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Feminism, philanthropy and patriotism : female associational life in the Ottoman empire

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Bountiful Patriotic Woman: Ottoman Muslim Women and the Ottoman Army

The women discussed in the previous chapter were probably not working in the Ottoman war industries or war agriculture out of patriotic motives as local propaganda would have it.¹ They simply had to work to sustain their families in absence of their breadwinner. Ottoman (Muslim) women belonging to the better off strata of the Ottoman urban society did not need to work in the military industrial sweat shops. Still the Ottoman authorities – successfully – tried to mobilize also those women who did not have to work to earn a living by appealing to them and asking them to contribute their labour and money to improving the fate of the Ottoman soldiers. As shown in the previous chapter, the military industry was not sufficient to equip the Ottoman soldiers properly. Nor could the military hospitals meet the growing demand for medical care when the number of wounded soldiers sent back from the battle grounds started to increase. By tapping into the patriotic Ottoman civilian public of volunteers the Ottoman authorities were, however, able to extend the potential labour and capital market.

Three semi-public organizations played an important role in the mobilization of the Ottoman public during the second decade of the twentieth century: the *Donanma Cemiyeti*, the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* and the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*. By granting specific socio-political roles to these organizations, which each had its own propaganda machinery, the Unionists were able to extract important resources from the Ottoman population.

Which appeals were made to these urban, elite women and what arguments were used to justify them are two questions discussed in the following two chapters. They further describe how these women responded to the appeals and

¹ See, e.g. “Die Frauenarbeit,” *Omanischer Lloyd*, 17. Mai 1918, 3 which is citing from *Tanin*.

what these responses tell us on how these women, as individuals and in organizations, saw themselves as patriotic women and dutiful citizens.

Equipping the Army

A modern navy commanding an appropriate fleet of modern ships and, after the start of aviation, an up-to-date air fleet were deemed essential for a modern state, in times of peace, but even more so when war was imminent. Building a modern fleet of sea and, some years later, air vessels was, therefore, put high on the agenda of those in charge after the Young Turk Revolution. To finance the modernization of both fleets the authorities tapped into the resources available amongst the public through several campaigns with the assistance of, particularly, the Fleet Organization.

Modernizing the Naval Fleet

While his uncle had tried to develop a modern military fleet, Abdülhamid II never made any efforts to do so. The acclaimed reason was that he feared a strong navy, because of the role it supposedly played in the dethronement of Abdülaziz. Therefore, he chose to leave the available ships in the Golden Horn to get rusty and to turn his attention to the extension of the railroad network instead, as we have seen. Only after the Greek war of 1897, when the Ottomans suffered heavy damages from the bombardments made by the Greek fleet, a half-hearted effort was made to rebuild the fleet.

After the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908, however, the new men in charge decided to give prominence to the building of a modern navy. They asked Great-Britain to send an advisor to assist them in this task. Upon this request the British sent Admiral Douglas Gamble to take charge of this mission.² He not only designed a plan for the restructuring of the naval organization, but also made a list of ships to be purchased.³ For this purpose the Ottoman government allocated two million golden pounds of its budget. Realizing this was not

² On the British naval missions see Chris B. Rooney, "The international Significance of British Naval Missions to the Ottoman Empire, 1908 - 14," *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXIV, 1, 1998, 1-29.

³ Afif Büyüktuğrul, *Osmanlı Deniz Harp Tarihi ve Cumhuriyet Donanması*, İstanbul: T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 1984, Cilt IV, 48-56.

sufficient,⁴ the daily *Tanin* started a campaign calling upon its readers to donate money in order to purchase two cruisers, to be named “Enver” and “Niyazi” after the heroes of the revolution.⁵

This campaign was taken over by other newspapers and found response amongst not only the male, but also the female audience. Women contributed both individually as well as in an organized form to it. One of the organizations active in this respect was the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* (Unionist Ottoman Women’s Organization). The information on this organization is limited. It seems to have been the women’s branch of the *Osmanlı Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* (Ottoman Unionist Organization) which was led by the actor Ahmed Fehim. In the daily *Metin* the foundation in Kadıköy of an Ottoman Ladies’ organization named *İttihad* (Union) was mentioned. According to this short note the organization had fifteen members, who immediately set out to meet with the female members of the Ottoman dynasty and the mother of the Egyptian Khedive. An article in the daily *İttifak* reported that the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* which was located in Kadıköy were the wife of the physician Pertev Akşivte, *Madam Akşivte*, the daughter of Doctor İsmail Pasha, Leyla [Saz] *Hanımefendi* and the mother of the poet and author Celal Sahir, Fehime Nüzhet, all women likely or known to have connections to palace circles. Its president was the widow of a man referred to as Sadi Pasha, Belkıs. As a candidate for membership *Matmazel Eliz Fresko* was mentioned.⁶

This organization originally aimed at undertaking activities beneficial for the fatherland and the nation and at meanwhile working on the uplifting of womanhood. Their first (and seemingly last) activity was to have a special performance of the theater play *Vatan* (Fatherland) by the famous Ottoman

⁴ This was barely enough for one single cruiser or “dreadnought.” Büyüktuğrul, *Osmanlı Deniz Harp Tarihi ve Cumhuriyet Donanması*, Cilt IV, 74.

⁵ “Donanma Cemiyeti,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1966. See also “Niyazi ve Enver Kruvazörleri -aynen-” *Millet*, 10 Ağustos 1908, 4.

⁶ “Hanım cemiyeti,” *Metin*, 10 Ağustos 1324 (23 August 1908), 3; “Kadıköy’ünde “Vatan” temâşası,” *İttifak*, 14 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 3-4; Hayriye bint-i Salih, “Kadın hissleri,” *Metin*, 15 Ağustos 1324 (28 August 1908), 3. See also, “Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi,” *İkdam*, 21 Ağustos 1908 reproduced in *II. Meşrutiyet’in İlk Yılı: 23 Temmuz 1908 – 23 Temmuz 1909*, İstanbul: Aygaz ve Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2009, 89. According to a short note in *Tanin* of 28 June 1911, Fehime Nüzhet presented the Sultan with flowers in the name of the *İstanbul Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (İstanbul Ottoman Ladies’ Organization) upon his return from his tour in Thrace. Whether or not this is the same organization is not clear. “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti,” *Senin* (= *Tanin*), 15 Haziran 1327 (28 June 1911), 2.

playwright Namık Kemal for an all-female audience.⁷ One of the actors in the play was Ahmet Fehim. The performance was enlivened with musical accompaniment by the military band of Tophane, the Ottoman arsenal, which also played a song of which the words were written by Fehime Nüzhet and the music composed by Leyla [Saz]. These two women also gave speeches in Turkish,⁸ while two *madama* addressed the audience in French. The revenues of this entertainment were to be donated as a contribution to the campaign for the two cruisers.⁹ Going in person to the members of prominent families to sell tickets for the loge places, the members of the organization were able to collect 800 pounds even before the day of the play.¹⁰ After the play, at the exit of the theatre, women were asked to also donate money for the victims of a large fire, which destroyed more than 1,500 houses in Fatih,¹¹ a crowded neighbourhood in the old part of Istanbul. In total 2,419.5 *kuruş* were collected.¹² The destruction caused by the fire instigated the heroes of the Revolution after whom the cruisers would be named to request that part of the money be spent on the relief of the problems of the victims of the fire.¹³ This is what indeed happened: of the 1,150 Ottoman pounds the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* collected within a

⁷ The series of nationalist plays performed in the immediate aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution including this one as well as another staging of *Vatan* organized by the *Büyükdere Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Milliyesi* (National Women's Society of Büyükdere) are well described in Bilge Seçkin, "Staging the Revolution; the Theatre of the Revolution in the Ottoman Empire 1908 - 1909," [Unpublished MA-Thesis, Istanbul: Bosphorus University, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2007].

⁸ In her speech Fehime Nüzhet stressed that Ottoman women should stimulate their children, i.e. sons, not to prefer a job as civil servant but to aspire other honorable vocations which would not be paid out of the Treasury. From this context it is clear that she was actually addressing Ottoman *Muslim* women. "Kadıköy'nde 'Vatan' teması," *İttifak*, 14 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 3-4.

⁹ "Hanım cemiyeti," *Metin*, 10 Ağustos 1324 (23 August 1908), 3; "Yine (Vatan) oyunu," *Hürriyet*, 10 Ağustos 1324 (23 August 1908), 3; "İane-i milliye," *İttifak*, 12 Ağustos 1324 (25 August 1908), 4; "Kadıköy'nde 'Vatan' teması," *İttifak*, 14 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 3-4; Hayriye bint-i Salih, "Kadın hissleri," *Metin*, 15 Ağustos 1324 (28 August 1908), 3.

¹⁰ This might refer to the visits of the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* to the women of the Ottoman dynasty and the mother of the Khedive mentioned before. See "Hanım cemiyeti," *Metin*, 10 Ağustos 1324 (23 August 1908), 3.

¹¹ See Necdet Sakaoğlu, "Yangınlar: Osmanlı Dönemi," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı, Vol. 7, 1994, 427-438.

¹² "Kadıköy'nde 'Vatan' teması," *İttifak*, 14 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 2.

¹³ "Hürriyet gazetesi idarehanesi," *Hürriyet*, 13 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 1; "Kadıköy'nde 'Vatan' teması," *İttifak*, 14 Ağustos 1324 (27 August 1908), 2.

few weeks, 863 pounds were by the Parliament ordered to be allotted to these victims.¹⁴

Although the campaign commenced by *Tanin* did find response, it was by far not enough to collect the money needed. For a more systematic means of propaganda and collection of gifts a better organization was required. Therefore, the German military attaché, Major von Stempel, suggested that an organization should be founded after the example of the German *Flottenverein* (Naval Society).¹⁵ During a meeting on 19 July 1909 the *Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Organization for the National Support of the Ottoman Navy) was founded. A month later its statutes were sent to the government for approval. Having gotten the full approval of the government the organization set to work on its major goal: collecting donations for the Navy. The money collected by newspapers such as *Tanin* and others were transferred to this new organization. Apart from the donations other sources of income were created, while the organization also started to publish a periodical entitled *Donanma Mecmuası* (Navy Periodical) as means of propaganda.¹⁶ In this periodical prominent Ottoman women and men appealed to their fellow countrywomen and -men to contribute to the founding of a strong navy to fight the (Greek) enemy.¹⁷

The Ministry of Interior closely co-operated with the organization and actively tried to incite the local authorities all over the Empire to stimulate the donation campaigns. The local authorities seem to have reacted enthusiastically

¹⁴ “Dersaadet Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi...,” *Yeni Asır*, 31 Ağustos 1324 (13 September 1908), 1. After this date there seem to exist no further references to this organization. An organization with a resembling name was, however, (officially) founded at the end of March 1913, the *Kadıköy Osmanlı İttihad-ı Nisvaniye Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ottoman Women’s Union Organization) with the aim of reviving the production of traditional, local commodities. This is probably the same organization referred to in a short note in *Kadınlar Dünyası* of 18 July 1913 in which the Kadıköy branch of an organization named *Osmanlı İttihad-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Women’s Union Organization) announced that a male lawyer was serving as its voluntary advocate. BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919); “Teşekkür,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 93, 5 Temmuz 1329 (18 July 1913), 2.

¹⁵ Bernd Langensiepen & Ahmet Güleriyüz, *The Ottoman Steam Navy 1828 - 1923*, London: Conway Maritime Press, 1995, [Edited & Translated by James Cooper], 14.

¹⁶ Büyüktuğrul, *Osmanlı Deniz Harp Tarihi ve Cumhuriyet Donanması*, Cilt IV, 63; “Donanma Cemiyeti,” *Türk Ansiklopedisi*; “Donanma Cemiyeti,” *Meydan-Larousse Büyük Lûgat ve Ansiklopedi*, İstanbul: Meydan Yayınevi, 1985, Cilt III.

¹⁷ See e.g. Salime Servet Seyfi, “Yol verin hürriyet için!” *Donanma*, I, Teşrinisani 1326 (November/December 1910), 786-788; Fatma Aliye, “Fatma Aliye Hanımefendi tarafından irsal buyurulmuştur: Donanmamız,” *Donanma*, V, 13 (37), Mart 1329 (March/April 1913), 626-629.

and by 1911 local independent central branches were established in 44 districts in the Ottoman Empire with a total of more than 325 sub-branches. Also in Berlin and Paris branches were founded. In the course of the years the pressure on these branches to reach specified targets increased to such an extent that they, in turn, resorted to a kind of levying of donations from the inhabitants of their districts.¹⁸ However, many Ottomans, male and female, contributed voluntarily to the organization when this appeal to their patriotic spirit was made.

One way of stimulating the donations was the publishing of lists with the names of the generous donors in the periodical of the organization. From these lists it is clear that women from various backgrounds contributed in large numbers.

The daily newspapers, too, continued to publish all sorts of activities related to the fundraising of the organization stressing their patriotic value. *Tanin*, for example, published the letter of the widow of a military officer who donated her pension of one month and called upon “other patriotic ladies [to] participate in this sacred duty.”¹⁹ A woman in Izmit donated a valuable calligraphy to be auctioned. The yield was to be transferred to the Fleet Organization.²⁰ Another woman from Karaburun near Izmir donated her olive gardens whose value was estimated to be approximately 10,000 *liras*.²¹ A gift with a particularly patriotic flavor was a silk flag of five and a half by eight meters for the cruiser “Yavuz Sultan Selim” donated by the inhabitants of Kastamonu and made by the girls of the local vocational girls’ school. This flag had been donated in December 1913 and had originally been meant for the “Sultan Osman” or the “Reşadiye,” which had been commissioned in Britain. However, the British Government seized these ships on 2 August 1914, after the Ottoman Empire had signed the agreement with Germany, which meant that it would support the Central powers if they went to war. Upon this the *Vali* of Kastamonu asked the Ministry of Interior to allot the flag to one of the ships ordered in Germany, the

¹⁸ Nadir Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908 - 18),” *Middle Eastern Studies*, XLIII, 5, 2007, 795-809; Nursen Gök, “Donanma Cemiyeti’nin Anadolu’da örgütlenmesine ilişkin gözlemler” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, XXVII, 43, 2008, 77-93.

