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

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CHAPTER EIGHT

*“Müstehlik değil Müstahsil”: Not Consumers, but Producers.**

Becoming conscious, patriotic consumers was, for urban Ottoman Muslim women, one way they could actively support the Ottoman economy, another was to become producers. As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman Empire, during the nineteenth century had, in fact, de-industrialized. It had become the supplier of raw materials for the rapidly developing industries in Europe but at the main time also one of the major markets for their products, including cotton textiles. Due to the international division of labour thus created, it had become “a nonmanufacturing country” as it was referred to in a 1908 American report on the possibilities offered by the “Turkish” market for American textile producers.¹ Or, the Ottoman Empire had become a consumer of goods produced by the Europeans.

While as Ottomans they were perceived to be non-producers, as Muslim women belonging to the urban well-to-do they were also destined to refrain from any productive activity. As in most western cultures at that time, the ideal division within a household was that its males earned the income to provide the women and their off-spring with sufficient means to buy the goods they needed. In exchange for their (financial) support, the women would take care of feeding, dressing, and raising the family, and thus spending the money the males earned properly. The quality and quantity of the expenditures made by women in the household partly determined the status of the (male) head of the family.² So

* Parts of this chapter were published previously: Nicole A.N.M. van Os, “Müstehlik değil müstahsil (producers, not consumers): Ottoman Muslim women and Milli İktisat,” in: Kemal Çiçek, et al. (eds) *The Great Ottoman- Turkish Civilization*, [4 Vol], Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000, Vol 2, 269-275.

¹ W.A. Graham Clark, *Cotton Textile Trade in Turkish Empire, Greece, and Italy*, [Washington, DC]; Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Manufactures, 1908, 11-47, quotation 18. [Accessed through www.archive.org]

² See e.g. the work by Thorstein Veblen published in 1899 on this topic. Thorstein B. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Fairfield, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1991 [reprint of original: New York: Macmillan, 1899].

while men produced and, of course, also consumed goods, women were ideally limited to consumption only.

In the perception of an Ottoman, however, the international division of labour and gender were not the only decisive features in making one a consumer or a producer, but also someone's ethno-religious background. While within a household one's role was determined by gender, within the larger "household" of the Empire, being a Muslim or a non-Muslim was felt to have determined one's role of consumer or producer: as mentioned in Chapter Five, while the Ottoman Muslim (male) population was mainly engaged in the pursuit of a political, bureaucratic or military career, their non-Muslim counterparts became dominant in the financing, trading and manufacturing sectors in the main coastal cities.³ The former were supposedly spending the state income, the latter earning it.

While the adherents of *Milli İktisat* originally directed their attention to ending the international division of labour, this situation of a division of labour *between* the ethno-religious groups within the Ottoman Empire became a thorn in the side of the adherents of the second form of national economy: that which wished to bring an end to this situation by creating a division of labour *within* the ethno-religious groups of the Empire. This stream of national economic thought gained, in particular, ground, as mentioned, during and in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars of 1912 - 1913.

In this chapter, the fight of Ottoman Muslim women against the multi-layered "division of labour" is described and analyzed. It shows how the multiple identities of Ottoman Muslim women, as women, as Ottomans and as Muslims, framed this fight. It shows how Ottoman Muslim women discussed how and why they should throw off their predetermined status of consumers and how Ottoman Muslim women belonging to the urban middle and upper socio-economic strata got increasingly engaged in patriotic economic activities which not only represented a shift in their multiple identities but also constituted them.

³ Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*; Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey*. Donald Quataert, however, points out that in the provincial towns of Anatolia trade remained in the hands of the Turkish Muslim population. Quataert, "The Age of Reforms: Manufacturing."

Discussing Women's Work

In Ottoman Turkish publications of the second decade of the twentieth century several arguments can be found in favor of women's working. Although some of the arguments were related to the individual needs of women and their families, most arguments in favor of an active participation in economic life for women put the need of the fatherland or the nation at the forefront.

Several (male) authors pointed out that a nation of which half the population lived an idle life would not be able to compete with those in which the whole population was economically active. The author Macid Şevket, who was one of the main editors of the women's periodical *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı* (Light of the Home of Knowledge), for example, argued there was constant competition between countries in the civilized world. This competition forced them to at least follow their neighbours or to even try to surpass them. Thus progress was guaranteed. Therefore, work was not a matter of choice, but a duty for every nation, he wrote. It was a duty not only for half the nation, but for the whole nation, including its women.⁴ In his words, the positivist ideas of the Young Turks and their belief in progress, evolution and civilization were cast in economic terms.

Authors in *Kadınlar Dünyası* agreed on the importance of economic development for catching up with civilization or at least for not being crushed by other civilized nations. In an article in *Kadınlar Dünyası* an author named Aliye Cevad Asım argued that for political independence, economic independence was required. A nation that was lacking economic independence was doomed to remain the slave of the economically stronger nations.⁵ She and Belkıs Şevket agreed that the pillars on which a healthy economy - and thus a healthy, progressive nation - was based were agriculture, trade and industry, and manufacturing. Women should become active in these fields, either independently or as partners of their husbands. Girls and their parents, therefore, should prefer merchants or manufacturers above civil servants or military officers as their husbands or sons-in-law, respectively. The latter after all were only spending the money of the state and not really contributing anything, they added.⁶

⁴ Macid Şevket, "Mesail-i ictimaiyeden: kadınlarımızın çalıştırması," *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı*, 2, 15 Mayıs 1333 (28 May 1917), 22-25.

⁵ Aliye Cevad Asım, "Çocukları hayata hazırlamak - 3," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 114, 19 Teşrinievvel 1329 (1 November 1913), 13-14.

⁶ Aliye Cevad, "Ziraat ve ticaret ve sanayi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 107, 31 Ağustos 1329 (13 September 1913), 6-8; Belkıs Şevket, "Ticaret ve sanatta kadın - 5," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 113, 12

Belkıs Şevket reiterated this idea of hers in an interview she gave to the Armenian journalist Cardashian:

The decadence of the Turkish State is due to many factors. The two principal ones among these are the indolence of our men and the uselessness of our women, for both of which the men are directly responsible. The curse of indolence has so strongly entrenched itself in the makeup of our men that the only occupation they want to pursue is to serve the State.⁷

Halide Edib, however, is hopeful of women's role in improving the economic situation. She lashed out to a male author who asked the question "what do women want?" in an article in *Tanin* appearing in October 1913 and wrote:

Since men [i.e. Ottoman Muslim men, NvO] do not have any position in the economic life of this country where women [i.e. Ottoman Muslim women, NvO] have the lowest position, women will surpass them very fast once they start to contribute to the economy.⁸

These arguments fitted in well with the efforts to make an end to the division of labour between the ethno-religious groups and replace it by a division of labour within the ethno-religious groups as, for example, Ziya Gökalp favored.⁹ Moreover, in the ideas of the two women the ideas of the CUP regarding the national economy are reflected: the idea that civil servants in general were not contributing to the economic prosperity of a country, but, on the contrary, meant a drain on it had taken root.

Another argument to support women's labour was that the socially and religiously desirable situation of a male breadwinner, who would earn sufficient money to sustain his family, might not always be realized. The designated male breadwinner's pay might be too low to provide for all his dependents or he might be absent for a longer period. Women, therefore, needed to be trained and educated in such a way that they would be able to earn a decent income, when necessary. Although this argument had been used before, the Balkan Wars and the subsequent "Great War" with their large scale mobilization and high death

Teşrinievvel 1329 (26 October 1913), 6-7. See Çakır, *Osmanlı kadın hareketi*, 264-300 for more examples.

⁷ Cardashian, "Two Turkish Suffragettes on 'Harem'," quotation 97. Note the use of the term "Turkish State." The interview was probably conducted in Turkish and it remains unclear what term was used in the original language.

⁸ "Kadınlar ne istiyor?" *Tanin*, 4 Teşrinievvel 1329 (17 October 1913), 2.

⁹ Toprak, *Milli İktisat - Milli Burjuvazi*, 18-19.

toll made this argument more compelling than ever as several chapters in this volume show. Although women who were forced to accept a job because of these practical reasons could be coming from all socio-economic strata,¹⁰ the authors and the readers of the women's periodicals, who presumably belonged to the educated urban relatively well-to-do, were not likely to fall into such a situation. However, they also felt that they, as active citizens had the duty to leave their inertia behind and become economically active.

Rural versus Urban Economy

While agriculture was mentioned as one of the sectors in which women should get active, most interest was shown in the more urban sectors of trading and the manufacturing, also the focus of the CUP government in its efforts to increase the involvement of Muslims in the Ottoman economy. The Ottoman Muslim, educated, urban middle-class women whose writings appeared in the women's journals such as *Kadınlar Dünyası*, developed a two way strategy to feminize and nationalize the Ottoman urban economy at the same time: the number of Ottoman Muslim women in jobs which were formerly occupied by men or by non-Muslim women increased through the conscious efforts of Ottoman Muslim women themselves supported by the measures taken by the CUP authorities. And Ottoman Muslim women who had some capital got organized to become investors and managers of workplaces where they employed Ottoman Muslim women and girls with little or no means.

The importance of women for agriculture in the context of the national economy and, of course, the war economy was also recognized by the Ottoman government. Edhem Nejat and the other Turkish nationalist authors in the periodical *Yeni Fikir* (New Idea), which was actually a periodical for teachers, stressed the importance of the Anatolian peasants and farmers for the Turkish nation. In their publications they also explicitly referred to the role of women in rural societies and agriculture.¹¹ The Ministry of Public Education, for example,

¹⁰ See e.g. Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Konak hanımlığından askeri dikimevi işçiliğine..... Bir Müslüman Osmanlı Kadının Hikâyesi," *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXXIX, 231, 2003, 4-10. This article is based on the (Turkish translation of the) book by İrfan Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, London: Eland, 1993 [1st published 1950].

