

THE FIRES IN ISTANBUL OF 1782 AND 1784 ACCORDING TO
MAPS AND REPORTS BY DUTCH DIPLOMATIC
REPRESENTATIVES.

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Among the most curious of the 18th century maps of Istanbul are two small manuscript maps that have been sent by Dutch ambassadors in Turkey to Holland in order to show the damage done by the big fires of 1782 and 1784. They are kept in the General State Archives in The Hague, together with several reports on these fires.

The frequency and the size of the fires in Istanbul had made a deep impression on Dutch representatives since the first establishment of a Dutch diplomatic mission in Turkey in 1611. Ernst Brinck, secretary to the first Dutch ambassador Cornelis Haga in 1613 and 1614 made careful mention in his notebook of all fires he heard of¹. Brinck mentions seven fires between May 1613 and February 1614. Most of them were small, but the 11th January 1614 the splendid palace of the Pacha of Aleppo burnt down together with some surrounding houses, the fire did not expand further because there was a lot of snow. More serious was the matter on the 30th of May 1613. Brinck wrote: «There has been a large fire at the Bezesten between the mosque of Sultan Soliman and the Serail. The fire started in the morning and lasted until late in the evening. It is estimated that more than a thousand houses and shops were destroyed, the disaster did not grow not larger because there was not much wind. 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

1 The notebook of Ernst Brinck is kept at the State Archives in Arnhem, Holland, collection: Oud-Archief Harderwijk nr. 2046. In the Royal Library of The Hague Brinck's album amicorum is kept. In this album several prominent persons in Constantinople have written messages.

houses. The Grand Vizier appeared, but he was almost chased away by the throwing of stones. The Grand Vizier ordered then to extinguish the fire, but they replied with a sneer that he should bring them then the water in which he had drowned the Janissaries (they referred to an event, some time ago, when the Vizier had ordered to throw 25 rebellious Janissaries in the river Euros at Adrianople). This rebellion was stopped at last by the execution of some ringleaders and by the promise to increase the pay of the Janissaries with a half asper daily. The Azamogians were calmed by the threat to make them Janissaries»².

At another place in his notebook Brinck gives some more information on the attitude of Janissaries in case of fire: «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 to the fire to spread. It is a bad thing that the Janissaries have the privilege to plunder the burning houses and the houses they pull down. Several Viziers and Pachas have wanted to prohibit this, but the Janissaries chased them away with stones. It happened in 1607 that Murad Pacha tried in vain to stop them plundering, but 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»³.

After this time a great many references to smaller and larger fires can be found in the reports of the Dutch diplomats in Turkey. In many reports there is mention of bad behaviour of the Janissary firecorps, a behaviour that did not become palpably better after a reform in 1729. Several times it is even hinted that the Janissaries were not only unwilling firemen, but also that they were among the worst arsonists⁴.

The 18th century knew even worse fires than the 17th century. The Dutch embassy building burnt down two times, in 1700 and in 1767. There were large fires that destroyed considerable parts of the town in 1756 and

² Brinck's notebook f. 9v.

³ Brinck's notebook f. 42v-43.

⁴ J. von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 7, Pest 1831, p. 355-356.

in 1770⁵. The great fires of July and August 1782 made such an impression on the Dutch ambassador Reinier van Haeften that he joined to his reports a small manuscript map in which the built areas of the town were coloured green and the destroyed areas left white.

According to the reports of Van Haeften there had been a period of considerable unrest and discontent among the people just before the fires. This unrest was caused by furor over the Russian actions in the Crimea and was stimulated by religious leaders. The Grand Vizier was supported by the pro-European Serail, that had a realistic view on the limitations of Turkish power, but the religious leaders, the populace and the Janissaries desired a strong line in the Crimean matter. It is not sure if the several fires that broke out in the capital during the summer of 1792 were lighted on purpose, but the lugubrious atmosphere described in the reports of the ambassador justifies serious suspicions. Even if the fires were accidental, it can not be doubted that the terrible spreading of the two big fires of 1782 was made possible by the inaction of ill-disciplined firemen.

The first fire started the 9th of July, according to Van Haeften near the Yedi Kule. This assertion by Van Haeften seems to be highly doubtful; according to the map that Van Haeften sent later, the Yedi Kule were far away from the area struck by the July fire. The map shows that the fire destroyed an area in the valley between Fener and Balat, and then to the South, upwards the hill, where at last it was confined by the city-walls and by the unbuilt area of Yeni Bahçe. More than 10.000 houses were destroyed, according to the reports a quarter of the city, which seems to be slightly exaggerated.

