vaz 'ı kadîm* which indicates how Ottomans were serious and responsive in not allowing the violation about the property rights of existing property owners and how Ottomans were careful to return the city into pre-disaster conditions after a disaster.

The difference about reconstruction of the city right after earthquakes was wooden structures. Since stone structures increased destruction and loss after an earthquake, wooden reconstructions were suggested. However, even after a terrifying earthquake, the Ottomans' policy was clear as crystal that there should be no wooden building around big structures like mosques and market places.³¹⁰

Reconstructing the city, bringing construction materials from other regions to Istanbul, making new appointments and shipping cereals were high cost issues. In addition to this, it was difficult to pay taxes in the conditions of aftermath of fires. The state, to ease the burden of people and help them, decrease taxes and sometimes even stop collecting taxes.

4.3.1. Tax Reductions until Completion of Reconstruction

After the earthquake of 1509, the Empire asked for an immediate reconstruction *avarız* (extraordinary) tax and brought many workers from different parts of the Empire to the capital.³¹¹ I have not encountered such a practice in the case of fires.

The immediate reconstruction of the commercial buildings were important to restore the life in the city, to have income for the state, waqfs and individuals, and to return to normalcy. However, since the conflagrations destroyed markets very seriously, the Empire reduced, and sometimes stopped collecting taxes until those places could be reconstructed so the Empire would not impose another burden to its people. After the

³⁰⁹ Mazlum, *1766 İstanbul Depremi, Belgeler Işığında Yapı Onarımları*, 48-49.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

³¹¹ Halil İnalçık, "İstanbul: *Türk Devri*," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 23, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 231-232.

great fire of Balat in 1729, the Kadı of Istanbul informed that 101 of 537 stores, which was burned during Balat Fire, were reconstructed within 3 months.³¹² An order was sent thereafter to state that since those 101 stores were reconstructed, they are supposed to pay a tax of which the amount will be determined by the Kadı of Istanbul.³¹³ To gain a clue about the extent to which a fire could paralyze the life of the city, and the way in which the state dealt with the issue, it might be better to refer to the case of 1755-1756. A fire between these years (probably 1755 Hocapaşa or/and 1756 Cibali), various shops throughout the city were reduced to ashes. Burned shops and vaults noted by authorities in this fire were 290 *manav* (greengrocery shop), 127 *bakkal* (grocery), 32 *sebzeçi* (vegetable seller), 69 *kasap* (butcher shops), 59 *ekmekçi* and *çörekçi* (bake houses and cookie houses), 23 *bezirhâne* (flaxseed houses), 30 *kebabçı*, *aşçı* and *hoşafçı* (kebab, cook and fruit stew shops), 10 *helvacı* (halva shops), 11 *leblebici* (roasted chickpea shops), 8 *paçacı* (shops for cooking animals' feet), 14 *tatlıcı* (maker and seller of pastries), 10 *turşucu* (pickle shops), 5 *yoğurtçu* (yoghurt shops), and 15 *saman* and *kömür* (hay and coal vaults). In total, 704 shops and vaults burnt down where 2,518 akçe was collected. After thirty days the authorities were informed that only 20 *manav*, 11 *bakkal*, 7 *sebzeçi*, 17 *fırın*, 6 *helvacı* and 6 *kebabçı* and *hoşafçı* were reconstructed where daily 251 akçe was collected. The authorities responded that three-months of tax, which is 7,550 akçe, should not be collected until the reconstruction of shops. However, the Kadı of Istanbul was responsible to follow the process and to note down the reconstructed shops and to inform the authority so the reconstructed shops could start to pay their taxes with an increased tax. When this increase in taxes were explained in the document, the example of the Balat fire in 1729 was given. It says as in the Balat fire, almost half of the taxes could not be collected, and for three months the collection of taxes was cancelled, but once they were reconstructed they paid higher taxes so the tax-gap during the reconstruction process could be filled. It seems that the Empire was trying to collect the same amount of money after the three-month period because daily collection of taxes was not possible. Therefore, the Empire allowed shops to be reconstructed and began to work and pay their taxes after a while, as if nothing happened.³¹⁴

³¹² BOA, İE.DH. No: 31/2744. (1 R 1142/ 24th October 1729).

³¹³ BOA, C.BLD. No: 20/996. (29 Ş 1142/ 19th March 1730).

³¹⁴ BOA, AE.SOSM.III. No: 69/5262.

One may ask the question; did the state bear all the expenses of the reconstruction itself? The state was very active, interventionist, and responsive in reconstructions. Undoubtedly, after fires, reconstruction of the city began immediately and the number of wooden houses increased rapidly again. Stone waqf buildings were taken care by the state and the ruling elite, so that within a five or six months, damages and traces of fires removed from the city although it was not possible to replace the goods within those kiosks, waqfs, or houses. There were high officials and notables who played an important role in extensive reconstruction activities. Sometimes Sultans particularly asked the notables to help the reconstruction in the capital.³¹⁵ As long as the Empire was strong and wealthy, this path was the same, which continued well into the 20th century.³¹⁶