¹¹ See e.g. Belkis İclal, "Macaristan'da kadınlığı ve ziraat tahsili," *Yeni Fikir*, I, 3, 15 Şubat 1327 (28 February 1911), 65-69; Belkis İclal, "Ziraat ve evhanımlığı mektebi," *Yeni Fikir*, II, 12, Haziran 1329 (June-July 1913), 381-388.

published a series of booklets especially for women which aimed at teaching them how to make certain agricultural products, such as dairy products,¹² silk,¹³ honey,¹⁴ bread and starch,¹⁵ and rose-oil.¹⁶ Moreover, women were explicitly included in the (provisionary) Law on Agricultural Duty, which was issued in September 1916 and which aimed at stimulating the agricultural production to provide army and civilians with sufficient food as shown in Chapter Eleven.

The authors in the women's periodicals seem to have had little interest in the women in the more rural areas of the empire and their activities. Only if their presumed activities supported the arguments of the authors in these periodicals were they referred to. Thus in the articles the Ottoman Muslim women living and working in the villages of Anatolia and their commercial and productive activities were used to show that religion as such was not an impediment to work and that women could work and trade. The Muslim women of villages on the Black Sea coast¹⁷ and in Anatolia¹⁸ who established their own, all-female markets were mentioned as examples not of industriousness for their work in the fields, but of female commercial entrepreneurship. This was not surprising: it was unlikely that the authors of *Kadınlar Dünyası* or any of the other women's periodicals themselves thought of getting involved in agricultural work. They were looking for more "urban" and more educated ways to become economically active, both as individuals as well as in joint efforts.

¹² Onnik İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: Sütçülük, Tereyağcılık ve Peynircilik Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1331; Onnik İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: Tavukçuluk Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1331.

¹³ [Onnik] İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: İpekçilik Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1331.

¹⁴ [Onnik] İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: Arıcılık Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1331.

¹⁵ [Onnik] İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: Ekmek ve Nişastacılık Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1331.

¹⁶ [Onnik] İhsan, *Kadınlara Ameli Sanayi-i Ziraiye Dersleri: Gül Yağcılık Sanatı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332. It is not clear which women the Ministry aimed to reach with these booklets. Women in the rural areas were in large majority illiterate. Was it perhaps trying to reach the women living in the smaller towns who had given up their agricultural activities?

¹⁷ Atiye Şükran, "Kadınlar ne için mağaza açamazlar?" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 60, 2 Haziran 1329 (15 June 1913), 1-2.

¹⁸ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, "İktisadiyatta müslüman kadını," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 149, 28 Haziran 1330 (11 July 1914), 2.

Women as White Collar Workers

The nationalist economic policy followed by the CUP and the large scale draft of able-bodied men during the continuous wars of especially the second decade of the nineteenth century, opened ample opportunities for individual Ottoman Muslim women with some degree of education to occupy positions which they had never held before.

One branch in which women started to be employed during the 1910s was that of communication: telephone, post and telegraph. Ottoman women had been working in functions in the foreign owned telephone offices before. Mostly, however, these women had been non-Muslims. It lasted until 1913 before the first Ottoman Muslim women, amongst whom Bedra Osman and Bedia Muvahhit, who became a famous actress later, were able to enter the British-French-American owned telephone company. This was only possible after the Ottoman Muslim women who were interested in such a position and the editors of the women's periodical *Kadınlar Dünyası* joined forces in raising public awareness.

In April 1913 the Telephone Company published an advertisement announcing that it was looking for female telephone operators. Stimulated by the women around *Kadınlar Dünyası* Bedra Osman and four lady friends of hers applied. They were, however, rejected on no other ground than that they were Ottoman Muslims. They instigated an action which in the first place was nationalist in the sense that it fulminated against the foreign companies, which declined to work with Ottoman Muslim women, and which in the second place was feminist in the sense that it involved an effort to introduce these Muslim women to a new kind of job: a job that could not just be done by any woman, but for which some kind of educational background was needed.¹⁹ This meant that it formed the opening to a job for middle-class, educated, Ottoman Muslim women outside journalism or teaching and private tutoring.²⁰

The First World War with its mass mobilization of the male working force²¹ combined with the measures taken by the Ottoman government to nationalize

¹⁹ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Dersââdet Telefon Anonim Şirket-i Osmâniyesi ve Müslüman Osmanlı Kadın Telefon Memureleri (1913)*, İstanbul: Türk Telekom, 2008.

²⁰ *Kadınlar Dünyası* formed one of the platforms in which women offered their services as tutors to other women through advertisements. Pelin Başcı, "Advertising modernity in Women's World: Women's Lifestyle and Leisure in Late-Ottoman İstanbul," *Hawwa*, II, 1, 2004, 34-63.

²¹ According to Yalman more than a million men aged between twenty and forty-five had to report to the enlistments' authorities when the order of mobilization was issued on 2 August 1914.

the economy accelerated the entrance of educated urban Ottoman Muslim women to white collar jobs. One of the measures taken to nationalize the economy was the prohibition of other languages but Turkish as means of communication for all companies, including foreign ones, in the Ottoman Empire in March 1916. In many of the foreign and non-Muslim companies French had been the main means of communication until that date. Many of the employees of these foreign and non-Muslim companies, male and female, were themselves foreign or belonging to the non-Muslim communities. With this measure the Ottoman Government hoped to create work for Ottoman Muslims while meanwhile the control over these companies became easier to establish. Although some of the foreign companies closed down due the circumstances, others indeed Turkified their activities. This meant that they had to hire personnel who were able to correspond in Turkish.²² Thus new opportunities were opened for those Turkish speaking Ottoman Muslim women who had had some education.

In 1917 the Ministry of Education decided that a special course taught in Turkish should be opened for girls in order to prepare them for work at trading companies, banks and other private enterprises. The School of Commerce (*Ticaret Mektebi*), therefore, opened a special branch for girls, the *Kız Ameli Ticaret Şubesi* (Practical Commercial Branch for Girls) at the Women's University in September 1917. The program of this school lasted one year, was free of charge and was, as the name shows, aimed at teaching practical skills. The curriculum existed of the following subjects: general commercial knowledge, typewriting, book keeping, Turkish, French to such a level that they could read the numbers and characters, and calculation. Women could be prepared for the entrance exam at *Bilgi Yurdu* (Home of Knowledge), an organization founded in 1916 by the Director of Primary Education at the Ministry of Education and aiming at educating women who for one reason or another had not had such an opportunity before.²³ The interest for these courses was so large – more than 100

Although the mobilization went far from smoothly, the Ottomans were able to set up an army of just below 800,000 at maximum at any time during the war according to Zürcher. The total of soldiers serving during the whole war was estimated to be twice as much, 1,6 million. Ahmed Emin [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930, 107; Erik Jan Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I," *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques*, 28, 1996, 235-258.

²² Toprak, *Türkiye'de 'Milli İktisat'*, 79-80.

²³ "Kadın Ticaret Şubesi," *Bilgi Yurdu Işığ*, 7, 15 Teşrinievvel 1333 (28 October 1917), 110; "Türkische Damen als Kontoristinnen!" *Der Neue Orient*, II, 1, Oktober 1917, 19; "Progrès de la

women applied –, that the directors considered opening a second class.²⁴ A few months after the courses started, in January 1918, the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi* decided to place some students attending this course in financial and commercial institutions to give them the opportunity to get some experience.²⁵ By that time 160 Muslim women were attending the courses.²⁶ In June 1918, fifty eight of them finished the course and received their certificates. One of them could start working immediately at the Hungarian Bank.²⁷ At the end of the summer, a new course was started, but this time the course took place in Beyoğlu, since a fire had destroyed most of old Istanbul including the school's building.²⁸ Meanwhile, in July 1918, *Bilgi Yurdu* itself had started commercial classes in order to educate women who wanted to work at a trading company, or who wanted to go into business themselves.²⁹

While the Ottoman government stimulated the education of potential female assistants, the Ottoman authorities started to employ Ottoman Turkish women in their offices as white collar workers. Although a part of the civil servants in principle were exempted from military service, the ongoing war led to a shortage of workforce in this sector, too. Women had been working in public service before the First World War as midwives, prison guards or teachers. During the First World War, however, new positions as civil servants were opened to them. The Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone started to hire Ottoman Muslim

question féminine,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 11 Septembre 1917, 3; “Die handelswirtschaftliche Erziehung der mohammedanischen Frauen,” *Der Neue Orient*, II, 6/7, Januar 1918, 295; Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, İstanbul: Eser Neşriyat ve Dağıtım, 1977, 1146-1147. For information on the foundation of the *Bilgi Yurdu* see Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, “Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii,” *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116. In September 1917 a similar institution with the same name was founded in Bursa. “Brussa’da Bilgi Yurdu,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 26 Eylül/September 1917, 2.

²⁴ “Enseignement commercial aux filles,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 25 Septembre 1917, 3.

²⁵ “Les femmes dans la commerce,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 21 Janvier 1918, 3; “Die türkische Frau im Handelsberuf,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 22. Januar 1918, 3.

²⁶ “Das Fest der Handelsschule,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Januar 1918, 3; “La fête de l’école commerciale,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 15 Janvier 1918, 3..

²⁷ “Maarif şuuunu: ticaret mekteb-i alisi kız şubesi mezuneleri,” *Muallim*, 23, 15 Haziran/June 1334/1918, 828.

²⁸ “Ticaret Mektebi inas şubesi,” *Vakit*, 23 Eylül/September 1918, 2; “Die Handelsschule für Frauen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. September 1918, 3. In January 1919, it moved back to old Istanbul, to a building “across from Sultan Ahmed Park.” “Ticaret Mektebi açılıyor,” *Vakit*, 5 Kanunusani/January 1919, 2.