¹⁹ Fatma Nesib, “Bu da bir kadın hissi,” *Tanin*, 20 Kanunuevvel 1325 (2 January 1910), 2.

²⁰ “Müsabaka-ı hamiyet,” *Sabah*, 5 Mart 1326 (18 March 1910), 3.

²¹ “Ein großherziges Geschenk für die Flotte,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 3. Januar 1914, 1. See for other examples: “Eser-i hamiyet,” *Senin* (= *Tanin*), 6 Haziran 1327 (19 June 1911), 4; “Hanımların fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 21 Eylül 1327 (4 Teşrinievvel 1911), 4.

dreadnought “Sultan Selim.” His suggestion was forwarded to the Ministry of Marine and accepted.²² Thus in September 1914 the flag was hoisted on the Yavuz Sultan Selim with a special ceremony.²³

Since women did not donate just money, but also gifts like handicrafts, ways had to be found to liquidify them and convert them into cash money. Organizing sales exhibitions, auctions and fairs formed a way to do so. Thus in 1910 a group of women from Cağaloğlu, a neighbourhood in old Istanbul, had organized such an exhibition where they showed all sorts of products. The yield of this exhibition was designated to be for the Fleet Organization. The money came out of the entrance tickets, which were one *kuruş*, a lottery with which one could win exhibited objects and for which 6,000 tickets of ten *kuruş* each had been printed, and auctions. The female painter Müfide donated an oil painting, which was sold by auction. Within half an hour 692 *kuruş* had been offered. Enthused by this, another woman offered a golden watch to be sold by auction. Thus, during the first three days the yield had already reached 6,000 *kuruş*, while the exhibition was going to last for another three weeks.²⁴

Two years later, the Fleet Organization came up with a plan to build a more permanent exhibition hall in Sultan Ahmed. This exhibition hall, where all the gifts donated by women from all over the country should be exposed, was to be coordinated by a women’s committee. Whether this exhibition hall was ever materialized is not clear.²⁵

When an evening entertainment was organized for men in the Tepebaşı Theatre of which the proceeds were to be donated, women protested that they wanted to have such opportunities too.²⁶ Although the editors of *Tanin* thought their request reasonable, no such activities seem to have been organized until the end of 1914, when the “theatre committee” of the *Donanma Cemiyeti* started to show theatre plays and movies for women in the afternoon and for men in the evening.²⁷ Since lotteries and garden parties or other social activities were a

²² BOA, DH.KMS, (996) 11/20, 16 Şaban 1332 (10 July 1914).

²³ “Eine Ehrenflagge für den “Savus (sic!) Sultan Selim,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 8. September 1914, 3.

²⁴ “Çağaloğlu sergisi,” *Tanin*, 12 Mart 1326 (25 March 1910), 3; “Hanımlarımızın sergisi,” *Tanin*, 23 Mart 1326 (5 April 1910), 2-3; “Maraz-ı hamiyet,” *Sabah*, 9 Mart 1326 (22 March 1910), 4.

²⁵ “Tarihçe-i hamiyet - icraat,” *Donanma*, III, 2 (26), Nisan 1328 (April/May 1912), 59-64.

²⁶ “Hanımlarımızın bir talebi,” *Tanin*, 12 Mart 1326 (25 March 1910), 3.

²⁷ See, e.g. “Donanma sineması,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 17 Teşrinisani 1330 (30 November 1914), 4; “Donanma Cemiyeti Heyet-i Temsiliyesi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 18 Teşrinisani 1330 (1 December 1914), 4; “Kinovorstellung für die osmanische Flotte,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 26. November 1914, 3. They may have been inspired by the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* which had founded its own movie

favorite way of money raising for women, women organized such events themselves. So a group of women in Kızıltoprak organized a garden party with music and a buffet. No males were admitted, but the musicians, who would be separated from their audience.²⁸ During a rowing competition in Moda of which the income was to be transferred to the Fleet Organization, the women in the audience, who were probably sitting separately from men, were addressed by three female authors/poets, Belkıs, Fehime Nüzhet and Nigar, who incited other women to contribute their due. These three women also sold lottery tickets for the benefit of the Fleet.²⁹

Women's organizations were active in collecting money for the Fleet Organization, too. The *Anadolu Hisarı Muhadderat-ı Osmaniye Teavün Cemiyeti* (Anadoluhisar Ottoman Women's Support Organization), for example, donated 770 *kuruş*.³⁰ An organization which made it explicitly one of its aims to contribute to the purchase of a battleship was the *Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*. The first goal of this organization was to reestablish the naval greatness of the Ottoman Empire and its conquering might in battle. Therefore it decided to spend fifty percent of its income on the acquisition of a warship to be called *Nevzat-ı Vatan* (Child of the Fatherland).³¹ The *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*, too, thought the existence of a proper fleet essential for the "nations" (*milletler*) and announced to combine the elevation of women with the support of the fleet: it would organize scholarly, scientific, literary conferences and concerts asking a fee which would be donated to the *Donanma Cemiyeti*.³² They kept word: in May 1912, for example, they organized a lecture to be given

theatre in September 1914 and which regularly staged theatre plays in the theatres in Istanbul. See, e.g., "Müdafaa-i Milliye Sineması," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 12 Eylül 1330 (25 September 1914), 4; "Kadıköy Kuşdili tiyatrosu'nda," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Teşrinisani 1330 (8 December 1914), 3.

²⁸ See e.g. "Hanımlara mahsus piyango," *Tanin*, 2 Haziran 1326 (15 June 1910), 4. For a similar activity see "Hanımların istikbal şenliği" *Senin* (=Tanin), 12 Haziran 1327 (25 June 1911), 5.

²⁹ "Osmanlı hanımları," *Tanin*, 16 Ağustos 1326 (29 August 1910), 1.

³⁰ *Donanma*, I, 3, Mayıs 1326 (May/June 1910), 266. The available sources do not give further information on this organization.

³¹ "Yeni Asır'dan: gaye-i milliye ve hanımlarımızın içtimai," *Tanin*, 8 Kanunuevvel 1325 (21 December 1909), 3; "Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti," *Tanin*, 7 Şubat 1325 (20 February 1910), 2.

³² "Beyanname: Teali-i Nisvan'dan sevgili milletlerine," *Tanin*, 28 Eylül 1327 (11 October 1911), 3 (Interesting here is the use of a plural "milletlerine").

by Halide Edib. The entry would be 5 *kuruş* of which 80% would go to the *Donanma Cemiyeti*.³³

Efforts were also undertaken to set up a women's branch or women's branches of the Fleet Organization. One of the branches that seems to have been very active was the *Kadıköy Hanımları Donanma Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Fleet Organization).³⁴ It organized an exhibition and collected money from its members and others. In *Tanin* of 13 April 1911 it published an acknowledgement thanking the Ottoman and foreign women who contributed to its exhibition. The interest for the exhibition had been large and the drawing of the lottery had to be postponed, because presents continued to be donated.³⁵ Women in Kastamonu established a women's branch in June 1911, half a year after a local (men's) branch had been established. Headed by the wife of a local judge, the women collected money and goods.³⁶ Another women's branch of the *Donanma Cemiyeti* was founded in 1912 on the initiative of Nezihe Muhlis. Nezihe Muhlis, who at that moment was the head of the *İttihad ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi* (Union and Progress Girl's Vocational School) in Gedikpaşa, published a letter in the daily *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in which she called upon women on the one hand to donate the fruits of their hands for the benefit of the Fleet Organization and on the other hand to participate in the establishment of a committee at her school which should collect and register goods to be donated to the Navy. Her letter was reprinted in the *Donanma* periodical together with the reply of the central committee of the *Donanma Cemiyeti* in which it expressed its approval and gratitude and promised to provide the receipts. The committee consisted of teachers of the school. Its president and vice-president became Nezihe Muhlis and the language teacher *Matmazel* Ravuna, respectively. The registrar and treasurer was the Kindergarten teacher *Seniye hanım*. The post

³³ "Teali-i Nisvan'ın 4üncü konferansı," *Tanin*, 22 Nisan 1328 (5 May 1912), 4. The lecture had to be postponed, though. "Teali-i Nisvan'ın 4üncü konferansı," *Tanin*, 27 Nisan 1328 (10 May 1912), 4.

³⁴ Also referred to as *Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Nisvan Şubesi* (Kadıköy Women's Branch of the National Organization for the Support of the Ottoman Fleet).

³⁵ For the exhibition see "Donanmamız için," *Tanin*, 18 Nisan 1327 (1 May 1911), 4; "Kadıköy Hanımları Donanma Cemiyeti," *Tanin*, 31 mart 1327 (13 April 1911), 5. For its other activities see e.g. "Hanımlarımızın muaveneti," *Tanin*, 21 Temmuz 1327 (3 August 1911), 4. It also organized a theatre play for women whose yield would go to the victims of a fire: "Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Nisvan Şubesi tarafından 10 Temmuz harikzadeganı menfaatına," *Tanin*, 3 Ağustos 1327 (16 August 1911), 5.

³⁶ Mustafa Eski, "İlk kadın mitingi," in: *Kastamonu'da ilk kadın mitingi'nin 75. yıldönümü uluslararası sempozyumu*, Ankara 1996, 33-46, 35.

of the receipts' officer (*makbuzat memuru*) was filled by the foreign language teacher *Matmazel* Celila. The Ottoman language teacher, Pakize *hanım*, and the history teacher, Hatice *hanım* became secretaries. As members were mentioned the music teacher Belkis,³⁷ the teacher of Arabic, Nakiye, the piano teacher *Matmazel* Goldenberg, the handicraft teacher Ferdane and the gymnastics teacher *Matmazel* Alfandari.³⁸ The Istanbul ladies' branch founded by Nezihe Muhlis was not long-lived. According to her memoirs, it existed for only one year.³⁹ During that year she published several poems and other literary products in the *Donanma*.⁴⁰

Another effort to set up a women's branch of the Fleet Organization was made by a group of women around *Kadınlar Dünyası*. Starting in July 1913 a series of articles started to be published, the first of which were written by one woman, Nazife İclal. Her ideas were supported, however, by others. Nazife İclal wrote two series of articles on the importance of a military and merchant fleet, respectively. In her articles she argued that the reason why the war with the Italians and the Balkan Wars broke out without any of the European states intervening on the behalf of the Ottoman Empire was that the Ottomans did not have a fleet.⁴¹ That was in her opinion also the reason they lost these wars. Thus, men and women, instead of spending time and money on pleasure and conspicuous consumption, she wrote, should work hand in hand to build up a fleet taking an example after Great Britain and Germany. She added that, although they were at peace at the moment, they were involved in an arms race building up their fleets.⁴² This way they secured their peace also for the future. In her view, a fleet was of greater importance than schools. Schools, after all, needed a fleet to protect them. "The father of happiness is power, might," she wrote, "its mother precaution and politics. (...) Peace and improvement live in the lap of power." Therefore, she called upon the readers of *Kadınlar Dünyası* to

³⁷ This is probably Belkis Şevket, discussed further below in this chapter.

³⁸ "Tarihçe-i hamiyet - icraat," *Donanma*, III, 2 (26), Nisan 1328 (April/May 1912), 59-64.

³⁹ Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk Kadını*, 86.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Nezihe Muhlis, "Cenk ninisi," *Donanma*, IV, 7 (31), Eylül 1328 (September/October 1912), 320-325; Nezihe Muhlis, "Yurdumuzun kızlarına," *Donanma*, IV, 8 (32), Teşrinievvel 1328 (October/November 1912), 355; Nezihe Muhlis, "Televünnat-ı hissiye," *Donanma*, IV, 8 (32), Teşrinievvel 1328 (October/November 1912), 357-366; Nezihe Muhlis, "Münakaşa," *Donanma*, IV, 9 (33), Teşrinisani 1328 (November/December 1912), 438.

⁴¹ Nazife İclal, "Donanmayı unutmamalıyız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 76, 18 Haziran 1329 (1 July 1913), 2-3.

⁴² Nazife İclal, "Donanmayı unutmamalıyız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 77, 19 Haziran 1329 (2 July 1913), 3-4.

contribute to building up a fleet, especially since the state did not have enough money to allocate to this aim.⁴³ Although her suggestion was that anybody sending a letter to *Kadınlar Dünyası* should add an extra stamp for the benefit of the Fleet, other forms of contribution were welcomed, too.⁴⁴ *Kadınlar Dünyası* continued to publish regular calls upon Ottoman women, publishing reports on donations of women to the *Donanma Cemiyeti*, including in its French pages.⁴⁵ With a photograph on its front page and another one inside, the periodical also featured prominently the launching of the Reşadiye in London.⁴⁶

In May 1914, Bedia Kamuran, bringing up the subject again and stating that to restore the glory of the times of the early sixteenth-century Ottoman Turkish Admiral, Barbarossa Hayreddin, the support of women was indispensable, invited Aziz Haydar to set up a women's committee within the context of *Kadınlar Dünyası* which should stimulate women to donate money and coordinate and register these gifts.⁴⁷ Aziz Haydar, indeed accepted this invitation and replied that by the end of May a *Donanma-yı Osmani Cemiyeti Kadınlar Şubesi* (Women's Branch of the Ottoman Fleet Organization) would be founded in Erenköy.⁴⁸ Whether this branch was indeed established and whether it actually undertook any activities remains unknown.

