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

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CHAPTER THREE

*The Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi, a Multi-Faceted Ottoman Women's Organization**

The use of Ottoman sources when doing research on Ottoman (women's) organizations is often problematic due to, in particular, the lack of capital characters or other means to indicate a particular name.¹ Moreover, newspapers were not always very precise in quoting the names of the organizations, especially if they could just as well be generic names for any philanthropic or charitable women's organization. The latter was also the case for the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Charitable Ottoman Women's Organization). Those doing research on this organization were, moreover, easily led astray for two other reasons: on the one hand the organization was referred to under various names itself, on the other hand there were three other women's organizations which had similar names.² Kurnaz,³ for example, confuses this organization with the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* (Women's Charitable Organization) founded in early September 1908 in Ottoman Thessalonica⁴ and

* This chapter is based on two articles published earlier: Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "A nation whose women are living in ignorance...: the foundation of the Milli İnas Mektebi in Nişantaşı," in: Ali Çaksu (ed.), *International Congress on Education and Learning in the Ottoman Empire*, İstanbul: IRCICA, 2001, 247-258; Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "Nurturing soldiers and girls: Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," in: Nuran Abacı (ed.), *Papers of VIII'th International Congress on the Economic and Social History of Turkey*. Morrisville: Lulu Press, 2006, 213 - 217. The materials from these two articles are complemented with more recently found materials.

¹ Rarely the official names were put between brackets.

² This organization, in the newspaper *Tanin* alone, was called *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Women's Charitable Organization), *Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Ladies' Charitable Organization), *Osmanlı Hanımları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Ladies' Charitable Organization), *Şişli Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Şişli Ladies' Organization) and *Şişli Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Şişli Ottoman Women's Charitable Organization), respectively.

³ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 211-212.

⁴ Zekiye, "Beyan-ı hakikat," *Kadın*, 17, 2 Şubat 1324 (15 February 1909), 7.

with the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* ([*Şişli*] Women’s Charitable Organization) founded in 1915 in Istanbul. Karakışla also confuses the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* with the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*.⁵

Although the four organizations should be separated, there seem to have been connections between three of them and the similarity in names is probably not a coincidence. Female relatives of the former *Serdar-ı Ekrem*⁶ Abdülkerim Pasha were involved in one way or another in the second and third organization: the Istanbul *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was founded by a daughter of his, Leyla, and on the one available copy of the annual report of the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* there is a handwritten note stating that it belonged to the wife of this Pasha, Raïke.⁷ Furthermore, the owner of the house where the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* used to gather in Thessalonica, Emine hanım, widow of Telci Osman Bey, was also listed as one of the (larger) donators in the annual report of the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*. In fact, most of the donors of the latter organization were originally from Thessalonica.⁸

The quantity of sources available on the four organizations varies. Most information is available on the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. Several sources report extensively on this organization and its activities during the period from its foundation in September 1909 until the summer of 1918. Information on the two *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*’s founded in Thessalonica and Kastamonu, respectively, and the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* is more limited.

⁵ Karakışla, “*Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniyesi*.”

⁶ The *Serdar-ı Ekrem* was the person who was in charge of the Ottoman army in absence of the Sultan, the military commander.

⁷ There is, however, no evidence that Leyla hanım was also involved in the foundation of the *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* as Kurnaz and Karakışla both state. Nor that Zekiye Hanım, the founder of the Salonican organization was a daughter of Abdülkerim Pasha. Karakışla based himself on Kurnaz. The sources she used, however, do not warrant such a conclusion. Her source is probably the article of Ruşen Zeki in *Nevsal-i Millî* who actually referred to the Istanbul organization of 1909, but which she confused with the Salonican organization. Karakışla, “*Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniyesi*,” Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 211-212; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” *Nevsal-i Millî*, İstanbul: 1330, 343-352.

⁸ “*Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*” *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 13-15. *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Orhaniye, 1334, [11-12]. So, for example, the largest donor and the only woman who was referred to by her own name instead of only as the “wife of” was Vesile, the wife of Kazım Emin Bey. The latter had been one of the richest tobacco traders of Thessalonica. Also Nazım Ali Molla and the wife and mother of his brother, Halil Ali Molla, who in 1928 would become the founder of the *Mensucat Santral*, donated generously.

In this chapter, the sources referred to in the introduction are explored to collate an as complete as possible picture of, specifically, the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. To show that this organization is different and therefore should be distinguished from the other organizations whose names look so similar, first these three organizations are described briefly based on the sources available for them. The chapter then continues with an extensive discussion of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* and its aims and activities. It shows how this Ottoman female association succeeded in combining feminism, patriotism and philanthropy.

The *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* (Thessalonica), the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan* (Kastamonu) and the (Şişli) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*

The *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* (Thessalonica)

The first organization, the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*, was founded, as mentioned above, early September 1908 in Thessalonica as one of the charitable women's organizations founded there shortly after the Young Turk Revolution.⁹ After the Thessalonian women's periodical *Kadın* had published some articles on the *Osmanlı Kadınları 'Şefkat' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* seems to have decided to use it as its bulletin board, too: from November 1908 until February 1909¹⁰ the periodical featured regular articles on the organization, partly written by its president, Zekiye,¹¹ the wife of a man named Hıfzı Pasha.¹² Zekiye did not only write in the *Kadın* on behalf of the

⁹ This was announced in the newspaper *Yeni Asır*. Zekiye, "Beyan-ı hakikat," *Kadın*, 17, 2 Şubat 1324 (15 February 1909), 7.

¹⁰ "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye. Selanik," *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 13-15; Zekiye, "Selam-ı ihtiram," *Kadın*, 11, 22 Kanunuevvel 1324 (4 January 1909), 4-6; "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye," *Kadın*, 13, 5 Kanunusani 1324 (18 January 1909), 15-16; "Müessir-i hamiyet," *Kadın*, 14, 12 Kanunusani 1324 (25 January 1909), 12-14; Zekiye, "Beyan-ı hakikat," *Kadın*, 17, 2 Şubat 1324 (15 January 1909), 7; Zekiye, "İki ihtiyac-ı mübrem," *Kadın*, 18, 9 Şubat 1324 (22 February 1909), 6-7.

¹¹ The only place where she was referred to as the president of this organization is the following article: "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye ve sergide Zekiye Hanımefendi'nin nutku," *Kadın*, 10, 15 Kanunuevvel 1324 (28 December 1908), 12-14.

¹² "Société de Bienfaisance Ottomane: une exposition," *Journal de Salonique*, 9 février 1909, 1.

organization. She was one of the regular contributors of the periodical publishing several articles on the importance of women's education.¹³ Moreover, members of the board of editors of the periodical seem to have been involved in the organization as well.¹⁴ It is therefore no surprise that the office of *Kadın* at the same time served as the mailing address of the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*.¹⁵

In the first article in *Kadın* its aims were listed as follows: "assistance to schools, efforts to disseminate knowledge, support of the indigent,"¹⁶ with support to schools being the most important one.¹⁷ At the short term, it wanted to give scholarships to school girls, while it offered the Board of the *Terakki* School in Thessalonica to assist in inspecting and supervising its two branches for girls.¹⁸ As such it probably was the female counterpart of the (male) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye* (Charitable Organization), which had been established some years earlier and which served similar aims.¹⁹

It had two kinds of members: active members and honorary members. The active members needed to be present at all meetings, the honorary members were expected to contribute financially and to assist in enlarging the organization. The members did not necessarily have to pay a fee, but could contribute with hand-made products which would be used in a lottery. The organization was said to have requests for honorary membership from women in Istanbul, Edirne and even Manchester.²⁰ The establishment of the organization also drew the attention of women belonging to the palace circles: in December 1908, the organization

¹³ See e.g. Zekiye, "Arz-ı teşekkür, takdim-i ihtiram," *Kadın*, 7, 24 Teşrinisani 1324 (7 December 1908), 3. See also "Zekiye Hanım'dan," *Yeni Asır*, 3 September 1908, 3.

¹⁴ Emine Semiye, "Kadın mecmua-ı muhterimesine," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 2.

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

¹⁶ Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye, "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye. Selanik," *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 13-15, quotation 14.

¹⁷ See "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye ve sergide Zekiye Hanımefendi'nin nutku," *Kadın*, 10, 15 Kanunuevvel 1324 (28 December 1908), 12-14; Zekiye, "Selam-ı ihtiram," *Kadın*, 11, 22 Kanunuevvel 1324 (4 January 1909), 4-6.