²⁹ “Hanımlara meccanen,” *Tanin*, 14 Haziran/June 1334/1918, 4; “Ticaret dersleri,” *Bilgi Yurdu Işıği*, 15, Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 252; “Bilgi Yurdu’nda,” *Türk Kadını*, 3, 20 Haziran/June 1334/1918, 47.

women by July 1914. Moreover, Feride Yaver was not employed in a back office, but very publicly, at a counter selling stamps.³⁰ In March 1916, women were asked to apply as controllers for the postal distribution center. The conditions were that they had to be eighteen, unmarried and that they had to have had at least finished middle school. Their salary was to be 400 *kuruş* per month.³¹ The Ministry of Finance hired women under the same preconditions as switchboard operators and secretaries on a monthly and daily base, the prefecture of Istanbul hired eight “Turkish” women paying them a salary of 400-500 *kuruş*, while women also started to be employed at the Court of Audit getting a monthly salary of 600 *kuruş*.³² In an ad of the Ministry of Post and Telegraph published in October 1917, both men and women were explicitly invited to apply to work at the post and telegraph offices in and around (old) Istanbul. The salary they would receive was not mentioned, but the candidates had to be able to write and read Turkish and to preferably also read Latin characters.³³ The *Bilgi Yurdu* eagerly offered to assist those women who wanted to apply for such jobs but lacked the skills needed. When the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture, for example, announced that it was looking for female scribes (*katibe*) who could translate from Turkish to French and *vice versa*, the *Bilgi Yurdu* announced that it offered courses for those women who wanted to apply.³⁴

Thus by the time the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, decided to establish an organization to employ women, the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*³⁵, in the summer of 1916, the employment of Ottoman Muslim women in white collar jobs had gained ground. When the number of women applying to the organization exceeded his expectations, therefore, Enver Pasha did not hesitate

³⁰ Aziz Haydar, “Kadınlığın yeni bir hatvesi daha,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 152, 19 Temmuz 1330 (1 August 1914), 4; Feride Yaver, “Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti aza-yı muhterimesinden Aziz Haydar Hanım Efendi’ye,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 155, 6 Kanunuevvel 1330 (190 January 1915), 7.

³¹ N.O., “Einstellung von Frauen in den Postdienst,” *Die Welt des Islams*, III, 3/4, 25 März 1916, 249; Lorenz, *Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche*, 68; Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, 85.

³² “Die Frau im Staatsdienst,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. April 1917, 3; “Weibliche Beamten,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10. April 1917, 3; “Weibliche Beamten,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. April 1917, 3; “Şehr-i emanetinde kadın memurlar,” *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, 53, 26 Nisan/April 1333/1917, 7; Lorenz, *Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche*, 69.

³³ “Erkek ve kadın memur aranıyor,” *Tanin*, 10 Teşrinievvel/October 1333/1917, 4. See also “Les femmes dans le service télégraphique,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 10 Juin 1918, 3.

³⁴ “Katibe aranıyor,” *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı*, I, 6, 15 Eylül/September 1917, backcover. It also offered courses at several levels for those women who wanted to start working as vaccinator. “Hanımlara,” *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı*, I, 6, 15 Eylül/September 1917, backcover.

³⁵ See Chapter Eleven.

to ask his colleagues at the Ministries of Interior and Education whether they perhaps had positions which could be filled by those applicants with some level of education.³⁶ The organization itself also employed women in administrative functions. The books of the organization were kept by two women, Mürüvvet and Saadet, while also the administrative staff of the women's battalion it established later consisted of educated women.³⁷ By December 1917 the *Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Protection of Children) explicitly invited properly educated women to apply for the positions of secretary and registrar offering the relatively high salary of 500-600 *kuruş*,³⁸ while the *Esirgeme Derneği* and the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* announced one day later that it was willing to pay 1,000 *kuruş* to the new, female director of the *Sanaat Evi* (House of Handicrafts) to be established.³⁹ A few days later, the Red Crescent did not hesitate to explicitly ask for a female bookkeeper, either.⁴⁰

By January 1918 *Die Neue Türkei* stated that more than a thousand “Turkish” women and girls were working as officers in either public or private institutions.⁴¹ The number of female white collar workers was obviously so substantial that the “Committee against Hoarding” issued special ration-cards for shoes for “women in government offices, the telephone, tram or electricity company and similar public offices” in that month.⁴² According to *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the telephone company alone, for example, was by that time employing 90 women of whom 85 were Ottoman Muslims.⁴³

By that time, the argument to employ Ottoman Muslim women in white collar jobs because of nationalist economic reasons was replaced by the argument that women had to replace the men on the battle field.⁴⁴ The importance of the participation of women in trade and commerce for economic development in general, however, continued to be used. A short note in *Tanin*

³⁶ BOA, DH.KMS, 42/10, 17 Muharrem 1335 (14 November 1916); BOA, Maarif Nezareti, Mektubi Kalemi (hereafter, MF.MKT), 1220/74, 22 Muharrem 1335 (19 November 1916).

³⁷ *Devletlü İsmetlü Naciye Sultan hazretlerinin zir-i himayelerinde Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi 1333 senesi raporu*, İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1334, 7. For more information on the *Kadın Birinci İşçi Taburu* see Chapter Eleven.

³⁸ “Katibe aranıyor,” *Tanin*, 26 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2; “Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyet-i Umumiyesi Katib-i Umumiye’lik’ten,” *Vakit*, 25 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2.

³⁹ “Bin kuruş maaşla...” *Tanin*, 27 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2.

⁴⁰ “Memure aranıyor,” *Tanin*, 10 Kanunusani/January 1918, 2.

⁴¹ “Die Türkin als Ärtzin und Beamtin,” *Die Neue Türkei*, II, 6/7, Januar 1918, 283.

⁴² “Memur hanımlara ayakkabı,” *Vakit*, 22 Kanunusani/January 1918, 2.

⁴³ “Havadis-i dünya,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 164, 9 Mart 1918, 10.

⁴⁴ “Die kaufmännische Bildung der türkischen Frau,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. Mai 1918, 3.

on female white collar workers in Britain who were supposedly expected to leave their newly acquired positions to the men when they would return from the war,⁴⁵ evoked a reaction from Hüseyin Ragıb [Baydur]. In the two lengthy feature articles he wrote, he did not refer to the war at all, but argued that women's household chores had diminished over time and that especially the women living in the city had only three options to fill in the spare time now left to them: work outside the home, in factories, trading companies and other commercial institutions, and contribute to the household and national budget, philanthropic activities in one of the many organizations or go shopping. While he approved of the first two activities, he, of course, made clear that he resented the last option.⁴⁶

Although the employment of urban, educated women in white collar positions in commercial companies and as civil servants was applauded, the women writing in the Ottoman women's periodicals wanted more than that. They felt that women should set up businesses of their own as well.

Female Entrepreneurs

Kadınlar Dünyası, besides pointing at the commercial activities of women in Anatolia and on the Black Sea coast, also published the success stories of entrepreneurial women in a more urban context. It featured the story of a woman who originally had had several workshops in Dedeâğaç (today's Alexandroupoulos) where women under her leadership sewed uniforms for the army, and who after the loss of that territory to Greece in the Balkan war had opened a catering shop in Kadıköy.⁴⁷

Another author in the same periodical referred to Europe, where, according to her, even women of the higher social strata were used to earning their own money. She suggested that Ottoman women should follow their example and should open a teahouse in Beyoğlu for women coming from outside town. This teahouse should be staffed by women.⁴⁸ Just before she wrote this, incidentally,

⁴⁵ "Kadınların harbtan sonra memuriyet hayatları," *Tanin*, 17 Teşrinisani/November 1333/1917, 3.

⁴⁶ Hüseyin Ragıb, "İstikbalın kadını -1-," *Tanin*, 24 Teşrinisani/November 1333/1917, 3; Hüseyin Ragıb, "İstikbalın kadını -2-," *Tanin*, 10 Kanunuevvel/December 1333/1917, 3.

⁴⁷ Süreyya Lütfi, "Efendim," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 38, 11 Mayıs 1329 (24 May 1914), 4.

⁴⁸ Rudi Telli, "Efkar-ı münevvere sahibi hanımlara," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 133, 1 Mart 1330 (14 March 1914), 2-3.

an Ottoman – and presumably Muslim – woman had indeed taken such an initiative, which had not gone unnoticed in the Ottoman (women's) press.

On 20 February 1914 a pastry shop for women had been opened by a woman called Seyide Kemal. This initiative was applauded in several newspapers and periodicals, including *Kadınlar Dünyası* and *Tanin*. In the latter publication, the author of the news stressed that it was common knowledge that they were always pleased to see that women were fulfilling their social duties. The author of the article in the former periodical placed this initiative in a more general context. She pointed out that an important step for nations (*milletler*) on the way to civilization was to establish companies, organizations and similar institutions. The author of this article stressed that there was still much to be done on this subject for the Ottomans (*Osmanlılık*), but that this need finally had been recognized. Moreover, places where women could sit and rest were lacking,⁴⁹ she wrote. In her opinion, the pastry shop of Seyide *hanım* located in an “Islamic establishment” (*islam müessesesi*), therefore, was not only helping womankind, but also constituted a step towards civilization.⁵⁰ The opening of this shop was, thus, thought worthwhile mentioning in the overview of the first year's activities of the periodical as one of the achievements of Ottoman Muslim womankind.⁵¹

In *Kadınlık*, furthermore, a reference was made to a woman, a refugee from Thessalonica, who had set up a dressmakers' workshop in Beşiktaş.⁵² The same periodical featured a photograph of two young Muslim women, which had been published in *Servet-i Fünun* a few months earlier.⁵³ The two women were learning the profession of dressmaker from their father, and, according to the

⁴⁹ This is not completely true, though. In an article by Ahmed Şerif on the deteriorating morals of women, the author was wagging his finger at the women who at Fridays and Sundays frequented the tea gardens, coffeehouses and theatres reserved for women in Kurbağlıdere (Kadıköy) at the Asian side of town. “Der “Sinin” vom Sonntag...,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27. Juni 1911, 2.