A second fire started on Wednesday 21st of August. This fire was even more serious than the former one. After the first fire there had been much ado about the finding of incendiaries, so criminal intent can not be excluded.

5 Documents on the destruction of the Dutch embassy have been published in : *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel* vol. 2 (1665-1725) edited by K. Heeringa, The Hague 1917, p. 308-309, for the fire of 1700; and in *Bronnen...* vol IV¹ (1765-1825) edited by J.G. Nanninga, The Hague 1964, p. 308-309 for the fire of 1767.

The fires in Constantinople of 1756 and 1770 are mentioned in the Dutch embassy reports of that period, States General archives nrs. 6959 and 6972.

According to the map the fire began in a mosque situated slightly to the East of the Greek patriarchate, possibly in the region of the Sultan Selim Mosque or the Gül Cami. The fire went to the East and to the South and was stimulated by a strong wind. The mentality of the firemen was very bad, water was lacking because a long period of drought had dried up all sources, and so the fire was only stopped by nature at the city-walls and at the sea, or driven away from the quarters that were spared by the wind. The result was the entire destruction of a part of the town, that was according to our map roughly limited in the East by a line drawn from halfway between Yeni Kapi and Kum Kapi to the North, touching the Soliman mosque and so straightly to the Golden Horn. The Western limit of the area of destruction was a line that began at the city-wall halfway Topkapi and Mevlana Kapi, and from there to the South, touching the court of the Fatih Cami and from there straight on to the Golden Horn.

Of course the situation within the burning area must have been terrible. The high number of victims indicate that the fire has spread with great rapidity so that many people were entrapped by it. From Van Haeften's report of the 26th of August it seems that many people were entrapped in the region near the Sea of Marmora. This might possibly be declared by a turning of the wind during the fire from North to North-East, so that the fire that first expanded in a straight line to the Sea of Marmora in the South got a branch that went in the direction of the city-wall, so that the quarters of Ak Deniz and Kum Kapi got caught in a fork. This turning of the wind during the fire would also declare that a part of Samatya was spared.

The disasters were followed by a serious disturbance of public life. A famine loomed and the Janissaries were roofless, both would certainly lead to a serious rebellion when no quick remedy was applied. There were threats that new fires would be lighted, and the sultan, fearing that his own position would be in danger when he did not appease the Janissaries, deposed Izzet Mechmed Pacha and made Grand Vizier the pacha of Rumelia, Yeqen Haci Mehmed Pacha, a former Janissary Aga who had the confidence of the troops.

This harsh minister restored the order by rigorous means and relieved the worst needs. However, the aggressive and pro-Janissary line he represented was not the political line of the Serail and soon as the situation had cleared up a little Grand Vizier was dismissed, albeit rather honorably; he was even allowed to keep the 2.000.000 piasters he had «earned» during

the four months of his office. He was replaced by a man of the Serail line, the Kiaia Bey Halil Hamid Pacha. This vizier stood in a good relationship with the Dutch ambassador. He was in the habit when he was still Kiaia Bey to have long talks with Van Haeften on the political situation in Europe⁶.

Van Haeften left Istanbul early in 1784. His secretary, George Ferdinand Kroll, represented the Dutch interests until the arrival of his successor Frederik Gijsbert van Dedem in 1785. During the tenure of office by Kroll there was again a large fire in Constantinople which started the 5th of August 1784. Probably inspired by his former boss Van Haeften, Kroll also sent a map together with his reports to Holland. This fire started in Balat, near Fener, and driven by the North-Eastern wind the fire spread rapidly to the South-West. The fire covered partly the same area as the fire of July 1782. The progress of the fire was hindered by the many open spaces which still remained from 1782, and so the losses were limited to some thousands of houses, but the area covered was still very large.

Also this fire had been preceded and accompanied by serious political disturbance directed against the politics of the Grand Vizier. The Janissaries threatened to burn down the whole city, and the Topchi Bachi, governor of Galata, Pera and Tophane had done nothing against disturbances in his circumscription, where the foreign embassies were situated. There were several cases of arson, without doubt provoked by the Crimean situation, but at last the Grand Vizier came into action and put an end to the disturbances.

Extracts from the reports from Dutch ambassadors and from other documents in the Dutch General State Archives that tell of the two fires are printed hereafter.