¹⁸ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, *İmperatorluk'tan Cumhuriyete Selanik'ten İstanbul'a Terakki Vakfı ve Terakki Okulları, 1877-2000*, İstanbul: Terakki Vakfı, 2003, 103, 383; Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye, "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye. Selanik," *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 13-15.

¹⁹ Alkan, *Terakki Vakfı ve Terakki Okulları*, 87, 381.

²⁰ Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye, "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye. Selanik," *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 13-15.

received letters and a gift of five “Ottoman *liras*” from Nazime Sultan, one of the daughters of Abdülaziz.²¹

On 18 December 1908 the organization organized an exhibition of handicrafts at a girls’ school in Thessalonica.²² The articles exhibited there were in most cases donated by members and sympathizers and could be won as prizes at a lottery whose lots were sold by its members.²³ The draw took place in January; the lucky numbers were published in *Kadın*.²⁴ By that time the organization had about 70 members, both Muslim and non-Muslim.²⁵ The last reference to this organization we can find in the Istanbul women’s periodical *Mehasin* of September/October 1909. In this article the president of the organization referred to the existence of a needlework and dressmaking workshop for needy girls and women set up by the organization.²⁶ When this workshop had been opened and how long the workshop remained up and running is unclear. Over the years the organization continued its activities: it assisted the poor in the local hospitals²⁷ and did not hesitate to send bedding, clothes and dressing material to the local CUP in support of the soldiers fighting in the war against Italy.²⁸ It is not clear how long this organization continued to exist but it is very likely that its activities came to a halt during the Balkan War or its immediate aftermath.

²¹ “Nazime Sultan ve Selanik Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi,” *Kadın*, 8, 1 Kanunuevvel 1324 (14 December 1908), 6-7.

²² “Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye ve sergide Zekiye Hanımefendi’nin nutku,” *Kadın*, 10, 15 Kanunuevvel 1324 (28 December 1908), 12-14.

²³ “La Société de Bienfaisance des Dames Musulmanes...” *Journal de Salonique*, 13 Décembre 1908, 1.

²⁴ “Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye,” *Kadın*, 13, 5 Kanunusani 1324 (18 January 1909), 15-16; “Müessir-i hamiyet,” *Kadın*, 14, 12 Kanunusani 1324 (25 January 1909), 12-14;

²⁵ “Société de Bienfaisance Ottomane: une exposition,” *Journal de Salonique*, 9 février 1909, 1.

²⁶ Zekiye, “İtiyadat-ı Muzırır,” *Mehasin*, 10, Eylül 1325 (September-October 1909), 722-724. Another women’s organization in Thessalonica, the “Société de Bienfaisance des Dames Grèques” had at an earlier date also founded such a workshop “where a large number of poor girls was doing needlework.” Le Bureau, “Ouvroir Grècque,” *Journal de Salonique*, 11 mai 1908, 2. This was probably the *Philoptochos Adelphotis ton Kyrion Thessalonikis*, which had been founded in 1876, referred to in Chapter One.

²⁷ “Eser-i şefkat,” *Rumeli*, 19 Kanunuevvel 1326 (1 January 1911), 3. In this article the organization is mistakenly referred to as *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisaiye*.

²⁸ “Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye’nin ilk eser-i şefkati;” Zekiye, “Trablusgarb Muavenet-i Milliye Heyet-i Muhterimesine;” “Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesine arz-ı şükran,” all in *Rumeli*, 31 Teşrinevvel 1327 (13 November 1911), 1. See also Chapter Twelve.

The *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan (Kastamonu)*

Very few sources are available on the second organization, the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvan*. It was founded by prominent women in Kastamonu, in the aftermath of the disastrous defeat of the Ottomans by the Russians and the extreme winter cold in December 1914 and January 1915 at Sarıkamış. Its aim was to provide the soldiers in Erzurum and its surroundings with bedding, bandages and other goods for hospitals. In April 1915 it decided to join forces with the local branch of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*. The organization was dissolved and a women's branch of the latter was established under the presidency of the wife of the Governor, Melek Reşid, with sub-branches in the smaller towns of the province.²⁹

The (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*

The sources on the (*Şişli*) *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* are also limited. The first reference to this organization was in the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkar*. According to a short note in this newspaper in May 1915 the soldiers at the Taşkışla hospital were visited by a group of women from an organization referred to as *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*.³⁰ This seems to have been its official name: the letterhead on stationary of the organization also carried this name. So do the stamps underneath its correspondence, which further indicate that the organization was located in Dersaadet – Şişli and that the organization was founded in 1331, that is, after February 1915.³¹

²⁹ Türk Kızılayı Arşivi (hereafter TKA), 82/19, 25 Kanunuevvel 1330 (7 January 1915); TKA, 28/160, [2 Mayıs 1331 (15 May 1915)]; TKA, 28/166, 28 Temmuz 1331 (10 August 1915); TKA, 28/167, 28 Temmuz 1331 (10 August 1915); “Kastamonu’da faaliyet-i vatanperverane,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 10 Nisan 1331 (23 April 1915), 3. See also “Hilal-i Ahmer takvimleri,” *Köroğlu*, 18 Haziran 1331 (1 July 1915), 2. In 1919, when her husband was governor of Sivas, Melek Reşid, together with some friends, also founded the *Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Defense of the Fatherland of Anatolian Women).

³⁰ “Mecruh gazilerimizi ziyaret,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 7 Mayıs 1331 (20 May 1915), 2. It is not completely clear which organization this was, the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* or the *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*. However, since the newspaper had carried an article on the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* two days earlier where it put the latter name between quotation marks, the organization referred to in this article is likely to be indeed the *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye*.

³¹ TKA, 68/29, 10 Mayıs 1332 (23 May 1916); BOA, MF.MKT, 1235/8, 21 Şevval 1336 (30 July 1918). According to the list of organizations made by the police in 1922, the date of foundation

The president of this organization was a further unidentified Fatma,³² who hosted the organization at her home in Şişli,³³ its vice-president was Celalet, the wife of a lawyer named Şinasi,³⁴ and its treasurer was Mevhibe, the wife of a trader named Rıza Derviş.³⁵



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).

In May 1916, the organization sent a letter to the Red Crescent stating that it was founded to do “good works” and that it thus wanted to contribute financially to the soup kitchens of the Red Crescent by donating 40 Ottoman

was actually 1 Şubat 1330 (14 February 1915). BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

³² *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Orhaniye, 1334.

³³ BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

³⁴ BOA, MF.MKT, 1235/8, 21 Şevval 1336 (30 July 1918); BOA, Dosya Usulu İradeler Tasnifi (hereafter DÜİT), Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/106, 8 Rebiülevvel 1336 (23 December 1917); BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 53-54.

³⁵ *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [7]; BOA, DÜİT, Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/106, 8 Rebiülevvel 1336 (23 December 1917); BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 53-54. More members of the Derviş family seem to have been involved in the organization. The woman listed in the Nişan Defterleri directly under Mevhibe and also decorated for her work at the Feriköy hospital was a woman named Hadar, who was the wife of a merchant called Nail Derviş. Furthermore, one of the women involved in the theatre performance organized by the organization in January 1916 was named Sabiha Derviş. “Müsamere,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 20 Kanunuevvel 1331 (13 January 1916), 2; “Müsamere,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 21 Kanunuevvel 1331 (14 January 1916), 2.

liras, a donation duly listed in the organization's (financial) year report over the year 1333 (1917).³⁶ Information on the organization's other "good works" was given in the introduction to the report: the organization explicitly aimed at providing the needy children of the country with proper education in order to improve their social situation. Although the organization, thus, had primarily been founded to provide proper education for poor children, the circumstances forced it to diversify the objects of its charity: wounded soldiers and other poor and needy were included amongst its beneficiaries.³⁷ The annual report contained more information on the organization. It minutely listed the financial sources of the organization: monthly membership fees, entrance fees, gifts and donations whose donors were listed separately, official collections, state bonds (*ikrazat*), and the selling of products made or collected by the members of the organization.

The list of donors forms another indication for the existence of a connection with the former Thessalonian organization: the majority of donors are (the wives and mothers) of men who had been involved with the *Terakki* Schools which had been established in Thessalonica in 1877. It is likely they belonged to the many Muslims which moved to Istanbul after the Greeks conquered Thessalonica during the Balkan Wars.³⁸

The report also enumerated what the money was actually spent on. Consistent with its original goal, the organization had not only supplied poor children with materials such as books, pencils, and paper, but it also had given financial support to Ottoman students in, for example, Germany. Furthermore, it had donated money and goods to poor families and women, distributed *helva* and oranges amongst the soldiers at the Feriköy hospital and paid for the electrical lighting system of that hospital.³⁹

The report showed that the organization was financially healthy: it closed the year with a positive result of 32,023 *kuruş* and 10 *para*, while even the sum of

³⁶ TKA, 68/29, 10 Mayıs 1332 (23 May 1916); *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [7] which lists another donation of 5,000 to the CUP soup kitchens (see also next chapter). The report actually covers the period from 1 Şubat 1332 to 31 Kanunuevvel 1333 (14 February 1917 – 31 December 1917), which is less than eleven months.