To show its appreciation for the financial support of the public the Ottoman government decided to commission an award in the form of a medal, the *Donanma İane Madalyası* (Fleet Donation Medal). Depending on the amount of money donated, the medal would be of gold, silver, nickel or bronze. For women

⁴³ Nazife İclal, "Donanmayı unutmamalıyız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 81, 23 Haziran 1329 (6 July 1913), 3-4; Nazife İclal, "Donanmayı unutmamalıyız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 87, 29 Haziran 1329 (12 July 1913), 3. The need of arming oneself to secure peace and the role of the citizens in it is taken up by Aliye Cevat in an article in which she fully agrees with Nazife İclal. Aziz Haydar also supported Nazife İclal in a lecture given for women in an entertainment for the benefit of the Fleet Organization and called upon women to support the Navy materially and morally. Aliye Cevat, "Donanma ruhu millettir," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 99, 7 Temmuz 1329 (20 July 1913), 1-2; "Konferans," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 126, 11 Kanunusani 1329 (24 January 1914), 13.

⁴⁴ Nazife İclal, "Donanmayı unutmamalıyız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 86, 28 Haziran 1329 (11 July 1913), 2-3.

⁴⁵ "Chronique féministe," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 124, 28 Décembre 1913/10 Janvier 1914, 4 [sic!]; *Kadınlar Dünyası*, "Appel au devoir," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 1.

⁴⁶ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 128, 22 Kanunusani 1329 (7 February 1914), front page and 4.

⁴⁷ Bedia Kamuran, "Terakki yolları," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 10-11.

⁴⁸ Aziz Haydar, "Bedia Kamuran Hanımefendi hemşireme," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 141, 2 Mayıs 1330 (15 May 1914), 6. See also B[edia] K[amuran], "Terakki yolları," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 142, 9 Mayıs 1330 (22 May 1914), 8;10.

the green and white ribbon coming with the medal was shaped in the form of a flower.⁴⁹ Many women were indeed rewarded with such a medal.⁵⁰

The appeals made to Ottoman women by Ottoman women and men alike to participate in fundraising for the modernization of the Ottoman military fleet found a ready response amongst them. Contributing to the purchase of ships for the fleet was felt to be a way to prove one's patriotism, because the purchase of these ships on the one hand was regarded to be a way of securing peace for the Ottoman Empire, while on the other hand it was deemed a necessary step on the way of progress. Thus Ottoman women indeed contributed in many ways to the fundraising activities to modernize the Ottoman fleet: they wrote articles in newspapers and periodicals, organized events and made donations in money or goods. That their patriotism was appreciated was shown through the reward they got: a medal whose grade depended on the amount of money donated.

The *Donanma Cemiyeti* would not only play a role in the collecting of money for the purchase of ships, but would in 1912 also become the coordinating organization for the collecting of money for a new kind of means of transportation and warfare: the airplane.⁵¹

Establishing an Air Fleet

While a proper military and merchant navy were deemed essential for a modern and strong state, in the 1910s another symbol of modernization gained importance, the aircraft. For America, Germany, France and Britain "aviation quickly emerged as an index of national vitality and strength."⁵² To be regarded one of the real great powers in Europe one had to participate in the race for the development of airplanes and airships. The heroic efforts of the early flyers appealed to a mass public in Europe and America, which had been prepared for

⁴⁹ "Donanma İlane Madalyası," *Meydan-Larousse, Büyük Luğat ve Ansiklopedi*, İstanbul: Meydan Yayınevi, 1985, III; "Donanma İlane Madalyası Nizamnamesi," *Düstur*, II, 4, 28 Ramazan 1330 / 28 Ağustos 1328 (10 September 1912). 625-626.

⁵⁰ See e.g. BOA, DH.KMS, (648) 13/33, 14 Cemaziyelevvel 1332 (10 April 1914); BOA, DH.KMS, (528), 17/14, 17 Rebiülahir 1332 (14 March 1914); BOA, DH.KMS, (586) 18/25, 27 Rebiülahir 1332 (14 March 1914); BOA, İ.Tal, 248/38, 7 Cenaziyelahir 1333 (22 April 1915); BOA, İ.Tal, 264/35, 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1333 (10 April 1915); BOA, İ.Tal, 2510/37, 18 Safer 1333 (5 January 1915).

⁵¹ "Tarihçe-i hamiyet - icraat," *Donanma*, III, 2 (26), Nisan 1328 (April/May 1912), 59-64.

⁵² Scott W. Palmer, "On Wings of Courage: Public Air-mindedness and National Identity in Late Imperial Russia," *The Russian Review*, LIV, April 1995, 209-226, quotation 210.

it through a growth in the amount of “science fiction” literature on the “potential of aviation and human progress.”⁵³ For the Ottomans, too, the aircraft became quickly to be regarded as an important means in the competition for military power and nationalist (self-)esteem.

The developments in Europe with regard to this new invention were closely followed in the Ottoman press. The flight of Louis Blériot over the Channel in July 1909 and the aircraft competitions in France in August of the same year were extensively reported on in *Tanin* by Mustafa Suphi. The writings of this journalist drew the attention of the Ottoman public to the potential importance of this innovation in the future for both peaceful and less peaceful purposes. Upon invitation of Mustafa Suphi a Belgian pilot came to Istanbul in August 1909 to make the first flight over Ottoman land. For this he needed the permission of the military authorities, who, under the leadership of Mahmud Şevket Pasha, showed great interest in the potential use for military aims. The first few efforts, which were made before a large public including members of the imperial household and high officials were not completely successful. More successful was the flight of Blériot, who was invited a few months later, on December 12. In the following years the Ottoman military authorities sent various persons and committees to follow the developments in Europe and investigate the possibilities and dangers of the aircrafts in case of war. During the Tripolitanian war the Ottomans learned the hard way what the potentials of these planes were: the Italians used their planes first for a reconnaissance flight in October 1911 and a few days later to bomb Ottoman positions.⁵⁴

This once more stressed the importance of an air fleet for the Ottomans. In March 1912 Mahmut Şevket Pasha offered a proposal to the Board of Ministers

⁵³ Michael Paris, “The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890 - 1918,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, XXVIII, 1993, 123-141, quotation 125. See also Palmer, “On Wings of Courage”; John H. Morrow Jr., “Knights of the Sky: The Rise of Military Aviation” in: Frans Coetzee & Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (eds), *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, Providence & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995, 305-324; and for a somewhat later period: Peter Fritzsche, “Machine Dreams: Airmindedness and the Reinvention of Germany,” *The American Historical Review*, LXXXIX, 3, June 1993, 685-709.

⁵⁴ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, “Osmanlı Havacılığına Genel bir Bakış” in: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu & Mustafa Kaçar (haz.), *Çağımı Yakalayan Osmanlı! Osmanlı Devleti'nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, [Proceedings of the International Symposium on Modern Techniques of Transport and Communication in the Ottoman State (IRCICA, 3-5 April 1989)], İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995, 524-531; Yavuz Kansu, Semet Şensöz & Yılmaz Öztuna, *Havacılık Tarihinde Türkler I; En Eski Çağlardan I. Dünya Şavaşına kadar*, [Ankara]: Hava Basımevi ve Neşriyat Müdürlüğü, 1971, 117-122.

which envisaged the building of a school for pilots, two hangars, a plane reparation workshop, and buildings for the students. Moreover, planes had to be bought. The total costs, however, were far too high to come out of the budget of the Ministry of Finance. Thus, in that same month, under the guidance of the daily *Sabah*, a campaign was started to collect money from the Ottoman subjects to buy three planes to be named *Vatan* (Fatherland), *Meşrutiyet* (Constitution) and *Ordu* (Army). The first contributions came from the Minister of War, Mahmud Şevket Pasha, and members of the staff at his Ministry. The Sultan donated 1,000 golden pounds and ordered that the plane to be bought with this money should be called *Osmanlı* (Ottoman) and that it should be delivered by the anniversary of his ascendance to the throne.⁵⁵ In April 1912 the *Donanma Cemiyeti* opened a special account for the “airplane donations” and became the coordinator of this campaign.⁵⁶

The Ottoman public followed its leaders suit and contributed in large numbers to the campaign, male and female alike. An unknown woman wrote a letter to *Sabah* urging women to participate in this action. She stated that gender should not be a reason for them to refrain from patriotism. She proposed to create a special list where the names of generous female donators would be mentioned. In this context women as conspicuous consumers were brought up again. The author argued that the gifts of women should be obtained by saving on the spending on luxury goods such as cushions with lace and pretty embroidery and woolen cloth. Instead they should purchase plain cushions and printed cottons and use the money saved this way for their patriotic duty.⁵⁷

Her article met with response. *Tanin* reported that a group of women in Kızıltoprak had collected more than 365 *kuruş*, while a woman in Moda had collected 616.5 *kuruş* and handed it to the newspaper which would forward it to the Donation Committee. Their activities were by the newspaper characterized as “a proof of the patriotic love for the fatherland of the Ottoman ladies.”⁵⁸

Women’s organizations, too, got involved in collecting money to this aim. The *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, for example, contributed 27

⁵⁵ İhsanoğlu, “Osmanlı Havacılığına Genel bir Bakış,” 531-534; Kansu, Şensöz & Öztuna, *Havacılık Tarihinde Türkler I*, 124.

⁵⁶ “Tarihçe-i hamiyet - icraat,” *Donanma*, III, 2 (26), Nisan 1328 (April/May 1912), 58-59.

⁵⁷ Bir Kadın, “Osmanlı tayyare filosu,” *Sabah*, 3 Mart 1328 (16 March 1912), 1.

⁵⁸ “Osmanlı tayyareleri için: hanımların hamiyeti,” *Tanin*, 1302, 3 Nisan 1328 (16 April 1912).

Ottoman pounds for the purchase of an airplane.⁵⁹ So did an organization referred to as *Rumeli Hisarı Muhadderat-ı Osmaniye Donanma Şubesi* (Rumelihisar Ottoman Women's Fleet Branch), which reportedly donated 306 *kuruş* to the campaigns.⁶⁰

The patriotism of women in other countries was presented as an example for the Ottoman women. In April 1912 the front page of the Istanbul *Kadın* showed a photograph of Sarah Bernard and her company counting the money they had collected for a military balloon. Inside the periodical another picture and an accompanying article were published. The article reported how the initiative of the author Henri Loudon to collect money to buy airplanes for the French army found a large response among the public and how Sarah Bernard used her fame to collect money during the breaks of her theatre plays by going into the audience in her theatre outfit.⁶¹

Articles on women and aviation started to appear in the Ottoman press. The Istanbul *Kadın* featured an article on a woman in France who crashed and died during the exam for her pilot's license.⁶² A more extensive article was written by an unknown author under the pseudonym *Hür Kadın* (Free woman). Referring to female pilots she (or he) pointed out that not only was aviation a symbol of progress, but that female pilots were a proof of how women could be successful in the public professions, as such another example of progress. Moreover, female pilots might be of great importance during a war, the author stated. Therefore (s)he called upon the women who would like to fly to announce their names in the hope that the government would subsequently come into action. The author, full of hope, wondered when the first flight of a woman in the country would take place.⁶³

This flight indeed took place a few months after the abovementioned article appeared, on 2 December 1913. On that day Belkıs Şevket, a teacher of educational theory and music and a member of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*, flew over Istanbul in an airplane piloted by Fethi Bey, one of

⁵⁹ "Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Tanin*, 1 Teşrinievvel 1328 (14 October 1912), 5; "Der Osmanische Frauenverein," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Oktober 1912, 2; "Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantash," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1.

⁶⁰ "Tayyare ianesi," *Tanin*, 30 Mayıs 1328 (12 June 1912), 5.

⁶¹ Havasdisçi, "Kadının haberleri," *Kadın*, 6, 7 Nisan 1328 (20 April 1912), 13-19, 18.

⁶² Havasdisçi, "Kadının haberleri," *Kadın*, 5, 17 Mart 1328 (30 March 1912), 12-15, 13-14.

⁶³ Hür Kadın, "Tayyarecilik ve kadınlarda kabiliyet," *Mekteb Müzesi*, I, 10, 15 Eylül 1329 (28 September 1913), 293-294.

the first Ottoman pilots.⁶⁴ Both after and before the event articles appeared in the press on the importance of this flight for humankind in general and Ottoman Muslim womanhood specifically.⁶⁵

On 22 November 1913 an editorial had appeared in the weekly *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the organ of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*, entitled *Cesaret-i Medeniye*, which literally means “civilized courage.” In this editorial the author(s), most probably Ulviye Mevlan, explained that progress was only possible if people possessed “civilized courage,” which she defined as the courage to break with the past and try out something new. The first Muslim woman to fly on a plane, she added, would show such courage and thus make a contribution to progress.⁶⁶ In the following *Kadınlar Dünyası* this subject is further elaborated upon. According to the author, “the place of the heroism of battle and combat of the old days had been taken over by the heroism of [the struggle for] civilization.” This struggle for civilization was best shown in science, through which the world was progressing step by step. Flying was only one example of this progress. Ottoman women, it was argued, had been impressed by the active participation of both men and women in Europe and America in this development. Consequently, the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* decided that Ottoman women should be part of it too. Thus, through the mediation of the husband of the editor-in-chief of the periodical and president of the organization, Mevlanzade Rifat, and the husband of another member of the organization, the cooperation of the director of the School for Aviation was secured. He informed them that he would be happy to assist them in their effort to let the first Muslim woman fly. After also Cemal Bey, the Second Commander of the First Army, had given permission, further arrangements could be made to let the flight, which would “destroy the idleness

⁶⁴ It would last until 1933 before the first Turkish woman, Bedriye [Gökmen], got her pilot’s license. In that same year also the first Egyptian woman got her flying license. Fikret Arıt, *Havalarıda İlk Türk Kadınları*, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967, 19-24; Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 158.

