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Producing, Transporting, and Distributing Charcoal: From the View of the Charcoal Merchants' Guild in the Eighteenth Century in Istanbul and Its Surrounding Regions

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Abstract
This article examines the eighteenth-century Ottoman charcoal merchants' guild and the charcoal distribution system. While previous research has primarily focused on the economic and political aspects of charcoal distribution in the Ottoman Empire, scant attention has been paid to the specific individuals and groups involved. This study analyzes primary sources to address this gap and to examine the activities and socioeconomic structure of the guilds. The research reveals that the charcoal merchants' guild was divided into subgroups based on location. Each subgroup exhibited distinct characteristics and played a role in the overall functioning of the guild. Notably, the ownership of charcoal warehouses significantly impacted the status and influence of their masters. The distribution system relied on the monopoly of the charcoal merchants. Villagers enjoyed certain privileges at the charcoal production sites, contributing to their involvement in the system. Additionally, other actors, such as brokers, shipping agents, and porters, benefited from the existing framework. Spatial factors played a crucial role in shaping the activities within the charcoal distribution system. The locations and their associated dynamics influenced both legal activities and violations. Consequently, the system became a contested domain in which various groups vied for their personal interests. By analyzing the charcoal merchants' guild and the distribution system, this study contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of the premodern Ottoman energy trade. The findings shed light on the roles and interactions of actors within the system, highlighting the complexities and challenges of the trade.

Keywords: charcoal, merchant, guild, city, energy

On Sekizinci Yüzyıl İstanbul'u ve Çevresinde Kömürcü Esnafı ve Kömür Dağıtım Sistemi

Özet
Bu makale, on sekizinci yüzyıl Osmanlı odun kömürcü esnafını ve odun kömürü dağıtım sistemini incelemektedir. Daha önceki araştırmalar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda odun kömürü dağıtımının ekonomik ve siyasi yönlerine odaklanırken ilgili kişi ve gruplara çok az ilgi göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, esnafların faaliyetlerini ve sosyoekonomik yapısını incelemek üzere birincil kaynakları analiz ederek bu boşluğu doldurmaya çalışmıştır. Araştırma, kömürcü esnafının konumlarına göre alt gruplara ayrıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Her alt grup farklı özellikler sergilemiş ve esnafın genel işleyişinde rol oynamıştır. Özellikle, odun kömürü depolarının mülkiyeti, ustalarının statüsünü ve etkisini önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Dağıtım sistemi, odun kömürcülerinin tekeline dayanmıştır. Köylüler odun kömürü üretim sahalarında belirli ayrıcalıklara sahip olmuş ve bu da onların sisteme dahil olmalarına katkıda bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, madrabazlar, reisler ve hamallar gibi diğer aktörler de mevcut çerçeveden yararlanmıştır. Mekânsal faktörler odun kömürü dağıtım sistemindeki faaliyetlerin şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Konumlar ve bunlarla ilişkili dinamikler hem yasal faaliyetleri hem de yasa ihlallerini etkilemiştir. Sonuç olarak sistem, çeşitli grupların kendi çıkarları için mücadele ettiği tartışmalı bir alan haline gelmiştir. Kömürcü esnafını ve dağıtım sistemini analiz eden bu çalışma, modern öncesi Osmanlı enerji ticaretinin dinamiklerinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bulgular, sistem içindeki aktörlerin rollerinin ve etkileşimlerinin altını çizerken ticaretin karmaşıklığına ve zorluklarına ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: odun kömürü, tüccar, esnaf, şehir, enerji

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In early modern Istanbul, charcoal was an indispensable fuel, which played a vital role in the urban economy and the lives of the city's residents. Charcoal was used in various settings, including the court, private homes, and trade workshops, with hammams, bakeries, and ironware manufacturers consuming particularly large quantities of thermal energy. The Imperial Arsenal (Tersâne-i Âmire) was one of the city's largest charcoal consumers, using it to produce iron components for ships. Due to the risk of fire and the scarcity of trees, charcoal was produced outside the city. The charcoal consumed in Istanbul came from various parts of the empire. Specifically, urban residents consumed charcoal from districts in the Thrace region near the Black Sea, including Istranca, Terkos, Çatalca, Vize, Tatarpazarı, Hasköy, and Filibe, and from communities on the eastern side of the Sea of Marmara, such as İzmit and Kocaeli. Due to its significant demand for charcoal, the Ottoman government attempted to ensure that Istanbul residents could acquire sufficient amounts at a reasonable price.

Despite its significance, however, research on charcoal's premodern history remains limited, particularly when compared with the rich body of scholarship on the modern history of coal.[1] In addition, most of the research on the distribution of early modern consumer goods has focused on foodstuffs, such as grain and meat, whereas relatively little attention has been paid to other daily essentials, including charcoal.[2]

To understand the Ottoman economy, it is necessary to mention the three principles articulated by Mehmed Genç: provisionism, traditionalism, and fiscalism.[3] In order to provide a stable supply of inexpensive, high-quality goods to its subjects, the Ottoman government enforced an economy that followed official prices, kept prices as low as possible, and sought to generate tax revenue from a stable economy. Some of the traders' guilds were appointed as requisition agents (*mübaya'acı*) in exchange for the monopoly over their occupation.[4] The studies of Genç and other scholars have mainly focused on the situation of foodstuffs, such as grain, and the spinning and weaving industries that developed from the seventeenth century onwards, and have revealed the Ottoman government's approach to food supply and the structure of domestic and international trade.

On the other hand, trade in charcoal supplied to Istanbul was conducted through the Black Sea route, which excluded foreign traders, making charcoal a commodity representative of the Ottoman Empire's domestic trade. Charcoal from Thrace discussed in this article was supplied to Istanbul via the same routes as foodstuffs and cotton produced in the region.[5]

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1 Muharrem Öztel, "İstanbul'un Temel İhtiyaçlarından Mahrukatın (Odun ve Kömür) Önemi ve Mahrukat Arz Piyasası (1789–1918)," *Turkish Studies* 8 (2013): 487–505; Büşra Karataşer, "İstanbul'un Kömür İhtiyacı ve Yaşanan Temel Sorunlar (1855–1872)," *Marmara Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* 38 (2016): 191–205; Yüksel Kaştan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kömür Ocaklarının İşletmesi (1839–1918)," *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2 (2016): 1–26.

2 Ahmet Uzun, "İstanbul'un İaşesi," *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2015), 6:56–80; İklil Selçuk, "Ottoman Market Regulation and Inspection in the Early Modern Period," *Adalya* 24 (2021): 356–373; Kaya Göktepe, "İstanbul'un İaşesinin Temini Meselesi ve İstanbul'un İaşesine Katkı Sağlayan Bir Merkez: Tekirdağ Kazası (XVIII.–XIX. Yüzyıllar)," *Belleten* 81 (2017): 857–916; Kenji Fujiki, "18 Seiki Istanbul no Dougyou Kumiai: Kachiku Riyou Gyoushu no Bunseki kara" [Ottoman guilds in eighteenth-century Istanbul: A study of butchers and tanners], *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (2005): 221–243; Seda Ünsar, "A Study on Institutional Change: Ottoman Social Structure and the Provision of Public Goods," *Akademik Bakış* 6, no. 11 (2012): 177–200; Shoichi Sawai, *Osuman Cho no Shokuryou Kiki to Kokumotsu Kyoukyu: 16 Seiki Kouhan no Higashi Chichukai Sekai* [Food shortage and environment in the Eastern Mediterranean world in the late 16th century] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2015).

3 Genç contends that the Ottoman Empire's government aimed to ensure that commercial goods remained affordable, abundant, and of high quality while curbing the ambitions of commercial guilds seeking to expand their profits. This approach was intended to prevent price hikes and shortages (provisionism). In their primary economic philosophy, the government consistently strived to preserve the status quo, drawing upon historical precedents to navigate new challenges (traditionalism). The central objective of the Ottoman government in economic matters was to generate tax revenue for the Treasury, prioritizing treasury income and expenditure reduction over income growth, given the constraints of transportation and technology at the time (fiscalism). Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (Istanbul: ÖTÜKEN Neşriyat, 2000), 41–48.

4 Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 85; Seven Ağır, "The Evolution of Grain Policy: The Ottoman Experience," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 43, no. 4 (2013): 571–598.

5 Faroqhi mentions Thrace as an example of peasants' active participation in local trade in premodern domestic trade, and as will be discussed below, we can observe peasant participation in the charcoal trade as well. Suraiya Faroqhi, "Trade: Regional, Inter-Regional and Internal," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil

Analyzing charcoal, a commodity distinct from foodstuffs and cotton, may shed light on the diversity of domestic trade in the Ottoman Empire. In addition, analyzing the charcoal supply system in relation to the various related groups can contribute to clarifying how domestic trade functioned in the Ottoman economy.