³⁷ *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [1; 7].

³⁸ *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [11-12]; Alkan, *Terakki Vakfı ve Terakki Okulları*, 54-135.

³⁹ *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [7; 9].

15,000 *kuruş* which the organization had borrowed from its members the year before had been paid back.⁴⁰

The report, however, alerted the authorities. Although the organization claimed in its report that it had gotten permission to collect money from the Governorship,⁴¹ it seems not to have obtained all the permissions needed. While it had obviously been licensed to actively collect money (*cem-i ianat*), it had not received permission to accept spontaneous donations (*teberruat* and *hibe*). When the Governor of Istanbul ordered an investigation into the matter, the organization tried to get this permission afterwards. The Governor, realizing that this was not according to the Law on Associations, which explicitly stated that permission had to be asked beforehand and not afterwards, asked the Ministry of Interior for advice. The Ministry of Interior forwarded the request to the Council of State for advice, which in turn passed it on to one of its departments. The conclusion was that, although the Law on Associations clearly stated that permission should be obtained beforehand for the active collecting of donations, a spontaneous donation or a bequeathing could not be anticipated. Therefore, the organization was acquitted of the charge and cleared.⁴² While the organization was waiting for the answer, it seems to have been networking to improve its chances: the vice-president of the organization, which, as mentioned, showed a special interest in education, sent a letter to the newly appointed Minister of Education, Nazım, to congratulate him on his appointment in July 1918.⁴³ According to the list with organizations made by the police in 1922 the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* was still active by that time.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ “Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi,” *Vakit*, 29 Şubat/February 1918, 2; “Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi,” *Vakit*, 30 Mart 1918, 2; *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*.

⁴¹ *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, [3].

⁴² BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, İdare-i Umumiye (hereafter DH.İ-UM), 11-4/6-11, 3 Zilhicce 1336 (10 September 1918); BOA, ŞD, MLK.MRF, 2386/43, 27 Şevval 1336 (5 August 1918).

⁴³ BOA, MF.MKT, 1235/8, 21 Şevval 1336 (30 July 1918).

⁴⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

The Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi

Its Foundation and its Members

The *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was founded in September 1909⁴⁵ by thirty women from prominent Ottoman and foreign families in Istanbul⁴⁶ and put under the patronage of the Ministers of War and of Navy.⁴⁷ Its president was Leyla Hanım, the daughter of *Serdar-ı Ekrem* Abdülkerim Pasha, while its vice-president was the wife of Doctor Luigi Tercüman, Adele.⁴⁸ Its treasurer was the daughter of the latter, Corinne Lütfi (Tercüman), while its secretary was the granddaughter of a certain Abdi Pasha, Süreyya Hanım.⁴⁹

Its original aim was to “improve the fate of soldiers and marines” by providing military hospitals, barracks, and the children’s hospital in Şişli with linen.⁵⁰ Initially the organization aimed at the military hospitals in Istanbul, but it planned to eventually open branches in other towns and do the same for the military hospitals there. The board of the children’s hospital in Şişli offered the

⁴⁵ Its official date of foundation was, according to the police report of 1922, somewhere at the end of 1913 or beginning of 1914 (the report reads 14 Kanunu[left out] 1329). BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919). In an other list made by the police at a later date the official date of foundation of the foundation was reported to be 26 Teşrinievvel 1325 (8 November 1909), which seems to be more likely. BOA, DH.EUM.6.ŞB, 53/78, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

⁴⁶ “Hanımlarımızın fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 18 Eylül 1325 (1 October 1909), 3; “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantash,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1.

⁴⁷ “Der türkische Damenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 25. Februar 1910, 2; “La Vie Féminine,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XIV, 4, Avril 1911, 135; “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantash,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1; Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

⁴⁸ Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 343-352, 348; “Der osmanische Frauenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Oktober 1912, 2.

⁴⁹ Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 343-352, 348; “Der osmanische Frauenverein,” OL, 15. Oktober 1912, 2; Melda Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütfü: bir Dostluğun Öyküsü*, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1998, 47-48.

⁵⁰ “Hanımlarımızın fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 18 Eylül 1325 (1 October 1909), 3; Hüseyin Cahid, “Siyaset: Osmanlı hanımları vardı,” *Tanin*, 9 Teşrinisani 1325 (22 November 1909), 1; “Der türkische Damenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 25. Februar 1910, 2; “La Vie Féminine,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XIV, 4, Avril 1911, 135; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 343-352, 348; Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

organization one of its rooms to use as a “clubhouse.” In this room the members of the organization did their sewing and held their meetings.⁵¹

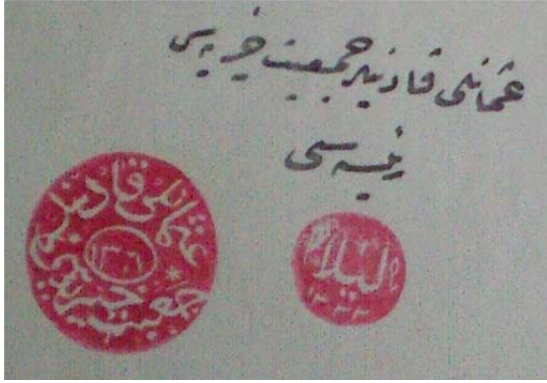


Figure 2 Seals of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* and its president, Leyla. The seal of the organization carries the date 1327 which is probably a *Hicri* date. Source: letter to the “Donation Committee” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 19 Teşrinievvel 1331 (1 November 1915). BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

According to a short article in the daily *Tanin* the members of this organization came from the highest circles of Ottoman society and belonged to all creeds.⁵² The initiative to found the organization was taken by 30 women,⁵³ but within two and a half months it had 50 members.⁵⁴ By October 1912 its number had reportedly gone up to 70.⁵⁵ While its president was probably Muslim, its vice-president was a non-Muslim woman, the wife of Luigi (also referred to as Louis) Tercüman, an Ottoman citizen who was Italian by origin.⁵⁶ Two of their daughters, Edith and Corinne, became active members of the organization. Edith married a man named Fethi Bey, became Muslim and took the name Edibe. Corinne was, according to a document listing the members of the organization who were rewarded with the Red Crescent Medal, the spouse of

⁵¹ Hüseyin Cahid, “Siyaset: Osmanlı hanımları vardı,” *Tanin*, 9 Teşrinisani 1325 (22 November 1909), 1; “Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 2 Kanunusani 1325 (15 January 1910), 3; “Der türkische Damenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 25. Februar 1910, 2.

⁵² “Hanımlarımızın fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 18 Eylül 1325 (1 October 1909), 3.

⁵³ “Hanımlarımızın fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 18 Eylül 1325 (1 October 1909), 3; “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantash,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1.

⁵⁴ “Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 4 Kanunuevvel 1325 (17 December 1909), 2.

⁵⁵ “Der osmanische Frauenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Oktober 1912, 2.

⁵⁶ The Tercüman family was originally from Genua, but moved to Istanbul in the first half of the nineteenth century. Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütü*.

a certain Ömer Lütfi Bey, who died during the Balkan wars.⁵⁷ Already during his lifetime she became closely befriended with Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk], a friendship which seems to have deepened after the death of her husband.⁵⁸

Very little is known on the other members of the organization. Some names are occasionally mentioned in the newspaper articles related to the activities of the organization. These names show that the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was indeed an *Ottoman* organization, including subjects from the Ottoman Sultan of different creeds: from the family names mentioned it is clear that women of Armenian, Greek and Arab background were also active for the organization.⁵⁹

Soldiers and Girls: the Activities of the Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi

Although the purpose of the organization initially seems to have been described in relation with “soldiers and marines,” its activities varied over time. Initially, these were indeed closely related to its original aim. Later, directly after the Balkan wars, an additional activity was undertaken: the members of the organization thought that it was better to prevent problems than to cure them and opened a school for girls. The First World War, however, seems to have forced the organization to return to its original activities again, while continuing to support the school founded.