The original reports by the Dutch ambassador in Turkey to the Dutch government (called «Stateen Generaal») over the years 1611-1795 are kept at the General State Archives in the Hague in two chronological series («ordinary letters» and «se ret letters») together with the letters from the Turkish government (States General archives nrs. 6888-7009). In the second

6. All reports on the fire are printed at the end of this article. The report on the dismissal of Jeğen Hacı Mehmed Pacha, dated 10th January 1782 is not printed here, it can be found in States General archives nr. 7008.

half of the 18th century the reports of the ambassadors were also printed in order to have them circulated among the ambassadors and in government circles like a kind of newspaper. In case the originals are lost there are several series of copies extant: Van Haeften's reports can be found copied in his final report to the Staten Generaal (States General archives nr. 8845), in the copybooks of the Staten Generaal (States General archives nr. 11567 and 11815) and in his own copybook in the archives of the Dutch embassy in Istanbul, also in the General State Archives (Embassy Turkey before 1811, nr. 746). Kroll's reports are copied in the copybooks of the States General (States General archives 11584) and in his own copybook (Embassy Turkey before 1811 nr. 786).

The board of Directors of Levant Trade in Amsterdam also received letters from ambassadors, usually the same reports as those to the government with some slight differences. Its archives are kept at the General State Archives in The Hague. Copies of the letters to the directors might also be found in the Embassy-archives. This board of directors had some kind of financial superintendence over the financial administration of the embassy in Istanbul. It corresponded also with the treasurer of the Dutch nation in Istanbul, an official who under supervision of the directors perceived the consular taxes and paid most of the official expenses of the embassy. The treasurer Jean Paul Panchaud, who was at the same time an important Dutch merchant in Istanbul, did also send some interesting reports on the fire of 1782. The correspondence of the Directors with several persons in Constantinople over the years 1660-1825 is kept in their archives nr. 97-120.

There exists also a mention of the fire of 1782 in the correspondence of a Greek merchant in Amsterdam in whose archives there is a voluminous correspondence with merchants in Istanbul and Izmir over the years 1771-1784. These merchant archives are deposited in the archives of the Dutch embassy in Turkey (Embassy Turkey before 1811 nrs. 1185-1231)⁷.

Except the two maps of 1782 and 1784 there exists a number of other maps of Constantinople in the General State Archives. The maps older than

7 A description of the archives of this merchant, together with a history of his trade-firm is: B.J. Slot, *Ho Démétrios Kourmoules kai to diethnes emporion ton Hellenon kata ta ete 1770-1784 in Mnemosyne* 5, Athens 1975, p. 115-147.

1830 have been quoted in an appendix hereafter. Except these maps there are also some plans and views of Constantinople in some old and rare books that are kept at the General State Archives of which the most important is the view in the big atlas «Civitates Orbis Terrarum» by G. Braun and F. Hogenberg, both Dutchmen, who edited this atlas in Köln in 1572-1618 in six volumes.

Document nr. 1

From a letter of R. van Haeften, ambassador, at Büyükdere, to the griffier (secretary) of the States General 24th July 1782

Original in States General Archives nr. 7008

Translated from the Dutch

... The 9th of this month a big fire has started in the neighbourhood of the Seven Towers that destroyed about 3000 houses and shops and also three Greek churches. This last loss is even worse because it is very difficult to rayas or Christian subjects to get permission to repair their churches.

Just now I got the news that yesterday afternoon in the Greek quarter of the town of Constantinople a new fire has started that is still going on and might destroy an even larger number of houses, because since some days we have a very strong wind here.

In Pera and Galata have occurred several cases of pest, so I am very happy that my wife is now so far recovered from her confinement that I could leave the 20th to my countryhouse in Buyukdere...

Document nr. 2

From a letter of R. van Haeften, Dutch ambassador, at Buyukdere, to the griffier (secretary) of the States General 9th August 1782.

Original in States General Archives nr. 7008

Translated from the Dutch

... this is a period in which there is a strong discontent among the people, and since the last fire, that lasted from the afternoon of the 23 till the 24th ten o'clock in the evening and in which one of the most densely populated quarters of Constantinople, one hour walking in circumference, has been burnt, there are found daily in the mosques letters -and it is asserted that there has been even found one stuck at the walls of the Serail- in which the deposition of the Grand Vizier is demanded together with the deposition of other high dignitaries, and even the Sultan is not spared. Although it has been tried to stop these

movements by the deposition of the Janissary Aga the discontent is still growing and it seems that it will be impossible to stop it, unless by a big change in the officials of the Serail and of the Porte. No night passes or fuels are found and fires are discovered on two or three places at the same time. Yesterday I received a letter from Pera, reporting that the Porter of the German embassy had come to the Dutch embassy to warn that there existed a plan to set fire to the German embassy, and all embassy-buildings standing very close together in the same quarter this might have serious consequences...