After the great fire of Cibali 1756, the Janissary barracks were destroyed totally. An order dating back to 1758, issued to the Kadıship of Çıldır, Rize and Ahışa noted that via the head of Istanbul Customhouse İshak Agha, *cizye* (a tax paid by non-Muslims) of these places should be sent to the capital which is about 20,000 kuruş to cover the expenses of reconstruction of the Janissary barracks. The Empire asked individuals, such as İshak Pasha, to take care of such issues.³¹⁷

Slot states that one of the grand viziers of the 18th century, Yeğen Seyyid Mehmed Pasha, figured out that more than half of the city burned down by fire and 300,000 people were homeless and breadless, the Janissaries were grumbling in the streets after all their barracks were destroyed. He cared for those poor people. He had done all he could to meet all the needs of people caused by fire.³¹⁸

In addition to these, there was a case of an officer writing a poem to Sadrazam Mehmet Pasha to praise his rule and asking personally to rebuild his house around the Palace,

³¹⁵ İnalçık, "İstanbul: *Türk Devri*," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, v. 23, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 231.

³¹⁶ Semavi Eyice, *Eski İstanbul'dan Notlar*, 2nd edition, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009), 28. For the situation of waqfs and their roles in reconstruction, see Yıldız, "1660 İstanbul Yangınının Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlili," 95-158. Rhoads Murphey, *Studies on Ottoman Society and Culture, 16th-18th Centuries* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 45-62.

³¹⁷ BOA, AE. SMST III. 43/ 3138. (fi 23 L sene 1171/ 30th June 1758).

³¹⁸ B.J. Slot, "The Fires in Istanbul of 1782 and 1784 According to Maps and Reports by Dutch Diplomatic Representatives," 58.

which burned down most likely in the great fire of Cibali in 1756. It is seen how the officer, Refik Efendi, expressed the burned house was a misery for officers.

Thank God, he has also been blessed in the world of benison.
Those who witness His eternal Highness have also been blissful.
And his Excellency Sultan Osman is the absolute agent of God
And his being to be eternal is present any time.
He has been elevated with his grace and sophistication,
His almighty may adorn his life with good luck and fate.
The laws must be conducted through the order of Mehmed,
For the desperate ones whose house have burnt down.
Mehmet Pasha will make us all perfectly happy and blessed.³¹⁹

4.3.2. Regulations on Sheltering

Tax reduction seems as one of the easiest help for the state, but in the aftermath of fires reconstruction was mostly needed, especially after the severest fires. Tax reduction most probably was very helpful for some victims, but it did not help some victims in terms of sheltering, especially to those who lost their houses and could not find even refuge in a mosque. Therefore, they had to go back to their damaged houses or shops if it was winter or they went back to their ruined houses because they could not reconstruct them immediately. As usually faced after the fires, sheltering problem sometimes caused people temporarily to settle in schools.³²⁰ Sometimes, people were taking shelter in mosques.³²¹ Sometimes people were moving to nearby towns and cities while some were living in mosques and madrasas.³²² The Empire was concerned for the ordinary people and warned house owners about the current problems. It was stated that house owners should not ask for rent from inhabitants under such circumstances.³²³ After the fire of 1660, “tens of thousands had been left homeless

³¹⁹ BOA, C.DH. No: 71/ 3501. (1169/ 1756). See Appendix A.

*Bihamdillah sa'id oldu sa'adet sadrına hala/ O zat baki sadrında görenler oldular mesrur
Vekil-i mutlakdır hazreti sultan Osmanın/ Cenab-ı hakk muayyen ola o zat-ı baki her demde
Kudüm sadrı buse iden keremle oldular a'lâ/ Devam-ı ömrü devletle muammer eyleye Mevlâ
Harîk olan menâzil eder memuriye pervâ/ Ede şer'i Mehmedle kavanin eyleye icrâ
Çıkıp üç mürdü kamille ----- yed-i tarihin/ Heman barî sa'id eden sadrı Mehmed Paşa.* I want to

thank my dear friend Aysun Kale for her sincere help in translation of the poem.

³²⁰ Kuzucu, “Osmanlı Döneminde Vefa Yangınları ve Semt Topoğrafyasına Etkileri,” in *Bir Semte Vefa*, ed. N.Bilge Özel İmanov and Yunus Uğur, (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2009), 576.

³²¹ Kuzucu, “Osmanlı Başketinde Büyük Yangınlar ve Toplumsal Etkileri,” 689.

³²² “İstanbul,” in *Yurt Ansiklopedisi*, v. 5 (İstanbul: Anadolu Yayıncılık, 1982), 3816.

³²³ Toraman, “128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri,” 70-71.

and many devastated families had to be resettled after the fire in the towns of Çorlu, Silivri and Çatalca, all of them a few miles from Istanbul”.³²⁴

Also, there are court records concerning resettlement and problems concerning it. In 1755, Manok, the son of Sarraf Artiyun, had been living in the Katip Kasım quarter when his house burnt down in a fire a year before and he had to move to Üsküdar afterwards. He requested permission to go back to the Katip Kasım quarter after reconstructing his burnt house, to transfer his belongings back and to return to the quarter with his wife. The Imam of the quarter, Hafız Mustafa Efendi and the Muezzin (Islamic prayer caller) Mehmet Halife, Ahmed Aga, Vardor, the son of Kuyumcu Edaş, Agya, the son of Ekserci Samon and Agob, the son of Somuncu Hadaroy, dwellers in the above mentioned quarter, conveyed the request of the victim, along with their testimony, to the authority to allow Artiyun to go back to his house with his wife and property.³²⁵

