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

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FEMINISM, PHILANTHROPY AND
PATRIOTISM: FEMALE ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE
IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Proefschrift

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in 1964

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
List of Tables	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
Names of (Women's) Organizations and their Translations	xvii

Introduction: Female Associational Life, Identity and Nationalist Discourse	1
<i>Framing the Topic</i>	1
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	5
<i>Sources</i>	35
<i>Structure</i>	47

PART ONE

ORGANIZING WOMEN, WOMEN ORGANIZING

Chapter One: Founding (Women's) Organizations in the Ottoman Empire	51
<i>Ottoman Women's Organizations before the Young Turk Revolution of 1908</i>	52
<i>Forming Women's Organizations after 1908</i>	62
<i>Regulating Associational Life</i>	64
<i>Conclusion</i>	68
Chapter Two: Ottoman Muslim Women and the International Women's Movement	69
<i>Creating International Sisterhood</i>	73
<i>Ottoman Women, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and the International Council of Women</i>	79

Ottoman Women and the IWSA	79
Ottoman Women and the ICW	83
The <i>Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti</i>	90
<i>Selma Rıza and the ICW</i>	94
<i>Conclusion</i>	99
Chapter Three: The <i>Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi</i> , a Multi-Faceted Ottoman Women's Organization	105
<i>The Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye (Thessalonica), the Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan (Kastamonu) and the (Şişli) Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye</i>	107
<i>The Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye (Thessalonica)</i>	107
<i>The Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan (Kastamonu)</i>	110
<i>The (Şişli) Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye</i>	110
<i>The Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi</i>	113
Its Foundation and its Members	113
Soldiers and Girls: the Activities of the <i>Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi</i>	116
Sewing for soldiers	116
Educating girls: the <i>Milli İnas Mektebi</i>	121
Financing Charity	127
<i>Conclusion</i>	133
Chapter Four: Helping the Poor Soldier's Families: the <i>Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti</i>	135
<i>The Organization, Its Members and Its Aims</i>	136
<i>Financing Charity</i>	138
<i>The Wooden Cannon; Hatıra-i Celadet Topu</i>	143
<i>The Logistics of Distributing Charity</i>	147
<i>Conclusion</i>	157

PART TWO
OTTOMAN WOMEN AND THE OTTOMAN
ECONOMY

Chapter Five: The Ottoman Economy in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century	161
<i>The Nineteenth Century: Growing Economic and Financial Ties</i>	162
<i>Economic and Financial Policies during the Second Constitutional Period</i>	170
Chapter Six: Gendering Labour and Resistance: Female Silk Reelers on Strike in the Summer of 1910	177
<i>Silk Reeling in Bursa</i>	179
<i>The Gender of Silk Reeling</i>	183
<i>Working at the Mills</i>	189
<i>Striking for Better Conditions</i>	193
<i>Conclusion</i>	200
Chapter Seven: <i>Milli Kıyafet</i> : Ottoman Muslim Women and the Nationality of their Dress	203
<i>Dress and (National) Identity</i>	204
<i>Appropriating and Contesting European Fashion during the Hamidian Era</i>	207
<i>1908: “From Despotism to Freedom”</i>	219
<i>The Search for a “National Dress”</i>	230
<i>The Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki</i>	
<i>Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi</i>	232
<i>Conclusion</i>	241

Chapter Eight: “ <i>Müstehlik değil Müstahsil</i> ”: Not Consumers, but Producers.	243
<i>Discussing Women’s Work</i>	245
Rural versus Urban Economy	247
<i>Women as White Collar Workers</i>	249
<i>Female Entrepreneurs</i>	254
<i>Combining Charity and Economic Patriotism</i>	257
The Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği	258
The Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu	265
<i>The Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı</i>	
<i>Anonim Ticaret Şirketi</i>	268
<i>Conclusion</i>	276