Previous Research

There are a limited number of studies that focus on the early modern charcoal industry. One example is Salih Aynural's examination of Istanbul's charcoal distribution system.[6] He notes that there were three main routes whereby charcoal was shipped to Istanbul. First, there were charcoal merchants in Istanbul who traveled outside the city and purchased charcoal directly from rural villages. Second, there were villagers who produced charcoal and transported it to regional transshipment hubs. From these hubs, it was then sent to Istanbul. Third, there were villagers who transported charcoal directly to Istanbul.[7] Aynural concludes that the government attempted to regulate charcoal distribution because it viewed charcoal as an essential item upon which urban residents depended. Accordingly, the Ottoman government ordered local officials to inspect charcoal arriving in Istanbul in order to ensure a sufficient supply and stable market prices. All actors involved in producing, distributing, and selling charcoal were obligated to observe official regulations and traditional orders (*nizam*). The charcoal produced in Thrace was shipped by land and sea to Istanbul. Generally, it was sent via cities along the coast of the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. The charcoal merchants' guild maintained bases of operation in the wharves lining Istanbul's coast. They held the exclusive right to receive and sell all the charcoal arriving in the city. Charcoal was sold to customers at a fixed price, and sales took place at warehouses located in and around the city's wharves.[8]

Muharrem Öztel's work on demographic policy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also touches briefly on the history of charcoal. Specifically, he notes that the expansion of Istanbul's charcoal supply in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was related to a dramatic increase in the city's population. That increase, he argues, was primarily a result of the in-migration into Istanbul from other regions of the Ottoman Empire. Öztel also examines the institutional mechanisms used to regulate the supply and sale of charcoal. Initially, he notes, the Istanbul agha and court judge (*kadı*) supervised the distribution of charcoal within the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter, however, that role was taken over by officials in the Ministry of the Interior (Dâhiliye Nezâreti) and Ministry of Forestry, Mines, and Agriculture (Orman Mâden ve Zirâat Nezâreti). As noted above, these officials played a double role. First, they were called upon to ensure that the residents of Istanbul and other parts of the empire had stable access to sufficient supplies of charcoal. Second, it was their duty to prevent periods of scarcity and oversupply, thereby ensuring price stability.[9] According to Öztel, the basic regulations governing charcoal distribution changed very little over the course of the nineteenth century. Namely, the local authorities were prohibited from levying taxes in the name of *koru hakkı* (grove right) when charcoal producers were exempted from taxation.

Alaaddin Tok discusses the history of charcoal in relation to the gradual decline of early modern sources of thermal energy and the development of a modern coal industry.[10] Although Tok focuses primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he provides a detailed socioeconomic and environmental analysis of firewood and charcoal usage and distribution during the early modern era. According to Tok, Istanbul continued, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to import charcoal from the same regions that it had since the eighteenth century. Even during the nineteenth century, for example, 38 percent of the charcoal shipped to the capital was sourced from the Istranca Mountains of the Edirne region.[11]

İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2:490.

6 Salih Aynural, "XVIII. Yüzyılda İstanbul'un Odun ve Kömür İhtiyacının Karşılanması," in *Osmanlı*, ed. Güler Eren, Kemal Çiçek, and Cem Oğuz (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 5:563–569.

7 Ibid., 5:565.

8 Ibid., 5:563–569.

9 Öztel, "Mahrukat Arz Piyasası."

10 Alaaddin Tok, "From Wood to Coal: The Energy Economy in Ottoman Anatolia and the Balkans (1750–1914)" (PhD diss., Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2017).

11 Ibid., 76.

As a whole, these studies have attempted to elucidate the political and economic dimensions of charcoal distribution, presenting the early modern system as a stable figure. Although Aynural pointed out the existence of brokers, he failed to pay sufficient attention to the fact that violations on the part of charcoal merchants and producers were commonplace and undermined the distribution system's efficacy and stability. The intervention of brokers and other external actors, particularly those operating outside of Istanbul, posed continual challenges and undermined the monopoly rights of licensed merchants and producers. Additionally, instances of official corruption and the interventions of the Istanbul agha and others also obstructed their activities.[12] Villagers also faced conflicts with their employers and interventions from the Istanbul charcoal merchants' guild.[13] A comprehensive examination of historical documents reveals a consistent pattern, on the part of officials, producers, brokers, and merchants, of scheming to maximize individual profit.

The limited examination of these issues in previous studies is due primarily to the fact that they were focused chiefly on charcoal's economic significance and the relationship between the Ottoman government and charcoal producers and sellers. That focus determined the nature of the historical sources utilized in these earlier studies. Moreover, it is worth noting that the research on Ottoman charcoal has concentrated primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whereas the eighteenth century has been treated as prehistory. In these earlier studies, charcoal merchants' guilds, which played a direct role in charcoal supply, have been treated as a stable, carefully regulated component in a broader distribution system, which linked rural producers with urban consumers. This study reveals, however, that the system of charcoal regulation was neither stable nor strictly controlled. On the contrary, it was a battleground in which self-regulating groups possessing their own independent interests competed to control the revenue generated by the production, shipment, and sale of charcoal. Although charcoal was considered an essential commodity, it was far less carefully regulated than staple foods, such as grain.[14]

Objectives

In order to empirically reconstruct the charcoal distribution structure, it is important to clarify the organizational structure of the groups involved and the socioeconomic relationships among them. This article examines the organizational structure of Istanbul's guild of charcoal merchants and the occupational mode of its members, and subsequently, the charcoal distribution system from the production site to Istanbul. To conduct this examination, this article focuses on the spatial aspect of the groups in the distribution system in conjunction with the organizational aspect.[15] The merchants' guild played a central role in Istanbul's charcoal distribution system and an analysis of its internal structure and relations with other social groups will enable us to elucidate the early modern system of charcoal distribution and the place of Istanbul's guild of charcoal merchants in the early modern social division of labor. Building on Aynural's analysis, this article demonstrates that the charcoal distribution system was a composite of self-regulating social groups, each possessing communal privileges and small capital. In many cases, communal privileges assumed the form of collective occupational rights, which granted the members of licensed groups control of specific trades or livelihoods. The maintenance of these privileges enables the perpetuation of these groups and the survival of their members. Accordingly, this article begins its examination of Istanbul's charcoal distribution system by identifying the various groups involved in the distribution of charcoal and their interrelations.

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12 Ibid., 95.

13 Aynural, "Odun ve Kömür," 66–67.

14 The provision of charcoal to Istanbul was a matter of government concern, but unlike the supply of grains and other foodstuffs, there were no policy-level restrictions. Ağır, "Ottoman Grain Administration," 585–591; Hitomi Ito, "18 Seiki Chuyou ni Okeru Istanbul he no Kokumotsu Kyoukyu Seisaku no Henka" [The Ottoman policy of grain provisioning for Istanbul in the mid-18th century: A focus on the new systems of 1748 and 1755], *Studies in Urban Cultures* 24 (2022): 77–89; Kenji Fujiki "The Prohibition on Trading Monopolies in Istanbul during Selim III's Regime: The Case of Vegetable Trade," *Al-Madaniyya: Keio Bulletin of Middle Eastern and Asian Urban History* 2 (2023): 15–26.

15 Faroqhi draws attention to the importance of the spatial aspect of guild organizations through the examples of conflicts among leather producers and saddle makers in Istanbul. The spatial factor played an important role during the formation of licensed guild organizations. Examined later in this article, spatial factors remained important both inside and outside Istanbul among the groups involved in the charcoal distribution system. Suraiya Faroqhi, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women* (Istanbul: EREN Yayıncılık, 2002), 219–234.

To explore the eighteenth-century charcoal distribution structure, this paper utilizes various primary sources, including sharia court registers and *Ahkâm* (edicts) registers. These sources contain valuable information about the structure of Istanbul's guild of charcoal merchants, the occupational practices of its members, and the guild's relations with other social groups. In addition, this paper analyzes administrative records from the chief accountant of the financial office (Defterdarlık Başmuhasebesi) and other administrative offices, as well as *Kefâlet* (surety) registers. Furthermore, when necessary, it draws on historical documents from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in order to elucidate long-term structural changes taking place within the charcoal merchants' guilds.

Charcoal Merchants Guild in Istanbul and Its Internal Structure

Before discussing the charcoal merchants in Istanbul, it is important to clarify the definition of *kömürcü*s in the documents because it can refer to both charcoal producers in the villages and merchants in Istanbul. Producers are more frequently called *re'aya*, *renciber*, or *kömür hark edenler*, and were mostly Christians residing in the villages specializing in charcoal production.[16] In Istanbul, two groups dealt with charcoal: the *kömürcü esnafı*, who are the primary focus of this article, and the *timur kömürcüsü esnafı* in Ayazmakapısı, a charcoal merchants' guild which specialized in trading charcoal made of heather (*funda*)—used for metal production—and supplied this type of fuel to the Imperial Arsenal on the other side of the Golden Horn.[17] Additionally, another guild in Istanbul that dealt with charcoal was the weighers' guild (*kantarcı esnafı*), which weighed and sold the charcoal transported via land by carts and animals. This guild had twenty-eight members and was located near the gates of the Theodosian Walls in 1726.[18] The details of this guild are hard to define due to a lack of documents, but they had the same *nizam* as the charcoal merchants' guild, and its structure and occupation were also very similar. On the other hand, the charcoal merchants' guild in Istanbul (*kömürcü esnafı*) imported charcoal mostly via water from production places, stored it in their own warehouses, and sold it to residents in Istanbul at a public price (*narh*) under state control.[19] All guild members had warehouses around the wharves and had a monopoly on charcoal in this region. The charcoal arriving in Istanbul was first sold at the wharves, and then the remaining stock was brought to the warehouse.[20]

The charcoal merchants' guild followed an ordinary model of the *esnaf* structure, led by leaders—including, *kethüdâ*, *yiğitbaşı*, and *ihtiyârs*—who were selected from among the masters who took one or two apprentices; no journeymen were observed in this guild. The charcoal merchants' guild consisted of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Although Muslims monopolized the dominant positions, non-Muslims could also be masters and likely formed subgroups within the guild.[21]

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16 The word *renciber* is likely to be used for charcoal producers from specific regions, including Gemlik, Yalakabad, Manastır, Elbasan, and Yenişehir. Producers from Thrace were more commonly referred to as *re'aya* or *kömür hark edenler*. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 153, no.1026 (Evâsıt-ı Cemâziyelevvel 1161 [May 8–18, 1748]); BOA, C.BDL. 95/4739 (24 Receb 1210 [February 3, 1796]); İŞS. 35, 80b–1 (6 Cemâziyelâhir 1186 [September 4, 1772]).