⁵⁰ “Kadın pastahanesi,” *Tanin*, 6 Şubat 1329 (19 February 1914), 3; “Kadınlıkta teşebbüs-ü şahsi: Seyide Kemal hanımefendi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 130, 8 Şubat 1329 (21 February 1914), 12. See also e.g. *Halka Doğru* and *Kadınlık*: “Kadınlar Pastahanesi,” *Halka Doğru*, 46, 20 Şubat 1329 (5 March 1914), 368; B. Advîye Sıdkı, “Musahebe: kadınlıkta fikr-i teşebbüs,” *Kadınlık*, 4, 27 Mart 1330 (9 April 1914), 3-4. The latter, in turn, referred to an article in the daily *Sabah* by Mahmud Sadık.

⁵¹ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Birinci sene-i devriye münasebetiyle,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 138, 4 Nisan 1330 (17 April 1914), 7.

⁵² B. Advîye Sıdkı, “Musahebe: kadınlıkta fikr-i teşebbüs,” *Kadınlık*, 4, 27 Mart 1330 (9 April 1914), 3-4.

⁵³ “Müslüman terzilerimizden Osman Zeki Bey'in kerimeleri,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1183, 23 Kanunusani 1329 (5 February 1914), 309.

subtitle, constituted a view of hope and pride and “a first step towards trade and entrepreneurship.”⁵⁴

These examples inspired other women writing in, for example, *Kadınlar Dünyası* to take the initiative to call upon their readers to set up a workshop where other women – those in need of an income – could be employed.⁵⁵ Setting up a workshop, however, was not easy for a single person. The solution was sought in cooperation of more women in such a project. Thus, the women writing in *Kadınlar Dünyası* picked up on the debates on corporatism of Ottoman intellectuals such as Edhem Nejat and Muhittin (Birgen), appropriated this form of economic development and gave it a distinctive feminine form.⁵⁶

Several letters appeared in *Kadınlar Dünyası* in which women were called upon to take such a joint initiative. Recognizing that it was difficult for one woman to gather the necessary capital to set up a workshop, Atiye Şükran suggested that, for example, ten women of a neighbourhood should get together and create a fund by depositing five *liras* each. This fund should be used as a starting capital for a workshop: the rent for a building should be paid with it, the purchase of machinery – in her example machines for knitting socks or shirts – and the raw materials – in this case yarn.⁵⁷ That she addressed women of a rather high social stratum is clear from the five *lira* deposit she suggested. In 1913 five *liras*, 540 *kuruş*, was a considerable investment, by far exceeding the monthly salary of women of the working class and even of most male civil servants.⁵⁸ Although Atiye Şükran call on women to contribute and set up a joint stock company was praised by other authors in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, it seems that her

⁵⁴ “Şayan-ı tebrik iki hemşire-i azim ve teşebbüs,” *Kadınlık*, 4, 27 Mart 1330 (9 April 1914), 8. By writing this, the authors and editors of these women’s periodicals ignored the fact that Ottoman Muslim women had been entrepreneurs for a long time in Ottoman history.

⁵⁵ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Terzilik,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 66, 8 Haziran 1329 (21 June 1913), 1; *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Terzi evi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 72, 14 Haziran 1329 (27 June 1913), 1; *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “İş evleri,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-5, 17 Ağustos (30 August 1913), 2.

⁵⁶ Toprak, *Türkiye’de ‘Milli İktisat’*, 211-232.

⁵⁷ Atiye Şükran, “Bir müteşebbis daha,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 33, 6 Mayıs 1329 (19 May 1913), 2; Atiye Şükran, “Çoraba, fanilaya iplik lazım,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 38, 11 Mayıs 1329 (24 May 1913), 2; Atiye Şükran, “240 mecdidiye ile bir ticaret kapısı!,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 61, 3 Haziran 1329 (16 June 1913), 1-2.

⁵⁸ The information on salaries is scarce, but it is possible to get an idea by looking at the salaries for civil servants in 1915/16 as given by Vedat Eldem. More than 65% of the civil servants in 1915/16 earned less than 500 *kuruş* per month. Vedat Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Ekonomisi*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1994, 98.

call to start a joint company to set up such a workshop remained without result.⁵⁹

While an increasing number of individual Ottoman Muslim women of the urban middle class thus found employment in commercial enterprises owned by others or themselves, it seems that the number of women who successfully engaged in joint commercial activities remained limited. Instead Ottoman Muslim women belonging to those socio-economic strata which seem to have been less hit by the effects of continuous wars, got engaged in women's organizations through which they set up charity workshops which enabled them to kill two birds with one stone: they strengthened the national economy while they, at the same time, supported a large number of poor and destitute women and girls.

Combining Charity and Economic Patriotism

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the wish to contribute to the strengthening of the national economy inspired several women to set up women's organizations. Some of these women's organizations aimed at providing the fashionable Ottoman ladies with the possibility to be dressed in a toilet made of locally produced fabrics. One of the other requirements for a national dress was that it should be made by Ottoman Muslim hands. According to the publications of those days, however, the number of skilled Ottoman Muslim dressmakers and seamstresses was limited which meant that to facilitate the conscious, patriotic consumers of the previous chapter the number of Ottoman Muslim dressmakers and seamstresses had to be increased. This led some of the women's organizations to get involved in the opening of (charity) workshops where impoverished Ottoman Muslim women and girls were taught to become dressmakers. By initiating and supporting the education of the much needed "producers" the Ottoman Muslim women of the urban elite raised the dressmakers they lacked to become true patriotic consumers of truly "national" products.

The *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, for example, not only aimed at stimulating the use of locally produced goods, but also educated poor Turkish Muslim girls to become seamstresses, an aim which thus

⁵⁹ See e.g. Leman Aziz, "Muhterem hocacığım," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 34, 7 Mayıs 1329 (20 May 1913), 3; Süreyya Lütfi, "Efendim," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 38, 11 Mayıs 1329 (24 May 1913), 4.

proved to be more than only charitable.⁶⁰ Similarly, the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*, arguing that the “foreign” seamstresses and dressmakers asked extremely high prices for their services, asked its members who were deft at using needle and thread to assist them in the education of young girls to become seamstresses. Towards the end of the First World War, the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*, moreover also announced the opening of its own “fashion salon” (*moda salonu*).⁶¹ Quite successful was a group of women in Kastamonu: they set up an *Osmanlı Hanımlar İş Yurdu* (Ottoman Ladies’ Workshop) where women could learn the skills to earn a living if necessary, but also to “stimulate the local production and consumption.”⁶²

Two other women’s organizations were founded almost exclusively to the aim of raising “Turkish” seamstresses and dressmakers: the *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği* and the *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu*.

The *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*

The *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*, was characterized by Ruşen Zeki as extremely nationalist (*nasıyonalist*) compared to other women’s organizations.⁶³ The nationalist character of this organization was already hinted at when very soon after its foundation the name of the organization changed slightly: the word *ve* (and) disappeared and its name became *Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*. The disappearance of this small word indicated a major shift in thinking. In its original name the existence of women of two separate backgrounds, Ottoman and Turkish, was recognized. This meant that in the eyes of the founders (and members) of the organization the Turks, obviously should not be equated with Ottomans, but had to be regarded as a separate group. It also meant that not only Turkish, but also non-Turkish Ottoman women could apply for assistance of the organization. The changed

⁶⁰ When a journalist of *İkdam* (probably its owner, Ahmed Cevdet) visited the organization in April 1914, the first aims were actually cited as “teaching Muslim girls all the finesses of women’s dressmaking, turning them into craftswomen, providing these craftswomen with a decent living with the fruits of their hands.” “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *İkdam*, 30 Mart 1330 (12 April 1914), 1.

⁶¹ “Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti moda salonu açıyor,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 6 Temmuz/July 1918, 2.

⁶² “Kastamonu Osmanlı Hanımlar İş Yurdu,” *Türk Yurdu*, XI, 9, 22 Kanunuevvel 1332 (4 January 1917), 3294.

⁶³ Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 345-346; “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7.

name, however, indicated quite the opposite. It implies that the organization was aiming only at the protection of Ottoman-Turkish women and means a shift towards a more Turkish nationalism, which is not surprising given the presidency of Nezihe Muhittin.