PART THREE

OTTOMAN MUSLIM WOMEN, WAR AND THE MILITARY

Chapter Nine: Gendering the War Time Community	283
<i>Military Reforms in the Late Ottoman Empire</i>	286
<i>Towards the Young Turk Revolution</i>	292
<i>Ottoman Muslim Women in Times of War</i>	297
Chapter Ten: Taking Care of Soldier’s Families	303
<i>The Muinsiz Aile Maaşı (Allowance for Families</i> <i>without Breadwinner): Laws and Regulations</i>	307
<i>The Inadequacy of the System</i>	317
<i>Beyond the State: (Semi-)Private Initiatives</i> <i>to Assist the Needy Soldier’s Families</i>	324
The Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi	325
<i>Conclusion</i>	334
Chapter Eleven: Ottoman Muslim Women and Work during the First World War	337
<i>Women and Manufacturing</i>	341

Ottoman Manufacturing and Women on the Eve of the First World War	341
Ottoman Manufacturing and Women during the First World War	342
The <i>Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi</i> The First World War, Industry and Ottoman Muslim Women	352
<i>Women and Agriculture</i>	360
The <i>Kadın Birinci İşçi Taburu</i>	368
<i>Conclusion</i>	371
Chapter Twelve: The Bountiful Patriotic Woman: Ottoman Muslim Women and the Ottoman Army	
<i>Equipping the Army</i>	379
Modernizing the Naval Fleet	380
Establishing an Air Fleet	380
<i>Equipping the Soldiers</i>	390
Supporting the Heroes of the Revolution	397
The <i>Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti</i> and its <i>Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi</i>	401
The <i>Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti</i>	408
Balkan Wars and the First World War	413
<i>Conclusion</i>	420
Chapter Thirteen: Heroes, Brothers and Sons: Ottoman Muslim Women and the Wounded Soldiers	
<i>Linen for "Our Wounded Soldiers"</i>	425
<i>Ottoman Muslim Women and the (Para-)Medical Profession</i>	425
<i>Nursing the Wounded of the Balkan Wars</i>	439
<i>Ottoman Muslim Women as Sick Attendants during the First World War</i>	442
	450

The Initiatives of Wieting Pasha and Besim Ömer	450
Ottoman Muslim Women as Sick Attendants and Public Opinion	452
Ottoman Muslim Voluntary Nursing Aids	457
Professionalization	461
<i>Hemşireler, Hastabakıcılar and Hademeler</i>	465
<i>Dealing with Shifting Gender Borders</i>	469
<i>Conclusion</i>	472
Conclusion: Feminism, Philanthropy and Patriotism: Ottoman Muslim Female Associational Life and Identity Formation	475
<i>Ottoman Women's Organizations</i>	475
<i>Feminism: Stretching But Not Changing the Gender Order</i>	480
<i>From Vakıf to Association, from Zakat and Sadaka to İane: the Secularization of Philanthropy</i>	485
<i>Patriotism in an Ottoman context: Community, Multi-tier Identity and Citizenship</i>	489
Bibliography	495
Index	527
Samenvatting	537
Curriculum Vitae	551