Document nr. 3

From a letter of J.P. Panchaud, treasurer of the Dutch Nation in Galata to the Directors of Levant Trade in Amsterdam 9th August 1782.

Original in the archives of the Directors of Levant Trade nr. 111.

Translated from the Dutch.

... The 23d of last month there has been a fire that lasted 26 hours and destroyed about 10.000 houses. This will cause poverty, certainly in a time when all is already expensive, when trade is in decline and when ready money is scarce. All this causes much discontent against the government's...

Document nr. 4

From a letter of J.P. Panchaud, treasurer of the Dutch nation in Galata to the Directors of Levant Trade in Amsterdam, 26th August 1782.

Original in the archives of the Directors of Levant Trade nr. 111.

Translated from the Dutch.

... The disastrous fire that started here the 23d of July and that destroyed more than 10.000 houses, has started again on Wednesday 21 of this month and lasted until Saturday 24 late in the afternoon. It has reduced to ashes more than half of this big city. So now hardly one quarter of this town remains, except of course the parts that lie on this side: Tophane, Galata and Pera. The losses in houses, furniture and merchandise are undescrivable. And it will be impossible to restore them in many years. The first fire of July 23d already caused a lot of poverty; there will now be even more poverty because several hundredthousands of people are roofless. Praise be to God that the part of the town with the richest shops and warehouses have been spared, but trade will suffer very much. Actually the situation is still so confused that there can be

8 About the scarcity of ready money in this period: B.J. Slot, *Ho Demetrios Kourmoules*... p. 118-119, 125-126.

no estimate of the number of victims. Praise be to God that I will suffer no direct damage to my trade-firm, but certainly the consequences of this accident will be serious for all traders on Vienna...

Document nr. 5

From a letter the ambassador R. van Haeften, at Buyukdere, to the griffier (secretary) of the States General, 26th August 1782.

Original in States General archives nr. 7008

The same letter was also sent to the Council of Directors of Levant Trade in Amsterdam. Original in the archives of the Directors, nr. 111

Translated from the Dutch.

... Meanwhile, those who rule the state, and who from their position are better able to know the feebleness and the impotence of the empire, try to check the mad furor of the people, having the conviction that a new war would mean the complete ruin of the empire. It is to be desired that this peace-loving ministry could remain in office, but it is not to be expected. On the contrary, it seems more and more probable that we are on the verge of big changes, and many imagine that we might have an immediate revolution. The populace not only continues to abuse at the government, but also it is saying openly that the Grand Signor is inept to rule. Also, when one fire is put out, another begins, and the continual discoveries of incendiaries leave no doubt that they are ignited on purpose. My letters of the 24th July and of the 9th August will have informed you of the two disastrous fires that ravaged Constantinople, the latter was so terrible that it resembled the fires of 1756 and 1758.

Today one could fill sheets of paper when one wanted to describe all terrors of the fire that ravaged the capital these last days, and no pen could describe it sufficiently to give a true impression. I will only refer that the fire began the 21th in the evening between nine and ten, and that it stopped the 24th in the morning at five o'clock. It lasted for two days and three nights without interruption always accompanied by a strong wind and occurring in a period in which almost all sources lacked water because of the droughth that lasted already from March.

These circumstances were still aggravated by the complete unwillingness that existed among the troops and among the workmen, so that the government was obliged to leave the extinction of the fire to divine providence. The most moderate reports agree that more than half of Constantinople has been destroyed by the fire. Not only innumerable houses that belonged to scholars of the law and other prominents of the Empire were destroyed, but also the palace of the Aga of the Janissaries and part of the barracks or «chambers» of these troops and also many warehouses and cornmills. This is even more serious

because there were already complaints and even grumbling about the scarcity of the available stock of food. It is estimated that at least five thousand people died in the fire or drowned; there were parts of the town near the seaside, where people had to choose between burning or jumping in the sea, and because of the strong wind boats were unable to save them. Others sought refuge in mosques with their valuables and thinking that they would be safe in these stone buildings, they were suffocated miserably.

It is enough to make one cry when one hears people from Constantinople talk of the cries and weeping of the unfortunates, and it is believed that neither in the last century, nor during the whole period in which Constantinople has been governed by the Turks there has been such a fire.