⁶⁵ Her flight is also explicitly mentioned in more recent literature on the history of aviation in Turkey. Orhan Aydar, *Uçan Süvariler*, Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1947, 61-66; Arıt, *Göklerde İlk Türk Kadınları*, 7-10; Kansu, Şensöz & Öztuna, *Havacılık Tarihinde Türkler I*, 143; İhsanoğlu, “Osmanlı Havacılığına Genel bir Bakış,” 545 (and photographs on 580-581). An article on Belkıs Şevket and her flight also appeared in the periodical of Turkish Airlines: Azime Acar, “Uçan İlk Türk Kadını: Belkıs Şevket,” *Skylife*, 10, October 1994, 60-66.

⁶⁶ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Cesaret-i medeniye,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 117, 9 Teşrinisani 1329 (22 November 1913), 2. The same theme is taken up by Belkıs Şevket in a lecture she gave a few weeks after her flight. “Konferans,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 128, 25 Kanunusani 1329 (7 February 1914), 5-6.

and cowardice that [were] left from the past,” take place.⁶⁷ All readers were invited to come and watch how “civilized courage” would become manifest in Ottoman Muslim women.⁶⁸ The flight took place on a Sunday after it had been postponed because of bad weather. The plane was the “*Osmanlı*” which had been bought with the money donated by the Sultan himself. Before she took place on her seat behind the pilot Belkıs Şevket addressed the audience briefly: “Womanhood has to be courageous, our blessed fatherland is saved by courage. Womanhood is elevated only with courage.”⁶⁹

Her flight over Istanbul was not only applauded by the public on the ground, but also in the newspapers in the days to follow.⁷⁰ Aziz Haydar, one of the founding members of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*, placed Belkıs Şevket’s flight in the context of the struggle between Muslims and Christians. With her flight Belkıs Şevket had created a horizon of reform and the opportunity for progress for Muslim womanhood. Thus she had opened, according to Aziz Haydar, the road to end the superiority of the Christians.⁷¹ While Aziz Haydar saw the importance of this event in ethno-religious terms, another author stressed the importance of it in terms of gender. By flying, she argued, Belkıs Şevket had proved to be as courageous as a man. Courage, like being free and showing initiative, were all qualities of human beings. Thus, women in order to become regarded as human beings, should possess these qualities. Belkıs Şevket, wrote Mükerrerem Belkıs, now had shown that women deserved to become human once again and to take fully part in social life.⁷²

⁶⁷ Kadınlar Dünyası, “Belkıs Şevket Hanımefendi’nin tayaranı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 118, 16 Teşrinisani 1329 (29 November 1913), 2. See also İkbâl Daniş, “Tayyare,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 118, 16 Teşrinisani 1329 (29 November 1913), 7-8.

⁶⁸ “Davet,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 118, 16 Teşrinisani 1329 (29 November 1913), 16. See also “Tayyarede bir hanım,” *Tanin*, 16 Teşrinisani 1329 (29 November 1913), 3.

⁶⁹ Kadınlar Dünyası, “Belkıs Şevket Hanım kızımız uçtu,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 119, 23 Teşrinisani 1329 (6 December 1913), 2-3.

⁷⁰ See, e.g. “Kadınlık aleminde,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1174, 21 Teşrinisani 1329 (4 December 1913), 80-81. “Tayyarecilik: Belkıs hanım uçtu,” *Tanin*, 19 Teşrinisani 1329 (2 December 1913), 1-2. The second flight of a Muslim woman, the wife of one of the pilots, Mehmed Ali Bey, four months later drew less attention. “Die Fliegerschule von Safraköj,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 7. April 1914, 4.

⁷¹ Aziz Haydar, “Kadınlığın yeni devresi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 119, 23 Teşrinisani 1329 (6 December 1913), 4.

⁷² Mükerrerem Belkıs, “Tayeran münasebetiyle iki cereyan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 119, 23 Teşrinisani 1329 (6 December 1913), 4-5.



Figure 22 A photograph of Belkıs Şevket and Fethi Bey sitting on the plane. *Servet-i Fünun*, 1175, 28 Teşrinisani 1329 (11 December 1913), 109.

The flight of Belkıs Şevket rallied the donation of money for the purchase of airplanes. During her flight she had thrown out flyers with red and white ribbons on which an appeal was made to the Ottoman and Muslim womanhood – *bilatefrik-i cins ve mezhep* (without distinction of race and religion) – to donate money for the purchase of a plane for the army to be named *Kadınlar Dünyası*.⁷³ Within the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* a special committee was formed to supervise the collection of money. Lists of the donators would be published in *Kadınlar Dünyası* and the daily newspapers.⁷⁴ However, the list of generous donors remained limited, despite the activities of a women's organization as far away as Baghdad, the *Bağdat Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Baghdad

⁷³ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, "Belkıs Şevket Hanım kızımız uçtu," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 119, 23 Teşrinisani 1329 (6 December 1913), 2-3. According to an Austrian women's periodical for female enfranchisement the flyers contained a text demanding the enfranchisement of Ottoman women. This seems quite unlikely, though. "Türkei," *Zeitschrift für Frauen-Stimmrecht*, IV, 1, 1914, 6.

⁷⁴ *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*, "Davet," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 119, 23 Teşrinisani 1329 (6 December 1913), 16; *Kadınlar Dünyası*, "Kadınlar Dünyası tayyaresi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 120, 30 Teşrinisani 1329 (13 December 1913), 2-3; "İane Cedveli," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 120, 30 Teşrinisani 1329 (13 December 1913), 16.

Women's Organization).⁷⁵ The studies on the history of Ottoman and Turkish aviation do not mention any plane with the name *Kadınlar Dünyası*.

The *Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* was the main mediator through which women could express their patriotism by contributing to larger scale military purchases such as ships and airplanes. While women donated mainly money through this organization and supported the army as an institution, two other organizations, the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* and the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and their women's branches were instrumental in both evoking the patriotism of women and in providing them with an intermediary through which they could actively support the soldiers with their donations in money and in kind.

Equipping the Soldiers

Supporting the Heroes of the Revolution

It was the Third Army situated in European provinces which staged the coupe in July 1908 and again military from that region who under the leadership of Mahmud Şevket Pasha formed the *Hareket Ordusu* (Action Army) which beat down the counterrevolution of April 1909. These activities earned them the support of the urban population. It was aware of the large share the army had had in – what in the contemporary discourse was called – the ending of the period of “despotism,” “zealotry” and “backwardness” and the opening of the gates to “freedom,” “enlightenment” and “progress.” The soldiers of the Third Army and the heroes of the Young Turk Revolution, however, seem to have been encamped under poor conditions. Immediately after the Revolution, therefore, several organizations including women's organizations undertook action to try to improve their fate.

In August 1908 a group of Muslim women met on the initiative of the wife of the medical doctor and microbiologist Rıfat Hüsametdin Pasha in Göztepe and founded an organization which aimed to collect money enabling the heroes who had made an end to the period of tyranny to return to their homes. The meeting,

⁷⁵ Pakize, “Kadınlar Dünyası'na,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 125, 4 Kanunusani 1329 (17 January 1914), 8-9.

which was organized in front of the mansion of Rıfat Hüsametdin Pasha attracted a large crowd of women.⁷⁶ Speeches were made by, amongst others, Fehime Nüzhet, who got so emotional that she was hardly able to finish her address. In her speech, which was published in the daily *Metin*, she appealed to the audience to come to the aid of the poor and helpless men, who wanted to return to their children and wives, but did not get any travel allowance or even money to buy bread on their way home.⁷⁷ The initiator, the wife of Rıfat Hüsametdin Pasha, became the president of the *Göztepe Hanımlar Kulübü* (Göztepe Ladies' Club), which was founded after this meeting. The members were women from other prominent Ottoman families: the wife and daughter of Şefik Pasha,⁷⁸ Server and Mediha, respectively, the widow of the poet Sefa Bey and another relative of Rıfat Hüsametdin Pasha. Within a few days after its foundation the Club collected 663 Ottoman *lira* and 77 *kuruş*, of which 500 *lira* had been donated by the Sultan himself, 25 *lira* were the yield of a theatre play and 138 *lira* had been collected by two women. This money was deposited at the Ottoman Bank.⁷⁹ How long this Club existed, how much money it collected and where the money went remains unknown.

People in several neighbourhoods of Istanbul formed neighbourhood based *Cemiyet-i Hayriye* (Charitable Organizations) to which men and women donated money and goods. By November, when cold set in, the number of organizations involved in providing "winter presents" for the soldiers increased to such an amount that an umbrella organization was founded, the *Cemiyet-i Merkeziye-i Hayriye* (Charitable Central Organization) in which one member of all the (men's) organizations participated.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, women also continued to contribute. In an advertisement, which was meant to evoke the compassion of the Ottoman ladies and to encourage them to donate military outfit, portrayed the soldiers as being "high up in the icy and snowy mountains, half starving, half naked."⁸¹ In this advertisement published by the *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Kadınlar Şubesi* (Committee of

⁷⁶ A correspondent of the *Neue Wiener Tageblatt* estimated them to be more than 300. "The Last of the Harem," *Evening Post*, 31 October 1908, 11.

⁷⁷ "Göztepe'de islam hanımlar mitingi," *Metin*, 31 Temmuz 1324 (13 August 1908), 2.

⁷⁸ It is unclear who this Şefik Pasha is. Could it be Ömer Şefik Pasha, the father of Besim Ömer, one of the major officers within the Red Crescent?

⁷⁹ "Göztepe'de geçen salı günü ...," *Metin*, 3 Ağustos 1324 (16 August 1908), 3.

⁸⁰ "İane-i askeriye cemiyatı," *Yeni Gazete*, 23 Teşrinisani/November 1908, 4.

⁸¹ "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Kadınlar Şubesi tarafından muhadderat-ı İslamiyenin anzar-ı hamiyete arz olunur," *Tanin*, 7 Teşrinisani 1324 (20 November 1908), 4.

Union and Progress Women's Branch), the women of especially Makriköy (present Bakırköy) were called upon to follow the example of the women in Istanbul and elsewhere and to take up their needles to prepare cotton jackets, woolen socks, shirts and underpants. Examples and materials to produce such goods locally instead of importing them from abroad could, for example, be obtained from the *Nizamiye Elbise Anbarı Dikimhanesi* (Sewing Workshop of the Army's Clothing Depot) in Sultan Ahmed.⁸² Women of another branch of the CUP, the *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Kadıköy Hanımlar Şubesi* (CUP Kadıköy Ladies' Branch) reported that they delivered packages containing knitted woolen and cotton jackets, woolen socks, "American shirts" and underpants to the *Hedaya-yı Şitaiye Askeri Komisyonu* (Military Committee for Winter Presents).⁸³ The retired head of a girls' school in Kastamonu seems to have had the same idea and collected money for the Ottoman soldiers of the Third Army to buy winter clothes in January 1909.⁸⁴

The author Fatma Aliye was involved in an organization which she herself in her notes referred to as *Cemiyet-i İmdadiye* (Support Organization).⁸⁵ The organization which at other places was referred to as *Nisvan-ı Osmaniye İmdad Cemiyeti* (Support Organization of Ottoman Women)⁸⁶ and *Nisvan-ı Osmaniye Cemiyet-i İmdadiye* (Support Organization of Ottoman Women),⁸⁷ respectively, was founded in November 1908 and aimed at collecting and sewing winter presents for the soldiers in Rumeli. From a letter sent by four members of the organization, Saime, Besime, Seniye⁸⁸ and Adile, to *Tanin* it is clear that they had a flying start. In the letter they expressed their gratitude to the head of the *Leyli Kız Sanayi Mektebi* (Vocational Boarding school for Girls), Samiye, whose

⁸² "Asakir-i Osmaniye'ye...", *Yeni Gazete*, 20 Teşrinisani/November 1908, 4. Is this the *Dikimhane* where the mother of Orga was employed (see Chapter Ten)?

⁸³ "Hanımlarımızın hamiyetşiarlığı," *Tanin*, 29 Kanunuevvel 1324 (11 January 1909), 3.

⁸⁴ "Tebşir," *Kadın*, 11, 22 Kanunuevvel 1324 (4 January 1909), 15-16.

⁸⁵ Atatürk Kitaplığı, Fatma Aliye Evrakları, (hereafter, AK, FAE), 12/7, undated; AK, FAE, 12/38, undated; AK, FAE, 12/39, 28 Kanunuevvel 1324 (10 January 1909); AK, FAE, 12/60a, 22 Kanunusani 1324 (4 February 1909); See also "Askere hedaya-yı şitaiye," *Serbesti*, 7 Teşrinisani 1324 (20 November 1908), 4. Although Kurnaz states that Fatma Aliye had been involved in a women's organization of this name in 1897, there is no proof of the existence of such an organization before 1908. Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 193-194.

⁸⁶ "Bila tefrik-i cins ü mezheb," *Sabah*, 16 Teşrinisani 1324 (29 November 1908), 3; "Şuun-u nisvan," *Kadın*, 7, 24 Teşrinisani 1324 (7 December 1908), 15.