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1 Stamp of the [Şişli] Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye under a letter of its vice-president (*reise-i saniye*), Celalet, to the newly appointed Minister of Education, Nazım Bey, dated 26 Temmuz/July 1334/1918. BOA, MF. MKT, 1235/8, 21 Şevval 1336 (30 July 1918). 111
- Figure 2 Seals of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* and its president, Leyla under a letter to the “Donation Committee” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 19 Teşrinievvel 1331 (1 November 1915). BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. 115
- Figure 3 “From the changes and evolutions of the world of Muslim women: a view of the ‘Charity Fair’ organized in Şişli with the assistance of the respected Ottoman ladies by the esteemed wife of His Excellency the Minister of Navy, Cemal Pasha.” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1196, 24 Nisan 1330 (7 May 1914), front page. 130
- Figure 4 A reproduction of the certificate handed to those who had driven a silver or golden nail into the cannon. *Servet-i Fünun*, 1299, 28 Nisan 1332 (11 May 1916), front page. Note the canon in the medallion on the top center. 144
- Figure 5 The wooden cannon on Beyazıt Square in front of the Ministry of War. *Harb Mecmuası*, I, 7, Mart 1332 (March/April 1916), 97 (front page). 146
- Figure 6 *Servet-i Fünun*, 1332, 22 Kanunuevvel 1332 (4 January 1917), front page. 153
- Figure 7 “Turkish Harem Life – The New Style and the Old,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 16 September 1876, 765. 168
- Figure 8 “Bursa. Interior of a Silk Filature.” 191
- Figure 9 Postcard showing a woman with *ferace* and *yaşmak*. 214
- Figure 10 Postcard showing *Meşrutiyet Hanımları* (“Ladies of the Constitution”). 221
- Figure 11 Group of women at one of the workshops of the organization. The banner in the back reads: *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. “Frauensichksal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer junge Türkin aus Constantinopel,” *Die Islamische Welt*, I, 7, 1917, 380-383. 234
- Figure 12 Letter head of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. 235

- Figure 13 “*Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği* Istanbul exhibition,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1207, 10 Temmuz 1330 (23 July 1914), 124. 264
- Figure 14 “Another picture of the war manifestations at Sultan Ahmed,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1114, 27 Eylül 1328 (10 October 1912), 508. Although the majority of demonstrators appear to be men, women are prominently figuring in the foreground of this photograph as if the photographer wanted to accentuate their presence. 297
- Figure 15 “Turkish Women at the Ministry of War in Quest of Information about their Soldier Husbands.” Vahan Cardashian, *Actual Life in the Turkish Harem*, [n.p.: n.p.], 1914³ [1911], 65. 319
- Figure 16 “Lady Lowther’s Refugees.” H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople, Old and New*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915, 526. 333
- Figures 17 and 18 “A picture of the thankworthy reforms of the Quartermaster General’s Department. At the Military Workshop: Muslim and Ottoman ladies aged from 12 to seventy at work sewing uniforms for our soldiers while making a living with an Oriental zeal” *Harb Mecmuası*, I, 11, Temmuz 1332 (July/August 1916), 174. 345
- Figure 19 “A part of the department of the workshop with electrically driven sewing machines. The rough and rapid sewing is done in this department; the remaining fine work is immediately transported to the women’s department in Decauville wagons.” *Harb Mecmuası*, I, 11, Temmuz 1332 (July/August 1916), 174. 346
- Figure 20 “Workers’ Battalion plowing,” *Harb Mecmuası*, III, 25-26, Mayıs 1334 (May 1918), 410. 374
- Figure 21 “Workers’ Battalion constructing a road,” *Harb Mecmuası*, III, 25-26, Mayıs 1334 (May 1918), 410. 374
- 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. 396
- Figure 23 Members of the Women’s branch of the Red Crescent together with some of their pupils at the *Darüssınaa* working on winter underwear for the soldiers. *Servet-i Fünun*, 1220, 9 Teşrinievvel 1330 (22 October 1914), front page. 406
- Figure 24 “Quatre jeunes musulmanes...” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1129, 10 Kanunusani 1328 (23 January 1913), 249. 409

- Figure 25 “Frauenschkisal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer junge Türkin aus Constantinopel,” *Die Islamische Welt*, I, 7, 1917, 380-383. 418
- Figure 26 *Servet-i Fünun*, 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), 604. The caption under this photograph reads in Turkish “Ladies and young girls serving our wounded soldiers at Gülhane Hospital.” The French caption under the same photograph reads “Turkish ladies and young girls working in a room of the Gülhane Hospital.” 427
- Figure 27 *Servet-i Fünun*, 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), 604. 428
- Figure 28 “The ladies of the French colony working for the wounded Ottomans at the French Embassy,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1127, 27 Kanunuevvel 1328 (9 January 1913), 197. 430
- Figure 29 Stamp of the *Kondüktör Mektebi İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi Sertababeti* (Office of the Head Physician of the *Kondüktör Mektebi İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi*) under an undated note [August – September 1915]. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. 432
- Figure 30 Seal of *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Merkezi Hanımlar Şubesi* with the signature of its president, Reşide Bekir. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. 434
- Figure 31 Reşide Bekir. Courtesy Nazlı İmre. 435
- Figure 32 “Les blessés ottomans...,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1126, 20 Kanunuevvel 1328 (3 January 1913), 172. 446
- Figure 33 “La Croissant-Rouge..,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1129, 10 Kanunusani 1328 (23 January 1913), 248. 447