17 Aynural, "Odun ve Kömür," 566; Tok, "From Wood to Coal," 35; BŞS. 223, 41b–1 (26 Şaban 1185 [December 4, 1771]); İŞS. 39, 66b–3 (25 Cemâziyelevvel 1190 [July 12, 1776]); İŞS. 45, 24a–2 (28 Cemâziyelevvel 1193 [June 13, 1179]); İŞS. 67b–3 (26 Zilhicce 1193 [January 4, 1780]).

18 Akif Aydın, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 21: İstanbul Mahkemesi 24 Numaralı Sicil* (*H.1138–1151/M.1726–1738*) (Istanbul: İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 141–142.

19 They could handle firewood in addition to charcoal as they were referred to as the firewood and charcoal merchants' guild (*oduncu ve kömürcü esnafı*) in a document. Although Aynural pointed out that firewood was never transported at the same time to prevent it from mixing with charcoal, the historical records confirm that the production sites for firewood were similar to those for charcoal and that charcoal was transported to Istanbul in the same vessels along with onions and other crops. It is doubtful that there was a clear division between the two. BOA, AE. SOSM. III., 56/4047 (Evâhir-i Zilkade 1129 [September 26–October 5, 1717]); BŞS. 158, 116b–2 (Gurre-yi Muharrem 1146 [June 14, 1733]); BŞS. 178, 125b–4 (21 Rebîülâhir 1155 [June 25, 1742]).

20 The charcoal was sold at wharves for 45 *para* and for 50 *para* at warehouses. BŞS. 218, 102b–2 (4 Safer 1173 [September 27, 1759]).

21 BOA, NFS.d.4, 48.

The position of *kethüdâ*, or guild warden, played a key role in mediating the relationship between the charcoal merchants' guild and the government or other guilds. Within the guild, *kethüdâ*s collected taxes, gave orders through market inspectors (*muhtesib*) and the court judge, monitored members' behaviors, and mediated internal disagreements.[22] Guild members typically selected *kethüdâ*s based on their influence or competence and the law court recognized them before the government issued a certificate (*berât*).[23] The *kethüdâ*-ship tended to be the object of investment by outsiders, primarily through a process called *hazine-mânde*, in which military officers returned their salary to the Treasury.[24] However, in the eighteenth-century, there is no record of an outsider purchasing the *kethüdâ* position in the Istanbul charcoal merchants' guild.

In the eighteenth century, there were fourteen *kethüdâ*s in the charcoal merchants' guild, most of them served for a very short period, from some months to about a year, while a few served for a significantly longer period. These exceptions were Eyüb bin Kanber and Süleyman bin Hasan. Eyüb came into office on January 24, 1726, succeeding the former *kethüdâ* Davutpaşalı Hasan (the first *kethüdâ* we can confirm in the eighteenth century), and then left his position in 1747. During this time, İbrahim bin Hüseyin, former *yiğitbaşı*, served as a *kethüdâ* for about a year before Eyüb was appointed *kethüdâ* again on June 14, 1733.[25] While İbrahim was the *kethüdâ*, Eyüb remained in the guild as *yiğitbaşı*. Unlike Süleyman bin Hasan mentioned below, there is no document of the guild members discrediting Eyüb, and İbrahim likely served as *kethüdâ* in his place while Eyüb was unable to serve as head of the guild for some unrecorded reason. Süleyman bin Hasan was more remarkable as he served in the *kethüdâ* position for nearly forty years, from 1758 to October 25, 1797. During Süleyman's tenure, Mehmed Çelebi bin Halil took the position of *kethüdâ* twice between February 4, 1766, and March 3, 1767, and from February 14, 1772, to September 4, 1772. Upon the second dismissal of Süleyman in 1772, the guild executives discredited him, including Mehmed, because of his lack of ability in the *kethüdâ* position; however, he returned to the position after half a year.[26]

It can be pointed out that the *kethüdâ*s of the charcoal merchant's guild tended to serve for a long term after the transition period, during which several *kethüdâ*s left their positions in rapid intervals. However, establishing long-term power did not ensure job security until the end of one's career. During Süleyman's tenure as a *kethüdâ*, there were nonconfidence votes from some of the guild members.[27] Süleyman might have installed Mehmed bin Halil, whom he trusted as a loyal colleague, as the *kethüdâ* when he needed to avoid such challenges and grievances. It is safe to say that *kethüdâ*ship did not have unquestioned authority over the guild, but rather had a flexible hold, which could be challenged according to the collective will of the masters.

The role of *yiğitbaşı* was believed to be that of an assistant to the *kethüdâ*, and they were chosen from among the masters to serve as the second-in-command but did not hold their

22 Robert Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul Kurumsal, İktisadi, Toplumsal Tarih Denemesi*, trans. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay and Enver Özcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1990), 1:380.

23 Amnon Cohen, *The Guild of Ottoman Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 188; Eujeoung Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 50–52; Nalan Turna, "*Kethüda*s: The Guild Wardens of Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," in *History from Below: A Tribute in Memory of Donald Quataert*, eds. Selim Karahasanoğlu and Deniz Cenk Demir (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2016), 285–300.

24 Mehmet Genç, "Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics, and Main Trends," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500–1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994); Turna, "*Kethüda*s," 285–300; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Purchasing Guild- and Craft-Based Offices in the Ottoman Central Lands," *Turcia* 39 (2007): 123–146.

25 BŞS. 148, 133b–3 (29 Şevval 1730 [May 17, 1730]); BŞS. 152, 77a–3 (18 Muharrem 1144 [July 23, 1731]); BŞS. 158, 116b–2 (Gurre-yi Muharrem 1146 [June 14, 1733]).

26 BŞS. 215, 88b–2 (20 Rebîülâhir 1172 [December 21, 1758]); BŞS. 254, 4a–1 (10 Zilkade 1185 [February 14, 1772]); İŞS. 25, 241b-2 (23 Şa'ban 1179 [February 4, 1766]); İŞS. 29. 20a–2 (2 Şevval 1180 [March 3, 1767]); İŞS. 35, 80b–1 (6 Cemâzeyilâhir 1186 [September 4, 1772]); İŞS. 69, 54a–1 (5 Cemâzeyilâhir 1212 [October 25, 1212]).

27 BŞS. 245, 4a–2 (10 Zilkade 1185 [February 14, 1772]); İŞS. 32, 60a–1 (20 Şevval 1183 [February 16, 1770]); İŞS. 62, 19b–1 (11 Receb 1208 [February 12, 1794]).

positions for extended periods of time, usually just for a year or less.[28] The position of *yiğitbaşı* might have served as a role in which guild executives learned the necessary know-how to operate the guild while supporting the *kethüdâ*, simultaneously acting as a refuge for former *kethüdâ*s to avoid complete banishment from the guild.

İhtiyâr

The role and significance of the *ihtiyâr* in the Ottoman charcoal merchants' guild are less well-documented compared to the other leading members. According to Mantran, the *ihtiyâr* is believed to have sided with the guild members rather than the *kethüdâ*.[29] The exact status and functions of the *ihtiyâr* within the charcoal merchants' guild remain uncertain, and historical sources provide varying interpretations. The number of individuals holding this position also varies significantly across different documents. For example, in 1755, eleven individuals were mentioned as *ihtiyâr*s, while the following month, only two, Molla Mehmed and Ömer Beşe, were referred to as *ihtiyârs*.[30] Three months later, they were mentioned as *ihtiyâr*s alongside Seyyid Mehmed Çelebi; however, Molla Mehmed was also mentioned as a *yiğitbaşı* at the same time.[31] Additionally, *ihtiyâr*, in some instances, is clearly used in the sense of "master." It can be concluded that there are three meanings of the term *ihtiyâr*: the representatives of masters, masters, and leaders (including masters and *yiğitbaşı*).