Another case from Fatih is quite interesting. An order issued to the Agha of the Janissaries to take care of the problem about *Kıptî* (gypsy) people. A fire broke out around Fatih burned down some houses and the neighborhood in which *Kıptî* people lived. Therefore, all *Kıptî* people moved to Edirnekapı with their children and wives and no *Kıptî* would be allowed to reside in Fatih. All *Kıptî* people were living in Edirnekapı and while they were paying their rent regularly, house owners wished to repair their houses and promised *Kıptî* people that they can reside after the repairs. So, all the *Kıptî* people were dispossessed. However, the house owners did not allow *Kıptî* people to resettle. The Sultan ordered allowance for all *Kıptî* people to settle there as he ordered earlier and he made it clear that all their expenses will be met from the treasury so that a misery could be prevented.³²⁶

4.3.3. Building Codes

Urban space and fabric renewal were not quite easy in the state because newly built structures were supposed not to violate the property rights of existing property owners.

³²⁴ Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle*, 62.

³²⁵ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 70/ A5. (9 min Şevval 1168/ 19th July 1755).

³²⁶ BOA, C.DH. No: 223/ 11102. (Fî evâil-i Muharrem 1169/ Early October 1755).

“According to Ottoman law no building can be erected in a spot which might obstruct the air or light or otherwise injure any house previously built”.³²⁷ Building codes contained a variety of regulations, which fit the law, such as, *vaz’-ı kadîm*, ban on wood use, ban on terraces and eaves. Moreover, those who wanted to reconstruct their houses were allowed to do so only without eaves and by use of stone. For those who want to reconstruct their shops were ordered to use stones, but only if they were not able to do that, they could be supported with the name of the Sultan and not be ignored.³²⁸ Along with orders regarding the destruction of bachelor’s rooms, banning the use and reconstruction of them was also one of the outstanding regulations in codes.

As an impressive and distinguished feature of Ottomans’ building codes *vaz’-ı kadîm*, which means reconstructing a structure in its former style, neither more nor less, prevented violations against neighborhoods’ rights. The state wanted the city to be reconstructed as fast as possible, but they did not act loosely about the application of the law. It would be no surprise if the authorities failed to notice some structures built against the zoning codes since it was most likely very difficult to check every single structure rebuilt in the city after a disastrous fire. What could give us about the seriousness and responsiveness of the state about the use and practices of codes, particularly *vaz’-ı kadîm*, is court records. Es-Seyyid El-hac Mehmed Efendi brought an action against the Muezzin Mustafa Efendi, who wanted to reconstruct his burned-down house in Molla Fenari district, which brought up zoning problems between them. It was seen that Muezzin Mustafa requested the bigger chunk of the empty plot. In the end, based on the investigation report of a surveyor, chief architect Ali Halife decided the zone to be divided equally between them, thereby refuting Mustafa’s claim.³²⁹ Thus, no violation of the right of a neighbor was tolerated by the reconstruction of Mustafa’s house bigger.

In another example, on behalf of the Waqf of Emine Hatun, Mehmed Efendi, Hâfız Mehmed Efendi, el-hâc Hasan, and Mehmed Odabaşı complained about a different

³²⁷ Levant Herald, Wednesday, November 28, 1860: Correspondance—Asia Minor (Smyrna, Nov.25) cited in Rhoads Murphey, *Studies on Ottoman Society and Culture, 16th -18th Centuries*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 47.

³²⁸ Toraman, “128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri, 72-73.

³²⁹ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 71/ B4. (fi 8 min Şevval 1168/18th July 1755).

reconstruction from the former style of a building across a house belonging to Waqf of Emine Hatun in Hoca Ali Paşa district, Balat. The complaint was about the reconstructed building that it was now able to see the inner side of neighboring house of women which belong to Waqf of Emine Hatun and this situation kicked up a storm. For this reason, a request was demanded to survey the appropriateness of the reconstructed building and therefore, *keşf naibi* (surveyor) El-hâc Mehmed Efendi, the chief architect El-hâc Hüseyin Halife and İbrahim Halife were charged for this examination. At the end of the survey, it was determined that the reconstructed building was different from former style and in this reconstructed building, it was very possible to see the inner side of neighboring house of women. As a result, the decision that the upper hall of reconstructed building had to be covered with a wall and windows in the middle had to be covered with wooden fence were reported to Es-seyyid El-hâc Ahmed and El-hâc Mehmed.³³⁰

There were some exceptions in the practice of *vaz' -i kadîm*, but those exceptions were still parallel with the Ottoman law of construction. The case about the reconstruction of a bakery sets an example representing that the law was not only on paper, but it was practically used. A group of ten people, including surveyor Hâfiz El-hâc Mehmed Efendi and the chief architect El-hâc Mustafa Efendi, went to view the reconstructed bakery around Meat Square. They find it to have been reconstructed in a different way than it had previously been. Since there was a need for a room for the workers to stay and to put their utensils, though it was decided that there should not be any intervention with the building and it should better be approved as it does not harm anyone else as well.³³¹

Many regulations, codes, and orders such as the ban on the use of wood in the re/construction of houses, inns, and shops, use of tiles for roofs, banning of terrace and eaves as well as regulations about limiting the height of houses, are available in the history of Istanbul to prevent, or at least to reduce, the damages the future fires can cause. After the great fire of Cibali in 1718, an order was issued to the Kadı of Istanbul to make sure that, while reconstructing their houses, people use tiles for roofs and they

³³⁰ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 95/ B4. (7 min Muharrem 1169/13th October 1755). See Appendix B.