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Source: <i>Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat</i> , İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1330 (1914), 20.	311
Table 2 Source: <i>Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat</i> , İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332 (1916), 20.	312
Table 3 Source: BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye, 480/6, (n.d. [March 1916]).	315-6
Table 4 Source: <i>Devletlü İsmetlü Naciye Sultan hazretlerinin zir-i himayelerinde Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi 1333 senesi raporu</i> , İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan ve Şürekası, 1334, Cedvel No. 5.	358

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The start of this work lies many years back: its first seeds were sown during a course on History of the Middle East during my undergraduate studies at Nijmegen University in the 1980s. Contrary to what one would expect this was not because the young professor teaching the course caught my attention with interesting stories on Ottoman women. In fact, he completely ignored them and did not refer to them at all. As an anthropology student taking courses on gender and participating in workshops on women's studies, this caused not only my eyebrows to be raised, also my interest was awoken. If there were any women in the Ottoman Empire – and, of course, there were – then why were they invisible? I asked the young professor if I could write a paper on Ottoman women for the course instead of taking an exam. He allowed me to do so. Thus started my venture into the lives of Ottoman women.

Over the years, I ended up digging deeper and deeper into Ottoman women's worlds. From the paper for the course on Ottoman women in general to my MA-thesis (*doctoraalscriptie*) on Ottoman women between 1838 and 1938 to this work on the organizational life of Ottoman Muslim women during the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918).

During the more than twenty years I spent on my research, the way I did my research changed thoroughly not in the least due to the technological developments which occurred. From leafing through hundreds of yellowed and bristle pages of old newspapers in even older libraries to online reading of those same newspapers in the comfort of my study at home. From painstakingly hand copying the relevant articles with a pencil to using the hand copiers brought by Japanese colleagues with their meters long strips of paper which had to be cut in pieces and reassembled at home; from copying texts by typing them at my first laptop to making digital photographs of the relevant articles to classify them later at my computer; and more recently, through simply reading the papers at home in my study after having downloaded the relevant pages, whole issues or even whole series of newspapers and periodicals.

Online catalogues formed another feature facilitating my work as an armchair scholar of the digital age bound to her study room. Relevant materials were found looking through the catalogues of the Prime-Ministerial Archives and the archives of the Red Crescent: a few emails and they arrived at my home.

These developments opened for me the opportunity to pick up my research where I left it many years ago since the need to go and actually spend weeks or

even months in a library or archive no longer exists. Having said this I do look back in fond memory at the long days spent at Millet Kütüphanesi, Beyazit Devlet Kütüphanesi, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Hakkı Tarık Us Kütüphanesi, and the Prime-Ministerial Ottoman Archives, all in Istanbul, or Bursa İl Halk Kütüphanesi in Bursa and Milli Kütüphane in Ankara. I am indebted to all the friendly people working at these institutions as well as to the fellow researchers I met during my quest for new and hitherto unrevealed sources. Many of them turned into friends during the discussions we had over many meals and even more glasses of wine or beer in the bars and *meyhanes* of Istanbul.

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Ooh, and by the way, I am sure the young professor of those days at present is more knowledgeable on Ottoman women than he could ever have hoped for.

NAMES OF (WOMEN'S) ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

It should be noted that several organizations appear more than once under different names.