⁸⁷ "Aynen:...", *Tanin*, 20 Kanunuevvel 1324 (2 January 1909), 4.

⁸⁸ The names of Besime and Seniye are also mentioned in one of the documents of Fatma Aliye on winter presents. AK, FAE 12/39, 28 Kanunuevvel 1324 (10 January 1909).

students had made a large contribution to the organization. According to the letter 1,000 sets of underwear had been sent to the Second and Third Army corps, which each received 500 sets. That same week another 1,000 sets were to be sent off, while 1,000 sets more were planned to be prepared.⁸⁹

A few weeks later, after she had seen some very poorly dressed soldiers at the market in Edirne, Fatma Aliye's sister, Emine Semiye, founded a similar organization in that town: the *Hizmet-i Nisvan Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Women's Service Charitable Organization).⁹⁰ Its aim was to "meet the winter needs of our brave soldier brothers and other charitable works."⁹¹ It did so by collecting wadded vests (*hurka*) which were generously donated by Ottoman Muslim as well as Christian women.⁹² The organization had ten Muslim members, all wives and daughters(in-law) of high civil servants and military, and six non-Muslim members. Its president was Emine Semiye, its vice-president Madame Fındıklıyan, while its secretary was a teacher named Dilber.⁹³

While women thus were also thinking of the soldiers when they were encamped at the borders in times of peace, the need for assistance from the public became even larger in times of mobilization and war. During war times they were no longer soldiers watching the borders, but men actively defending them and fighting the enemy face to face. When the CUP in Thessalonica founded an organization of *Trablusgarb Muavenet-i Milliye Şubesi* (Branch for National Support for Tripoli) during the war against Italy, the local women's organizations such as the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* and the *Osmanlı Kadınları 'Şefkat' Cemiyet-i Hayriye* eagerly contributed by donating bedding, dressing material and clothing.⁹⁴ While the war against Italy thus induced women to donate generously,⁹⁵ the Balkan Wars and, subsequently, the First World War,

⁸⁹ "Aynen:...", *Tanin*, 20 Kanunuevvel 1324 (2 January 1909), 4.

⁹⁰ Emine Semiye, "Kadın Mecmua-ı Muhterimesine," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 2.

⁹¹ "Şuun-u nisvan: 'Hizmet-i Nisvan' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 10, 15 Kanunuevvel 1324 (28 December 1908), 16.

⁹² "Şanlı asker kardeşlerimiz...", *Yeni Edirne*, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 8; "Şanlı asker kardeşlerimiz...", *Yeni Edirne*, 9 Kanunuevvel 1324 (22 December 1908), 4; and subsequent issues.

⁹³ "Şuun-u Nisvan: 'Hizmet-i Nisvan' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 10, 15 Kanunuevvel 1324 (28 December 1908), 16.

⁹⁴ "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye'nin ilk eser-i şefkatı," *Zekiye*, "Trablusgarb Muavenet-i Milliye Heyet-i Muhterimesine;" "Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesine arz-ı şükran," all in *Rumeli*, 31 Teşrinievvel 1327 (13 November 1911), 1.

⁹⁵ See also, e.g. "Hanımlarımızın hamiyeti," *Tanin*, 8 Kanunusani 1327 (21 January 1912), 3.

which carried more than ever before the character of a “total war,” evoked even more activist compassion.

This compassion, however, became increasingly better coordinated during these wars compared to the rather haphazard efforts in the first years after the Young Turks revolution. During the Balkan Wars and the First World War, the coordination of collecting and allocating goods and money for soldiers and the military was centralized in the hands of two (semi-)public organizations: the *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*,⁹⁶ which was mainly, but not exclusively, concerned with the wounded soldiers and the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, which was founded approximately two years after the Red Crescent and which mainly coordinated the patriotic activities regarding the active soldiers.

The *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and its *Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*

During the 19th century a predecessor of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*, the *Mecruhin ve Marza-yi Askeriye İmdad ve Muavenet Cemiyeti* (Organisation for the Assistance and Support of Wounded and Sick Soldiers), had been founded as a result of the ratification of the “Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field” (22 August 1864) by the Ottoman government in July 1865.⁹⁷ This organization, however, proved to be stillborn. Abdülhamid II, during his regime, as mentioned before, did not allow for any organization to be firmly grounded. He, therefore, preferred to establish short lived organizations which often were somehow affiliated with the international Red Cross during times of war to dissolve them once war was over.⁹⁸

Immediately after the Young Turk Revolution, initiatives were taken to re-establish an Ottoman Red Crescent by men as well as women. Some

⁹⁶ The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* had already played a role in this sense during the Tripolitanian war. When women in Vedin had collected 320 Franks, they forwarded it to the newspaper *Tanin* which in turn passed it on to the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*. “Vedin hanımlarının hamiyet-i vataniyesi,” *Tanin*, 20 Haziran 1328 (3 July 1912), 4.

⁹⁷ Bessim Ömer, “La fondation, la réorganisation du Croissant-Rouge et son action pendant les guerres de Tripolitaine et des Balkans,” *Bulletin International des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge*, XXXXVI, 183, 1915, 419-428. See also <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebSign?ReadForm&id=120&ps=P>. For the full text of the convention see http://www.redcross.int/en/history/gen_cons_frameset.asp (both consulted 13 October 2009).

⁹⁸ Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Devlet*, 307-323.

organizations using the name *Hilal-i Ahmer* were even founded. Not all of them were trustworthy. Besim Ömer, in his conference to women, complained of cheaters who had collected money from naïve citizens under the pretext of working for the *Hilal-i Ahmer*.⁹⁹ A letter of Hayriye Bint-i Salih published only a month after the revolution seems to confirm this. She wrote that she was happy that Feride bint-i Yaver had established a trustworthy *Hilal-i Ahmer* since her “donations are not spent on the goals we want, but are getting in the hand of a bunch of cheaters.”¹⁰⁰ Feride bint-i Yaver,¹⁰¹ had just suggested founding a *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* one day earlier. She especially saw a role for women in this organization and its foundation: “Indeed, we Ottoman women are veiled, but our being veiled does not prohibit us from trying to do such beneficent works,” she wrote. With these “beneficent works” she referred to setting up a *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and to spending the money women spent on fashion on that organization.¹⁰² To raise funds for a new Red Crescent, the wife of Rıfat Pasha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the period 1909 - 1911, organized a *Bazar de Charité*. With this fair she succeeded in collecting approximately 3,500 *lira* which would form part of the start capital of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*, which was eventually founded.¹⁰³

Despite these early efforts and those of some Ottoman bureaucrats to revive the organization in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk revolution, it would take some more years to establish an Ottoman Red Crescent and a women’s branch. The *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* was finally officially founded after a congress in April 1911 under the explicit protection of the Ottoman dynasty. Almost one year later the *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi* (Ottoman Red Crescent Women’s Central Committee) was officially established. Based on its statutes – which were in conformity with those of the International Red Cross – the Red Crescent was obliged to set up such a women’s branch. Thus once the Red Crescent was firmly founded, it made a call upon women to

⁹⁹ Besim Ömer, *Hanımfendilere Hilal-i Ahmer’e Dair Konferans*, İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1330, 66-68. See also Nicole A.N.M. van Os, “Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer ve Terakkiperver Cemiyet-i Nisvanyesi ve Hilal-i Ahmer ve Fukuraperver Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanyesi: dolandırıcıların ‘sahte’ Osmanlı kadın örgütü – 2,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXXVIII, 226, 2002, 22-27.

¹⁰⁰ Hayriye bint-i Salih, “Hamiyetperver Feride Hanım,” *Metin*, 10 Ağustos 1324 (23 August 1908), 3.

¹⁰¹ The same woman who was one of the first Ottoman Muslim women to work at the front office of the post office. See Chapter Eight.

¹⁰² Feride bint-i Yaver, “Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti teşkili,” *Metin*, 9 Ağustos 1324 (22 August 1908), 4.

¹⁰³ Bessim Ömer, “La fondation, la réorganisation du Croissant-Rouge.”

organize themselves and to set up committees and sub-committees in Istanbul and the other provinces.¹⁰⁴ A few months after this call and after preliminary meetings, the Women's Central Committee was officially established on 20 March 1912. Its honorary president was the *başkadın efendi* (main spouse of the Sultan), while other women belonging to the imperial dynasty also belonged to the founding members. These women and other members of the imperial household would, in the course of the years, not only pay their yearly fees, but also donate generously to the organization.¹⁰⁵

The board of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Genel Merkezi* (Red Crescent Women's General Center) initially consisted of women who all belonged to prominent Ottoman families of different creeds.¹⁰⁶ In due course, however, the organization seems to have been Turkified/Islamicized and nationalized as also Selma Rıza complained.¹⁰⁷

Two years after its foundation, in March 1914, the Women's General Center decided to branch out and dispatches were sent out accordingly calling upon women anywhere in the Empire to assist in establishing these branches.¹⁰⁸ Following this call, many branches were opened in Istanbul¹⁰⁹ and all major towns of the Empire. In these towns the initiatives to establish local branches were generally taken by the wives of the local governors or other high bureaucrats who in most cases also became its president.¹¹⁰ Not all the local branches in the province seem to have been firmly grounded in the local community. In Kastamonu, for example, an earlier women's branch of the Red

¹⁰⁴ "Ein Aufruf des 'Roten Halbmonds'" *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 9. Dezember 1911, 1-2; Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 1 -*, İstanbul, 1331, 56.

¹⁰⁵ *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Salnamesi, 1329 - 1331*, [İstanbul:] Ahmet İhsan ve Şürekası.

¹⁰⁶ Tepekaya & Kaplan, "Hilâl Ahmer Hanımlar Merkezi'nin kuruluşu ve faaliyetleri (1877 - 1923)," 150-153.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁸ Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 1 -*, İstanbul, 1331, 59.

¹⁰⁹ As, for example in Kadıköy, or in Bebek where one was established in August 1915. "Mecruh gazilerimizin şefkatlı validesi Hilal-i Ahmer menfaatine" *Sabah*, 19 Mayıs 1331 (1 June 1915), 3; "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Mayıs 1331 (7 June 1915), 1; "Hilal-i Ahmer'in yeni hanımlar şubesi," *Tanin*, 27 Temmuz 1331 (9 August 1915), 4.

¹¹⁰ Such was the case, for example, in Konya in October/November 1914 and in Kastamonu in May 1915. TKA, 28/16, 26 Ağustos 1330 (8 September 1914); TKA, 28/24, 13 Teşrinievvel 1330 (26 October 1914); TKA, 28/29, 9 Teşrinisani 1330 (22 November 1914); TKA, 28/160, 2 Mayıs 1331 (15 May 1915); TKA, 28/177.

Crescent had been founded during the Balkan Wars, by Mukbile *hanım*, the wife of the governor, Galib *Bey*, who succeeded in gathering 150 women around her, who sat to work to provide a field hospital in Inebolu with linen.¹¹¹ This branch, however, seems to have become dysfunctional and was re-established in May 1915 by the wife of the governor at that time, Melek Reşid.¹¹² In Izmir, to mention one other example, the women's branch which had been briefly active in 1915 to collect money and to provide the hospitals with underwear and clothes had also become dysfunctional to be reactivated in July 1916 by the wife of a certain Tevfik Pasha.¹¹³ This time, it seems to have been more successful: by 1917 the branch had 180 members.¹¹⁴

In November 1916, moreover, the *Frauenverein vom Ottomanischen Roten Halbmond in Wien*¹¹⁵ was founded upon the initiative of Besim Ömer. During the Balkan wars and the first years of the First World War, women in Vienna, both Ottoman and non-Ottoman, had deployed activities for the benefit of "Turkish" soldiers in several charitable committees. When, in November 1916, Besim Ömer visited Vienna, he gave a speech to the "Turkish" women living there instigating the women to establish this *Frauenverein*. With the foundation of the Women's Organization of the Ottoman Red Crescent in Vienna, the women united their efforts under the leadership of the wife of the Ottoman ambassador to Vienna, Fatma Zehra Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha,¹¹⁶ who became its president, and the wife of the counselor of the Ottoman embassy, Richard Blacque, Mme Josephine Blacque *Bey*, who served as its vice-president. It collected money which it used to financially support Austrian hospitals in curing Ottoman soldiers and to buy goods for the Ottoman Red Crescent Richard Blacque in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁷ After the large fires in Istanbul in the

¹¹¹ "Frauenverein des Roten Halbmondes in Kastamoni," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 22. Februar 1913, 2. See also Eski, "İlk kadın mitingi," 35-36.

¹¹² See Chapter Three.

¹¹³ "İzmir Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Cemiyeti," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 30 Haziran 1332 (13 July 1916), 2.

¹¹⁴ Mesut Çapa, *Kızılay (Hilal-i Ahmer) Cemiyeti (1914 - 1925)*, Ankara: Türk Kızılayı, 2009, 33.

¹¹⁵ A local "men's branch" had been established in December 1914. "Viyena'da Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Teşrinisani 1330 (8 December 1914), 2; "Hilal-i Ahmer'in Avusturya şubesi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 26 Teşrinisani 1330 (9 December 1914), 4.

¹¹⁶ Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha had been the first president of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* when it was (re-)established in 1911.