³³¹ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 97/ A6. (fi 13 min Muharrem 1169/19 Ekim 1755).

do not have wooden terraces.³³² An order was also issued to the chief architect to ban the use of terraces in structures because they caused the spread of fires.³³³ Another order in 1743 was issued to the chief architect not to let people have terraces in their houses since they enabled flames to catch nearby houses easily and caused people to suffer.³³⁴

It is necessary to consider bachelor's rooms as additional reasons for the eighteenth-century Istanbul fires, differently from a century earlier. An imperial order, issued to Kadı of Istanbul, as an example, clearly indicates the wooden bachelor's houses, shops, and public markets as the reason for 1718 Cibali Fire.³³⁵ It is very likely for this reason that certain complaints were recorded and the state made bachelors' rooms to be demolished and banned the building of new ones as a precaution for these dangerous places. The example from 1718 allowed the use of stone for the reconstruction of bachelor's houses. After the fire of Cibali in 1718, an order was issued to the Kadı of Istanbul to prevent reconstruction of buildings made of wood and those who wish to build bachelors' houses and rooms within the walled city or outside of the city, as money-winning assets, should use stone, not wood.³³⁶ However, since complaints about bachelor's houses did not stop, the Empire banned the reconstruction of them altogether and even ordered to demolish the current ones. In 1751, the Empire placed a ban on the construction of bachelors' rooms in a *han* (inn) in Gedikpaşa, which burned down in the fire of 1751.³³⁷

Around At Pazarı, some people used the upstairs of their stables for earning more money as bachelor's rooms, coffeehouses, and inns in which fires easily broke out. Since those who lived in these places were unreliable, some artisans and residents of the neighborhood complained about the situation and requested these type of structures to be examined and banned. An imperial order, therewith, forbids using upstairs of burned-stables as bachelor's rooms, and inn where bachelors live, or coffeehouses where bachelors rollick.³³⁸

³³² Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100-1200)*, 66.

³³³ İstanbul Mahkemesi Sicilleri 24, 116/B1.

³³⁴ Ahmet Refik, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100-1200)*, 158.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

³³⁷ Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700-1800*, 32.

³³⁸ BOA, AE. SMST. III, no: 368/ 29229. ([1]144/ 1731-1732).

Up to now, many different examples shed light on the Ottoman authorities' level of consciousness, responsiveness, as well as efforts towards precautions. What about the ordinary people? There are important cases one can encounter in court records showing how ordinary people were sensitive against fires beyond all the efforts of the state and these examples can be assumed as the representations of the ordinary people's consciousness regarding fires. The example of At Pazarı is the one I just mentioned above. The residents complained about the places where bachelors live and spend their time due to the high possibility of fires. Another example is from the residents of a neighborhood around the bath of Ayasofya-i Kebir. People complained about some houses built with terraces and applied to the court to request to check whether or not the new constructions did not endanger public safety and accordingly, to solve the problem because of the fact that they did not want to live under the fear of fire. In other words, they did not want to live in a neighborhood with a serious fire hazard. So, the chief architect was issued to investigate and solve the problem.³³⁹

Since there were fires before, Imam Ali Efendi and folks like El-hac İsmail and Mustafa Çelebi and Muezzin Mehmed Emin, Hasan Çelebi, and El-hac Ahmed and Es-Seyyid El-hac Ali and Süleyman Agha and others asked for the firewood, which was piled up next to Çörekci Halil's glazier shop around Parmakkapı, to be carried away for the peace and the security of the neighborhood. It was noted as the reason of why Halil carried them away.³⁴⁰

The case of Fatma is a very meaningful and touching one, which sheds light on more than courts' performance and responsiveness, but the ordinary people's caution, precautionary concerns, and wariness against fires. In the Sinanpaşa district, adjacent to Yenibahçe of Istanbul, El-hac Süleyman, the son of Hüseyin and Fatıma, the daughter of Abdullah were living in a two-story house, Fatıma in the ground floor and Süleyman on the upper floor. Süleyman suddenly disappeared and Fatıma now began to live by herself. However, since she is older, weak, disabled, and careless about some things, a fire burned out in her room but the neighborhood residents extinguished it. A small representative group of neighborhood including the religious officials and ordinary residents wanted to locate someone reliable upstairs of Fatma Hatun in order

³³⁹ Altınay, *Hicri On İkinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100-1200)*, 159.

³⁴⁰ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 67/ B3. (5 min Şevval 1168/15th July 1755).

to look after her. In the end, it mentions that Rukiyye, the wife of Ali, was settled to upstairs of Fatma Hatun, to take care of her.³⁴¹



³⁴¹ *İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri* 209, 95/ A2. (Muharrem 1168/October 1754).

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

The spirit of the dead survives in the memory of the living.

