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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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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, Beyazıt 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 İmdad Cemiyeti* (Support Organization of Ottoman Women)
- Nisvan-ı Osmaniye Cemiyet-i İmdadiye* (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 Grècques* (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 Bıçkı Yurdu* (Turkish Women's Tailor's Home)
- Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti* (Women's Support Committee) (Adana)