¹¹⁷ *Bericht des unter dem Allerhöchsten Protektorate Seiner Majestät des Sultan stehenden Frauenvereines vom Ottomanischen Roten Halbmond in Wien für die Zeit vom 20. November 1916 bis 31. Dezember 1917*, Wien: Im Selbstverlag, 1918 (accessed through "Austrian Literature

summer of 1918, it also donated a considerable sum to be used for the temporary soup kitchens of the Red Crescent.¹¹⁸

The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* was the founder of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Darüssınaası* (Red Crescent Ladies' Craftworkhome) which in due time became an important provider of military textiles. The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* had taken the initiative to open this home during the Balkan Wars to provide female Muslim refugees,¹¹⁹ and especially the daughters and widows of the Ottoman soldiers pouring in from the Balkans, with a job to earn an honest living. With a starting capital of 500 *lira*, the *Hilal-i Ahmer Darüssınaası* opened its doors on 7 August 1913. Initially it employed fifteen girls and women who were paid by the day. Two to three months later 110 persons had found employ at the Home: the small girls were sewing and embroidering supervised by a female teacher, the younger women worked as weavers supervised by a man, while the older women worked at the spinning wheels. The girls and women received warm meals at the Home and were living in mansions especially purchased by the *Hilal-i Ahmer* for this purpose in Beyazit and Sultan Ahmed. By October 1914 the Home reportedly employed 20 girls aged between nine and twelve, 50 girls aged between twelve and fifteen, while the remaining women were between 40 and 60 years of age or even older.¹²⁰ The daily supervision of the Home was in the hands of four women chosen from among the members of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi*. They reported to the Women's Center on a monthly basis. While the girls and women of the Home originally were supposed to produce artistic needlework based on old Turkish models, after the mobilization of 1914 they turned to the preparation of "winter presents" for the soldiers. Many of the winter presents donated by prominent women of the Istanbul society were actually produced by the girls and women of the Home, although many of the lady members of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyeti* (Red Crescent

Online" at www.literature.at). See also "Viyena'da Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlarının faaliyeti," *Tanin*, 2 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, 3; "Der Rote Halbmond in Wien," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. Mai 1918, 3.

¹¹⁸ "Harikzedeler için," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 3 Temmuz/July 1918, 2; "Hilal-i Ahmer aşhanelerine iane," *Tanin*, 3 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 4.

¹¹⁹ The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and its *Kadınlar Merkezi* did much more to alleviate the plight of the many needy refugees fleeing into Istanbul: they gave medical treatment, and distributed clothes, food and shelter. A detailed account of these activities is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter.

¹²⁰ No explanation is given for the reason why there were no women aged 16-39 working at the Home. It is likely, though, that women at this age were married with (young) children and were, therefore, tied to their families and their homes and working there.

Organization Ladies' Committee) had also set to work. By May 1915, for example, the Women's Committee itself was also producing 2,000 pieces of underwear per day.¹²¹



Figure 23 Members of the Women's branch of the Red Crescent together with some of their pupils at the *Darüssıma* working on winter underwear for the soldiers. *Servet-i Fünun*, 1220, 9 Teşrinievvel 1330 (22 October 1914), front page.

By November 1915, the Home had become one of the suppliers for the First Army corps producing upon order socks and gloves for the soldiers and 135,000 sets of underwear. For the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, moreover, the women and girls of the Home produced 60,000 hunters' vests (*avcı yelekleri*). They had also successfully developed a way to produce the much needed hydrophilic gauzes, which could no longer be imported. Furthermore, these women and girls together with the ladies of the headquarters had started to produce gas masks using pictures in European newspapers, since poisonous gasses were being used

¹²¹ "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi'nin taht-ı idare himayesinde 'Hilal-i Ahmer Darüssınaası'nın asakir-i Osmaniyeimize hidematı," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1210, 9 Teşrinievvel 1330 (22 October 1914), 368; "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkez-i Umumisi'nde humalı bir faali'nin taht-ı idare himayesinde 'Hilal-i Ahmer Darüssınaası'nın asakir-i Osmaniyeimize hidematı," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1249, 30 Nisan 1331 (13 May 1915), 5; *Türkiye Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi Darüssınaası: Eytam ve Eramil-i Şuhedaya Muavenet*, [İstanbul]: Ahmed İhsan ve Şurekası, 1339, 21-22.

at Gallipoli. By November 1915, almost 75,000 of them had been sent to the navy and land forces, while its production continued. By then, the Red Crescent was employing 200 women on a daily base and 300 others two days a week.¹²²

A similar for women was active in Bursa. It had initially been founded by the English Red Crescent [sic!] and a member of the local Levantine community, a “Miss” Whittal,¹²³ had been in charge of it.¹²⁴ In March 1914, however, the workshop including all its equipment was transferred to the local branch of the *Hilal-i Ahmer*.¹²⁵ The local branch of the *Hilal-i Ahmer* asked the newly established women’s branch to manage the workshop donating fifty *lira* to spend on some urgent investments.¹²⁶ At this workshop, where by the end of 1915 150 girls and women were employed,¹²⁷ hydrophilic gauzes and *Amerikan bezi* were produced.¹²⁸ In November 1915 the workshop was integrated with an existing factory and moved to its building. Thus it was turned into a larger enterprise where poor women and girls were educated and where an income could be generated “for our country and organization.”¹²⁹

The *Hilal-i Ahmer* worked in close cooperation with another organization which was established approximately a year later in January/February 1913, the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.

¹²² “Hilal-i Ahmer’in hidematından,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2; Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799; “Türkische Frauen des Roten Halbmondes,” *Die Islamische Welt*, I, 5, April 1917, 257-262.

¹²³ The Whittals were a levantine family living mainly in Izmir and Moda, Istanbul. For her activities during the Balkan Wars in both Üsküdar and Bursa, “Miss” Whittal received a *Şefkat Nişanı* of the third grade in May 1915. BOA, İ.Tal, 775/14, 1 Receb 1332 (26 May 1914).

¹²⁴ TKA, 156/7, 29 Kanunusani 1329 (11 February 1914).

¹²⁵ TKA, 156/17, 1 Mart 1330 (14 March 1914).

¹²⁶ TKA, 156/121, 5 Mart 1330 (18 March 1914).

¹²⁷ Bessim Ömer, “La fondation, la réorganisation du Croissant-Rouge et son action pendant les guerres de Tripolitaine et des Balkans,” 427.

¹²⁸ TKA, 156/28, 5 Ağustos 1330 (18 August 1915); TKA, 156/31, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1915); TKA, 156/32, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1915). There are several documents in the Red Crescent Archives pertaining to the sending of various quantities of hydrophilic gauzes from Bursa to Istanbul between November 1914 and March 1915. E.g. TKA, 156/44, 30 Teşrinievvel 1330 (12 November 1914); TKA, 156/92, 17 Mart 1331 (30 March 1915).

¹²⁹ TKA, 156/121, 5 Mart 1330 (18 March 1914); TKA, 156/123, 7 Kanunuevvel 1331 (20 December 1915).

The *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*

One of the organizations which were very active in the collection of goods and money for aims related to the war was the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (National Defense Organization). It was founded at the instigation of the CUP following the coup of January 1913,¹³⁰ and it had, according to its statutes, various aims. In the first place, it wanted to stimulate and strengthen the social activities and the intellectual level of the nation (*millet*). Secondly it aimed at improving public health and national education. It also planned to work on accustoming the whole nation to an active and working life. Furthermore, it targeted training and exercising the youngsters in such a way that they would be strong enough to be rushed off to the battlefield. Finally, it wanted to enlighten the burdens of war. In short, its aim was to establish “the happiness and welfare of the nation to the highest possible degree.”¹³¹ Abdullah Cevdet, at the time, cited its aims briefly as “[to] collect donations, register volunteers, enlighten the minds of the people.”¹³² As such the organization served as a well-lubricated propaganda machinery reaching into the farthest corners of the Empire consciously trying to also involve the not always complying non-Muslim population, and women.¹³³ Initially, the organization’s *İane Heyeti* (Donation’s Committee), therefore, decided to cooperate with the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* of Halide Edib and the *Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*.¹³⁴

Two days after the official establishment of the organization, however, four Tatar women – Muslims from Russia, who worked as nurses in the Kadırğa hospital during the Balkan war –¹³⁵ went accompanied by a journalist to the office of the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.

¹³⁰ Although the official date of foundation of this organization according to its statutes was 1 February 1913, it seems to have been in existence somewhat earlier. Nâzım H. Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991, 17-21.

¹³¹ Article One of the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Nizamname-i Esasisi* (Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası, 1330) as reproduced in *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Nizamname-i Esasisi Tadil Layihası* (Dersaadet: Ahmediye Matbaacılık Şirketi, 1334) as reproduced in Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 175-208, quotation 184.

¹³² A[bdullah] C[evdet], “Ağlatan bir sahne-i fazilet,” *İctihad*, III, 51, 24 Kanunusani 1328 (6 February 1913), 1163-1164, quotation 1163.

¹³³ Ginio, “Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913);” Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Devlet*, 305-306.

¹³⁴ Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 44.

¹³⁵ “Türklük şunu - Şimali hemşirelerimiz,” *Türk Yurdu*, IV, 14, 18 Nisan 1329 (1 May 1913), 464; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 344. See fig. 9 and also Chapter Thirteen.



Figure 24 The four Tatar women. “Quatre jeunes musulmanes...” (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun*, 1129, 10 Kanunusani 1328 (23 January 1913), 249.

They had several ideas on how also women could contribute to the aims of the organization. In the first place they suggested that a women’s committee should be formed to collect gifts. The members of this committee had to organize themselves in such a way that they would be able to knock the door of every house in Istanbul to ask for a donation. The four women themselves stated that they were prepared to take upon them any sort of service to the benefit of this committee and to donate all their valuables. Secondly, they proposed that meetings should be organized during which speeches should be held in which the patriotism of the women would be awakened. They also wanted groups of women to be formed to go to the battlefield to look after the wounded soldiers.

They would have to dress their wounds and prepare their meals, and they would encourage those whose courage had disappeared.

Moreover,

they would take the weapons from the hands of those who, God forbid, committed treason by fleeing from the enemy and sacrifice their lives for the sake of the defense of the fatherland and thus set an example for the males.¹³⁶

The four women, furthermore, offered to be the first group of women to be enlisted to go to the battlefield. Finally, the women's committee was to call upon the Sultan to go to the borders and stand at the head of his soldiers and to show the whole Islamic world actively that he was prepared to give his life for the preservation of the honor of the position of the Khalif.¹³⁷ With this last proposal they referred to an article by Halide Edib which had been published in *Türk Yurdu* and in which she had addressed the Ottoman Sultan. In her address she fervently urged the Ottoman Sultan to take up arms, lead the army and defend the fatherland, the honor, and the minarets, so that "the name of the one who is going to allow the lands conquered by Sultan Mehmed to be trampled upon will not again be Sultan Mehmed!"¹³⁸

Most of these suggestions implied that women would have to break existing gender codes. They would have to go into the street, knock on doors which could well be opened by males, go to the front to take care of male soldiers and even take up the weapons. The *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Osmanlı Hanımlar Heyeti* (Ottoman Ladies' Committee of the National Defense) which as a result of the action of these four women indeed was founded was much more moderate. Its main aim became to collect money amongst women. As such, as Polat points out, its status remained somewhat vague. It was often regarded as a sub-committee of the "Donations' Committee" and activities of the Ladies' Committee were sometimes announced as being organized by one of the other committees within the organization.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ A[bdullah] C[evdet], "Ağlatan bir sahne-i fazilet," *İçtihad*, 1163-1164, quotation 1164.

¹³⁷ A[bdullah] C[evdet], "Ağlatan bir sahne-i fazilet." See also "Vor dem Wiederbeginn des Krieges. Die Opferwilligkeit der türkischen Frauen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 3. Februar 1913, 1; "Türk hanımlarının hamiyet-i vatanperverane," *Tanin*, 22 Kanunusani 1328 (4 February 1913), 4.

¹³⁸ Halide [Edib], "Edebiyat: Padişah ve Şehzadelerimize!" *Türk Yurdu*, III, 2, 1329 (1913), 33-36. Eyal Ginio shows how during the Balkan Wars this rhetoric was popular amongst the Turkish nationalists. Rather than pointing to Islamic references they preferred to refer to the dynastic past. Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913)."

¹³⁹ Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 74-75.

One of the first activities¹⁴⁰ of the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Osmanlı Hanımlar Heyeti* complied with the second wish of the four Tatar women: on 8 and 15 February 1913, respectively, two large meetings were held for women in the lecture hall of the university under the presidency of one of the founding members of the Red Crescent Women's Committee, princess Nimet(ullah İsmail) Muhtar, the youngest daughter of the former Khedive of Egypt, İsmail Pasha, and wife of Mahmud Muhtar Pasha.¹⁴¹ The meetings were extensively covered in the press both locally and abroad¹⁴² and a booklet containing the texts of the speeches made and the poems read was published in the same year.¹⁴³

The collecting of money proved to be the most important task of the Ladies' Committees and they seem to have been rather successful in it. The meetings at the University brought in a large sum worth of gold and jewels plus cash money. One woman even donated the fur coat she had been wearing coming to the meeting. At the second meeting 12,685 *kuruş* were collected.¹⁴⁴ The Organization was not only successful in winning the women for the national cause in the various parts of Istanbul, such as Beşiktaş,¹⁴⁵ Makriköy¹⁴⁶ and

¹⁴⁰ In a speech to foreign women at the Tokatliyan Hotel in Istanbul Halide Edib, though, claimed that the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Committee for the Elevation of Women) had organized the meetings. "Halide Hanımefendinin hitabesi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 134, 8 Mart 1330 (21 March 1914), 4-5. See also "Better Women's Conditions Are Urged in Turkey," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 April 1914, 2.

¹⁴¹ Şefika Kurnaz, *Balkan Harbinde Kadınlarımızın Konuşmaları*, İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1993, 23.