Sewing for soldiers

Originally, the organization aimed at providing the military with linen. To this aim the women gathered at the Children’s hospital where they worked on their sewing together. Those women members who did not want to or could not leave their homes were allowed to do their sewing at home and send it to the hospital. Within a month after the foundation of the organization, the women had sewn

⁵⁷ BOA, DUİT, Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/88, 25S1336 (11 December 1917).

⁵⁸ Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütfü*; Altan Deliorman, *Atatürkün Hayatındaki Kadınlar*, İstanbul: Burhan Yayınevi, 1961, 57-74.

⁵⁹ See, for example, “Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 5 Mayıs 1331 (18 May 1915), 2 which refers to the wives of the further unknown İstanki and Kiryis (?) Beyler.

200 pieces of linen.⁶⁰ A few weeks later the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* is reported to have donated 300 pieces to the military. Several women had contributed by donating, amongst other things, money, sewing machines, and cloth.⁶¹ In the first years of its existence, it sent water filters to the troops in Yemen, held collections for the victims of the fires in Istanbul and contributed money to activities aimed at the purchase of an airplane.⁶²

Its core activity during the first three years of its existence, however, seems to have been providing linen for the soldiers. Within three years it succeeded at sending a total of 48,961 pieces of linen to the ministries: 10,157 in the first year, 16,004 in the second year and 22,800 pieces in the third year.⁶³ Another source mentions that in April 1911 alone, for example, it sent the land army 10,786 pieces of linen (underwear and bedding), while another 7,600 pieces were forwarded to the navy.⁶⁴ The start of the Balkan wars led to another increase in activity: in October 1912 the members were invited for an extraordinary meeting where would be decided what activities to undertake.⁶⁵ At the meeting the decision was taken that the organization would produce nightgowns and underwear for the wounded Ottoman soldiers and that it would distribute them with the help of the Red Crescent.⁶⁶ In November 1912, the organization handed over 950 nightgowns which had been produced in ten days by the members of the organization to the Ministry of War.⁶⁷ After the start of the Balkan War, a successful appeal was made to the members of the organization and at the *Şişli Etfal Hastanesi* (*Şişli Children's Hospital*) a ward with 300 beds was completely equipped. The organization bought the medical and surgical equipment needed for the wounded soldiers of the ward, but also provided food and “tea biscuits and tobacco.” Some of the women actively participated in the nursing of a total of 300 wounded soldiers and 60 wounded officers for a period of six months,

⁶⁰ Hüseyin Cahid, “Siyaset: Osmanlı hanımları vardı,” *Tanin*, 9 Teşrinisani 1325 (22 November 1909), 1.

⁶¹ “Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 4 Kanunuevvel 1325 (17 December 1909), 2.

⁶² “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. See also Chapter Twelve.

⁶³ “Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 1 Teşrinievvel 1328 (14 October 1912), 5.

⁶⁴ “La Vie féminine,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XIV, 4, Avril 1911, 135.

⁶⁵ “Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesinden,” *Tanin*, 27 Eylül 1328 (10 October 1912), 3.

⁶⁶ “Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 1 Teşrinievvel 1328 (14 October 1912), 5; “Der Osmanische Frauenverein,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Oktober 1912, 2.

⁶⁷ “Die Damen der osmanischen Wohltätigkeitsgesellschaft,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. November 1912, 2.

while they also took care of washing the clothes of the soldiers. The money came partly from the donations of the members but money was also collected in the streets of Pera.⁶⁸ Moreover, the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* equipped 100 beds for the hospital in the barracks of Taşkılla.⁶⁹ Furthermore, they sent 250 padded vests to the soldiers in Çatalca at the beginning of 1913.⁷⁰

For their work for the wounded soldiers during the Balkan Wars the women of the organization were rewarded with *Hilal-i Ahmer* Medals in July 1915. The president of the organization, Leyla, received the medal in silver, other members of the organization received the same medal in bronze.⁷¹

According to an article published in 1914, the organization was by that time putting 30 to 40,000 pieces of linen per year at the disposal of the Ministries of War and Navy.⁷² The members of the organization did not produce all the linen themselves. They hired poor women to be able to reach this level of production. The salaries of these women were paid through the yields of the fairs and the other fundraising activities of the organization.⁷³ Due to the outbreak of the First World War the activities of the women accelerated. The organization took upon it to provide for the former Russian hospital in Nişantaşı, which had been turned into the Pangaltı Military Hospital to nurse wounded soldiers brought in from Çanakkale.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ “Die Hilfsaktion. Dank.” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 6. Dezember 1912, 2; “Die Wohltätigkeitsgesellschaft der osmanischen Damen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. März 1913, 1; Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

⁶⁹ “Sanitätshilfe: Eine Danksagung,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. Dezember 1912, 2.

⁷⁰ “Die Wohltätigkeitsgesellschaft der osmanischen Damen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. März 1913, 1.

⁷¹ BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 31, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 123-126. The other members were *Madam* Luigi Tercüman, Talaat, Süreyya, Edibe, *Madam* Ömer Lütfi (=Corinne Tercüman Lütfi), *Madmazel* Edit Tercüman, Salime, Rana, İclal, Kerime, Fatma hanım Ali bey. Two years later, in November 1917, they received the ribbon going with the medal. BOA, DUİT, Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/88, 25 Safer 1336 (11 December 1917).

⁷² “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1.

⁷³ Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

⁷⁴ “Grand Concert,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. Juli 1915, 5; “Für das Krankenhaus in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. August 1915, 3; “Grand Concert,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. August 1915, 5; “La société de bienfaisance des dames ottomans,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27 Octobre 1917, 3; BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915; BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915. For information on the history of the hospital which was turned into a Russian hospital again after the war, see Nuran Yıldırım, “Rus Hastanesi,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994, Vol. VI, 370.

The goods for the hospital were partly obtained through the *Mecruhin-i Gaza-ı Asakir-i Osmaniye İane Komisyonu* (Committee for Donations to the Wounded Ottoman *Gazi* Soldiers) which was founded under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the battles in Çanakkale had started and wounded soldiers had started to pour into Istanbul. This Committee was not only central to the collection and allocation of money and goods donated from abroad, but also seems to have served as an intermediary to order materials from especially Austria-Hungary until this was no longer possible in September 1916.⁷⁵ The archival files related to this Committee,⁷⁶ therefore, contain many letters from and to Ottoman women's organizations involved in activities for the hospitals as well as incidental documents on the activities of individual women.⁷⁷

When the "Donations Committee" was established, the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* did not hesitate to demand goods for the hospital under its protection.⁷⁸ The Committee immediately sent some goods varying from thermometers to different kinds of cloth for which it was duly thanked by the head physician of the hospital and by the organization.⁷⁹ In October 1915, the president of the organization asked the Committee for 200 slippers for the wounded soldiers at the hospital.⁸⁰ Two weeks later, acknowledging the arrival of the slippers, Leyla *hanım* asked for more: 200 cotton vests, 200 belts, a dozen of (illegible), a dozen of thermometers, and 100 pairs of socks, which were indeed

⁷⁵ When it was no longer possible to purchase the goods needed for the hospitals from Austria-Hungary the Committee was dissolved and the money left in its accounts was transferred to the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*. Dispatch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 4 Eylül 1332 (17 September 1916) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915.

⁷⁶ Notably BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915 and BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915.

⁷⁷ See Chapter Thirteen for more information on these letters and the activities of other women's organizations.

⁷⁸ Letter of the organization dated 29 Temmuz 1331 (11 August 1915), an undated list of the wanted articles and a draft response to the *Pangaltı Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* dated 15 Ağustos 1331 (28 August 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915; See also several documents at BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

⁷⁹ Draft letter of Committee in reply to request of the organization dated 15 Ağustos 1331 (28 August 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915; and letter of the head physician of Pangaltı Hospital dated 16 Ağustos 1331 (29 August 1915); letter from the organization to the chair of the Committee, Cevad Bey, who was the Ottoman Ambassador to Bulgaria, signed by Leyla, Süreyya and Bekire dated 20 Ağustos 1331 (2 September 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

⁸⁰ Letter of Leyla hanım dated 4 Teşrinievvel 1331 (17 October 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915.

received about a month later.⁸¹ In December 1915, Leyla *hanım* sent another letter demanding several goods, including socks, plates and porcelain ewers and washing bowls, and 30 and 10 bolts of *Amerikan bezi* (unbleached, coarse calico) and *tülbent* (muslin), respectively. The cloth was to be turned into linen by the women of the organization.⁸² Leyla *hanım*'s requests were again honoured except for the *Amerikan bezi*. The import of this cloth from Vienna was becoming increasingly difficult and Leyla *hanım*, therefore, had to wait for these 30 bolts. Whether or not she ever received them remains unknown, since the correspondence between the Committee and the organization came to a halt.⁸³