Usta

A relatively large number of documents is available on *usta*s (masters)—individuals who owned the production tools and shop usufruct while employing apprentices. Masters were full members of the guild with rights and duties and had certain collective powers in the guild as we can see in the case of the nonconfidence of the *kethüdâ* Süleyman. As Cohen and Yi have mentioned regarding the structure of the Ottoman guilds, the core of the guilds comprised the masters.[32] The guild masters were sometimes called *ashâb-ı mahzen*, which is literally translated as warehouse owners, but it is more understandable to interpret the word *sahib* as "a responsible master," as Yi claims, because the actual owners of the charcoal warehouse were usually a separate individual not involved in the charcoal trading.[33]

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the charcoal merchants' guild began to implement the *gedik* system, which functioned as a protection and consolidation of the guild's monopoly rights during the economic hardship in the 1760s, which caused an increase in rent prices.[34] A *gedik*, which literally means breach or slot, was imposed on the production tools and used to assert usufruct over the mastership and shop.[35] The charcoal merchants'

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28 Nalan Turna, "Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Loncalarında Yiğitbaşılık ve Yiğitbaşılar: Genel Çerçeve ve Bir Değerlendirme," *Turkish History* 13, no.1 (2021): 643–664; Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 86–88; BŞS. 216, 44a–2 (11 Şevval 1171 [June 18, 1758]); BŞS. 85a–1 (2 Safer 1172 [October 5, 1758]).

29 Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul*, 1:352.

30 BŞS. 211, 14a–2 (17 Rebîülevvel 1169 [December 21, 1755]); BŞS. 20a–2 (11 Rebîülâhir 1169 [January 14, 1756]).

31 BŞS. 211, 31a–5 (6 Cemâziyelevvel 1169 [February 7, 1756]).

32 Cohen, *The Guild of Ottoman Jerusalem*, 188; Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 50–52.

33 Part of them were also called as *sermayeci*. Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 95; BŞS. 124 67b–4 (24 Şa'ban 1132 [July 1, 1720]); BŞS. 161, 85a–5 (10 Ramazan 1147 [February 3, 1735]).

34 Guild masters began registering their means of production in the seventeenth century to secure their property and maintain their status as masters. When a master died, the *gedik* was transferred to their son, a skilled journeyman, or someone outside the family under control of the guild leaders. However, this option also allowed outsiders to invest in the guild and become members, which ultimately eroded the exclusive nature of the traditional guild system by the nineteenth century. Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 210; Nalan Turna, *The Artisans and Janissaries of Istanbul: Before and After the Auspicious Event 1808–1839* (Istanbul: Libra, 2022), 36; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 18–19; İŞS. 29, 62a–3 (7 Rebîülevvel 1181 [August 3, 1767]). In some cases, women (his wife or daughters) inherited the *gedik* when a master passed away. The same tendency can be observed in the charcoal merchants' guild as a certain woman Nefise, the daughter of Osman bin Ebubekir, took back the *gedik* from Osman's colleague Ahmed, possessing it until she sold it to İbrahim bin Halil nine years later. During these nine years, Nefise managed a charcoal warehouse where, presumably, she employed a merchant. BŞS. 297, 77–2 (5 Zilkade 1202 [August 7, 1788]); BŞS. 319, 31b–3 (13 Receb 1211 [January 12, 1797]).

35 Especially after the 1760s, the *icâreteyn* system became widespread. *İcâreteyn* refers to the "double-rental system," whereby the leaseholder of a waqf property pays a substantial amount for the usufruct of the property and then pays the annual rent for the long term. The masters rented most of the charcoal warehouses as it is rare to see warehouses owned by charcoal merchants as private property. Engin Akarlı, "Gedik: A Bundle of Rights and Obligations for Istanbul Artisans and Merchants, 1750–1840," in *Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social: Making Persons and Things*,

guild implemented this system around the 1770s, and was widespread until the 1810s. Masters set *gedik*s on their production tools such as shovels and charcoal sacks, and this led the production tools to be portable commodities to be sold to others when a master died or left his job.[36] Before the implementation of the *gedik* system in the charcoal merchants' guild, it is assumable that the warehouse's usufruct was considered mastership due to the fact that the masters were sometimes called *ashâb-ı mahzen*.

Hidmetkârs and Other Employees

Apprentices within the charcoal merchants' guild were referred to as *hidmetkâr* (servant) rather than as *çırak* or *şakird* (apprentice).[37] Presumably, the conditions of *hidmetkâr*s were not significantly different from those of apprentices in other guilds, as they were both subordinated to the masters. Apart from working in the warehouse, a *hidmetkâr* occasionally traveled to hubs within the charcoal distribution system and procured charcoal from villages on behalf of their master.[38] According to the surety registers, many *hidmetkâr*s were the relatives of their masters and hailed from the same regions in eastern Anatolia, such as Sivas, Eğin, Harbut, Kemah, and Çemişgezek, except for a small number of locals.[39] Although there were familial and regional ties between the masters and most of the *hidmetkâr*s, the latter title *hidmetkâr* encompassed various statuses as we can see in the case of Balat, where a *hidmetkâr* accused the master of not paying a salary when he had worked under a salary-based contract. The *hidmetkâr*, in this case, could be closer to a wage laborer than an apprentice, meaning that they included a vast range of workers from apprentices to wage laborers.[40]

Some masters also hired couriers and watchmen. One document confirms that a master hired charcoal couriers (*kömür hammalı*) and rowers (*kayıkçı*) and housed them in his own "bachelor rooms" (*bekâr odaları*).[41] In another document, a charcoal merchant recruited watchmen to guard his vessels docked at the wharves at night.[42] These individuals were likely employees on the outskirts of the charcoal merchants' guild, hired according to the masters' needs.[43]

Spatial Organization of the Charcoal Merchants' Guild

The charcoal merchants' guild had warehouses around the wharves along the Istanbul's coast in places like Bahçekapısı, Ayazmakapısı, Unkapanı, Tüfenkhane, Ayakapı, Cibali, Fener, Balat, Ayvansaray, Eyüb, Ahurkapı, Çatladıkapı, Kumkapı, Langa Yenikapı, Davutpaşa, Samatya, Yedikule, and Hasköy (fig. 1, table 1).[44] There are five lists of warehouses and masters of the charcoal merchants' guild from 1696, 1724, 1776, and 1792. These lists show that there were 68 warehouses in 1696, 34 masters in 1724, 89 masters in 1776, and 65 and 81 masters in 1792.[45] It would be misleading to consider all these lists to contain a comprehensive

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ed. Alain Pottage and Martha Mundy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 182; Miyase Koyuncu, "Osmanlı Devletin İkilemi: Gedik İhdası," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 8, no. 5 (2013): 444; Genç, "Klâsik Osmanlı Sosyal-İktisadî Sistemi ve Vakıflar," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 42 (2014): 42.

36 We can see the charcoal merchants' *gedik* was set upon two cushions (*minder*), a cotton mattress (*beledi mak'ıt*), five cotton pillows (*beledi yastık*), two blankets (*yorgan*), a middle-sized woolen fabric (*orta keçe*), seventeen charcoal sacks (*çuval*), a shovel (*kürek*), a scale (kantar), another shovel, a copper brazier (*bakır mangal*) with a wooden board (*tahta*), a basin (*leğen*) with a pitcher (*ibrik*), and a tray (*akçe tahtası*). İŞS. 80, 85b–2 (4 Zilkade 1218 [February 15, 1804]).

37 BOA, A.{DVN.d.831 (25 Safer 1207 [October 12, 1792]).

38 İŞS. 42, 81b–1 (11 Şevval 1192 [October 2, 1778]).

39 Some local subgroups showed strong geographical ties as all members were from Çemişgezek in Çatladıkapı and Eğin in Cibali and Ahurkapı, and the same tendencies can be seen in other contemporary guilds. Those regions had been the primary supplier since the seventeenth century; presumably, this was the aftermath of the Celali rebellions as it coincided with the migration tendencies in the seventeenth century examined by Faroqhi. Some court records reveal that those who come from Eğin are the residents of the village of Şiroz. They did not lose their ties with their home village as they inherited lands when their relatives in the village passed away. Cengiz Kırlı, "İstanbul'da Hemşehirlik Tabanlı Tabakalar/Yoğunlaşmalar," in *Antik Çağdan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2015), 4:72–79; Faroqhi, *Men and Women*, 266–272; BOA, NFS.d.4; BŞS. 47 122b–1 (8 Safer 1097 [January 4, 1686]).

40 BlŞS. 52, 97b–2 (9 Safer 1167 [December 6, 1753]).

41 BOA, NFS.d.4, 48.

42 BŞS. 327, 4a–1 (21 Cemâziyelevvel 1216 [September 29, 1801]).

43 Faroqhi, *Men and Women*, 268.

44 Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 24*, 125–126; BŞS. 71, 58a–1 (3 Receb 1213 [December 11, 1798]); İŞS. 27, 38a–1 (Selh-i Cemâziyelâhir 1180 [December 2, 1766]); BOA, NFS.d.4.