Aghkadakhnam Dignants Ingerutyun (Charitable Women's Organization)

Les Amies des Jeunes Filles (The Friends of Young Girls)

Anadolu Hisarı Muhadderat-ı Osmaniye Teavün Cemiyeti (Anadoluhisar Ottoman Women's Support Organization)

Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti (Organization for the Defense of the Fatherland of Anatolian Women)

Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti / Heyeti (Ladies' Organization / Committee for the Support of Soldiers' Families)

Asri Kadın Cemiyeti (Modern Women's Organization)

Azkanever Hayuhyats Ingerutyun (Patriotic Armenian Women's Organization)

Bağdat Hanımlar Cemiyeti (Baghdad Women's Organization)

Bebek Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (Charitable Organization of Women in Bebek)

Beyoğlu Musevi Kadınlar Cemiyeti (Beyoğlu Jewish Women's Organization)

Beyoğlu Rum Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye (Beyoğlu Greek Women's Philanthropic Organization)

'Bienfaisance' Musevi Kadınlar Cemiyeti (Thessalonica) ('Bienfaisance' Organization of Jewish Women)

Bikes Asker Ailelerine Muavenet Cemiyeti (Organization for the Support of Indigent Soldiers' Families)

Bikes Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı (Hanımlar) Cemiyeti ((Ladies') Organization for the Support of Indigent Soldiers' Families)

Bursa Terakki-i İnas Cemiyeti (Bursa Organization for the Advancement of Girls)

Büyükdere Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Milliyesi (National Women's Organization of Büyükdere)

Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye (Thessalonica) (Women's Charitable Organization)

Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan (Kastamonu) (Women's Charitable Organization)

Cemiyet-i İmdadiye (Support Organization)

Committee of Lady Lowther

Committee (of Quaker women) presided over by Miss Burgess

Committee of women in Konya under the presidency of the wife of the governor

Committee presided over by Lady Block

- Constantinople Auxiliary Ladies' Association for Promoting the Christian Education of Jewish Females
- Çerkes Kadınları Teavün Cemiyeti* (Circassian Women's Organization for Mutual Support)
- Deutsche Frauenverein zu Konstantinopel* (German Women's Organization in Constantinople)
- Donanma-yı Osmani Cemiyeti Kadınlar Şubesi (Erenköy)* (Women's Branch of the Ottoman Fleet Organization (in Erenköy))
- 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)
- Fakir Çocukları Esirgeme Derneği* (Organization for the Protection of Poor Children)
- Frauenverein vom Ottomanischen Roten Halbmond in Wien* (Women's Organization of the Ottoman Red Crescent in Vienna)
- Göztepe Hanımlar Kulübü* (Göztepe Ladies' Club)
- Heyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaiye* (Thessalonica) (Women's Charitable Committee)
- Hilal-i Ahmer (Cemiyeti) Hanımlar (Genel) Merkezi* (Red Crescent (Organization) Women's (General) Center)
- Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Kadıköy Şubesi* (Red Crescent Organization Women's Branch of Kadıköy)
- Hizmet-i Nisvan Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Women's Service Charitable Organization)
- Idelda* (German sewingclub)
- İslam Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Charitable Organization for the Employment of Muslim Women)
- İstanbul Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (İstanbul Ottoman Ladies' Organization)
- İstihlak-i Milli (Kadınlar) Cemiyeti* ((Women's) Organization for National Consumption)
- İstihlak-i Milli (Kadınlar) Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Charitable (Women's) Organization for National Consumption)
- İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Kadınlar Şubesi* (Committee of Union and Progress Women's Branch)
- İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Kadıköy Hanımlar Şubesi* (Committee of Union and Progress Kadıköy Ladies' Branch)
- İzmir Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (İzmir Women's Red Crescent Organization)
- Kadıköy Donanma-yı Osmani Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Organization for the Ottoman Fleet)