The foreign merchants tremble with reason for the consequences of the disaster, yesterday there has already been a bankruptcy of two Jewish trade-firms in Constantinople, and of this bankruptcy three Dutch firms will suffer considerably. May God grant that the Franks do not have to fear more disasters and that they be delivered from the fear in which they live here. If only half of the rumours about arsonists and the threatening words spoken by the populace since the Crimean war about strangers and especially about the two nations they accuse of coveting the fall of Turkey are true, then some disaster is imminent and Pera and Galata may suffer the same fate as Constantinople has suffered. Such times and circumstances make that foreigners will get a dislike of staying here...

... I just heard that the Grand Vizier, Izet Mechmed Pacha had been deposed and succeeded by the pacha of Roumelia, Hagi Jeghé Pacha. This new Prime Minister was during the last war Aga of the Janissaries. He is an old man of 70 years who has never before been employed in matters of state and who is to be commiserated that he has to take up now this difficult and dangerous office. The Grand Signor had him called so secretly from his district that, although he had already been ordered here before the fire, the last Grand Vizier did not suspect anything until one hour before his disgrace. The former Grand Vizier was a lenient and peaceable person, and he did not lack understanding, but he had no energy and allowed himself to be ruled completely by his brother-in-law, who was a very bad person, much hated by the people. They have done very well by chasing him also, together with the Chiaus Bachi, who had, by means of his wife a great influence on the thoughts of the Grand Signor, and he was an abomination to the people because of his avidity. I hope that these changes will calm down the spirits, but, according to the reports I get from Constantinople, there is only small chance of this. The fermentation gets more and more dangerous, the fear for a revolution increases, and today all shops are closed. In the streets there are loud calls that changing ministers is not sufficient, and that a change of sovereign is necessary. One hears that not only Pera and Galata, but also the countryhouses on the Bosphorus will be burnt down, in order that the infidels who will come to conquer Constantinople will find only ruins.

Yesterday and the day before yesterday there have been found incendiaries near the houses of foreigners in Pera, there were several fires that have been lighted on purpose and even a Turkish negro had been arrested. Fear is so great that the Franks take the furniture from their houses and put it in warehouses...

Document nr. 6

From a letter the Greek merchant Stamati Augerino in Constantinople to the Greek merchant Dimitrio Kurmulu in Amsterdam, 26th August/9th september 1782.

Original in the archives of Dimitrio Kurmulu, archives of the Dutch Embassy in Constantinople nr. 1225.

Translated from the Greek language.

... The 11th of this month, at 3 at night started a big fire here that lasted more then 50 hours, and destroyed half of the city or even more. The worst damage was in Rintzali...

Document nr. 7

From a letter of R. van Haeften, ambassador, at Buyukdere, to the griffier (secretary) of the States General 10th September 1782.

Original in the States General archives nr. 7008, where the originally enclosed map is lacking. The same letter, with the map in the archives of the Directors of Levant trade nr. 111.

Translated from the Dutch.

... In my last letter I wrote you that the Grand Visier Izet Mehemed Pac-ha had been deposed. Afterwards this minister in disgrace has been banished to Demotica after having been imprisoned for some days in the Serail. The Grand Signor had given him the choice to go either to Demotica or to Philopopel, and he also retains his three tails. He owes this lenient treatment to the Moufti who has protected him very much and without whose intercession he would have been sacrificed to the hate of the people. His brother in law, known under the name of Celebi Aga, by whom to his undoing he allowed himself to be ruled completely, did not escape so happily. He is daily being tortured to get him to confess where he hid the money that he extorted from the people. It is rumoured that by this expedient he has already been obliged to reveal the hidingplace of 8000 purses, and it is hoped that there will be found a lot more. His wife, who is very much in esteem in the serail, tries to plead with the sultan to spare his life, but he is so hated by the people that it is believed that

the sultan, notwithstanding his inborn gentleness, will be unable to grant this.

The day after the deposition of the Grand Vizier the Kiaia Bey and the Defterdar have also been deprived of their offices. They have been succeeded by their predecessors. These changes, as well as the great severity with which the new Grand Vizier began his office, seem to have calmed a little bit the excited spirits. No day passes or one hears about public or secret executions, and the number of those, who the Prime Minister has drowned at night is so considerable, that it is said that they are the result of a rebellion which the Prime Minister was able to stifle in its early beginnings. This suspicion is strengthened by the doubling of the watches and by the sharp orders given to the watches to prevent large gatherings in the coffeehouses and on the streets and also by the prohibition to leave one's house after sunset. At least these things seem to indicate that the fear for a rebellion was not a vain one. However, this Grand Vizier shows that he is a man who will make himself feared if he will be allowed to have his way, and in the short time that he has been in office, he has shown that the heavy task that has been given to him does not astonish him. He found more than two thirds of the capital destroyed by fire, 300.000 people without houses and almost without bread, the Janissaries grumbling in the streets because all their barracks had burnt down.