45 Akif Aydın, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 57: İstanbul Mahkemesi 22 Numaralı Sicil* (*H.1107–1108/M.1695–1697)* (Istanbul: İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), 553–556; Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 24*, 125–126; BŞS. 223, 97b–1 (15 Receb 1186 [October

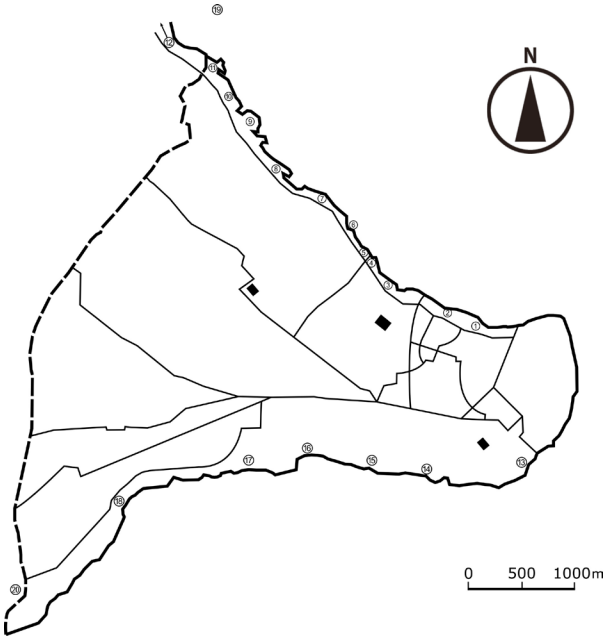

Figure 1: Map of charcoal merchants in Istanbul. Prepared by the author based on Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul*, 1990.

number of warehouses and masters as these documents have different purposes, especially the surety registers of 1792.[46] A relatively comprehensive list of masters and warehouses is the *nizam* record from 1772, showing 128 masters and 159 warehouses.[47]

It can be pointed out that in some districts such as Ayazmakapı, Balat, and Kumkapı the number of warehouses increased while in Eyüb, Ahurkapı, and Çatladıkapı the number stayed stable. It can also be pointed out that some of the districts such as Balat, Unkapanı, and Kumkapı continued to function with larger numbers of members while those of Eyüp, Fener, Samatya, and Bahçekapı had relatively small numbers. Other sources confirm that Cibali and Bahçekapı had lost a significant number of members at the end of the eighteenth century, but additional research is needed to fully understand the causes for this. Based on this evidence, it can be said that the charcoal merchants' guild consisted of local subgroups. While this feature appears to be consistent with Mehmet Genç's discussion of a broad-based guilds in Istanbul, there are structural differences in practice.[48] The guilds Genç mentioned were the few guilds which had large numbers of laborers under a strong organizational structure controlled by the head warden and local group leaders.[49] The ties between local subgroups of the charcoal merchants' guild were looser and probably based on individual relationships.

Nonetheless, it can be observed that there was a certain level of local networking as some of these subgroups acted autonomously and had their own characteristics. For instance, the Unkapanı and Kumkapı subgroups independently negotiated with the local porters and determined the price for landing charcoal.[50] The Balat charcoal merchants also demonstrated

12, 1772]); İŞS. 27, 38a–1 (Selh-i Cemâziyelâhir 1180 [December 2, 1766]); İŞS. 38, 12a–2 (11 Receb 1190 [August 26, 1776]); BOA, A{DVN.d.831, 68 (25 Safer 1207 [October 12, 1792]); BOA, NFS.d.4.

46 These registers were created for the purpose of social security and recording the number of suspicious warehouses and their crews, not to count all members of the guilds in Istanbul. The registers were established under Selim III's regime after he was attacked by a man while he attended prayer at the Ayasofya Mosque. Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill 2014), 1–3; Nejdet Ertuğ, *Sultan III Selim Dönemi İstanbul'unda Esnaf Grupları ve Medreseler* (Istanbul: Kitapevi 2016), 1–6.

47 BŞS. 223, 97b–1 (15 Receb 1186 [October 12, 1772]).

48 Genç, *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 290.

49 Kazuma Iwata, "18 Seiki Istanbul no Niyaku Kumiai: Naibu Kouzou ni Kansuru Kousatsu" [The baggage carriers' organizations in eighteenth-century Istanbul: A study of their internal structure], *Orient* 63, no. 2 (2020): 183–184; Nejdet Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşım ve Kayıkçılar* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları 2001), 7–9.

50 İŞS. 54, 21b–3 (19 Ramazan 1200 [July 16, 1786]); İŞS. 131a–3 (18 Şevval 1201 [August 3, 1787]); İŞS. 67, 69b–2 (24 Rebiülevvel 1211 [September 27, 1796]); İŞS. 73, 28b–3(12 Cemâziyelevvel 1214 [October 12, 1799]).

			1696		1724		1772		1776		1792		1792	
			W*	M**	W	M	M	W	W	M	W	M	W	M
1	Bahçekapı				6		6	10	5					1
2	Balıkpazarı		2											
3	Ayazmakapı				2				2			6		9
4	Unkapanı		8				10	12	8			8		7
					3							4		4
														5***
5	Tüfenkhane				2							3		
6	Ayakapı		3		3		5	6	5					
7	Cibali		13				12	12	9					
8	Yenikapı		1											
9	Fener		2				1	1	2					
10	Balat	Balat			4		19	23						
		Inside	2						8					
		Outside	1						14			10		10
11	Ayvansaray						9	9	4					
12	Eyüb	Inside	2											2
		Outside												1
13	Ahurkapı						7	9	2			2		2
14	Çatladıkapı				2		7	9	6			6		6
15	Kumkapı		11		6		24	26				29		29
16	Langa Yenikapısı		1				6	7	7					
17	Davutpaşa				3		17	21	9					
18	Mirahor		5											
	Samatiya				3		5	5	6					
19	Hasköy								7					
		Silahhane İskelesi												2
		Hasköy Büyük İskelesi												3
20	Yedikule											1		
	Total		**68**		**34**				**89**			**65**		**81**

*Warehouse
**Master
***Presumably Tüfenkhane

Table 1: Number of warehouses and masters by district. Based on the lists of warehouses and masters of charcoal merchants' guild from Aydın, İstanbul Mahkemesi 22, 553–556; Aydın, Kadı Sicilleri 24, 125–126; BŞS. 223, 97b–1 (15 Receb 1186 [October 12, 1772]); İŞS. 27, 38a–1 (Selh-i Cemâziyelâhir 1180 [December 2, 1766]); İŞS. 38, 12a–2 (11 Receb 1190 [August 26, 1776]); BOA, A{DVN.d.831, 68 (25 Safer 1207 [October 12, 1792]); BOA, NFS.d.4..

a certain level of independence in their guild and close ties to the local community as these merchants elected the leader of the local porters, a practice not observed among charcoal merchants in other districts.[51] Additionally, the surety registers indicate that the guarantors of the Balat charcoal merchants were not guild leaders or other guild officials but other neighborhood traders.[52] This may suggest the presence of strong local connections in Balat. Thus, the location of their business in Istanbul played a crucial role in shaping the business structure and the status of the charcoal merchants within the guilds.

51 BŞS. 229, 22a–6 (3 Şa'ban 1177 [February 6, 1764]); İŞS.48, 41a–2 (25 Receb 1192 [August 19, 1778]); İŞS. 79, 44a–3 (9 Receb 1217 [November 5, 1802]).
52 BOA, NFS.d.4.

These features also suggest positional and structural differences between the local subgroups. One can think that the influences of the local groups among the guild differed according to their neighborhood since masters from some districts, such as Eyüb and Fener, are rarely found on the documents of court records, while the larger local groups of Unkapanı, Balat, and Kumkapı were represented through members chosen as *kethüdâ*s.[53] Likewise, the Unkapanı group is divided into three different places in the register of NFS.d.4., while the other subgroups of charcoal merchants only occupy one place in the same register. This presumably shows the geographical differentiation of the locations of the warehouses in the Unkapanı area, as one group probably corresponds to the one in Tüfenkhane.[54]

Some charcoal merchants also had warehouses outside Istanbul, in the village of Ayastefanos. Ayastefanos was one of the most important and closest hubs in the charcoal trading between Istanbul and Istranca. The merchants used these warehouses to control the amount of charcoal imported to Istanbul. Based on the description in their *nizam*, these locations were used as transit warehouses and branch offices. It is impossible to determine how many merchants had warehouses in Ayastefanos and how they functioned inside the village society.[55] Nonetheless, a certain number of merchants probably possessed warehouses in Ayastefanos as the *nizam* forbade selling charcoal stored in the warehouses in Ayastefanos by disguising it as charcoal from Istranca. Ayastefanos is the only documented location of charcoal merchants' warehouses outside Istanbul, as far as I could determine, suggesting that a substantial part of the commercial sphere of the charcoal merchants extended beyond Istanbul.

The Charcoal Warehouses

It is hard to know what the charcoal warehouses looked like. The only available information about them is the width, around 10 to 30 *zira* wide;[56] some were as large as 60–200 *zira*.[57] In many areas, warehouses located in proximity to one another probably formed streets solely used by charcoal merchants or limited number of commercial districts under guild control, especially through the *gedik* system after the 1770s. The warehouses needed to be established as charcoal warehouses from the outset, and converting a building intended for other purposes into a charcoal warehouse was prohibited.[58] If fire or any disaster destroyed a warehouse, the charcoal merchant was required to petition for reconstruction.[59] While the purpose of the *gedik* system was to limit the number of members, building a new warehouse and settling a new *gedik* was not prohibited under the condition that it had to be approved by the government. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth century, the growth of warehouse and merchant numbers in Istanbul continued to meet economic demands.