Nezihe Muhittin, whose name at that time was still Nezihe Muhlis, was one of the founders of the organization probably during or immediately after the Balkan wars.⁶⁴ Other founding members were Sabiha Süleyman, the daughter of Süleyman Pasha, Hamiyet Hulusi, daughter of Morali Suphi Pasha and wife of the primary school inspector, Hulusi Bey,⁶⁵ Naciye Hurşit, Saniye Muhtar, Behire Hakkı, who later founded the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu*, and Settare

⁶⁴ The exact date of its foundation is not clear. In an archival document of December 1921 through which the organization is granted the status of an organization “for the public benefit” (*umumi menfaate hadim*), that date is said to be 25 March 1913. However, other sources point at a date of foundation in 1912. According to Şefika Kurnaz there were two different organizations with this name of which one was founded in 1908 and the other in 1912. The sources she gives for the organization founded in 1908 (Tunaya and Ruşen Zeki) however do not sustain this presumption: Tunaya is giving Ruşen Zeki as the only source, meanwhile giving as date of foundation 1325/1909. Ruşen Zeki in turn, however, does not mention any date. Kurnaz’s date of 1912 is based on Celâsun. Nezihe Muhittin, one of the founders, however, gives a rather vague date of foundation: “between 1328 and 1329.” An as Meb. signing author in the *Muhit* sets the date as 1913. Celâsun, as mentioned, gives 1912 as date of foundation. According to an article in *Türk Kadını* it was founded just after the Balkan Wars in 1328. Other sources also remain hazy and say that the organization was founded “during the Balkan war.” Nezihe Muhittin’s remark that the statutes were changed in a way she did not like one or two years after the foundation of the *Esirgeme Derneği* (see below) would mean that the date of foundation was one or two years before April 1913. This would make the date given by Celâsun, 1912, the most plausible one. None of the sources, however, mentions the existence of two organizations of the same name, which might indicate that, although the organization was informally founded in 1912, it took them until 25 March 1913 to become an officially registered one. BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Dahiliye, 56/24, 21 Receb 1340 (20 March 1922); “Esirgeme Derneği ve sergisi,” *Türk Kadını*, 4, 4 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 63; Zehra Celâsun, *Tarih Boyunca Kadın*, İstanbul: Ülkü Kitap Yurdu, 1946, 85-86; Çaka, *Tarih Boyunca Harp ve Kadın*, 39; Meb., “Esirgeme Derneğinde gördüklerim,” *Muhit*, III, 33, July 1931, 14-15; 76; Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk Kadını*, 87-89; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 345-346; Taşkıran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. yılında Türk kadın hakları*, 38; Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de siyasal partiler* [3 Cilt], İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1988 (2. Baskı), Cilt I, 476; 480-481; Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet döneminde Türk kadını*, 206-211.

⁶⁵ Güldane Çolak & Lale Uçan, *II. Meşrutiyet’ten Cumhuriyet’e Basında Kadın Öncüler*, İstanbul: Heyamola Yayınları, 2008, 123-126.

Ahmet, the wife of Ahmet Ağaoğlu.⁶⁶ In August 1916 the organization had a board of twelve, female, members which gathered once a week.⁶⁷

The organization was, according to an obituary for Hamiyet Hulusi by Besim Ömer, very explicitly named a *dernek* instead of a *cemiyet*, on the initiative of the brother of Hamiyet Hulusi, the Turkish nationalist Hamdullah Suphi, the first supposedly being a Turkish word for organization and the latter meaning the same but having Arabic roots.⁶⁸ While Nezihe Muhittin became the secretary of the organization, Sabiha Süleyman was made its president, a function she kept until at least October 1917, when she sent a telegraph to the Sultan to congratulate him on the occasion of the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice in name of the organization.⁶⁹ She was succeeded by Hamiyet Hulusi.⁷⁰ In April 1913 members of the Ottoman dynasty showed their appreciation for the activities of the organization: the Sultan donated 50 Ottoman pounds and his first wife became the patroness of the organization.⁷¹

The texts of two different statutes (*nizamname*) of the *Osmanlı (ve) Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği* and the *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu* are available: one is a booklet which was found in a file in the Ottoman archives; the other one is a text in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. Most likely the version in the form of a booklet is the first one.⁷² According to this version the first aim of the organization was to

⁶⁶ Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk kadını*, 87-89; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 345-346; Lorenz, *Die Frauenfrage in Osmanischen Reiche*, 54-55; BOA, DH.KMS, 45/48, 22 Zilhicce 1335 (10 October 1917); “Esirgeme Derneği ve sergisi,” *Türk Kadını*, 4, 4 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 63.

⁶⁷ Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, “Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii,” *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116.

⁶⁸ Besim Ömer, “Esirgeme Derneği ve Hamiyet Hanım,” *Resimli Uyanış*, 27 Şubat (February) 1930 reproduced in: “Türk kadınlığı için elim bir ziya,” *Türk Yurdu*, IV(XXIV), 27-28, 1930, 69-71.

⁶⁹ “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7; BOA, DH.KMS, 45/48, 22 Zilhicce 1335 (10 October 1917).

⁷⁰ BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Dahiliye, 56/24, 21 Receb 1340 (20 March 1922).

⁷¹ “İhsan-ı Şahane,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 14, 17 Nisan 1329 (30 April 1913), 1. See also, Nezihe Muhlis, “Kiymettar bir teşvik,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 15, 18 Nisan 1329 (1 May 1913), 1-2.

⁷² The first *nizamname* in the form of a booklet, was not dated. The second *nizamname* of the *Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği* (where the word *ve* ‘and’ is lacking) was published in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. The former was found in a file in the archives dated Temmuz 1331, which is July/August 1915. However, this is not necessarily the date of the *nizamname*, since the *nizamnames* of two other organisations in the same file were dated 1327. Taking into account the dates of these two *nizamnames*, the change in name (the disappearance of the word *ve* which was never used after 1913), and the remark of Nezihe Muhittin on the removal of one of the articles (see below), I believe the booklet was actually the first one. A last argument might be that the statutes in the *Kadınlar Dünyası* were much more elaborate, especially on the subject of organization and administration. *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneğinin Nizamnamesi*,

collect all the labour forces of Muslim and Turkish women in one centre, to awaken the minds of the Turkish Ottoman women and to open them to industry and trade in order to find a solution for the real problems of the fatherland.⁷³

To reach this aim the organization planned to open workshops (*sanaat evleri / darüssıma*), handicraft companies (*sanaat şirketleri*) and vocational schools (*sanaat mektepleri*) all over the Ottoman country (*yurd*). Another aim was to develop the “national handicrafts, which were face to face with death.” From all corners of the empire the members of the organization were to collect examples of traditional Turkish needlework, to be used to teach the students. The byelaws also mentioned the possibility of supporting existing vocational schools. Those students of the institutions established by the organization who reached a certain level would be paid for their work. Finally, to educate the women on the subject of economy, lectures for all-female publics would be held and books would be published.⁷⁴ The sources of income for the organization were to be the monthly contributions of its members and their other payments plus the incomes from the institutions to be founded.⁷⁵ The *darüssıma*, the school they wanted to support, and the reserve fund would receive each ten per cent of the revenues. The remaining seventy per cent would be reserved for an “economic institution” (*müessese-i iktisadiye*).⁷⁶

In the other version of the statutes as printed in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the school which was to be assisted financially and intellectually was actually named: the *İttihad ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi* (Union and Progress Vocational Girls’ School), which had been founded by the CUP. Besides this aim, two other aims were formulated in this version: “to teach feminine arts to the orphaned and

[İstanbul]: Nefaset Matbaası, [n.d.], (found in: BOA, DH.İ-UM, 89-2/1-23, 15 Şaban 1333 (28 June 1915)); “Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği nizamnamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 2, 5 Nisan 1329 (18 April 1913), 4; “Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği nizamnamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 3, 6 Nisan 1329 (19 April 1913), 3.

⁷³ *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneğinin Nizamnamesi*, [İstanbul]: Nefaset Matbaası, [n.d.].

⁷⁴ *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneğinin Nizamnamesi*. The same two main aims were mentioned by Celâsun. Celâsun, *Tarih Boyunca Kadın*, 85-86.

⁷⁵ In later times - it is not clear to me until when the organization existed, but it was at least still active in 1931 - they also tried other ways to earn money. In 1337 (1921), Hamiyet Hulusi, who was at that time president of the organization, asked for official permission to sell flowers in order to raise money. BOA, DH.İ-UM, 11-4/6-80, 5 Şaban 1339 (14 April 1921); “Kaybettiğimiz çok kıymetli ve halkçı bir Türk kadını, Hamiyet Hulusi hanım,” *Muhit*, II, 17, March 1930, 1293; Meb., “Esirgeme Derneğinde gördüklerim,” *Muhit*, III, 33, July 1931, 14-15; 76.

⁷⁶ *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneğinin Nizamnamesi*.

friendless daughters of martyrs or refugees at the workshop (*dariüssınaa*) to be founded and to work on the growth and the progress of Ottoman economic life.”⁷⁷

All three goals - the school, the *Dariüssınaa*, and the Ottoman economy - were put on the same level, suggesting that the charitable side was as important as the nationalist side, while in the first mentioned statutes the nationalist aims clearly predominated. The second aim of the first statutes, the development of national handicrafts, was completely absent in the version published in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. Nezihe Muhittin was probably referring to this change, when she was complaining that one or two years after the foundation of the organization an important article on the subject of the protection and stimulation of local products and arts had been removed from the statutes.⁷⁸

From all its goals, the *Esirgeme Derneği*, as the organization was generally called,⁷⁹ realized at least two. It was able to support the vocational girls' school and it indeed opened a workshop, where the daughters of refugees and of casualties of the Balkan wars were educated in four classes in the “feminine handicrafts” (*sanayi-i nisaiye*) and earned an honest living.⁸⁰ By October 1913, the vocational school for girls in Aksaray was officially opened.⁸¹ At this school girls received four years of education on topics such as accounting and tailoring. In the first year of its existence, it had 20 pupils, two years later the number of pupils had increased to almost 100. Most of the teachers worked as volunteers at

⁷⁷ “Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği nizamnamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 2, 5 Nisan 1329 (18 April 1913), 4; “Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği nizamnamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 3, 6 Nisan 1329 (19 April 1913), 3. See also Emine Seher Ali “Teşebbüste ittihad,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 3, 6 Nisan 1329 (19 April 1913), 2.

⁷⁸ Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk kadını*, 87-89.

⁷⁹ Besides the brief *Esirgeme Derneği* also the name *Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği* is used, while at a later point (in the 1920s) it became simply *Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği*.