While the president of the organization thus worked hard behind the scene to acquire goods for the hospital, some of the members of the organization visited the wounded soldiers in the hospital and gave them flowers, oranges, cigarettes, tea and biscuits. Two of the (non-Muslim) members worked as nurses in one of the hospitals.⁸⁴ One of them, the wife of a colonel, Mrs. İstanaki, received a *Şefkat* Medal of the third degree in October 1915 for her work at the Pangaltı hospital.⁸⁵ Corinne Tercüman and Behire *hanım*, the wife of a scribe at the Ministry of Finance, were also rewarded with a Red Crescent Medal in bronze for their work at that hospital. For Corinne Tercüman this was the second time she received this medal. More members of the organization received the same medal for the second time, for their work at the Şişli Children's Hospital: the granddaughter of *Serdar-ı Ekrem* Abdülkerim Pasha, Rana, for example, received a bronze Red Crescent Medal for her work at this hospital during the First World War, while she had received one previously.⁸⁶ While its work for the wounded soldiers seems to have continued until the end of the First

⁸¹ Letters of Leyla *hanım* dated 19 Teşrinievvel 1331 (1 November 1915) and 19/9/1331 (2 December 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

⁸² Letter of Leyla *hanım* dated 15 Kanunuevvel 1331 (28 December 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

⁸³ Note dated 7 Kanunusani 1331 (20 January 1916) scribbled on back of the letter of Leyla *hanım* dated 15 Kanunuevvel 1331 (28 December 1915) and letter of Leyla *hanım* dated 10 Kanunusani 1331 (23 December 1915) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

⁸⁴ "Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 5 Mayıs 1331 (18 May 1915), 2.

⁸⁵ BOA, İ.Tal, 2077/ 5, 14 Safer 1334 (22 December 1915); BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 34, Şefkat Nişan-i Hümayun irade-i seniye defteri, 5.

⁸⁶ The continuous wars had obviously urged the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* to add an article to the regulations regarding the awarding of the Medal to make it possible to give persons a second medal. In the lists more names of women rewarded for their work at the two hospitals were mentioned. It is, however, not clear whether they were also members of the organization. BOA, DUİT, Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/106, 8 Rebiülevvel 1336 (23 December 1917); BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 51-52.

World War, the organization decided to diversify its activities and to get engaged in what at first sight seems to be a completely different kind of activity by October 1913.

Educating girls: the Milli İnas Mektebi

Although the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* had originally been founded with the aim of improving the circumstances under which the military were living (and dying) by providing military hospitals with clothes, bandages and bedding, in the fourth year of its existence it embarked upon a completely new project. In order to “finally make an end to the many disasters which the beloved fatherland was going through every day,”⁸⁷ its members decided to dedicate their efforts and money to the opening of a school for girls, including the orphans from the Balkan Wars. The girls educated at this school would, they hoped, become the mothers of an “industrious, serious, resolute, enterprising” future generation. Such a generation could only be raised if the future mothers were educated properly, they argued. After all “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”⁸⁸ This initiative seems to be a logical outcome of the discussions which had been taking place in the women’s and other periodicals of the period.

When the Young Turks came to power, they paid ample interest to the development of the educational system. This interest instigated discussions on “how” and “by whom” such a system should be developed. Those discussing the “how” question disagreed on whether to take the “top-down” or the “bottom-up” approach. Those who, with Emrullah Efendi, Minister of Education in 1910 and 1911, were in favour of the top-down approach argued that the country was in urgent need of an intellectual elite. This elite should be educated in the shortest possible time. Therefore, starting with developing primary education would take too much time. He, and his followers, suggested starting from the top by giving preference to the development of senior high schools and university education.⁸⁹ The opposite position was taken by Sati Bey *cum suis*. They felt that

⁸⁷ “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 17 Mayıs 1329 (30 May 1913), 4-5.

⁸⁸ “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 20 Mayıs 1329 (2 June 1913), 5.

⁸⁹ Mustafa Ergün, *Meşrutiyet Devrinde Eğitim Hareketleri (1908 - 1914)*, Ankara: Ocak Yayınları, 1996, 42-67.

well-organized elementary education formed the basis for a good educational system which in turn was the precondition for the elevation of society.⁹⁰

That women, too, needed more education if the country was to be elevated was no point of discussion. Most of the authors in the women's periodicals seem to have agreed with Bedia Kamuran, who wrote that:

[w]oman is the being that propels a nation's progress and decline, or rather, which is the cause of either its disaster or its happiness. If the level of knowledge of the women of a nation is high, that nation will reach the last step of its progress. A nation whose women are living in ignorance is condemned to a deplorable decline, to a terrible annihilation.⁹¹

Those involved in the "by whom" discussion had different opinions on whether the state should be the sole initiator of the foundation and running of new educational institutions or whether private persons, organizations and institutions should also be involved in developing the educational system. This discussion was also reflected in the writings of women (and men) in the women's periodicals.

The women, like the men, were divided on the question on who was responsible for the improvement of women's education. Should Ottoman Muslim women take up the challenge and create educational opportunities for themselves or should they trust the government to meet their educational needs?

Although the Young Turk government made serious efforts to improve the educational system, these efforts were severely hampered by the bad financial situation of the Empire. The amount of money which could be allocated to education was limited and even more so the amount of money to be allocated to the education of girls and women.

Realizing this, quite a large number of the authors in the Ottoman Turkish women's periodicals wrote that such an important issue could not be left to the government, but that women themselves should take the helm at least partly in their own hands. The degree to which women would be able to do so was subject to discussion. While some authors felt that private persons and organizations including women and women's organization should take the initiative and open

⁹⁰ Ergün, *Meşrutiyet Devrinde Eğitim Hareketleri (1908 - 1914)*, 124-136. Faithful to his ideas, Sati bey established his own kindergarten and primary school in July 1915. "Yeni mekteb," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1258, 2 Temmuz 1331 (15 July 1915), 106-107.

⁹¹ Bedia Kamuran, "Osmanlı kadını'nın ulvi vazifeleri," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 133, 1 Mart 1330 (14 March 1914), 5-6.

and operate schools, others pointed out that if opening such a school was not a problem guaranteeing its long-term existence was not easy due to financial and operational problems which could – and, in their view, definitely would – occur.⁹²

Still, the middle- and upper-class women writing in the Ottoman Turkish women's periodicals felt that they had an obligation to assist their sisters in finding and pursuing the road to enlightenment. They found various means to do so. They invited their readers to organize themselves, to write educational articles in the women's periodicals and other publications, to provide scholarships or other financial or material assistance, to teach and give lectures and to financially support existing or newly opened schools. Despite the objections and potential problems raised in some of the writings, they even called upon their fellow-women to found training institutions and schools.

The many publications of the period bear witness of the fact that these calls did not remain void. Many women, both as individuals or organized in one way or another, did indeed write articles of an educational character, facilitated the access of girls to school by giving financial support,⁹³ gave lectures and organized courses,⁹⁴ and became teachers.⁹⁵ Some women, furthermore, did not pay any attention to the warnings in the women's periodicals and decided to open their own schools.

⁹² See e.g. Enis Avni, "Osmanlı kadınları cemiyet-i müteşekkilesi ve iki noksan," *Kadın*, 17, 2 Şubat 1324 (156 February 1909), 2-5; Evliyazade Makbule, "İsmet Hakkı Hanımefendiye," *Mehasin*, 5, Kanunusani 1324 (January/February 1909), 345-349; Zekiye, "Arz-ı teşekkür, takdir-i ihtiram," *Kadın*, 7, 24 Teşrinisani 1324 (7 December 1908), 3; Zekiye, "İzah-ı meram," *Kadın*, 21, 2 Mart 1325 (15 March 1909), 5; İsmet Hakkı, "Evliyazade Makbule Hanımefendi'ye," *Mehasin*, 5, Şubat 1324 (February/March 1909), 447-450; Sıdika Ali Rıza, "Bahçe mektepleri," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 13, 16 Nisan 1329 (29 April 1913), 3-4; Mevhibe Mustafa, "Maarifimiz...", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 17, 20 Nisan 1329 (2 May 1913), 3-4; Kadınlar Dünyası, "İçtimai: müzaheret-i milliye," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 24, 27 Nisan 1329 (10 May 1913), 1.

⁹³ See, e.g., "Générosité d'une dame musulmane," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, I, 5, Mars 1907, 55-56; "Maarifperver bir hanım," *Tanin*, 14 Kanunuevvel 1326 (27 December 1910), 2; Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk kadını*, 87-89.