All these are circumstances that request an extraordinary prudence and a more than ordinary activity. He has begun to solve the problems, and because the lack of bread was the most urgent matter, he has, during the first days of his office, always accompanied by two executioners, walked personally through all the quarters inside the town and in all the suburbs, to admonish the bakers under penalty of death to increase their production. Seeing that the number of ovens that were destroyed was very large, he has ordered to dig ovens under the earth like it is done in the armies. So people do not have to wait any more for their bread, but can get it now at any hour of the day in abundance. He has severely forbidden that any person would begin to rebuild his burnt house before the palace of the Janissary Aga and the barracks of the Janissaries (that were not partially as I wrote before, but old and new ones completely destroyed) are rebuilt, so that this work would not be obstructed by lack of workmen.

In the meantime the Janissaries in Constantinople live in tents. All the people whose houses were destroyed by the fire have been cared for by him. In brief, this Prime Minister has done all he could to relieve all needs caused by the disaster.

Because I had no time before the leaving of the last mail I send you now the drawing of the big fire that broke out in Constantinople.

The Turks celebrate now their Bairam, and although it had been predicted that the Bairam would not pass quietly, one does not hear of the slightest disturbance. The prominents are not very happy that the sultan accepted the presents they offered him at this occasion, because they had expected that the Monarch, taking into consideration the serious damages they had suffered by the fire, would this year relieve them of this tribute...

Document nr. 8

From a letter of the ambassador R. van Haeften, at Buyukdere, to the griffier (secretary) of the States General, 25th september 1782.

Original in States General archives nr. 7008

Translated from the Dutch.

... Eight days before yesterday the birth of a sultan was announced by the firing of all the cannons of the Serail. He has been given the name of Mechmed. This is the fourteenth child the Grand Signor has begot during a period of eight years, three sons and two daughters are still alive. When this monarch got to the throne in 1774 there was according to the physicians no probability that he would leave offspring.

Without the heavy disaster that happened the 21th of last month, the happy event would have been celebrated by a Dolalma or general illumination and other public festivities. Indeed the inhabitants of Constantinople have still too vivid a memory of their misfortune to be able to dry their tears so quickly.

Often extraordinary happenings are exaggerated, but in the first reports about this fire there was no exaggeration. The more one investigates, the larger the losses seem. According to a description, given recently by a private person in whom one might confide, the number of the killed would be 6000, and the number of burnt houses 80.000, with the palace of the Aga of the Janissaries and the two fixed barrack-buildings of these troops. Also were destroyed more than a hundred palaces that, though built of wood have costed from 200 to 1000 purses each. Also more then 200 mosquer, among which 30 built of stone and fine marble, 60 public bath-houses, 130 mills, 400 ovens, and an equal number of shops and warehouses with food. Several warehouses with coal were destroyed one Armenian and six Greek churches, of which the loss by these two nations is estimated irreparable, not because of their value -they were built with little expense out of wood-, but because of the impossibility to rebuild them, being this prohibited by the government according to Muslim law.

Document nr. 9

From a letter of F. Kroll, chargé d'affaires at Constantinople to the griffier (secretary) of the States General, 9th August 1784.

Original in States General Archives nr. 6985.

Translated from the Dutch.

The 5th of this month, about eleven o'clock there started in the Jewish quarter of the town, that is situated next to the Greek quarter of Fanar a big fire that increased so much by the strong North-Eastern wind that after a short

time number of houses, among which several splendid buildings and small mosques in a radius of a quarter of an hour walking have caught fire, and this fire continued with the strong wind until the next morning when it diminished a little, and finished at about four in the afternoon, so only after a period of 28 hours. The end must be ascribed to the several empty spaces remaining still unbuilt after the fire of 1782 that have stopped further progress. In the meantime there are given incredibly high figures for the number of the houses that have been destroyed, the most moderate estimates vary between 1500 and 1600.

At this occasion there have been heard several grumblings of the people. The people did not scruple to curse the Grand Vizier loudly and terribly in the streets, saying that they considered him to be the gravedigger of the empire, and that they would like to see the entire city in flames. When they were asked why they made those terrible curses, they only replied that the reason was known amongst themselves, the Janissaries...