The masters of the charcoal merchants' guild rented warehouses from waqfs from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century.[60] Even if they did not possess the warehouses, usufruct was seen as the condition to be a master. When a master resigned, he was required to part with the production tools and the warehouse to stay out of the business.[61] Concerning the relationship between the masters and the warehouses, it is worth noting that the number of charcoal merchant masters increased at a higher rate than the number of charcoal warehouses did in the late seventeenth century. It became more common for masters to own only one charcoal warehouse by the end of the eighteenth century, indicating that the number of master-owners increased gradually over time and that one master typically

53 BŞS. 254, 4a–1 (10 Zilkade 1185 [February 14, 1772]); BOA, NFS.d.4.
54 BOA, NFS.d.4, 48.
55 Aydın, *İstanbul Kadı Siciller 24*, 126.
56 This means the widths of warehouses were 7.5–27 m wide as one *zira* equals 75–90 cm.
57 Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 22*, 553–556.
58 Residents in the Hoca Halil 'Attar quarter complained that a charcoal merchant Hüseyin converted a former grain merchant's shop into a two-story building with a charcoal warehouse on the first floor and an inn on the second floor. BŞS. 219, 50b–3 (24 Cemâziyelevvel 1173 [January 13, 1760]).
59 İŞS. 61, 57a–1 (Gurre-yi Şa'ban 1207 [March 14, 1793]); İŞS. 82, 56a–1 (Gurre-yi Cemâziyelâhir 1219 [September 7, 1804]); BŞS. 162, 50a–1 (9 Safer 1148 [July 1, 1735]).
60 Aydın, *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 57*, 341–342.
61 İŞS. 86, 90a–1 (12 Rebiülevvel 1220 [June 10, 1805]).

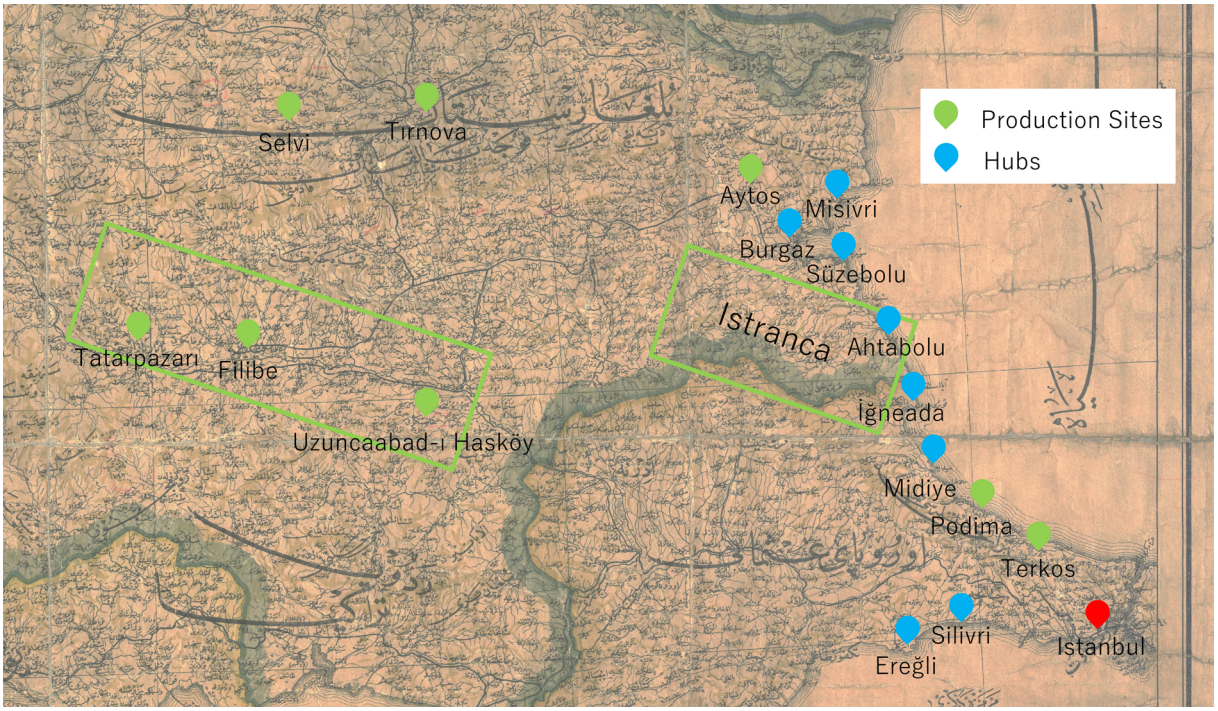

Figure 2: Map of Thrace. Prepared by the author based on BOA, HRT.h.159 (1330 [1911–1912]).

owned one warehouse.[62] On the other hand, even if most of the masters tended to own just one warehouse each in the eighteenth century, it did not mean equality among the masters as some masters, not *kethüdâ*s, provided personal guarantees to other masters, implying hierarchical relationships between masters.

The Charcoal Distribution System

Charcoal sales adhered to official pricing regulations. Not only were prices determined for charcoal sales to customers but official prices were also established for purchases from charcoal-producing regions, although historical records do not confirm these prices.[63] The official price was generally set at a low level, which explains why all the instances of fraudulent activities related to charcoal prices, discussed in the following cases, involved prices higher than the official rate.

Various intermediaries were involved in the trade between Istanbul and the production sites. Aynural identified three models of charcoal trading between the production sites and Istanbul: villagers could sell charcoal (1) at the official price, (2) by having the merchants cover the production costs in advance and in return receive the charcoal produced, or (3) by having the merchants pay for the entire year in advance and receive the contracted quantity ofcharcoal.[64]

The charcoal distribution system was divided into production places, hubs, and Istanbul (fig. 2). The groups engaged in the network were employers and villagers in the production places, the brokers in the hubs, shipping agents, charcoal merchants, and porters in Istanbul. The local judges and their men in the production places and the hubs supervised these groups, while in Istanbul, they were supervised by the Istanbul court judge and agha. Although the distribution system was under governmental control and customs of the engaged groups, there was always tension between the groups that sough to maximize their

62 This tendency was hastened after the 1770s, assumably under the influence of *gedik* implementation.
63 BŞS. 206, 59b–2 (10 Receb 1167 [3 May 1754]).
64 Aynural, "Odun ve Kömür," 565.

own benefits. The charcoal merchants in Istanbul were allowed their monopoly on the charcoal trading between the production places and Istanbul under state control, while the producers and other groups could profit from this distribution system based on their occupation, even though some were illegal. Sometimes their activities were construed as violations of the charcoal merchants' monopoly on trading, even if the activities were allowed by the government. Analyzing the cases of violations reveals how the groups struggled to maximize or defend their right to the distribution system and how the network functioned in the eighteenth century. In the following section, the three realms of the distribution system will be analyzed, as they all had their own systems of concessions and hierarchy.

Places of Production and Villagers

Charcoal merchants in Istanbul had two options to purchase charcoal from the villagers: either sign an exclusive contract for charcoal production or buy it in the port cities. In the former, merchants paid for a year's worth of charcoal production and received a stable amount, which villagers transported to nearby port cities and loaded onto vessels hired by the merchants in Istanbul. The latter option involved buying the charcoal directly from the charcoal producers at the ports.[65] The primary production sites were formed around Filibe, Selvi, Istranca, and Terkos under the control of local court judges and provincial notables (*a'yan*); the producers around Filibe could also produce charcoal in the area of the Istranca Mountains.[66] The owners of groves and land (*ashâb-ı koru u yurd*) organized the production of charcoal by cutting trees and processing them in facilities called *ocak* or *torlak*, then bringing them to nearby port cities to sell.[67]

The government protected and monitored charcoal production to ensure a stable supply for the large Istanbul population. However, even though entry of outsiders into charcoal production was prohibited, there were in fact non-permitted parties who found their way into the industry. The first were the brokers who started to organize their own production units around Istranca in the 1750s.[68] Later, bureaucrats also became involved in production units, as in the case of Mustafa Agha, a *kapıcıbaşı* in Istanbul who, in 1801, was accused of organizing a production unit of charcoal in the Istranca Mountain region and selling it to Istanbul at the Ahtabolu and Çingene (Kıbtiyân) wharves when the charcoal production was only permitted to the villagers from Filibe, Tatarpazarı, and Uzuncaabad-ı Hasköy in the region between the Istranca Mountains and the Black Sea coast.[69] These illegal organizations existed until the first quarter of the eighteenth century and the brokers in this region were probably the locals who were used to producing charcoal and obviously not happy to be stripped of their right to do so.[70] Hence, the illegal production of charcoal in Istranca can be seen as a conflict between the locals and villagers from other villages. Mustafa Agha probably took advantage of this grievance to invest as an entrepreneur.