In his *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, Osman Nuri Ergin writes the fires of Istanbul chronologically by referring the chroniclers of the Ottoman Empire such as Peçevî, Naîmâ, Râşid Mehmed, and İzzi. According to Osman Nuri's list, between 857-1269 (1453-1852/1853), 109 fires broke out in Istanbul including the districts outside of the walled city, namely, Galata, Kasımpaşa, Eyüp and Üsküdar.³⁴² However, in the tables of fires I presented in the second chapter, the number of fires between 1453 and 1756 in total is 121 and this includes only fires in Istanbul, excluding Eyüp, Galata and Üsküdar. It is clear that fires were a really important phenomenon in the Ottoman capital. The figure below shows the number of fires in periods of one hundred years and it is seen that the number of fires increased drastically in three centuries after the capture of Constantinople.

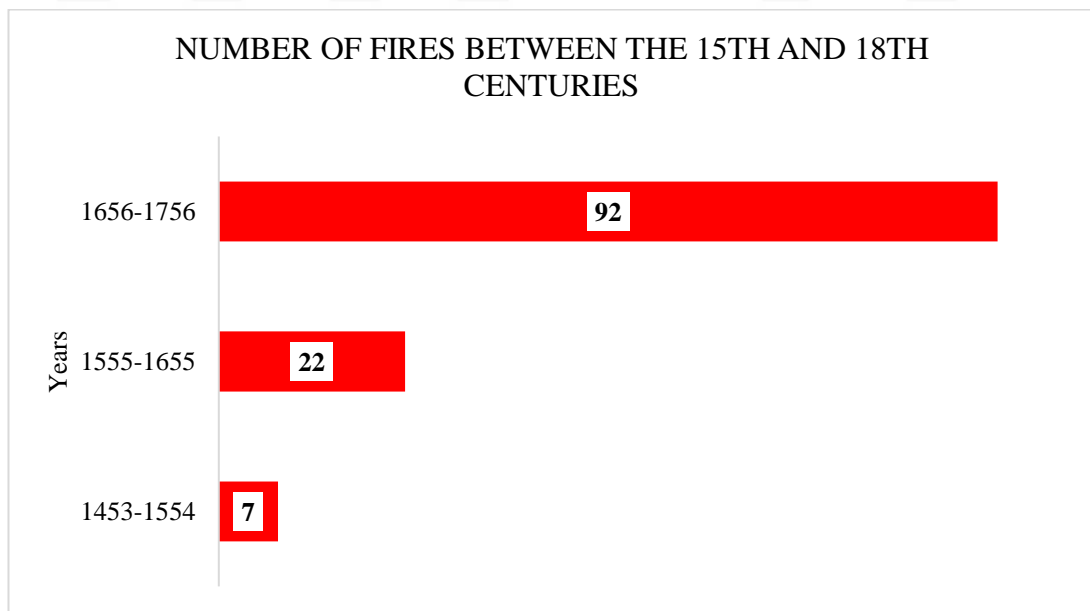


Figure 5.1. Number of Fires between the 15th and 18th Century

³⁴² Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umurû-ı Belediyye*, v. 3 part 2, 1185-1221.

75 of 92 fires in the last period of one hundred years occurred between 1751 and 1756. In the first half of the 18th century, Istanbul was struggling with fires more than ever. The reasons for fire outbreaks were various, but arson seems to play an important role. Also, traditional wooden construction with large eaves, deficiency in spatial organization (lack of detached buildings), narrow streets, and wind in Istanbul caused fires and their spread all over the city. In addition to these reasons, firefighters, their equipment, and methods could not help sufficiently to keep fires especially the major fires under control, though invention of *tulumba* helped to extinguish several fires and saved life and property on many occasions.

The frequency of fires in Istanbul was remarkable through the 15th and 18th centuries. It is seen in the figure 2.1 that the Golden Horn is the area where the frequency of fires were highest. Also, it appears that there were three fire zones in Istanbul. First fire zone was from *Balat* to *Cibali*, second zone was from *Odunkapısı* to *Sirkeci* and the third one was from *Bayezid* to *Mahmutpaşa*. These districts were the commercial and residential areas of Istanbul where various economic activities were taken place. Therefore, one can imagine the destruction level and a fire's cost to the people of Istanbul. In the figure 2.2, it is seen that a century-old time period following the conquest of Constantinople, fires mostly occurred in the center of the city, the main road which Byzantines called *mese* and the Ottomans called *Divânyolu*. Fire locations seems to shift in the 17th century, with the use of Golden Horn, along with the migrations. Only the fire zone three (*Bayezid- Mahmutpaşa*) seems to suffer from fires chronically.

The number of fires in the city between 1751 and 1756 was two times more than the previous century. There were seventy-five fires at that time period and seven of those seventy-five fires were major ones. The figure 2.3 shows most of the fires occurring in the area of the Golden Horn and the map enables us to see in which parts of the city fires were quite destructive and which parts of the city mostly experienced the fires. In addition to three fire zones in the earlier centuries, a fourth zone appears in the 18th century on the opposite side of the Golden Horn, namely *Gedikpaşa*. Also, apart from the increase in the frequency of fires in zones and other locations in the capital, a number of fires with serious destructive power occurred in the city through the years. One may follow this difference by checking the maps in the second chapter. By

comparing tables and maps, it appears that the total number of fires occurred from the 15th to the beginning of the 18th century was forty-six, while the number of fires occurred between 1701 and 1756 reached seventy-five. Additionally, among the forty-six fires until the 18th century, there was only one fire rated as 5 and three fires rated as 4. However, between 1701 and 1756, there are four fires rated as 5 and three fires rated as 3. Thus, claiming that the Ottoman Istanbul was surfing on the waves of flames in the first half of the 18th century would not be wrong.