¹⁴² For reactions in the Ottoman Turkish press see Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 75-76; Kurnaz, Şefika, *Balkan Harbinde Kadınlarımızın Konuşmaları*, İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1993, 19-20. See also "Eine patriotische Frauenversammlung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10. Februar 1913, 1; "Die muselmanischen Frauen an die europäischen Monarchinnen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10. Februar 1913, 1; "Die Nationalverteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Februar 1913, 1; "Die zweite patriotische Frauenversammlung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 16. Februar 1913, 1; "Das Komitee für nationale Verteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 17. Februar 1913, 1.

¹⁴³ *Darülfünun Konferans Salonunda Kadınlarımızın İçtimaileri*, İstanbul: Tanin Matbaası, 1328 (1913). The same text was republished with an introduction in 1993 in a transliteration by Kurnaz. Kurnaz, *Balkan Harbinde Kadınlarımızın Konuşmaları*.

¹⁴⁴ "Die zweite patriotische Frauenversammlung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 16. Februar 1913, 1; "Das Komitee für nationale Verteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 17. Februar 1913, 1.

¹⁴⁵ At a meeting for women of the branch in Beşiktaş, for example, Fatma Aliye, Fehime Nüzhet, Salime Servet and Nur Halime addressed the audience. "Hanımlara konferans: Müdâfaa-i Milliye Beşiktaş Şubesinde," *Tanin*, 7 Mart 1329 (20 March 1913), 5. See also, "Türk hanımlarının toplanışı," *Büyük Duygu*, 2, 16 Mart 1329 (29 March 1913), 31-32; "Für die Nationalverteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 20. März 1913, 2; See also Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 80-81; Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 203.

Kadıköy,¹⁴⁷ but also women in Bursa,¹⁴⁸ Trabzon,¹⁴⁹ Ankara,¹⁵⁰ Diyarbakir,¹⁵¹ Izmir,¹⁵² Van,¹⁵³ Niğde,¹⁵⁴ and probably more places established local women's branches, held meetings and collected money for the National Defense Organization. Since the National Defense Organization was the official coordinating body of the patriotic activities related to the active armed forces also other women's organizations transferred the money and goods they collected to it to be distributed further.

The money coming from the donations and from other sources was used for several different projects during the first years of the existence of the Organization. Food, equipment and transport were provided for the soldiers. Support was also given to the families of soldiers and to refugees coming from the European provinces. Money was spent on propaganda, while the organization also donated airplanes to the Army. During the First World War other activities were also undertaken with the money: so, for example, the families of the soldiers at the front were financially supported, as we have seen, while their lands were tilled with the help of the Organization.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ "Müdâfaa-i Milliye: tehhür," *Tanin*, 29 Mart 1329 (11 April 1913). According to this article the women of the Ladies' Committee of the Makriköy (Bakırköy) branch had organized a lottery. Since not all the tickets were sold the date of the draw had to be postponed, though.

¹⁴⁷ The branch in Kadıköy seems to have been particularly active during the second half of the First World War. "Grande fête champetre," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 2 Août 1917, 3; "Grande fête champetre," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 3 Août 1917, 4; "La fête de Féner Baghtché," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 3 Août 1917, 4; "Kadıköy hanımlarının faaliyeti," *Tanin*, 7 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 4; "Konferans," *Tanin*, 6 Ağustos/August 1334/1918, 4; "Kadınlara Konferans," *Tanin*, 13 Ağustos/August 1334/1918, 4.

¹⁴⁸ "Müdâfaa-i Milliye: Brussa hanımlarının hamiyetperverlikleri," *Tanin*, 15 Şubat 1328 (28 February 1913), 3.

¹⁴⁹ "Müdâfaa-i Milliye: Trabzon hanımları," *Tanin*, 23 Şubat 1328 (8 March 1913), 4-5; "Die patriotischen Frauen von Trapezunt," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27. Februar 1913, 1.

¹⁵⁰ "Die Nationalverteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. Februar 1913, 2.

¹⁵¹ "Die nationale Verteidigung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 4. März 1913, 1.

¹⁵² "Patriotische Opferstimmung in Smyrna," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 14. März 1913, 1.

¹⁵³ Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 86.

¹⁵⁴ "Niğde Hanımlar Müdâfaa-i Milliyesi," *Tanin*, 26 Kanunuevvel 1331 (8 January 1916); "Niğde Hanımlarının Hamiyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 10, 14 Kanunusani 1331 (27 January 1916), 2902. A few months after the Niğde branch was established by the wife of the *mutasarrıf* (district's governor) it also incorporated the women of the many smaller towns around Niğde. "Niğde Müdâfaa-i Milliye Hanımlar Cemiyeti," *Tanin*, 14 Nisan 1332 (27 April 1916), 3.

¹⁵⁵ Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 65-72. According to a report of the Beyoğlu Şubesi over the year 1917, the branch spent 192,382 *kuruş* on "wintergoods" (*levazim-i şitaiye*) for the soldiers, 586,596 *kuruş* on paying the rent of the houses of soldier's families, 52,952 *kuruş* on paying the "separation allowances" for the soldier's families without breadwinners, 16,109 *kuruş* was donated

The *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* was, together with the Ministry of War, the largest customer of the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*. It also ordered goods from the *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu* and, for example, the *Hilal-i Ahmer Darüssınaası*.¹⁵⁶ As said, the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* cooperated closely with the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*. Thus, when the women of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*, only a few weeks after the start of the First World War, found that the depots of the organization carried sufficient stock of underwear for the hospitalized soldiers, they turned to sewing “winter presents” for the soldiers in arms which they transferred to the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.¹⁵⁷ Vice versa, the Kadıköy Women’s Branch of the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* collected money to financially support hospitals.¹⁵⁸

Balkan Wars and the First World War

Both the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* were pivotal to the propaganda politics of the Unionists to arouse patriotism amongst and extract resources from the population of the Ottoman Empire. Both organizations turned into the major coordinating institutions for those women who, during the Balkan Wars and later during the First World War, increasingly got involved in the “industry” of war donations as individuals and in organizations.

The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* received, for example, thirty percent of the money collected by the *Makriköy İane-i Harbiye Komisyonu* (Makriköy War Donations’ Committee), which was founded immediately after the start of the Balkan Wars¹⁵⁹ and which had a separate women’s branch, the *Makriköy İane-i Harbiye Kadınlar Komisyonu* (Makriköy War Donations Women’s Committee). The president of the latter was, we learn from a letter to *Tanin*, Fehime Nüzhet. During its first meeting, the members of the women’s branch had donated in total 22.5 Ottoman *Liras*. In her letter Fehime Nüzhet announced further that

to hospitals, 15,073 *kuruş* was spent on poor relief and 4,747 *kuruş* on donations for the victims of the fires. “*Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 18 Nisan/April 1334/1918, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799; Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816; Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, 54.

¹⁵⁷ Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 1 -*, İstanbul, 1331, 64-65.

¹⁵⁸ “Kadıköy hanımlarının faaliyeti,” *Tanin*, 7 Temmuz/July, 1334/1918, 4.

¹⁵⁹ TKA, 93/10, 11 Teşrinievvel 1328 (24 October 1912).

the women would go out to sell cards on crowded places in the city to collect more money to support the soldiers and their families.¹⁶⁰ A committee of women in Erenköy also tried to raise money to pay for the recovery of wounded soldiers by organizing a lottery in November 1912.¹⁶¹ The public was, however, called upon not only to donate money, but also goods.

Almost immediately after the outbreak of the Balkan War, in October 1912, *Tanin* published a call of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* addressing men and women to provide underwear for the soldiers fighting at the borders of the Empire. Its call was widely responded to. Women in the Ottoman Empire and outside it, sat themselves behind their sewing machines or bought ready-made underwear and donated this.¹⁶² A group of Ottoman women living in Paris joined forces under the presidency of the wife of the Ottoman Ambassador, Mehmed Rifat Pasha, and called themselves the *Paris Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Women's Organization in Paris). These women set up a sewing workshop in the Embassy to contribute to the general effort to provide the soldiers with underwear. Moreover, they collected a total of more than 11,000 franks.¹⁶³ Even the *Kadıköy Donanma-yı Osmani Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Organization for the Ottoman Fleet) originally founded to collect money to buy ships for the navy as discussed above, shifted its activities: at the train station at Sirkeci it distributed 500 sets of underwear, plus undershirts and socks to the soldiers leaving for the battlefield. The sets were handed over to the soldiers by the women themselves with the words "God willing, you will return as a *gazi* (a war veteran), and in your hometown your family will remove these clothes."¹⁶⁴

As mentioned before, the First World War, with its wholesale mobilization, increased the need for military outfits even more. No longer could textiles or uniforms be imported. The traditional suppliers of cloth and yarn, Britain and India, belonged to the enemy camp, while Germany and Austria-Hungary were

¹⁶⁰ Fehime Nüzhet, "Varaka: Senin ceride-i muhterimesi müdüriyetine," *Senin* (=Tanin), 8 Teşrinievvel 1328 (21 October 1912), 5.

¹⁶¹ "Erenköyü hanımların bir teşebbüsü," *Renin* (=Tanin), 24 Teşrinievvel 1328 (6 November 1912), 4.

¹⁶² "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi Heyet-i İdaresi'nden," *Canin* (=Tanin), 2 Teşrinievvel 1328 (15 October 1912), 5; "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi Heyet-i İdaresi'nden," *Canin* (=Tanin), 3 Teşrinievvel 1328 (16 October 1912), 5.

¹⁶³ "Paris'te Osmanlı kadınları," *Renin* (=Tanin), 18 Teşrinievvel 1328 (31 October 1912), 2.

¹⁶⁴ "Osmanlı hanımlarının hamiyeti," *Senin* (=Tanin), 11 Teşrinievvel 1328 (24 October 1912), 3. See for more examples of donations by women "Havadis-i dünya: ordumuza hedaya-yı şitaiye," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-7, 31 Ağustos 1329 (13 September 1913), 15.

in need of the materials themselves. The Ottoman army had to fall back on the resources in its own country in order to equip its soldiers. It tried to take over and further develop the local industries as discussed in the previous chapter. The civil and military authorities were aware, however, that this would not suffice and called upon the population of the Ottoman Empire to contribute its might through the mediation of the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* and the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and its *Kadınlar Merkezi*. The appeal was not made in vain: the newspapers reported daily about the generous and patriotic gifts of citizens all over the Empire and several women's organizations which had been founded with different aims turned their activities to production for the army. While giving birth was seen as the largest patriotic duty of women during the war, contributing to the war effort by working on military equipment, argued Ulviye Mevlan in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, was a duty for any woman having the possibility to do so.¹⁶⁵ She wrote this in the midst of a campaign for "winter presents" reminiscent of the one in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution. Although the mobilization of the Ottoman soldiers took place in August 1914, the authorities realized that winter was nearing fast and appealed to the public to assist in preparing the soldiers for the cold.

The campaign for "winter presents" was actually launched by the Istanbul governorship with an advertisement on 15 September 1914.¹⁶⁶ Two days later the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* issued a declaration asking the public to donate "winter presents" *in casu* clothing like warm underwear, vests, socks and gloves.¹⁶⁷

Since these presents did not necessarily have to be self-made, shrewd business men did not hesitate to advertise with the sales of products for soldiers.¹⁶⁸ One man even opened a workshop where "winter presents" were produced calling it *Eser-i Şefkat İmalathanesi* (Works of Compassion Workshop).¹⁶⁹ The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* immediately responded and broke into this new market too: in advertisements it informed

¹⁶⁵ Ulviye Mevlan, "Hal-ı hazırda kadın," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 154, 29 Teşrinisani 1330 (12 December 1914), 2.

¹⁶⁶ "Askere hedaya-yı şitaiye," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 2 Eylül 1330 (15 September 1914), 3.

¹⁶⁷ Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 1 -*, İstanbul, 1331, 64-65.

¹⁶⁸ "Askere hediye-i şitaiye arayanlara," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 7 Eylül 1330 (20 September 1914), 4; "Asker kardeşlerimize hediye-i şitaiye," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 21 Eylül 1330 (4 October 1914), 4.

¹⁶⁹ "Hediye-i askeriye için Eser-i Şefkat İmalathanesi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 7 Eylül 1330 (20 September 1914), 4.

the public that cotton shirts produced by the women and girls at the *Darüssınaa* were for sale at its “shop for military equipment” at a price range of 7.5 to 11 *kuruş*.¹⁷⁰

The campaign was highly successful: the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* reported regularly how it received large amounts of gifts from towns all over the empire.¹⁷¹ Subsequently, the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* renewed the invitation to the Ottoman public to donate “winter presents” for the soldiers during the Gallipoli Campaign, at the end of the summer of 1915, with a new winter coming up.¹⁷²

Several individual women,¹⁷³ but also women’s organizations answered to these calls and set to work. In October 1914, the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*, whose aim, as shown in Chapter Two, was to educate and enlighten Ottoman women, organized a concert combined with lectures whose “yield [was] meant for the purchase of warm underwear for the army.”¹⁷⁴ The women of the *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu* donated money and goods to the Defense Organization more than once. They promised to produce *mintan* (a kind of heavy outer shirt) for free and invited women who wanted to participate in sewing them against a salary to come to the Home to come and work there.¹⁷⁵ The graduates of the Home donated 133 cotton jackets to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* with whom the organization cooperated closely. While the war was raging the Home produced another 55,155 jackets free of charge, out of material delivered by the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*. As a reward the girls received the silver medal of the organization, while Behire Hakkı was rewarded with a medal of gold. Realizing that these medals had cost the organization 4,500 *kuruş*, the girls and women

¹⁷⁰ “Askerlerimize hediye-i şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 10 Eylül 1330 (23 September 1914), 4.