Document nr. 10

From a letter of F. Kroll, chargé d'affaires in Constantinople to the griffier (secretary) of the States General, 25th August 1784.

Original, with accompanying map, in States General nr. archives nr. 6984.

Translated from the Dutch.

... The Stambol effendi or inspector and first judge of Constantinople has been accused of neglect of duty in his office. The complaints were that he retained ships that were loaded with food for a very long time, so that he made it impossible to ships that might have carried several more cargoes before winter, to make more than one trip. Because of this he has been deposed during the last days of Ramadan, and then was also deposed the Topchi Bachi or general of the artillery, because the latter during the last fire in Constantinople had done very little in his quarters of Galata, Pera and Tophane, to reprimand the people and to punish their open slander against the Grand Vizier, which he was empowered to do. It is true that this inaction could have had the worst consequences for the quarters that are ruled by him, because the instigators remained unpunished before and after the fire. Because of this impunity the populace took so much courage, that some days later it was discovered that they planned to commit arson again in Pera near the houses of the foreign ambassadors, where certain prepared incendiaries have been found. If they had not been discovered in time they might have destroyed the entire suburb. After several foreign ministers had complained about these matters at the Porte, there has been a precise investigation, and there have been arrested several arsonists, who have been executed immediately. Thus quiet has been restored now, and there is no talk any more of these things...

Appendix : Maps of Istanbul anterior to 1830
in the dutch general state archives.

Ministry of the interior, nr. 68.

«Plan du detroit de Constantinople», 1829, printed 2 leaves.

States General Archives nr. 6985, exh. 23-9-1784

Map of Constantinople, showing the area destroyed by the fire of the 5th August 1784. Manuscript, coloured.

Archives of the Directors of Levant Trade nr. 111

Map of Constantinople, showing the areas destroyed by the fires of the 12th July and of the 21th August 1782. Manuscript, coloured.

B.P. 1-122

«Plan de Constantinople, de son port, canal et environs». Edited by J.F. Leopold, Wien 1725. With insets : prospect of Constantinople and map of Hungary and Turkey. Printed.

B.P. 1-123

«Constantinople ou Stamboul» by L'Empereur. Edited by J. Rocque, London 1752. Printed.

B.P. 1-124

«Plan de Constantinople et du Bosphore», with insets : Plan du Serail. 1788. Printed and handcoloured.

B.P. 1-125

Maps of Constantinople and the Serail, without date (late 18th century?).
Nr. 1 : «Constantinopolis»; nr. 2 «Plan du Serail». Manuscript and coloured⁹.

9 This map, based on 18th century maps of Constantinople and surroundings by the Frenchman Kauffer was probably drawn just before 1800 by J.H. van Woensel, author of some other maps mentioned in this list.

B.P. 1-126

«Nouveau plan de Constantinople» Edited by Simon Schropp Berlin 1825.
With inset: «Plan du Serail». Printed.

B.P. 1-127

«Plan de Constantinople» by E. Mentelle. Edited by Jean, Paris 1828. Printed.

B.P. 1-128

«Plan de Constantinople avec les dispositions défensives prises en Janvier 1829 par I.E.H.» Manuscript and coloured.

B.P. 1-129

«Contours et Perspective de Constantinople» by P.F. Baron de Gudenus. Without date (18th century). Printed. 3 large sized leaves:

- 1 Vue de la ville, with inset: Plan de Constantinople et de ses faubourgs.
- 2 Vue de Scoutari, Dolma-Bagtche et Top-Hana.
- 3 Vue d'Ejoub, Ters-Hana et Kassim Pacha.

Marine maps 2012

«Carta Esferica del paso de los Dardanelles, del Mar de Marmora y del Canal que conduce al Mar Negro». by Don Dionisio Alcala Galiano. Edited by the Direccion Hidrografica Madrid 1806. With inset: Constantinople. Printed¹⁰.

Marine Maps 2019

«A map of the Propontis or Sea of Marmora with its two streights, viz. Bosphorus and Hellespontus» by P.C. Bohn. Edited by A. Dury, London 1770. Printed.

¹⁰ This map seems to be based for its drawing of Constantinople on the same sources as map nr. B.P. 1-125.

Marine Maps 2020

Dutch edition of nr. 2019 by J. van Keulen, Amsterdam, without date. Printed.

Marine Maps 2021

«Carte très exacte de la Mer de Marmara, avec toutes les profondeurs, levées par les soins du Chevallier de Kinsbergen, vice-Amiral de Hollande et de Westfrise», edited by H. Frieseman, Amsterdam without date. Printed¹¹.