It is not quite possible to determine the cause of each fire that occurred from the Ottoman chronicles or the archival documents at hand. However, it is possible to argue firmly that arson might have been one of the most common causes of fires, when the timing of the fires are assessed, together with the general opinion in the literature. Janissaries in Istanbul were Janus-faced in that they could be both starters and the extinguishers of many fires. Furthermore, in addition to the slaves or ex-husbands as potential arsonists, there was an artisan who organized an arson to ruin his rival at least on one occasion.

The rivalry between people seems unchanged through years and no doubt one can find more examples in various places in the modern world. Domino's Pizza and United States Fire Administration cases set meaningful examples for that. In 2011, two managers of a Domino's Pizza set fire to a Papa Johns to boost their sales.³⁴³ Another example about arson problem is traceable in a report developed by a cooperative agreement between the National Volunteer Fire Council and the United States Fire Administration. Report says that an arsonist among firefighters is a serious problem for countries to solve.³⁴⁴ Therefore, I might dare to speculate the difference from those modern problems, the seventeenth and eighteenth century stories reveal considerable features that maintain the similar characteristics of human conduct in the face of major catastrophes regardless of time.

³⁴³ <http://www.nbcmiami.com/news/Dominos-Pizza-Managers-Charged-With-Burning-Down-Papa-Johns-132934723.html> (Accessed 24.06.2015)

³⁴⁴ *Report on the Firefighter Arson Problem: Context, Considerations, and Best Practices*, https://www.academia.edu/1052842/National_Volunteer_Fire_Council_-_Report_on_the_Firefighter_Arson_Problem_Contexts_Considerations_and_Best_Practices (Accessed 24.08.2015)

There is no doubt that firefighting started earlier than the pre-modern period. However, since the 17th century cities grew in size and density, which caused more use of fire, so did the danger of fire outbreaks. To limit fire damage authorities tried to adopt more effective measures such as building codes, migration policies, creation of firefighting teams. One of the most common methods of stopping fire and its spread in the 17th and 18th centuries was to pull down or blowing up buildings. Various fighting methods to tackle such fires generally share similar characteristics, if not exactly the same, such as bucket brigade or pulling down the adjacent buildings. Thanks to technological and scientific developments of the time, a couple of pumps invented as new weapons to fight fires in the beginning of the 18th century, which were different in size, and applied in most of the recorded world. Every technological innovation creates its own environment, and pumps are not exception. Ottomans established *Tulumbacılar Ocağı* in the first quarter of the eighteenth century to educate fire fighters who would operate the pumps while in British Empire fire fighter units or fire clubs accrued as a private enterprise in the early modern era.

Focusing on the capital of the Ottoman Empire, namely Istanbul, in the pre-modern period, this thesis attempts to scrutinize responses to fires. Along with the reasons for their outbreak, their adjuvant reasons and influences, comparison of the Empire's counterparts and the analysis of fires enable this thesis to draw a full picture of the city in terms of all sides of fires. The perception of fires was linked to religion. Ottomans had a unique religious rationalization. Therefore, answer to the question of fires' reasons was related with religion. However, it did not mean just to pray and wait for the creator to extinguish the fire. On the contrary, extinguishing was very important and residents were continuously warned by the authorities. Furthermore, firefighter corps was founded, fire pumps were invented and encouraged. In addition to these, society was conscious about fires and did not hesitate to request authorities to check the neighborhood where they lived and their neighbors who lived next door.

When it comes to the state's response to fires and its role in taking precautions and reconstruction efforts, the research shows that the Ottomans obviously saw the danger and was willing to take action without losing time and its responsiveness was remarkable. Regulations to reduce the future vulnerability, to solve the current

problems, and to help people in sheltering and feeding were priorities for the Ottomans in dealing with the outcome of fires.

Çokuğraş and Gençer in their recent article claim that the Ottoman state did have a more proscriptive nature than prescriptive in the 18th century regulations when fires are concerned.³⁴⁵ However, building codes illustrates how the Ottoman Empire reconstructed the capital along with taking preventative measures for the future concerns. As seen from various examples throughout the thesis, regulations, practices, and building codes were neither emergency nor temporary practices, but well considered and planned codes. However, the realization of these regulations, practices, and codes is undoubtedly a matter for another inquiry.

It seems that the Ottomans were similar to their counterparts in suffering from fires. However, it seems that the Ottomans were different in their perception towards fires, their approach, and regulations in the aftermath of fires than their contemporary counterparts in the world. Ayalon claims that “in the 17th and 18th century western European authorities saw earthquakes and fires as occasions for introducing social innovations and transforming relationships between rulers and ruled.”³⁴⁶ For example, London after the great fire of 1666 “saw an astonishing degree of activity as expansion both east and west coincided with the rebuilding of some 9,000 houses in the City.”³⁴⁷ New buildings in London were well built and fit for persons of honor and quality. Also, “for the security of the inhabitants, there is a gate with iron bars to shut up at nights.”³⁴⁸ The famous district Westminster had fine town houses, exquisite homes for aristocrats, gentlemen and their ladies. The old city of London in the aftermath of the fire, formed a second focus of wealth within the metropolis.³⁴⁹

On the other hand, in the Ottoman Empire, after fires, Sultans used their authority to reconstruct markets, the Janissary barracks, the big structures such as mosques and

³⁴⁵ Çokuğraş and Gençer, “Urban regulations in 18th century Istanbul: Natural disasters and public dispute,” 192.