Villages in the vicinity of the Bosporus and suburbs of Istanbul also engaged in charcoal production, although the quantity may have been less than that of their counterparts in Thrace and the transportation system was different. Individual villages likely produced charcoal in the vicinity of Istanbul, rather than forming a widespread production unit. In a 1671 dispute between the village of Podima and the Sultan Mehmed Han Gazi Waqf, the villagers had been allowed to cut wood from forests designated as waqf property without

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65 Aynural, "Odun ve Kömür," 565.

66 Those local officials were sometimes accused of their intention to levy extra taxes on the villagers they hired in the name of *balta hakkı* (axe right) or *koru hakkı* (grove right). Öztel, "Mahrukat Arz Piyasası," 492.

67 Akif Aydın, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 80: İstanbul Mahkemesi 56 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1201–1203 / M. 1786–1787)* (Istanbul: İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), 165–166; BOA, A.{DVNSMHM. 129, 187 no.1325 (Evâsıt-ı Muharrem 1133 [October 11–21, 1720]); Ahmed Kal'a, ed., *İstanbul Ahkâm Defteri İstanbul Ticaret Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları 1997), 1:91–92.

68 BOA, AE. SOSM.III, 77/5870 (Evâsıt-ı Cemâzeyilâhir 1169 [March 12–22, 1756]); BOA, SABH.I, 229/15217 (25 Cemâzeyilâhir 1198 [May 16, 1784]); BOA, C.BLD, 11/502 (Evâhir-i Zilkade 1184 [March 7–17, 1771]); BOA, İKTS, 44/2170 (Evâhir-i Ramazan 1175 [April 4–14, 1762]). The villagers from Filibe, Tatarpazarı, and Uzuncaabad probably acquired a privilege to produce charcoal and excluded locals in this region between 1717 and 1756 as, according to the records, the locals of Istranca produced charcoal in 1717. BOA, A{DVNSMHM. 126 no.123 (Evâhir-i Cemezeyilevvel 1129 [May 2–12, 1717]).

69 İŞS. 75, 12b–3 (4 Zilhicce 1215 [April 18, 1801]).

70 BOA, C.BDL. 110/5470 (Evâsıt-ı Receb 1229 [June 28–July 8, 1814]).

permission. This led to a discussion about the issue of villagers cutting trees from waqf-designated forests, which ultimately resulted in a ban. The village representatives attended the law court, indicating that villages around the Istanbul area were engaged in small-scale charcoal production on a village-by-village basis.[71]

The villagers from the Bosporus area transported the charcoal they produced by small boats and sold it to charcoal merchants at the wharves, supervised by the *bostancıbaşı*. In certain villages in Thrace and the suburbs of Istanbul, the residents had the privilege of producing and selling charcoal directly in Istanbul. However, the charcoal merchants considered this a violation of their monopoly and petitioned to prohibit the villagers from selling charcoal in Istanbul. In July 1761, the Podima villagers petitioned the court after the charcoal merchants in Istanbul seized their charcoal and forbade them from selling it in the city despite it being allowed in Istanbul for an extended period.[72] This case should be viewed as a clash of interests caused by the charcoal merchants' desire to gain larger profit over the villagers' privilege.

Hubs and Brokers

Eyüp, Silivri, Midye, and Süzebolu were hubs where the villagers who brought charcoal and the shipping agents or charcoal merchants who came to buy them interacted. The brokers, called *madrabaz* or *muhtekir*, owned their own warehouses at the hubs and formed small organizations comprising of a few individuals to manage multiple commodities.[73] It is hard to know who they were, but a document indicates that some were local shopkeepers and dealt with several kinds of commodities at their warehouses as a side business.[74] These brokers bought and sold these commodities outside the regulated trading system, concealing their goods in their warehouses to sell at higher prices, particularly during winter, when the commodities were scarce.

In 1779, the villagers from Istranca complained that the brokers in Midye had illegally purchased the charcoal that would have been sold to the vessels hired by the Istanbul charcoal merchants and hid them in their warehouses when the villagers brought the charcoal to the port.[75] The Istanbul charcoal merchants also submitted a similar complaint, which claimed that the brokers acquired the charcoal that would have been shipped to Istanbul and prevented the vessels from harboring at the port of Silivri during a storm.[76] While selling their charcoal and returning home early may have been an attractive offer for the villagers, it was not beneficial for those in Istanbul. The brokers in Silivri even organized their own charcoal transport system as they bought charcoal from Istranca and then sold it to Istanbul via their warehouses in 1740.[77] Although the sultan and the government repeatedly ordered local authorities to prohibit their activities whenever reported, these prohibitions were ineffective. Nonetheless, their business practices resembled those of authorized charcoal merchants and probably received tacit approval from both the local community and charcoal merchants as long as they did not engage in any significant misconduct.[78]

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71 Akif Aydın, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 29: Eyüb Mahkemesi 82 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1081/M. 1670–1671)*, (Istanbul: İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), 105–106.

72 Ahmet Kal'a, ed., *İstanbul Ahkâm Defteri İstanbul Esnaf Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyük Şehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları 1997), 1:299–300.

73 For example, in 1771, four Jews were accused of buying charcoal before arriving in Istanbul and then selling them in winter at a higher price. The background of every broker's case can be considered to vary from small to large businesses and from side businesses to criminal acts. BOA, AE.SABH.I, 30/2325 (25 Rebîülâhir 1179 [December 9, 1765]); BOA, C.BLD. 99/4912 (26 Rebîülâhir 1211 [October 29, 1796]); İŞS. 59, 39b–2 (19 Şevval 1205 [June 21, 1771]).

74 BOA, C.BLD. 99/4912 (26 Rebîülâhir 1211 [October 29, 1796]).

75 BOA, AE.SABH.I. 155/10390 (10 Şevval 1193 [October 21, 1779]). This kind of violation was widespread among the hubs, as similar incidents could be found in Terkos. Kal'a, *Esnaf Tarihi*, 1:299–300.

76 Kal'a, *Ticaret Tarihi*, 1:282–283.

77 Akif Aydın, ed., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri 69: Bab Mahkemesi 172 Numaralı Sicil (H.1152–1153/M.1740)* (Istanbul: İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), 553–556.

78 One can assume how strictly the charcoal merchants' guild tried to regulate the brokers; there were certain limitations as they were in remote Istanbul and not the members of local communities in the hubs. Additionally, the relationship between the charcoal merchants' guild and the brokers was not always antagonistic at the individual level, as in some cases, some of the charcoal merchants or shipping agents tried to benefit from collusion with the brokers. BŞS. 206, 59b–2 (20 Receb 1167 [May 13, 1754]).

Shipping Agents

It was not only brokers and villagers but also shipping agents who transported charcoal to Istanbul who violated rules and sold charcoal along the way. The charcoal merchants' guild hired these agents, who used the merchants' vessels to import charcoal along with firewood, hay, and vegetables.[79] The medium- to long-sized vessels utilized for transporting charcoal were called *çenber*, *çekelve*, and *çektirme*.[80] The shipping agents who owned these vessels and shipped charcoal to Istanbul were registered based on the districts where they unloaded their cargo.[81] In some cases, shipping agents used vessels owned by charcoal merchants for hauling, and some of these vessels were operated by more than one merchant.[82] These agents illegally sold their load en route to Istanbul, considering it a perquisite, but the charcoal merchants in Istanbul did not share this view.[83] Documents show that merchants required proper transport of charcoal and asked the government to ban illegal sales. However, selling charcoal was allowed to people who came to the vessels on their own boats before they landed on the wharves in the Golden Horn.[84] Additionally, to increase profits, vessels designated for transporting charcoal were sometimes used for other purposes without consent.[85]

Istanbul and the Charcoal Merchants' Guild

The court records pertaining to charcoal merchants frequently discuss matters related to payment for charcoal purchases. As charcoal was typically acquired through bulk purchases, multiple individuals contributing funds towards these transactions were common.[86] Neighboring charcoal merchants most likely often collaborated and pooled their resources to cover the costs of purchasing charcoal. In this context, the subgroups within the charcoal merchants' guilds served as a framework for raising funds specifically designated for charcoal purchases.

How the charcoal merchants' guild sold charcoal in Istanbul is unclear. We do know that the charcoal was sold at the wharves at a smaller price and then brought to the warehouses by the local porters in the contract. The warehouses also functioned as a shop while merchants also brought the charcoal to other quarters to sell it. In 1749, charcoal merchants and muleteers disputed over a vacant place to sell charcoal. On August 15, 1749, Lazari, a charcoal merchant in Balat, complained about el-Hac Musa bin Ahmed, the *kethüdâ* of Balat muleteers, for discontinuing the sale of charcoal in a vacant lot in the Hızır Çavuş quarter, where merchants had sold charcoal in the past, and petitioned to stop their intervention. After two months, muleteers claimed that it was Lazari and other charcoal merchants who were against the custom, and the court concurred with the prohibition of selling charcoal in the vacant lot.[87] Based on this case, the charcoal merchants are understood to have sold the charcoal to the people at their warehouses and certain places in neighborhoods.

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79 Shipping agents were organized according to the wharves in Istanbul forming a guild called the skippers' guild (*reis esnafı*). They hired their men; some probably ran businesses on their vessels, while others used customers' vessels. If an accident occurred on the way to the destination while carrying goods on consignment and harmed the cargo, the captain had to make up the charges for the shipment. İŞS. 64, 82b–2 (3 Zilkade 1210 [May 10, 1769]).