⁹⁴ E.g. "Teali-i Nisvanın dördüncü konferansı: yirminci asırda kadınlar," *Tanin*, 22 Nisan 1328 (5 May 1912), 4; "Der Frauenverein...", *Die Welt des Islams*, 3/4, 1913, 222; "Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti'nden," *İkdam*, 3 Mayıs 1330 (16 May 1914), 4.

⁹⁵ Yahya Akyüz, "Öğretmenlik mesleği ve Osmanlı'da kadın öğretmen yetiştirilmesi," *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 195, Mart 2000, 31-43.

İsmet Haydar,⁹⁶ for example, opened a school twice. The first one she founded in 1909 together with her sister, Aziz Haydar, and three friends – also sisters –. The school aimed at young women, who were to be educated to become “perfect mothers, capable housewives and good spouses.” Classes at this school located in Beyazıt could be attended both during daytime and in the evening.⁹⁷ After this one was closed down, she opened another school in Göztepe in 1911.⁹⁸ The information we have on these schools is limited, though.

More information is available on the school established by the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, in 1913. The school, named *Milli İnas Mektebi*, was located at Osmanbey Caddesi in Nişantaşı. According to the early plans it would start with classes both at kindergarten and primary level. The kindergarten classes would be open to boys and girls aged between three and six, while the primary level classes would take only girls between seven and twelve years of age.⁹⁹

The school and its curriculum were allegedly prepared according to the latest developments and pedagogical insights. The pupils would already start with reading classes in kindergarten.¹⁰⁰ The curriculum for the primary level classes was published in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. According to this publication first grade students were to have 32 “hours” of classes per week with each “hour” lasting 45 minutes. Within the 32 hours the following courses would be taught: Turkish and French (nine hours each), needle work (four hours), calculation and gymnastics (three hours each), religion (two hours) and one hour each of geography and “moral and ‘civilized’ knowledge” (*malumat-ı ahlakiye ve medeniye*). In the second year, with a total of 30 hours per week, the share of the languages would be diminished to eight hours each, while the hours of needlework declined to two hours a week. Added were one hour of history and

⁹⁶ Later, İsmet Haydar obviously moved to Bagdad where she became the president of the local women’s committee of the Red Crescent. A women referred to as Didar Şevki was its vice-president. For their work they both received a Red Crescent Medal: İsmet Haydar in silver, Didar Şevki in bronze. BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 33, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, [18-19].

⁹⁷ Enis Avni, “Ana mektebi,” *Kadın*, 25, 30 Mart 1325 (12 April 1909), 11-12; “Ana mektebi,” *Tanin*, 15 Temmuz 1325 (28 July 1909), 4.

⁹⁸ “La vie feminine,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XIV, 4, Avril 1911, 135. Her sister Aziz Haydar reportedly established another school later in Erenköy. Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 347. It is possible that both sources are referring to the same institution.

⁹⁹ “Nişantaşı Milli İnas Mektebi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100 - 13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ “Zur Eröffnung der nationalen Mädchenschule in Schischli,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. November 1913, 1.

calligraphy each. In the third year, also with a total of 30 hours a week, the hours spent to learn Turkish and French would be further decreased to six hours each. One hour each of geometry and sciences would be added. The course on moral and civilized knowledge would be discontinued, while the pupils would get two hours of instruction on cookery.¹⁰¹

As can be understood from this curriculum, the pupils would learn French as a foreign language according to the original plans. French was the language of the well-educated, upper strata of the various ethno-religious groups in Istanbul and also the language predominantly spoken by the many foreigners in the city. The reporter of *Osmanischer Lloyd*, the Istanbul newspaper published in German and French by the German Embassy, however, was assured that there were plans to eventually introduce German as well.¹⁰² The increased closeness between the Ottoman and German Empires on the eve of the First World War seems to have accelerated these plans, but French as at least one of the foreign languages remained on the curriculum. The rapprochement between the two Empires led to an overall turn towards a more German inspired organization where the children at kindergarten level, for example, were educated based on the ideas of the German pedagogue Fröbel by a German kindergarten teacher.¹⁰³ Besides the program for children, the founders of the school also aimed at providing courses in French, English and piano for interested women and girls.¹⁰⁴

In November 1913 the school was officially opened in the presence of many “Turkish”¹⁰⁵ women and prominent Ottomans and foreigners. *İstanbul muhafızı* (military commander of Istanbul), Cemal, the *merkez kumandanı* (central commander), Rifat, the director of the military academy Vasıf and a representative of the Ministry of Education, Kemal Bey all attended the opening ceremony. Others present were the governor of Pera, Kani Bey, the *dragoman* of

¹⁰¹ “Nişantaşı Milli İnas Mektebi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100 - 13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7-8. See also, “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 17 Mayıs 1329 (30 May 1913), 4-5; “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 20 Mayıs 1329 (2 June 1913), 5; “Milli İnas Mektebi,” *Tanin*, 19 Teşrinievvel 1329 (1 November 1913), 4; “Zur Eröffnung der nationalen Mädchenschule in Schishli,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. November 1913, 1.

¹⁰² “Zur Eröffnung der nationalen Mädchenschule in Schishli,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. November 1913, 1.

¹⁰³ “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100 - 13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

¹⁰⁵ The word “Turkish” when put between quotation marks is referring to the German word “Türkisch” which was generally used in the *Osmanischer Lloyd* when referring to Ottoman Muslims.

the German Embassy, Dr. Wustrow, the director of the Société Commerciale de l'Orient, Mr. de Senn and Selim Sırrı, the general inspector for the education of gymnastics in “Turkish” schools. The “Sultan’s hymn” was played, after which the representative of the Ministry of Education held a speech in which he praised the women for taking such an initiative and expressed the wish that the school would prosper. His speech was followed by another one by the poetess Nigar *hanım*, who stressed that “the education of the women’s world [was] a patriotic duty,” while the last speaker was Selim Sırrı who held a passionate speech defending his ideas on pedagogy. After the official part was finished food and drinks were offered to the audience.¹⁰⁶

By March 1914, the school reportedly had 70 students enrolled. According to *Osmanischer Lloyd* the school was consisting of two parts by then: a kindergarten and a school for domestic science. In the latter part the “older” girls were taught how to cook Turkish and European dishes. The kindergarten part was still lacking the materials needed for a proper Fröbelian education, however. In *Osmanischer Lloyd* the presence of German elements was heavily stressed. According to this newspaper, a part of the classes, including the kindergarten, were given by German speaking – but probably Ottoman – women.¹⁰⁷ The principal of the school was Dr. Otto Söhring, who was very much involved in the propagation of German education in the Ottoman Empire and later became the director of the German Gymnasium.¹⁰⁸ Mrs. Tercüman was the vice-principal. There was one teacher with the German nationality for the highest classes, who also taught German to those “Turkish” women who were interested. She was financed by the German-Turkish Union who paid 1,000 Mark during three years. Another German language teacher was financed by the “Berlin Friends of Turkey.”¹⁰⁹ French, however, initially seems to have been taught as the main foreign language, while according to *Die Welt des Islams* German became a part of the curriculum only in 1915.¹¹⁰ By the start of the new school year in

¹⁰⁶ “Milli İnas Mektebi,” *Tanin*, 19 Teşrinievvel 1329 (1 November 1913), 4; “Der Eröffnung der nationalen Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. November 1913, 1. See also Kadri “İstanbul postası,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1170, 24 Teşrinievvel 1329 (6 November 1913), 602; “İnas mektepleri,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1170, 24 Teşrinievvel 1329 (6 November 1913), 617.

¹⁰⁷ “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1

¹⁰⁸ Mustafa Gencer, *Bildungspolitik, Modernisierung, und kulturelle Interaktion: Deutsch-türkische Beziehungen (1908 - 1918)*, Münster, u.a.: Lit Verlag, 2002, 207.

¹⁰⁹ “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1; Gencer, *Bildungspolitik, Modernisierung, und kulturelle Interaktion*, 207.

¹¹⁰ Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütfü*, 48; “Nationale Mädchenschule Ferriköj,” *Die Welt des Islams*, III, 3/4, 1915, 226.

September 1915, German indeed had become obligatory.¹¹¹ One year later, a year was added to the school's curriculum.¹¹² Visitors to the school including an inspector of the Ministry of Education all seem to have been impressed by the institution and the way it was run.¹¹³

The school and its premises were also used for other activities such as conferences¹¹⁴ and concerts. One such concert for women was given in March 1914. The musicians were all members of prominent Ottoman families, while the audience, amongst whom Fehime Sultan, a daughter of Murad V, and the wife of the German Ambassador, Frau von Wangenheim, probably also belonged to the well-to-do class.¹¹⁵ These concerts, like fairs, served to raise money.