³⁴⁶ Yaron Ayalon, “Ottoman Urban Privacy in Light of Disaster Recovery,” *J. Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 514.

³⁴⁷ Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London 1650-1750*, (London: Methuen, 1944), 8.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

complexes, and enable cheap and plenty materials and foodstuff rather than to challenge social conventions. The aim, in the aftermath of fires, of reconstruction in the 18th century Ottoman Empire was not to rearrange social or political realities, but rather reconstruct pre-fire conditions. The Ottoman Empire's responsibility in the capital to reconstruct the social, economic and political life cannot be underestimated. The Ottomans' responsiveness and willingness to reconstruct the city played a crucial role for people to survive and return to normalcy.

Vaz'-ı kadim was one of the most important tools for returning to pre-fire conditions because it enabled architectural organization, and order and prevented land boarder violations as well as violation of privacy. Orders sent to the local authorities on occasion in order to check if any violations occurred or not show that Ottomans were concerned and responsive about the reconstructions in the aftermath of fires.³⁵⁰

Responses to disasters on the state and communal level indicate that Ottoman Istanbul fires played a significant role by influencing the daily life of Istanbulians, the Ottoman administration. Ayalon stresses that Ottomans gave priority to Islamic structures due to their symbolic value and they "used Islam as a tool for enhancing public loyalty to the state."³⁵¹ However, by helping victims of disasters prevail another fact: Sultan's ultimate patronage. When fires are concerned, sultan cared and helped his subjects impartially in the aftermath of fires by controlling prices, ordering workers not to demand more money and informing house owners not to increase rents in fire neighborhoods. Considering the fact that for Ottomans, in the pre-modern era, all the subjects were trustees of Allah therefore motivation to return the capital city to its pre-fire condition and reconstruction social welfare seem pretty consistent. This approach and understanding bear the question if desire of showing the patronage and legitimacy of Sultan could be motivations behind these efforts? This is an important point that deserves further inquiry.

³⁵⁰ Kenan Yıldız, "Osmanlı'da Mimarînin Sınırları: Yeniden İnşa Faaliyetlerinde "Vaz'-ı Kadim" Kavramı," in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Çevre ve Şehir*, (İstanbul), 371-379.

³⁵¹ Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, And Other Misfortunes*, 4.

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Figure of Beyazıt Fire Tower in the 19th Century, ID: 001560012008

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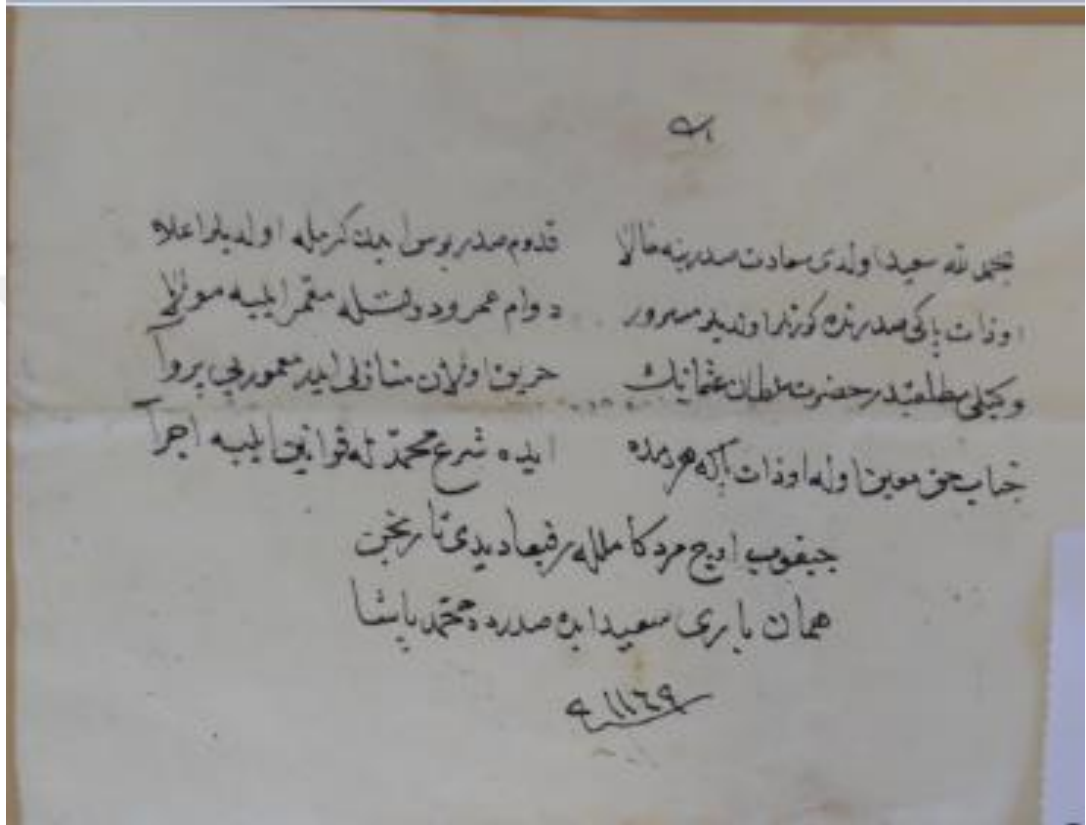
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APPENDICES

- A. Refik Efendi's poet expressing how a burned house could be a misery for officers.