Leupe, Foreign Maps nr. 90

The same as Marine Maps 2021.

Marine Maps 2022

The same, but with date : 1791.

Marine Maps 2023

English edition of 1812 of Marine Map 2012. Printed.

Marine Maps 2024

«Carte réduite de la Mer de Marmora par le Comte Truguet vice-amiral «1784-1788». Edited by Depot Général de la Marine, Paris. Insets : «Plan du canal des Dardanelles» by Truguet and «Plan du Canal de Constantinople» by Kauffer. Printed.

¹¹ The Dutch admiral Van Kinsbergen had distinguished himself in Russian service in the Black Sea, where 2 September 1773 he sank the Turkish flagship. In Dutch service he made several voyages to the Aegean. He was the author of a rather remarkable book on the Greek Archipelago, which might be described as a guide to future conquerors. Its first edition in French (*Description de l'Archipel*) was published under the of the editor of his maps, H. Frieseman, with a fictive place of edition Neuwied sur Rhin (instead of simply «Amsterdam») in 1788. The later (enlarged) editions in German (*Beschreibung der Archipel*) and in Dutch (*Beschrijvinge der Archipel*) of St. Petersburg and Amsterdam, 1791 and 1793, are anonymous, the author is indicated with the abbreviation R.v.K. (Ridder van Kinsbergen).

Marine Maps 2028 A

«Zeekaart van het Kanaal van Constantinopolen», revised edition of the chart of the Bosphorus of Kauffer by the Dutch rear-admiral J. van Woensel. Without date. Printed and hand coloured.

Marine Maps 2028 B

The same as 2028 A but not coloured.

Leupe, Foreign Maps 92

The same as Marine Maps 2028B

Marine Maps, 2029

«Plan du détroit de Constantinople» in two leaves, without date. With seven insets, showing: the fortress Kilia Kalessi, the castle near the firehouse of Europe, the castle Kharipolie, Battery of Limani channel, the castle Roumeli Kavali, the battery Teli Take and a plan of the Serail. Printed.

Marine Maps 2044

«Wassende graden paskaart van de Zwarte Zee». Made from the measurements, executed by J.H. van Kinsbergen, by J.H. van Woensel. Edited by J. van Keulen, Amsterdam, without date (about 1775). With insets: of Maps of the Bosphorus and of the Sea of Azof. Printed.



Kroll's map of 1784

Explanation of the numbers on Kroll's map of 1784

1. The mosque of Valide Cami
2. The mosque of St. Sophia
3. Palace of the Grand Vizier
4. The mosque of Sultan Ahmed
5. The mosque of Nuri Osmanie
6. The mosque of Sultan Bajazet
7. The mosque of Solimanie
8. The mosque of Sultan Mehmed
9. The mosque of Ederne Cami
10. The mosque of Sultan Selim
11. The mosque of Gül Cami
12. The patriarchal church of the Greeks
13. The Greek church of Jerusalem
14. The arsenal of the warships
15. The foundrie of guns, called Top-Hana
16. Seven Towers
17. The Serail of the Grand Signor
18. The fire of the 5th of August 1784
19. The mosque of Ejub
20. The channel between the city and Galata
21. The Sea of Marmora
22. Galata
23. The granaries
24. House of the General of the Artillery
25. The aquaducts

Explanation of the numbers on Van Haeften's map of 1782

1. Mosque of Top Cami, where the Grands Signors gird their sword.
2. Patriarchal church of the Greek
3. Arsenal of the warships
4. Arsenal of the galleys
5. Galata
6. Pera, residence of the foreign ambassadors
7. Gun roundry
8. Jeni Cami or Valide Mosque
9. Mosque of St. Sophia
10. Mosque of Sultan Achmet
11. Mosque of Osmanie
12. Mosque of Sultan Bajazet
13. Mosque called Solimanie
14. Palace of the Janissary Aga
15. New barracks of the Janissaries
16. Mosque of the Sons of the Grand Signors.
17. Mosque of Hogia Mustapha Pacha
18. Mosque of Mustapha II
19. Aqueducts
20. Mosque of sultan Mehemet
21. Palace of the Grand Signor
22. The Seven Towers
23. Mosque where the fire began
24. Hippodrome
25. Gate of the town called Top Kapi
26. Gate of the town called Jeni Kapi
27. Samathia
28. Fire of the 12th of July 1782
29. Old barracks of the Janissaries
- + Houses outside the walls of the city