80 The *çektirme* was a type of sailboat with oars commonly used for transportation in and around Istanbul. It was used to transport various commodities, including grain, charcoal, wine, fruits, and vegetables. On the other hand, the *çekelve* was a smaller sailboat with two masts, measuring between 17.5–23.5 m in length, and primarily used for transporting wood and charcoal. Lastly, the *çenber* was a type of caïque that merchants widely used to transport their goods to Istanbul. İdris Bostan, *Kürekli ve Yelkenli Osmanlı Gemileri* (Istanbul: Bilge Yayım Habercilik ve Danışmanlık, 2005), 169, 251; İdris Turna and Ahmet Emre Pirim, "Çektirme Gemisinin Tarihi ve Dönemin Ticari Faaliyetlerindeki Rolü üzerinde Bir İnceleme," *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 5, no.12 (2015): 119–135; Öztel, "Mahrukat Arz Piyasası," 499.

81 Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 24*, 250–256.

82 Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 56*, 63.

83 İŞS. 61, 85a–1 (21 Zilhicce 1207 [July 21, 1793]).

84 Kal'a, *Ticaret Tarihi*, 1:42–43.

85 Kal'a, ed., *İstanbul Ahkâm Defteri İstanbul Esnaf Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyük Şehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları 1997), 2:347–348.

86 There are two main patterns of breach of contract: failure to return the cost of purchasing charcoal on loan or failure to hand over charcoal purchased jointly. In some cases, members of the guild also borrowed money from the *kethüdâ*. BlŞS. 58, 31a–4 (10 Receb 1182 [November 20, 1768]); BŞS. 84, 83a–3 (21 Receb 1118 [October 29, 1706]); BŞS. 203, 88a–1 (Gurre-yi Rebîülâhir 1122 [May 30, 1710]); BŞS. 217, 60b–4 (2 Ramazan 1172 [April 29, 1759]); İŞS. 75 69b–3 (8 Cemâziyelevvel 1216 [September 16, 1801]).

87 BlŞS. 46, 95a–1 (27 Receb 1159 [August 15, 1746]); BlŞS. 46, 95a–3 (4 Şevval 1159 [October 20, 1746]).

The charcoal merchants also broke their own internal orders, while various outsiders threatened their monopoly in Istanbul. The internal regulations of the charcoal merchants' guild of 1726 provided rules for charcoal trading in Istanbul, including the following: (a) selling pure charcoal without sand and pebbles, (b) pricing charcoal at one *akçe* per *okka*,[88] (c) not selling charcoal stored in warehouses in the village of Ayastefanos or other places as Istranca charcoal, (d) paying porters 40 *akçe*s per person to carry charcoal out of warehouses, and (e) pricing charcoal at one *akçe* on May 5–6 (*Ruz-ı Hızır*) and 1.2 *akçe* starting from October 8 (*Ruz-ı Kasım*).[89] The conditions (a), (b), and (e) can be found in the other documents related to the *nizam* of the weighers' guild. Violating condition (a) involved mixing impurities with charcoal to misrepresent its amount, which was probably a common practice among those frequently dealing with charcoal.[90] If the charcoal merchants' guild caught someone violating the rules, they were required to report them to the court and ensure punishment according to the *nizam*. In many cases, violators were expelled from the guild, and in severe cases, they were even jailed.[91]

One of the most frequent violations was selling charcoal at an inflated price.[92] For example, in 1758, fellow guild members accused a zimmi by the name of Asir of selling charcoal above the official price.[93] Asir received a warning and agreed to be banished from the guild if he committed the violation again. However, he did not heed the warning and continued to break the rule, leading to his banishment several months later.[94] In 1773, Ebubekir Bey, a charcoal merchant residing in Fener, was accused of selling charcoal at an inflated price.[95] Regardless of the guild's claims, the main issue was that Ebubekir attempted to sell charcoal illegally to the Imperial Artillery Arsenal (Tophane-yi 'Amire). According to the accusers, the *kethüdâ* had the privilege of supplying charcoal to the Imperial Artillery Arsenal, as agreed upon by the guild's decision, presumably related to the *miri mubaya'a* system. Ebubekir was expelled from the guild and imprisoned in Boğazkesen Fortress, which was a more severe punishment than typically imposed for selling charcoal at a high price.[96]

Meanwhile, outsiders who attempted to sell charcoal independently also threatened the guild. For instance, in 1773, Ebubekir in Balat was accused of selling charcoal outside the control of the guild.[97] Similarly, in 1737, a Christian named Petro was found selling charcoal at a higher price without permission, while in 1756, a vegetable seller named Salih was accused of buying charcoal from shipping agents and selling it at an inflated price.[98] Despite claims from charcoal merchants that the violators were acting against their internal orders, the court issued only warnings to the offenders and did not impose more severe penalties, such as imprisonment, provided they did not repeat the violation. One possible reason why outsiders received lighter punishments than guild members did was that they were outside the group, limiting their ability to be judged under the guild's *nizam*. However, at the same time, the guild had the primary responsibility of policing the sale of charcoal by outsiders, as official offices and courts did not actively enforce regulations on nonmembers.

88 One *okka* roughly equals 1300 g.
89 Aydın, *İstanbul Mahkemesi 24*, 126.
90 BŞS. 299, 43b–3 (Selh-i Cemâziyelevvel 1204 [February 14, 1790]).
91 BOA, C.BLD. 8/368 (Evâsıt-ı Safer 1171 [October 24–November 3, 1757]); BŞS. 168, 128a–3 (15 Rebîülevvel 1150 [July 12, 1737]); BŞS. 209, 25b–2 (12 Cemâziyelevvel 1168 [February 24, 1755]); İŞS. 30, 88b–2 (16 Şa'ban 1182 [December 26, 1768]). When a guild member was jailed, and his violation was not severe enough, the *kethüdâ* often petitioned to free him from jail. İŞS. 30, 88a–1 (12 Şa'ban 1182 [December 22, 1766]).
92 İŞS. 38, 12b–2 (9 Rebîülâhir 1190 [July 28, 1176]).
93 BŞS. 216, 44a–2 (11 Şevval 1171 [June 18, 1758]).
94 BŞS. 216, 85a–2 (2 Safer 1172 [October 5, 1758]).
95 İŞS. 36, 23a–1 (8 Zilkade 1186 [January 31, 1773]).
96 İŞS. 34, 39b–1 (4 Cemâziyelâhir 1184 [September 25, 1770]).
97 İŞS. 35, 80b–1 (6 Cemâziyelâhir 1186 [September 4, 1772]).
98 BŞS. 168, 128a–3 (15 Rebîülevvel 1150 [September 13, 1737]); BŞS. 211, 31a–5 (6 Cemâziyelevvel 1169 [February 7, 1756]).

Conclusion

Throughout the eighteenth century, the government remained passive in regulating the charcoal distribution system. However, there were brokers in every hub, and many illegal sellers in Istanbul, including authorized charcoal merchants who tried to sell charcoal outside the guild's control. The government considered grain and cotton from Thrace more important and recognized charcoal as the appendage of this transportation route. The government behaved as an overseer to ensure that the charcoal trading system adhered to their primary concern of supplying enough charcoal at an affordable price, not as a punisher with initiative, as almost none of the violators faced severe punishment even though the same orders were issued repeatedly. Ultimately, charcoal was just one among many commodities in the eyes of the government, while it was a vital resource for society. Nonetheless, this particular commodity is still important as a sample of internal trading within the empire with minimum foreign influence.

Upon reviewing the charcoal distribution system, we can conclude that it formed around the privileges of charcoal producers and the monopoly of the Istanbul charcoal merchants. The system was maintained throughout the eighteenth century, with local alternation in the middle of the century. In Istanbul, the charcoal merchants' guild experienced a structural transition after the *gedik* system was implemented among the guild. It was the 1770s and slightly late for the *gedik* to penetrate the guild as it had already been widespread in the 1760s among other guilds. Further detailed research is required, but assumably, the implementation of the *gedik* system and a structural change were caused by the economic hardship Genç mentioned. In Thrace, villages were grouped into units for charcoal production based on specific regions. Each unit was responsible for collecting wood within its territory for charcoal production and its sales routes. After producers in Istranca lost their right to produce charcoal in the 1750s, conflicts between the authorized producers from Filibe and the locals began to rage. Port towns served as hubs for charcoal distribution and acted as a nexus between producers and Istanbul charcoal merchants. However, the charcoal merchants primarily purchased charcoal based on contracts or left the purchasing to shipping agents, which meant that they did not have much direct communication with the producers. Consequently, local brokers exploited their geographical advantage to purchase and distribute charcoal illegally. It is important to understand that these violations were not intended to change the whole system of charcoal distribution, for instance, by replacing the existing system, but merely sought to maximize the brokers' own profit. Even the local producers in Istranca did not petition or protest to regain their rights. The charcoal distribution system in the eighteenth century can thus be concluded to be an outcome of unstable relations built upon a stable system.

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46, 52, 58.
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