⁸⁰ BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Dahiliye, 56/24, 21 Receb 1340 (20 March 1922). See also the advertisements of the organization in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 14 and 15, of 30 April and 1 May 1913, page 4, in which they call upon the children of martyrs and soldiers to apply for a place at the *sanaat evi* and further, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “İçtimai: meserretlerimiz,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 15, 18 Nisan 1329 (1 May 1913), 1; Emine Seher Ali, “Tekamül-ü tedrici,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 17, 20 Nisan 1329 (3 May 1913), 1.

⁸¹ “Havadis-i Dünya: Esirgeme Derneği Mektebi'nin resmi küşadı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-10, 21 Eylül 1329 (4 October 1913), 15; “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7.

the school.⁸² By May 1914, the organization had several branches in neighbourhoods such as Kasımpaşa and Kanlıca.⁸³

During the First World War the organization, including its *Sanaat Evi*, geared its activities towards production for the army, as many other organizations. In November 1918 the organization's *sanaat evi* was still expanding its activities, inviting girls of eight years and older to come and work at the Home and other women in need to apply for sewing to be done in their own home.⁸⁴ Moreover, despite the disappearance of this aim from its statutes, the organization also contributed to the saving of the national handicrafts from their being overrun by European products by teaching "Turkish" women and girls the traditional techniques and patterns.⁸⁵ It is not clear, however, whether its plan to establish an economic institution – or: as Nezihe Muhittin called it in a speech quoted by Ruşen Zeki, an economic company (*iktisadi bir şirket*) – was ever realized.⁸⁶

To reach its aims the organization needed money. One source of income for the organization was formed by the yearly financial contributions of its 200 to 250 members: there were four different memberships on which depended what one would pay. Other ways to procure money for its aims were lotteries, afternoons with entertainment,⁸⁷ the selling of rosettes and the organization of (yearly) exhibitions where the products of the pupils were sold.⁸⁸

⁸² Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, "Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii," *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116.

⁸³ "Bizde hareket-i nisvan," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7.

⁸⁴ "Esirgeme Derneği'nin faaliyeti," *Vakit*, 14 Teşrinisani/November 1918, 2.

⁸⁵ BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Dahiliye, 56/24, 21 Receb 1340 (20 March 1922).

⁸⁶ Ruşen Zeki, "Bizde hareket-i nisvan," 345-346; "Bizde hareket-i nisvan," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7. See also Lorenz, *Die Frauenfrage in Osmanischen Reiche*, 54-55; Çakır, "Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği."

⁸⁷ See, for example, "Müsamere," *Tanin*, 9 Ağustos 1331 (22 August 1915), 2 for which the catering was done by Seyide Kemal.

⁸⁸ "Esirgeme Derneği sergisi," *Tanin*, 14 Temmuz 1330 (27 July 1914), 4-5; Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, "Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii," *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116; "Esirgeme Derneği ve sergisi," *Türk Kadını*, 4, 4 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 63; "Esirgeme Derneği sergisi," *Tanin*, 23 Haziran/June 1918, 2; "Esirgeme Derneği sergisi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Haziran/June 1918, 2; "Esirgeme Derneği'nden," *Tanin*, 3 Temmuz/July 1918, 4; "El işleri sergisi," *Vakit*, 21 Haziran/June 1918, 3; "El işleri sergisi," *Vakit*, 3 Temmuz/July 1918, 2; "Esirgeme Derneği ve sergisi," *Türk Kadını*, 4, 4 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 63. The yield of the exhibition during the month of Ramadan in 1918, for example, was approximately 1,500 *lira*. See also "Esirgeme Derneği," *Asar-ı Nisvan*, 14, 1 Teşrinievvel/September 1341/1925, inside backcover and "Beynelmillel Paris sergisinde," *Asar-ı Nisvan*, 20, 1 Şubat/February 1342/1926, 10. According to the last article women participated with their products at an international exhibition in Paris.



Figure 13 “*Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği* Istanbul exhibition,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1207, 10 Temmuz 1330 (23 July 1914), 124.

It is not clear until when this organization continued to exist, but it must have been at least until the early 1930s.⁸⁹

Nezihe Muhittin and her colleagues seem to have inspired the women at the Red Crescent who founded the *Hilal-i Ahmer Kadınlar Darüssınaası* (Red Crescent Women’s Workshop) in August 1913 with a starting capital of 500 Ottoman *liras*. It educated girls in the field of textiles and, like the *Esirgeme Derneği*, initially seems to have aimed at preventing the disappearance of traditional Ottoman handicrafts by making the “fine needlework which has almost become obsolete with us, but which is very much liked and appreciated by foreigners” more widely known and appreciated, both nationally and internationally. Initially, it employed only 15 women and girls, but after the start

⁸⁹ Meb., “*Esirgeme Derneğinde gördüklerim*,” *Muhit*, III, 33, July 1931, 14-15.

of the First World War this number increased fast as will be shown in Chapter Twelve.⁹⁰

The *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu*

The *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu*, a school where women would be scientifically educated to become dressmakers, was founded by Behire Hakkı in 1913.⁹¹ On 15 July of that year a short letter of hers appeared in *Tanin*. In that letter she wrote that she had heard that someone had opened a salon where Ottoman women could come to learn sewing. Having heard this, she had decided to teach the “Muslim women and girls” who could not afford to go to this salon for free during two afternoons per week as a small contribution to her country (*memleketime*). With her letter she invited women who could read and write a little, and knew a bit of accounting and sewing to come and register.⁹² The response to her call must have been such that she decided to establish the *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu*. According to the bye-laws of the organization, the official date of its foundation was 23 July 1913, a national holiday,⁹³ exactly five years after the Young Turk Revolution and only eight days after her letter appeared in the newspaper. This date was probably chosen for its symbolic weight.⁹⁴ The name of her organization and the express invitation to Muslim and not Turkish

⁹⁰ Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer’e Dair Konferans*, İstanbul: Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1330, 61-62, quotation 62; *Türkiye Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi Darüssımaası: Eytam ve Eramil-i Şühedaya Muavenet*, [İstanbul]: Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1339 (1923).

⁹¹ And not by her husband, İsmail Hakkı, as Karakışla states. Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, 65. See also Sabiha Zekeriya who stated explicitly that this organization was the result of “a woman’s personal effort.” Sabiha Zekeriya, “Kadın müesseselerini ziyaret: Bıçkı Yurdu Müessesesi,” *İnci*, I, 1, 1 Şubat/February 1919, 11.

⁹² Behire Hakkı, “Varaka,” *Tanin*, 2 Temmuz 1329 (15 July 1913), 5.

⁹³ It was actually the first national holiday in the Ottoman Empire. Sanem Yamak, “Meşrutiyetin Bayramı: ‘10 Temmuz İd-i Millisi,” *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 38, Mart 2008, 323-342.

⁹⁴ Under the coat of arms of the organization on the front page of the byelaws the date 10 Temmuz 1329 (23 July 1913) is given. This date is confirmed in the introduction to the byelaws in which Behire Hakkı expresses her happiness with the opening of her institute on the fifth birthday of the constitution. *Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu Nizamnamesi ve Ders Programı*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şurekası, 1329, 1-5.

women and girls indicates that in her view being Turkish was equivalent to being Muslim.⁹⁵

Moreover, from the statutes of the organization it is clear that she was not unaware of the existing class differences. One of its aims was formulated as follows: “to raise real dressmakers out of Turkish *women* in the hope to save the Turkish *ladies* from the hands of ignorant midinettes” (emphasis added). Reflecting the belief in science of the Young Turks, the statutes claimed that these midinettes were ignorant, because they had learned their skills in practice from their master workmen instead of according to a scientific method.⁹⁶

The aims were more specifically mentioned in the statutes themselves.

Article 1 – *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* will be a scientific school for dressmakers; it will prepare teachers who have been educated theoretically and practically for girls’ vocational schools and who will teach in this way to our women how to cut their clothes (*biçki*), which is one of the main female duties. By teaching women’s dressmaking for free to the wives of martyrs and their orphans and those who out of necessity want to earn their bread with their own hands, it will try both to improve their situation and to secure them a means of maintenance, and to raise Muslim women dressmakers in our fatherland and thus endeavor to progress and develop its economic life. (...)

Article 5 – *Biçki Yurdu* is open for all Muslim ladies (...).⁹⁷

In an article in *Muhit* of 1929 reviewing Turkish women’s social activities, the author, based on an interview with the husband of the founder of the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* – Behire Hakkı herself was ill – stated it even more boldly: Behire Hakkı’s idea had been “to put an end to the need of the Turkish sisters for the enemies in the country, more precisely the Greek (Rum) dressmakers.”⁹⁸

According to an announcement in *Tanin* of 17 January 1914, the number of women interested in getting free education was so large that the organization had to decide to accept twice the 30 students which it according to its statutes would take for a course. Women who wanted to apply to fill the extra places were requested to apply with a doctor’s report and a document attesting to their

⁹⁵ See also “Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu,” *Mekteb Müzesi*, I, 10, 15 Eylül 1329 (28 September 1913), 312.

⁹⁶ *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu Nizamnamesi ve Ders Programı*, 4-5, quotation 5.

⁹⁷ *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu Nizamnamesi ve Ders Programı*, 6-7.