In October 1917, the school was still teaching Turkish, French and German to a "large number" of students, while in September 1918 the start of a new year was again announced in the newspapers.¹¹⁶ What happened to the school when the war was over and the British occupied Istanbul remains unclear. Still, this school, with its longevity, seems to have proved the sceptics of private initiative wrong.

Financing Charity

The organization funded its activities with incomes from various sources. The primary source of income for the organization was formed by the membership fees of its members. At the founding of the organization, this fee was set at five *kuruş* per month for those members who would actively participate in sewing linen, and ten *kuruş* per month for those who did not want to participate in this

¹¹¹ "Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi himayesinde Feriköy Milli İnas Mektebi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 24 Ağustos 1331 (6 September 1915), 2; "Şişli Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nin himayesinde...", *Tanin*, 20 Ağustos 1331 (2 September 1915), 2.

¹¹² "Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi himayesinde Şişli Milli İnas Mektebi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Ağustos 1332 (1 September 1916), 2

¹¹³ Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütfü*, 48-49.

¹¹⁴ "Hanımlara konferans: Osmanlı Maarif Cemiyeti'nden," *Tanin*, 25 Teşrinievvel 1329 (7 November 1913), 4.

¹¹⁵ "Wohltätigkeitskonzert," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. März 1914, 2. "Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1. See also "Die türkischen Frauengesellschaften," *Die Welt des Islams*, II, 1, 1914, 20-21.

¹¹⁶ "La Société de bienfaisance des dames ottomans," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27. Oktober 1917, 3; "Şişli Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi himayesinde...", *Vakit*, 6 Eylül/September 1918, 2; Özverim, *Mustafa Kemal ve Corinne Lütfü*, 50.

sewing.¹¹⁷ Moreover, in cases of emergency, the members were asked to make extra contributions in kind or in money, as was the case when they organized materials for the army and the navy. The money they gathered was put into an account at the Selanik Bank. This bank gave them an extra-high interest rate of 15% in 1909, thus creating another source of income.¹¹⁸ A third way of obtaining funds was through the collection of money in the streets. They did this at least once.¹¹⁹

The organization also set up other fund-raising activities. A favourite activity was the organization of fairs. Thus it organized several fairs to finance the school it had founded. The first fair took place from Thursday 5 to Sunday 8 June 1913 under the patronage of the Minister of Education, Şükrü Bey and the military commander of Istanbul, colonel Cemal at the Şişli Hamidiye or Etfal Hastanesi, which also served as a kind of headquarters or clubhouse for the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. According to the habits of the time, which demanded a segregation of male and female activities, the fair was open to women on Thursday and Saturday, while men were able to visit it on Friday and Sunday.¹²⁰ At the fair the goods brought in by the members of the organization, such as hand-made embroideries, were sold as were the articles from other contributors. Furthermore, there was plenty of food and music.¹²¹ The proceeds of this fair amounted to 350 Ottoman pounds.¹²² This first fair was meant to raise the means for starting the school.

Operating a school, however, was expensive and another fair was organized from 30 April until 4 May 1914 also at the Şişli Children's Hospital to further support the school financially. The patron of this fair was the wife of the Minister of Navy, Cemal Pasha, and both the Minister of Interior, Talat Pasha and the Minister of Finance, Cavid Bey paid it a visit.¹²³ This fair aimed at collecting money in order to “establish better conditions for the girls' school in

¹¹⁷ “Hanımlarımızın fedakarlığı,” *Tanin*, 18 Eylül 1325 (1 October 1909), 3.

¹¹⁸ “Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 4 Kanunuevvel 1325 (17 December 1909), 2.

¹¹⁹ “Die Damen der osmanischen Wohltätigkeitsgesellschaft,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. November 1912, 2.

¹²⁰ “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 17 Mayıs 1329 (30 May 1913), 4-5; “Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Tanin*, 20 Mayıs 1329 (2 June 1913), 5.

¹²¹ “Fevkalade bir sergi,” *Tanin*, 23 Mayıs 1329 (5 June 1913), 3.

¹²² Forinne (sic!) Lütfi, “Şerike-yi mesaimiz ...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-13, 12 Teşrinievvel 1329 (25 October 1913), 7.

¹²³ This last fair was referred to in the Ottoman Turkish newspapers as the “Şefkat Pazarı.” Çakır, however, referred to this particular fair as an activity without an organization. E.g. “Şefkat Pazarı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 15; Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, 48-49.

Schisschli (sic!) and to enable it to fulfil its educational tasks satisfactorily.”¹²⁴ The wives of prominent Ottoman officials took the task upon them to assist in the organization of the fair. The wives of Cemal Pasha, the Minister of Navy, of Prins Burhaneddin, of Talat Pasha, the Minister of Interior, of Dr. Akıl Muhtar Pasha, of Muktar Bey, the former ambassador in Athens, the mothers-in-law of both the Ottoman ambassador to Berlin, Mahmud Muhtar Pasha, and Cemal Pasha as well as the latter’s sisters and the daughter of Field Marshal Kasım Pasha were all involved in this activity.¹²⁵ Besides this women’s committee a men’s committee was set up which was presided over by Cemal Pasha, while also the governor of Pera, Süleyman Kani Bey was involved in the organization of the fair.¹²⁶

The members of the committees set to work and successfully asked several business owners to donate goods to be sold during the fair to the benefit of the organization. Several women also made contributions in the form of “Oriental” embroideries and other goods.¹²⁷ The fair was again organized at the Şişli Children’s Hospital, where the organization got several rooms at its disposal. The rooms were decorated *allaturka*, that is, in an oriental fashion, with the help of carpets delivered by the imperial factory in Hereke completed with rare flowers and plants. The military band Ertuğrul provided the music for the occasion.¹²⁸

After having made meticulous preparations, the fair finally opened its doors on Thursday, 30 April 1914 with a speech by Cemal Pasha. He, in turn, left the floor to the Minister of Education, Şükrü Bey, who also praised the works of charity of the Ottoman ladies. Subsequently, Leyla *Hanım*, the president of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, thanked both speakers while she also referred to the self-sacrificing spirit of Ottoman women. After these speeches, the sales started.

¹²⁴ “Die nationale Mädchenschule in Schischli,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. April 1914, 2.

¹²⁵ “Die nationale Mädchenschule in Schischli,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. April 1914, 2.

¹²⁶ “Wohltätigkeitbasar,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. April 1914, 3; “Kermesse au profit de la Société Bienfaisance des dames ottomans,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 19 Avril 1914, 7.

¹²⁷ “Kermesse au profit de la Société Bienfaisance des dames ottomans,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 19 Avril 1914, 7; “Die Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hospital Hamidieh,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 24. April 1914, 2.

¹²⁸ “Die Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hospital Hamidieh,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 24. April 1914, 2; “La grande Kermesse de Bienfaisance,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 24 Avril 1914, 7; “La Kermesse de Chichli,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 30 Avril 1914, 7.



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.

A look at the list of names of women involved in the sales of goods, flowers and refreshments confirms that the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was a real Ottoman organization which had representatives of several of the ethno-religious groups living in the Ottoman Empire amongst its membership. It seems that even some women of non-Ottoman citizenship participated in its activities. This might be one of the reasons that *Osmanischer Lloyd/Lloyd Ottoman* paid so much interest in the activities of this particular organization.¹²⁹ The fair was very successful. The interest shown was so large that the gender segregation which had been planned through the opening of the fair to men and women on different days could not be maintained: women could not be prevented from coming on a day which was initially scheduled for men. Amongst the many visitors were not only high-ranking Ottoman officials and

¹²⁹ “Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hamidien Krankenhaus,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. Mai 1914, 3-4; “La Kermesse de l’hôpital ‘Hamidié,’” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 1 Mai 1914, 7; “Şefkat Pazarı,” *Tanin*, 17 Nisan 1330 (30 April 1914), 5-6; “Şefkat Pazarı: dünkü resmi kuşadı,” *Tanin*, 18 Nisan 1330 (1 May 1914), 3.

their relatives, but also several members of the *Corps Diplomatique*.¹³⁰ On its last day, the Minister of Education, Şükrü Bey, paid another visit to the fair. At that occasion he announced that the school henceforth would fall under the special protection of his Ministry.¹³¹