BOA, C. DH. no:71/ 3501. (1169/ 1756)

B. The case of Waqf of Emine Hatun

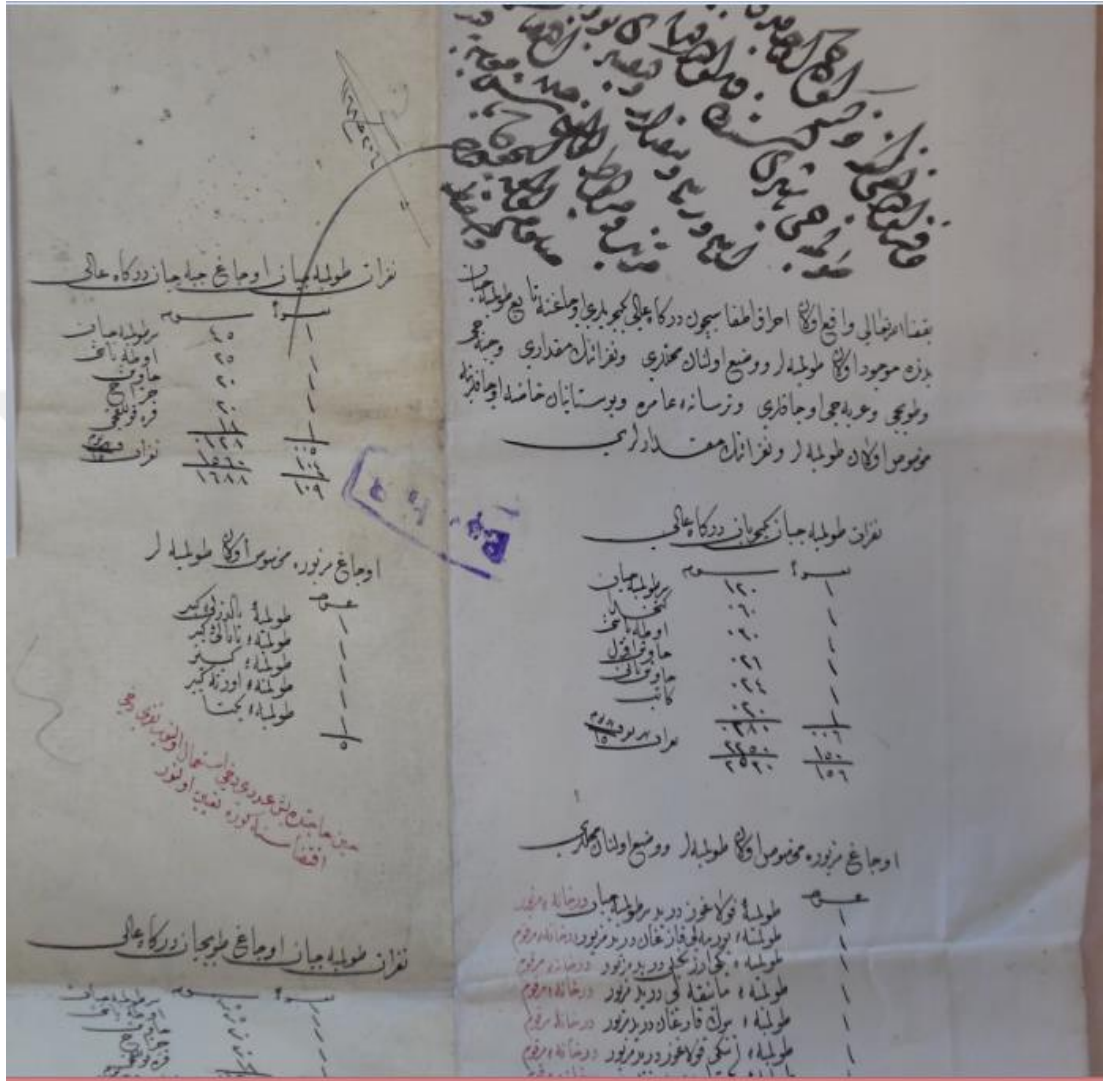
A complaint about the different reconstruction of a building across a house belonging to Waqf of Emine Hatun in Balat. A request was demanded to survey the appropriateness of the reconstructed building and therefore, *keşf naibi* (surveyor) El-hâc Mehmed Efendi, the chief architect El-hâc Hüseyin and İbrahim Halifeler were charged for this examination.



İstanbul Bâb Sicilleri 209, 95/ B4. (7 min Muharrem 1169 / 13th October

1755)

- C. The number of firefighters and tulumbas in Istanbul belonging to different corps, namely, the Janissaries, Cebeci, Topçu, Arabacı Topçu, Tersane-i Âmire, and Bostancı.



BOA, C.BLD. no: 67/3319. (1168/1755)