⁹⁸ Efzaiş [sic!] Suat, “Türk kadınlarının içtimai faaliyeti,” *Muhit*, 7, Mayıs 1929 (May 1929), 493-496, quotation 496. See also “Biçki Yurdu sergisi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 Temmuz 1331 (27 July 1915), 2.

poverty. Moreover, the organization had decided to also accept women against payment for separate lessons. They could also apply but needed only a doctor's report.⁹⁹ This organization, like the *Esirgeme Derneği* organized regular exhibitions showing the products of its pupils.¹⁰⁰

The total number of students graduated from this institution remains unclear,¹⁰¹ but in 1919 the graduates decided to found an organization of their own which aimed at financially supporting those members who would fall ill and those who wanted to open their own establishment.¹⁰² Many graduates of the Home became teachers at schools in Istanbul or were sent to the province by the Ministry of Education not only as teachers at the local schools, but also as their administrators.¹⁰³ That the efforts of Behire Hakkı were appreciated by the authorities is clear from the two medals awarded to her by the Ministry of

⁹⁹ "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu," *Tanin*, 4 Kanunusani 1329 (17 January 1914), 4.

¹⁰⁰ Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, "Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii," *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116; "Bıçkı Yurdu sergisi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 Temmuz 1331 (27 July 1915), 2; "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu sergisi," *Tanin*, 26 Haziran 1332 (9 July 1916), 3; "Bıçkı Yurdu sergisi," *Tanin*, 28 Haziran 1332 (11 July 1916), 2-3; "Bekleidungsakademie für türkische Damen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 11. Juli 1916, 3; "Le Bitcki Yourd," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 8 Juillet 1917, 3; "Bıçkı Yurdu sergisi," *Tanin*, 2 Temmuz/July 1918, 4; "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı sergisi," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 3 Temmuz/July 1918, 2.

¹⁰¹ According to an article in *Türk Yurdu* 24 women received a diploma in the early summer of 1914. Another article in the same periodical of November 1915 mentioned that 40 women received their diploma. Lebib Selim, however, wrote that same month that 150 women had graduated in the second year of its existence. The article of Zeynetullah Nuşirevan also in *Türk Yurdu* referred to 30 graduates in the first year and 250 in 1915 - 1916. The last number is also given in an article in *Osmanischer Lloyd* of July 1916. By 1923 Abdullah Cevdet praised the organization which according to him had educated 1,380 dressmakers. According to the daily *Vakit*, on the other hand, the organization had graduated close to 5,600 students within six years after its foundation. T.Y., "Türk kadınlarında iktisadi terakkiyat," *Türk Yurdu*, VI, 11, 24 Temmuz 1330 (6 August 1914), 2393; T.Y., "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu'nda," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 24 Teşrinievvel 1331 (6 October 1915), 2393; Lebib Selim, "İçtimaiyat: Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816; Zeynetullah Nuşirevan, "Türk kadınının terbiyevi mevkii," *Türk Yurdu*, X, 11, 4 Ağustos 1332 (17 August 1916), 3112-3116; "Bekleidungsakademie für türkische Damen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 11. Juli 1916, 3; "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu'ndan," *Vakit*, 13 Temmuz/July 1335/1919, 2; "Yeni bir kadın cemiyeti," *Vakit*, 14 Temmuz/July 1335/1919, 2; Abdullah Cevdet, "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu sergisi," *İctihad*, XIX, 159, 1 Teşrinisani/November 1923, 3267. See also Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 217-219.

¹⁰² "Türk Kadınları Bıçkı Yurdu'ndan," *Vakit*, 13 Temmuz/July 1335/1919, 2; "Yeni bir kadın cemiyeti," *Vakit*, 14 Temmuz/July 1335/1919, 2.

¹⁰³ Sabiha Zekeriya, "Kadın müesseselerini ziyaret: Bıçkı Yurdu Müessesesi," *İnci*, I, 1, 1 Şubat/February 1919, 11.

Education and the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture, respectively, on the first anniversary of the organization.¹⁰⁴

Thus the urban, educated Ottoman Muslim women of the well-to-do families were quite active in their efforts to contribute to the development of a national economy by taking the initiative to employ impoverished women and girls and train them as producers of textile products in workshops within the context of their charitable organizations. These workshops were financed with the donations of these women and their monthly subscriptions and were expected to be able to sustain themselves at some point. Details on the way these workshops were run are lacking. No balance sheets are left, so we do not know what sources of income they had or what expenditures were made. Were the contributions of the members of the women's organizations necessary to keep the workshops going or were they able to sustain themselves? Nor do we have any information on the daily practices and organization of these workshops. Who managed them, who intermediated between the women working in the workshop and their customers and commissioners?

It is clear, however, that they were not expected to produce a return on investment for the participating women. The opposite is the case with the joint stock ventures which were established in the context of the development of a national economy in the course of the Second Constitutional Period. Most of these joint ventures were established by men, except for one, the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi* (Bazaar for Women's Goods Ottoman Joint Stock Trading Company).

The Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi

Although the number of joint stock companies increased in the early years of the Second Constitutional period, the effects of the First World War combined with the efforts of the CUP government to establish a national economy provided the Ottoman Muslims with more opportunities than before to found such companies. The Ottoman Muslim women writing in the women's periodicals,

¹⁰⁴ The first assigned her a *Maarif Nişanı* (Education Medal), third class on 10 Temmuz 1330 (23 July 1914), the second a *Sanayi Madalyası* (Medal of Industry) one day earlier. BOA, İ.Tal., 1382/19, 5 Ramazan 1332 (29 July 1914); BOA, İ.Tal., 1391/8, 5 Ramazan 1332 (29 July 1914).

however, did not seem to have been able to invest venture capital in such commercial activities, with a few exceptions. An approving article in a *Türk Yurdu* of 1913 reported that Fehime Nüzhet in cooperation with some other women had founded a company that should win and market internally and internationally black copal.¹⁰⁵ The capital of the firm was 10,000 Ottoman pounds, which was acquired by giving out 1,500 shares of five pounds each and 1,000 shares of two and a half pounds.¹⁰⁶ However, further information on this firm is lacking. Other women are known to have become stock holders in mining projects in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁷

The number of newly established joint stock companies increased especially after 1915. Conform the policy of national economy many of the joint stock firms carried the word *milli* (national), *Türk* (Turkish), or *yerli* (local) in their name. According to Toprak most joint stock firms were founded in the year 1917, 39 firms in total.¹⁰⁸ One of them was the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi*, a company founded by three women, Fatma Hasene (Nazım?), Fatma Zehra and Ayşe İzzet in April of that year.¹⁰⁹

Earlier that year, in January, these three women had sent a petition to the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture asking for permission to found a joint stock company named *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi*.¹¹⁰ Fatma Hasene was at that time living in Beşiktaş, Fatma Zehra in

¹⁰⁵ A frankincense which when burned spreads a pleasant aroma.

¹⁰⁶ K(ef).N. “Hanımlarımızın iktisadi teşebbüsleri,” *Türk Yurdu*, IV, 10, Ağustos 1329 (August/September 1913), 784; “Havadis-i dünya: madencilikte kadınlarımız...,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-6, 24 Ağustos 1329 (6 September 1913), 15.

¹⁰⁷ A Muslim woman got a concession for a magnesium mine in the province of Thessalonica together with a man. A British woman was initially granted a concession for an iron mine, which was later withdrawn. BOA, MMİ, 1937/29, 2 Zilkade 1330 (14 October 1912); BOA, MMİ, 1833/44, 14 Zilkade 1332 (5 October 1914); BOA, MMİ, 2767/9, 29 Rebiülevvel 1333 (14 February 1915). See also Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 134-135.

¹⁰⁸ Toprak, *Milli İktisat - Milli Burjuvazi*, 112-113. Toprak, *Türkiye’de ‘Milli İktisat,’* 355-365.

¹⁰⁹ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı: Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi,” *Tanin*, 27 Nisan/April Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 24; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 2 Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 2; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 3 Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 2.

¹¹⁰ This was the name of the company according to the cover of its statutes of 1333 (1917). In the name at the first page of these statutes and on the cover of the statutes of 1335 (1919), however, the word *Ticaret* (Trading) was lacking. *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şurekası, 1333; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, İstanbul: Hilal Matbaası, 1335 (both in BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339.(1 August 1921))

Bebek and Ayşe İzzet in Ayaspaşa. Apart from where they lived, nothing is known about these women. One of them, however, might have been the wife of one of the founders of the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Anonim Ticaret Şirketi* (Military Goods Trading Company Ltd.), a company with which the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* seems to have been connected in more ways, as is shown below.¹¹¹

The aim of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* was to “produce and sell all goods that ladies need and to undertake all sorts of sewing.”¹¹² Not only were the founders female and did the *Pazar* aim at a female clientele, it also tried to employ as many women as possible. It explicitly stated in the second article of its statutes that “except for the directors, accountant, *modistra* (dressmaker), janitor and porter, all employees and servants would exist of women.”¹¹³ To do business, however, the signatures of at least two of three men, the director Rıfat Bey and two members of the Board of Directors, Kemal and Abdullah, were needed.¹¹⁴

The company was founded during the war years at a moment that inflation was soaring. For many women and families the purchase of goods had become problematic, because they lacked the money. The salaries of the military were low, if they received their payments at all. Similarly, the salaries of the civil servants and employees in the commercial sectors did not keep pace with the inflation rate. Moreover, payments were often in paper money, which lost its value even faster than the coins which most of the people therefore preferred.

As a result the purchasing power was low and it thus seems economically unwise to open a new store. The *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı*, however, tried to stimulate its sales by providing a special facility for the “families” of the officers and military pensioners. The company provided them with credits, so that they could pay their purchases in installments. These credits were especially

¹¹¹ I.e. one of the founders of the *Eşya-yı Askeri Anonim Ticaret Şirketi* was a *miralay* (colonel) Ömer Nazım. On one of the documents for the *Ticaret ve Ziraat Nezareti* Fatma Hasene signed as Hasene Nazım. *Eşya-yı Askeri Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahiliye*, İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şurekası, 1335 (found in: BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye (hereafter ŞD.ML.NF), 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339.(1 August 1921)); BOA, Sadaret Divân-i Hümayûn Kalemi Mukâvele Kısım (hereafter A.DVN.MKL), 64/26, 21 Cemaziyelahir 1336 (3 April 1918).