¹⁷¹ See, e.g., “Hedaya-yı şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 6 Teşrinievvel 1330 (19 October 1914), 3; “Hedaya-yı şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 1 Kanunuevvel 1330 (14 December 1914), 3.

¹⁷² “Gazilerimize hedaya-yı şitaiye hazırlayalım,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 11 Ağustos 1331 (24 August 1915), 2; “Askerlerimize hediye-i şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Ağustos 1331 (1 September 1915), 2.

¹⁷³ See, for example, the article according to which a palace woman, the *Hazinedar Usta*, (Treasurer [of the Harem]) donated 60 cotton vests, 20 hunter’s vests, 55 pair of socks, 13 woolen belts and 20 pairs of gloves to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye*, or the article which reports on a former palace woman, who donated 500 underpants, 500 shirts and 100 pairs of gloves to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye*. “Hediye-i şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 28 Teşrinievvel 1330 (11 November 1914), 4; “Hamiyetli bir hanım,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 6 Mart 1331 (19 March 1915), 3. Also women of lesser means contributed such as, for example, the mother of a fallen soldier who donated all his possessions to that organization. “Un beau geste patriotique,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 8 Juin 1915, 5.

¹⁷⁴ “Zum besten der Soldaten,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 23 Oktober 1914, 3.

¹⁷⁵ “Hediye-i şitaiye,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 27 Eylül 1330 (10 October 1914), 4.

collected this sum amongst them and donated it to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.¹⁷⁶

Women from the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Kadıköy Şubesi* (Red Crescent Organization Women's Branch of Kadıköy) organized a concert in June 1915 and collected 6,822 *kuruş*, which they transferred to the *Hilal-i Ahmer*.¹⁷⁷ Through the mediation of the chief Rabbi of Istanbul the *Beyoğlu Musevi Kadınlar Cemiyeti* (Beyoğlu Jewish Women's Organization) donated 3,341 *kuruş* to the *Hilal-i Ahmer* collected by the Jewish women of Haydarpasha.¹⁷⁸ The *Hilal-i Ahmer* also received the 1,352 *kuruş* the "Society of Ladies of Maltepe" had collected.¹⁷⁹ The *Esirgeme Derneği* and an "Organization of Ladies in Üsküdar," under the patronage of Ayşe Sultan, daughter of Abdülhamid II, organized parties and concerts to collect money for the wounded soldiers.¹⁸⁰

The organization which had been founded to stimulate the consumption of locally produced goods, *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*,¹⁸¹ was involved in several activities to support the Ottoman soldiers in the field. In October 1914 it organized a festivity at Gülhane Park to collect money to buy "winter presents" for the soldiers.¹⁸² In July 1915 a similar event was organized at the Taksim Gardens.¹⁸³ The women working at the workshops of the organization in Istanbul, Üsküdar, Beylerbeyi and Emirgan, were set to work and produced 1,500 pairs of woolen socks and 1,450 hunters' vests for the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* instead of fancy dresses out of locally produced cloth for Ottoman ladies.¹⁸⁴ In the years to follow, the organization reportedly had another 100,000 pairs of socks knit, while also other parts of military outfits were sewn, which were either sent directly to the front or handed to the Red Crescent.

¹⁷⁶ Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816.

¹⁷⁷ "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Mayıs 1331 (7 June 1915), 1.

¹⁷⁸ TKA, 193/75, 21 Kanunusani 1330 (3 February 1915).

¹⁷⁹ "Pour les blessés," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 18 Juin 1915, 5.

¹⁸⁰ "Parlak bir müsamere," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Nisan 1331 (2 May 1915), 2; "Wohltätigkeitskonzert," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15 September 1915, 2-3; "Yaralı askerlerimizin menfaatına müsamere," *Tanin*, 30 Ağustos 1331 (21 September 1915), 3.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Seven.

¹⁸² "Gülhane parkında," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Eylül 1330 (5 October 1914), 3.

¹⁸³ "Fevkalade bir müsamere," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 18 Haziran 1331 (2 July 1915), 2.

¹⁸⁴ Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799.

These were produced by the members of the organization, the women and girls in the workshops, but also by soldier's wives working for them at home, so that they did not have to leave their children alone. A photograph taken in one of its workshops shows the women working on navy caps.



Figure 25 Women from the *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlakı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* in one of the organization's workshops. The woman with the white blouse is probably the manager of the workshop. Note that she does not cover her head. "Frauenshiksal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer junge Türkin aus Constantinopel," *Die Islamische Welt*, I, 7, 1917, 380-383.

The members of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent, themselves, also set to work. At the beginning of December 1914 the members were invited to knit woolen gloves for the soldiers.¹⁸⁵ A few weeks later they were again invited for "an urgent sewing job."¹⁸⁶ When, in February 1915, cold struck, the members of the organization were called upon once more:

¹⁸⁵ "Muhterem Osmanlı Hanımlarına," *Turan*, 18 Teşrinisani 1330 (1 December 1914), 3; "Ein Aufruf an die türkischen Frauen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. Dezember 1914; Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 1* -, İstanbul, 1331, 58.

¹⁸⁶ "Hilal-i Ahmer'deki dikişler," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 7 Kanunuevvel 1330 (20 December 1914), 3.

the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi* hopes that our ladies will not leave their husbands, brothers and children and their brave compatriots, who are fighting and sacrificing themselves to save the national honor, without underwear and that they will work as the women of a country in war should do.¹⁸⁷

The women could come and pick up as much cloth and patterns from the headquarters as they wanted so they could also work at home. The invitation to pick up cloth and patterns from the *Hilal-i Ahmer* headquarters to “energetically cooperate” in the production of underwear for soldiers at home was repeated in March 1915.¹⁸⁸ A few weeks later the members of the organization were especially invited to come to the Center to sit and sew there.¹⁸⁹

An interesting action was undertaken by the poet İhsan Raif in January 1915. She organized a gathering for women where she and another poet would read poems and another man would give a lecture on “Ottoman Turkishness” for women in the lecture hall of the university. Moreover, some movies would be shown, while the military band of the dreadnought “Yavuz” would provide a musical background. These kinds of events were regularly organized, but what was special about this one was that the women wanting to attend it could pay the entrance fee in money, 10 *kuruş*, or in kind by bringing a pair of gloves for the soldiers.¹⁹⁰

Men and women in Anatolia also participated in the collective, patriotic activities. The local branches of the *Hilal-i Ahmer* and the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* actively encouraged the public to make donations. So, for example, in Isparta and Yozgat men and women collected money and winter wear including woolen socks and gloves as well as undershirts and caps. The money was sent to the *Hilal-i Ahmer*, the clothes to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.¹⁹¹ By May 1915, a women’s organization founded in September 1914 in Adana under the presidency of the wife of the Governor and referred to as the *Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti* (Women’s Support Committee) had not only donated winter presents, but had also succeeded in producing 33,000 pieces of underwear which had been

¹⁸⁷ “Mecruhin gazata yardım,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 28 Kanunusani 1330 (10 February 1915), 4.

¹⁸⁸ “Osmanlı hanımlarına,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 18 Şubat 1330 (3 March 1915), 4; “Vom Roten Halbmond,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. März 1915, 3. According to the German newspaper “patriotic Turkish women” were invited, while *Tasvir-i Efkar* refers to “Ottoman ladies.”

¹⁸⁹ “Dikişe davet,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Nisan 1331 (2 May 1915), 2.

¹⁹⁰ “Şayan-ı takdir bir teşebbüs,” *Tanin*, 28 Kanunuevvel 1330 (10 January 1915), 3; “Bir çift eldiven müsameresi,” *Tanin*, 7 Kanunusani 1330 (20 January 1915), 4.

¹⁹¹ “Agence Milli,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 13 Février 1915, 5.

handed to the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.¹⁹² A group of women belonging to the highest circles in Konya gathered in a committee under the presidency of the wife of the governor collected more than 100,000 pieces of winter underwear for the soldiers.¹⁹³

Conclusion

Three organizations were instrumental in coordinating, channeling and controlling the patriotic campaigns which served, amongst other things, to extract resources from the Ottoman civilians to the benefit of the Ottoman army and its soldiers in the decade immediately following the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908: the *Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* and the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*. All three organizations were initially gender blind: the initiators do not seem to have thought of explicitly including women in their organizations. The Ottoman (Muslim) women affiliated with the military and bureaucratic elite which had forced the old regime to step down and had replaced it, however, certainly felt they were part of a new community, which yet had to be defined, but to whose military might they, as co-citizens, should and could contribute actively.

The support of Ottoman (Muslim) women and men for the Ottoman army carried two dimensions: one can be called “institutional” and the other one which should rather be referred to as “humanitarian.” On the one hand, they contributed to the efforts to reestablish the once military greatness of the Ottoman army by co-financing ships and airplanes, symbols of progress and modernity; on the other hand, they tried to improve the fate of the ordinary soldiers.

Through the co-financing of ships and airplanes Ottoman Muslim women confirmed that they felt they were citizens belonging to a community which not only had to fortify itself *vis á vis* outsiders, but also had to advance on the steps towards becoming “civilized.” The women around *Kadınlar Dünyası* went somewhat further: they appropriated the act of flying by connecting “progress” and “civilization” to gender even for something as “masculine” as flying. Some of

¹⁹² “Adana’da Yardımcı Hanımlar,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 28 Nisan 1331 (11 May 1915), 2; “L’oeuvre patriotique dans les provinces...,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 11 Mai 1915, back page.

¹⁹³ “Konya hanımlarının eser-i futuvveti,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 1 Kanunusani 1330 (14 January 1915), 2.

the women involved in this event, however, stressed the importance of this flight to the Muslim community: the flight of a Muslim woman would place islamhood amongst the civilized communities. The flight of Belkis Şevket which indeed meant a break with the existing gender conventions, however, proved to be nothing more than a symbolic act which was published widely (even up until today), but resulted in little or no change for Ottoman (Muslim) women. They continued doing what they had done before: collecting money, something they had grown accustomed to since they had been explicitly appealed to in the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the poorly equipped soldiers who were encamped under poor circumstances in the cold of the winter had been the object of the first associational philanthropy of Ottoman Muslim women. After the Young Turk Revolution, during the decade of continuous wars between 1908 and 1918, soldiers once more belonged to the favored beneficiaries of Ottoman Muslim women's charitable activities.

Since the army with its brave soldiers was regarded to be the motor behind the revolution which had brought "freedom, equality and brotherhood," women wholeheartedly supported their liberators in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution. They were encouraged to do so through the calls published in the newly established newspapers which were supportive of the new regime. The soldiers of the "Action Army" which succeeded in beating down the counter-revolution of April 1909 could count on similar feelings of sympathy and thus support.

During the Balkan Wars, this patriotic charity, rather than being something initiated by the (elite) urban population, was actively promoted by the Ottoman government. The Unionists, who were in charge from the end of January 1913 onwards, consciously tried to weld together the military and the civilian, the men at the front and the men and women at home, through public campaigns using several media. The highest bureaucrats and even members of the imperial dynasty, including its women, actively participated in these campaigns, setting the example through widely published donations. Thus the new Ottoman Sultan could show his allegiance and that of his household to the new regime and distance himself from his direct predecessor.

Similar campaigns were an important feature of the efforts to arouse, or rather, continue the patriotic spirit during the First World War when the Ottoman authorities were in need of every bit of support to sustain the war which lasted much longer than expected. Through the campaigns they tried to extract whatever resources remained with the population, including its women,

to sustain what was left of its army. This became, however, increasingly difficult due to the scale and longevity of this war.

While both women, who were by default not active soldiers, and men who did not serve for one reason or another were called upon to express their love for their fatherland by donating money, this was a rather passive form of doing so. Moreover, the lack of materials in the army was not always only a question of money, but often also of lack of productive power as was shown in the previous chapter. Especially during times of mobilization and war this lack became acute. Women therefore did not only contribute in the form of money to the war effort, but they were additionally addressed in their capacity to sew. Through their ability to actively contribute to the war production by sewing parts of the soldier's equipment women became, therefore, explicitly part of the pool of labour resources for the military effort. Sewing for the army, thus, became one of the patriotic contributions to the war effort of urban elite Ottoman Muslim women who felt that in this way they could make up for not being able to become soldiers, the ultimate duty of (male) citizens, themselves.

The lack of military outfit and finances for the military organization offered the women of the top layers in Ottoman society ample opportunity to give content to their citizenship and to show their patriotism in a distinctively feminine way. While their sisters of the lower social strata had to work in the war supply industries out of bare necessity, as discussed in the previous chapter, they could afford themselves the luxury of spending time and money on donations in the form of uniforms and other military textiles to support the heroic soldiers at the front. Moreover, as members of the boards of the various women's organizations they could show their dedication to the fatherland by gearing the activities of their organizations towards those benefiting the military. The number of articles they were able to turn out seems to have been substantial. It is unclear though whether they sufficed for the estimated 800,000 soldiers in the field.¹⁹⁴ Whether these products actually reached those men is another question which remains unanswered.

Donating money and goods nor sewing entailed any crossing of gender borders. The money raising activities were, in principle, all gender segregated, with separate occasions for men and women; sewing was also done in all female environments or at home. For other activities for the *Hilal-i Ahmer*, notably working as sick attendants in the hospitals nursing the wounded soldiers

¹⁹⁴ Erik Jan Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I," *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques*, 28, 1996, 235-258.

returning from the battlefields, however, this was different as will be shown in the next Chapter.