At both fairs articles were sold which had been donated by the members of the organization or other benefactors. Apart from these articles food and drinks were sold and there was an orchestra to provide the music.¹³² Moreover, at the last fair a lottery was held. Although there is no information on the yield of the first fair, the proceeds of the sales and the lottery at the second fair were considerable: approximately 160 and 300 Ottoman pounds on the first day and second day, respectively. The last two of the in total four days yielded another 350 Ottoman pounds in total.¹³³ Thus, the proceeds of the fair amounted to a sum of approximately 800 Ottoman pounds.¹³⁴

Concerts and lectures were also given to raise money. One such concert for an all-female audience was performed at the school, as mentioned above, in March 1914.¹³⁵ Another concert *cum* lecture in August 1915, however, was featured at the German cultural home, Teutonia. The yields of this activity were explicitly meant to buy materials for the hospital at Nişantaşı and the soldiers in this hospital. The newly arrived “Dr. Kurt Ranitsch aus Dresden” gave a lecture in German using slides, while Mrs Kazim Bey and Mrs. Lütfi Bey played the violin and piano, respectively. Also the Italian musician, piano teacher and composer, Italo Selvelli played some works.¹³⁶ Teutonia was also the place where

¹³⁰ “Der Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hamidieh-Krankenhaus,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. Mai 1914, 2-3; “Die Wohltätigkeitsbasar,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 3. Mai 1914, 3.

¹³¹ “Der Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hamidieh-Krankenhaus,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. Mai 1914, 2; “Şişli Şefkat Pazarı,” *İkdam*, 22 Nisan 1330 (5 May 1914), 4.

¹³² “Fevkalade bir sergi,” *Tanin*, 23 Mayıs 1329 (5 June 1913), 3.

¹³³ “Der Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hamidieh-Krankenhaus,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. Mai 1914, 2-3; “Die Wohltätigkeitsbasar,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 3. Mai 1914, 3; “Der Wohltätigkeitsbasar im Hamidieh-Krankenhaus,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. Mai 1914, 2; “Şişli Şefkat Pazarı,” *İkdam*, 22 Nisan 1330 (5 May 1914), 4.

¹³⁴ “Şefkat Pazarı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 15.

¹³⁵ “Wohltätigkeitskonzert,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. März 1914, 2. “Von der Mädchenschule in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 29. März 1914, 1; See also “Die türkischen Frauengesellschaften,” *Die Welt des Islams*, II, 1, 1914, 20-21.

¹³⁶ “Mecruh gazilerimiz için müsamere,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 Temmuz 1331 (27 July 1915), 2; “Müsamere,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 18 Temmuz 1331 (31 July 1915), 2; “Konferans ve konser,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Temmuz 1331 (4 August 1915), 2; “Grand concert,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 28 Juillet 15, 5; “Für das Krankenhaus in Nischantasch,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. August 1915, 3; “Grand Concert,”

a concert of chamber music was organized in March 1917. German and French pieces were performed by, amongst others, Corinne Lütfi who sang at this concert, while others sang, played the piano, cello and violin.¹³⁷

In June 1916 another concert took place at the Taksim Park, a favourite spot for the organization of such events. According to the first announcement several bands and orchestras were to play. Undertakings to contribute were given by the Naval Band, the Court Orchestra, a gypsy orchestra, while also a salon orchestra of German-Austrian soldiers had gotten permission from its commander to play. While between four and nine o'clock the premises were opened to women alone, men were allowed to join them only after nine.¹³⁸ A committee consisting of the wives of prominent members of Istanbulian high society organized this event which turned into something larger than just a concert: games – with prizes to win – were organized for the children up to twelve years old, a movie was shown (for ladies only), for the smaller children swings and a merry-go-round were available. The main attraction was a “Kiosk de Champagne” which was located in the Taksim Park Bar. The entrance fee was set at 10 *kuruş*.¹³⁹ The same fee was asked for another double concert at the same venue in July 1917. In the afternoon a concert was given which was only accessible to women. Later, in the evening, men could attend another, separate concert.¹⁴⁰ By June 1918, the concert at Taksim Park had become a tradition, as *Tanin* pointed out.¹⁴¹

How much money the contributions and activities yielded remains (yet) unclear. However, it must have been enough to keep the organization, the school and the other charitable activities viable for a period of at least eight years.

Osmanischer Lloyd, 1 Août 1915, 5; For more information on Italo Selvelli see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italo_Selvelli

¹³⁷ “Wohltätigkeitskonzert,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 18. März 1917, 2; “Der Wohlfahrtsverein türkischer Damen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 24. März 1917, 3.

¹³⁸ “Gartenfest,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 21. Juni 1916, 3; “Taksim Bahçesi’nde..” *Tanin*, 9 Haziran 1332 (22 June 1916), 3; “Bahçe eğlencesi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 9 Haziran 1332 (22 June 1916), 2; “Taksim Bahçesi’ndeki eğlence ve konser,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 13 Haziran 1332 (26 June 1916), 2.

¹³⁹ “Das Gartenfest im Taximgarten,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 22. Juni 1916, 3; “Gartenfest,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 22. Juni 1916, 3; “Taksim Bahçesi’ndeki Konser,” *Tanin*, 11 Haziran 1332 (24 June 1916), 2-3.

¹⁴⁰ “Concert au Jardin du Taxim,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 28 Juillet 1917, 4.

¹⁴¹ “Taksim Bahçesi’nde müsamere,” *Tanin*, 30 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, 3. See also “Taksim Bahçesi’nde müsamere,” *Vakit*, 31 Mayıs/May 1918, 2; “Grand garden-Party au Jardin du Taxim,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 1 Juin 1918, 3; “Grosses Gartenfest im Taximgarten,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. Juni 1918, 3; “Le Garden-Party du Taxim,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 4 Juin 1918, 3; “Le Garden-Party du Taxim,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 5 Juin 1918, 3.

Conclusion

The *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was one of the women's organizations on which there is a rich variety of sources available. The reasons for this are, very likely, that the women who participated in its activities belonged to the upper-middle social strata of Istanbul society and that the organization and its activities also drew the attention of the German community living in the Ottoman capital. During the First World War, this organization was, slowly but distinctively, absorbed into the German sphere of influence. It seems that this organization and particularly its educational and cultural activities were actively incorporated into the German *Bildungspolitik* which aimed at the social modernization of the Ottoman Empire through an increase of German influence on the development of educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire. The appointment of Dr. Otto Söhring, who was one of the architects of this policy as the first director of the school, and the consistent report of the activities in the German propaganda newspaper published by the German Embassy *Osmanischer Lloyd* are clear indications of this involvement as are the active involvement of German diplomats and high ranking officials in, for example, the financing of the school founded by the organization and its curriculum.

The activities of the organization form a nice example of the combination of philanthropy, patriotism and feminism discussed before: taking care of wounded soldiers by sewing bandages and night gowns, equipping a hospital, collecting and donating money for several purposes and setting up a girls' school not just to educate the girls for their own benefit, but to raise the educated mothers of a future generation of service for the fatherland.

With this last aim they are typical of the "familial" or "social" feminism referred to in the introductory chapter of this work. The aims, nor the activities of this organization required women to brusquely cross the existing gender boundaries. With their activities, however, the women involved in the organization were able to extend the female realm as it existed. While a part of the activities took place in public and at the same time were made public through the media, the women themselves remained largely secluded. The fairs and concerts were organized in such a way that the two sexes did not have to meet. Even in the press the names of the women involved were not mentioned: they were indicated by the names of their husbands or fathers, respectively. Thus, they allowed women to become public while remaining in a separate all-female sphere at the same time. They would have crossed the gender lines if they

had actually nursed wounded soldiers. However, it is not clear whether the Ottoman Muslim members of the organization were actually participating in this.¹⁴²

The organization seems to have been rather inclusionary: it had members coming from the various ethno-religious communities living in Istanbul. The active board and the organizing committees, however, were in majority formed by wives of Ottoman Muslim officials. Whether or not they were Muslim themselves is not clear in all cases. The wife and daughters of Luigi Tercüman are the only women mentioned by name who belonged clearly to a non-Muslim family. However, both daughters were married to Muslims as well. In the sources available a more comprehensive list of members is lacking, but occasionally the names of non-Muslim women occur.

When the organization was dissolved remains unclear. It is very likely, though, that with the final defeat of Germany and the Ottoman Empire in October 1918, the organization was closed down or became defunct. At least it disappeared from the media.¹⁴³

¹⁴² See for a more elaborate discussion of women and nursing Chapter Thirteen.

¹⁴³ The police report of 1922 indeed remarks that the organization is by that time “inactive.” BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).