- Kadıköy Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Hanımlar Şubesi* (Kadıköy Ladies' Branch of the National Support for the Ottoman Fleet)
- Kadıköy Fukaraperver Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Organization for Poor Relief)
- Kadıköy Hanımları Donanma Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Fleet Organization)
- Kadıköy Osmanlı İttihad-ı Nisvaniye Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ottoman Women's Union Organization)
- Kadıköy (Osmanlı) Fukaraperver Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Ladies' Branch of the Kadıköy (Ottoman) Organization for Poor Relief)
- Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi* (Islamic Organization for the Employment of Women)
- Kırmızı-Beyaz Kulübü* (Red-White Club)
- Ladies' committee of an international committee in support of the Children's hospital in Şişli
- Maçka Hastahanesi Kadınlar Heyeti* (Maçka Hospital Women's Committee)
- Makriköy Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti* (Makriköy Organization for the Protection of Children)
- Makriköy İane-i Harbiye Kadınlar Komisyonu* (Makriköy War Donations Women's Committee)
- Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Women's Organization for the Consumption of Local Products)
- May-Beyaz Kulübü* (Blue-White Club)
- Muhadderat-ı Osmaniye İane Komisyonu* (Donation Committee of Ottoman Ladies)
- Muhtaç Asker Ailelerine Muavenet Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Support of Needy Soldiers' Families)
- Muhtaç-ı Muavenet Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Organization of Lady Helpers for Soldier Families in Need of Assistance)
- Müdafaa-i Milliye Osmanlı Hanımlar Heyeti* (Ottoman Ladies' Committee of the National Defense)
- Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy (Merkezi) Hanımlar Şubesi* (Women's Branch of the (Central) Kadıköy National Defense Organization)
- Nisvan-ı Osmaniye İمدad Cemiyeti* (Support Organization of Ottoman Women)
- Nisvan-ı Osmaniye Cemiyet-i İمدadiye* (Support Organization of Ottoman Women)
- Organization of Ladies in Üsküdar
- Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi* (Ottoman Red Crescent Women's Central Committee)
- Osmanlı İttihad-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Women's Union Organization)
- Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Women's Charitable Organization)

- Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i İttihadiyesi* (Unionist Ottoman Women's Organization)
- Osmanlı Kadınları 'Şefkat' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Women's Charitable Organization 'Compassion')
- Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Organization for the Defense of Women's Rights)
- Osmanlı (ve) Türk Hanımları / Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği* (Organization for the Protection of Ottoman (and) Turkish Ladies / Women)
- Österreichisch-ungarische Frauenverein* (Austrian-Hungarian Women's Organization)
- Pangaltı Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Pangaltı Ottoman Women's Charitable Organization)
- Paris Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Women's Organization in Paris)
- Peran Philoptochos Adelphotis ton Kyrion* (Philanthropic Organization of Women from Pera)
- Philoptochos Adelphotis ton Kyrion Thessalonikis* (Thessalonian Philanthropic Organization of Women)
- Rum Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* (Thessalonica), (Greek Women's Charitable Organization)
- Rumeli Hisarı Muhadderat-ı Osmaniye Donanma Şubesi* (Rumelihisar Ottoman Women's Fleet Branch)
- Rumeli Hisarı Donanma-yı Osmani Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Women's Branch of the Rumelihisar Ottoman Fleet Organization)
- Société de Bienfaisance des Dames Bulgares de Constantinople* (Charitable Organization of Bulgarian Ladies of Constantinople)
- Société de Bienfaisance des Dames Grèques* (Thessalonica), (Charitable Organization of Greek Ladies)
- Société des Abeilles* (Organization of Bees)
- Society of Ladies of Maltepe
- Şam Nisvan-ı Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Damascus Women's Organization for National Support)
- (Şişli) Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* ((Şişli) Women's Charitable Organization)
- Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Advancement of Women)
- Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Women's Organization for the Advancement of the Fatherland)
- Tibrotsaser Dignants Ingerutyun* (Schoolloving Women's Organization)
- Turkish Compassionate Fund
- Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* (Turkish Women's Tailor's Home)
- Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti* (Women's Support Committee) (Adana)