¹¹² *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1333, 3; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1335, 3.

¹¹³ *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1333, 3; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1335, 3; “Eine Frauenaktiengesellschaft in der Türkei,” *Der Neue Orient*, I, 7, 1917, 331.

¹¹⁴ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Anonim Şirketi’nden,” *Vakit*, 20 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi’nden,” *Tanin*, 25 Kanunuevvel/December 1333/1917, 4.

meant for those “families” who wanted to marry off their children and needed to buy them a proper trousseau.¹¹⁵ Although the word *aile* (lit. family) is used in the text of the statutes, from the context it becomes clear that the word is actually meant to refer more specifically to the wives rather than to the families of the military.¹¹⁶

The credits granted to the women and their families depended on the rank of their husbands: the families of lieutenants (*mülazım*) would be able to get a credit of 500 *kuruş*, those of captains (*yüzbaşı*) of 1,000 *kuruş*, those of majors (*binbaşı*) of 1,500 *kuruş*, of lieutenant colonels (*kaymakam*) and colonels (*miralay*) of 3,000 *kuruş*. To prevent the company from going bankrupt, the credits would only be given after permission of the board of managers. To get this permission, the military in question had to show he had no debts elsewhere – or if he had them, how large they were – by getting a certificate from the financial committee of his detachment and the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi* or, if he was a pensioner, from the Directorate of Personnel and the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*.¹¹⁷

According to article five of the statutes, the capital of the company was to be 30,000 *lira* to be created by the issuing of 6,000 shares of 5 *lira* each. The shares were to be to the order and upon issuing one third would be offered firstly to the families of officers and military pensioners, one third to the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*, and one third to civil service pensioners (*memurin-i mülkiye mütekaidleri*) and their families. If the shares were not sold to these groups within the time set for it, they could be sold to persons from outside these groups as well. Besides these shares, fifteen founders' shares would be created for the founders of the company. These shares, too, were to the order and were not allowed to be sold during the first five years after they had been issued. The

¹¹⁵ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi,” *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, 53, 26 Nisan 1333 (9 May 1917), 7 (I am indebted to Yavuz Selim Karakışla for sharing this source with me).

¹¹⁶ In the text of the *nizamname* the word used is *aile* (lit.: family). However, that they are actually referring to the wives of the officers and military is clear from the use of the word *zevcleri* (their husbands). “The company will sell goods to the families of officers and military pensioners to be paid in installments from the salaries of their husbands.” *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1333, 4; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1335, 4.

¹¹⁷ *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1333, 4; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1335, 4.

holders of these shares were not supposed to participate in the General Board of Shareholders or to engage in the daily business of the company.¹¹⁸

This fifth article caused discussion in the Council of State. The founders of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı*, like the founders of any new joint stock company, had to ask for permission for its foundation from the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture. The Ministry did not simply grant its permission, but sent the request on to the Council of State. In March 1917 the Committee for Finance and Public Works (*Maliye ve Nafia Dairesi*) of the Council of State met and discussed especially the consequences of the fifth article extensively. The members of the Committee pointed out that, according to this article, the shares, which in the first place should be sold to the “families” of soldiers and military and civil pensioners, could be sold not only to “ladies,” but also to “other persons,” *in casu* males, if they would not be completely sold to these “families” or the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*. This would create problems in their view. The problem was not so much that women would obtain shares. The members of the Committee agreed that it was not possible to change this part of the statutes since women and men legally had equal rights to obtain possessions. What bothered the members of the Committee more was that it would lead to the intermingling of men and women. The shareholders were supposed to participate in the election of members of the Board of Managers and in the annual meeting of the General Board of Shareholders. If both women and men were able to purchase these shares, this entailed that these meetings would be attended by males and females alike. And this, it was argued by İhsan Bey, was in contradiction with the national laws and manners (*ahkam ve adab-ı milliyeye mugayir*). He, therefore, pleaded in favor of an additional paragraph through which would be guaranteed that the meetings of the Board of Managers and the General Board of Shareholders would be exclusively male or female by having the shareholders of the other sex represented by males or females, respectively. Another member of the Committee argued that women would be able to attend these meetings alongside men, if they would oblige by the rules of *tesettür* and sit in the places assigned to them by the regulations. The majority of the Committee agreed with that and since such a regulation was foreseen in, they felt that there was no need for an additional remark in the statutes. Hence, with a majority of the votes, it was decided that no additions needed to be made to the statutes on this subject.

¹¹⁸*Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1333, 5; *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir*, 1335, 5.

Before the final decision was taken on 1 April 1917, the subject was once more brought up in the Committee. One of the Committee members, Mustafa Efendi, remarked that, although the intermingling of men and women was forbidden according to the religious law and against social conventions, women founding joint stock companies or buying shares did not automatically imply their personal and direct involvement in trade or intermingling with men. He, therefore, did not see any need for changes, either. *Hafız İhsan Bey* also pointed at the impossibility of men and women meeting in one room, but added, that since it was possible to vote by representation the company was not different from any other joint stock company and thus that a change in the statutes was not needed. The Committee thereupon voted in majority to accept the statutes without any changes.¹¹⁹

This decision was forwarded to the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture and an Imperial Decree was issued on 20 April 1917, which allowed for the foundation of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı*.¹²⁰ The *Pazar* was located in a building adjoining the *Ordu-Donanma Pazarı* of the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Pazarı* across from the post office which had been opened close to the Sirkeci Station in 1909.¹²¹ Two “large fashion shows” on 10 and 11 December 1917 where a variety of models from famous Viennese fashion houses was shown marked the official opening of the *Pazar*. The yield from the entrance fees, half a *lira*, would be donated to the *Darüssınaa* of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi*.¹²² According to Thea von Puttkamer, a journalist writing for several German newspapers, “ladies from esteemed families had gathered” to see the simple and plain, but fashionable dresses shown by models, who were all tall, slim and blond.¹²³ On 20 December 1917, the *Pazar* was opened to the wider public.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ BOA, ŞD.ML.NF, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339.(1 August 1921); BOA, DUİT, 65-1/32-1, 15 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (7 April 1917).

¹²⁰ BOA, DUİT, 65-1/32-1, 15 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (7 April 1917); BOA, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları (hereafter MV), 247/17, 2 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (25 March 1917).

¹²¹ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı bu Perşembe günü açılıyor,” *Vakit*, 17 and 18 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1333, 2.

¹²² “İstanbul’da büyük bir moda sergisi,” *Tanin*, 27 Teşrinisani/November 1333/1917, 4; “Moda sergisi,” *Vakit*, 9 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1933, 2; “Vienna moda sergisi,” *Vakit*, 11 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1933, 2.

¹²³ Thea von Puttkamer, “Dünkü moda sergisi,” *Vakit*, 12 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1933, 2.

¹²⁴ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı bu Perşembe günü açılıyor,” *Vakit*, 17 and 18 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1333, 2; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” *Vakit*, 22 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1333, 2.

According to an announcement the *Pazar* sold “ready-made morning-, tea-, evening-, and brides dresses, and furs.” Furthermore, the seamstresses in the workshop of the *Pazar* would make tailor-made dresses of any kind and *çarşafs* out of any fabric chosen. It also sold “perfumes, make-up sets, linen and silver table ware, jewelry, silk fabrics, underwear, stockings, handkerchiefs, lace, ribbons, various braids and various other articles.”¹²⁵ All of these were, as an advertisement mentioned, according to the “aesthetic tastes” of women.¹²⁶

Although the *Pazar* aimed at a clientele of “virtuous Muslim ladies” (*muhadderat-ı islamiye*),¹²⁷ it did not aim at using locally produced goods, like (the shops of) the abovementioned women’s organizations. On the contrary, it was proud of its carrying European products and having tailor’s cutters (*makasdar*) and mannequins from Vienna and a *modistra* “from Europe.”¹²⁸ The reason for this might have been a very practical one: by the time the *Pazar* was opened, the local (textile) producers had, by and large, stopped producing luxury goods for the civil market, but were almost exclusively geared towards production for the army.¹²⁹

Despite the destitute situation of many women in Istanbul, the *Pazar* seems to have filled a need. The day of the opening many potential clients showed interest in the new place.¹³⁰ The business of the company developed unexpectedly fast and was evaluated at 80,000 *lira* by January 1918.¹³¹ As a result,

¹²⁵ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı bu Perşembe günü açılıyor,” *Vakit*, 17 and 18 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1333, 2.

¹²⁶ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” (advertisement), *Yeni Mecmua*, inside backpage of various numbers in 1918; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” (advertisement), *Tanin*, 31 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2.

¹²⁷ “Viyena moda sergisi,” *Vakit*, 10 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2.

¹²⁸ “Bazar d’articles pour Dames,” (advertisement) *Lloyd Ottoman*, 10 Janvier 1918, 2; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” *Tanin*, 30 Kanunuevvel/December 1333/1917, 4; advertisement from *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Mayıs 1334/1918 (19 May 1918), 4 quoted in: Cüneyd Okay, “Meşrutiyet döneminde bir kadın şirketi: Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı A.Ş.” *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXXI, 183, Mart 1999, 12-14.

¹²⁹ Even these imported goods must have been difficult to get. An announcement of the *Ordu-Donanma Pazarı* shows that goods were sold based on ration-cards which had to be obtained beforehand from the *Pazar*. These coupons, however, were not handed to everybody. Ration-cards for cambric, for example, were only obtainable for women who had recently given birth or for girls who were going to get married. “Vécikas de batiste et de souliers,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 14 Mart 1918, 3. See also “Vesikasız elbise yapılmayacak,” *Vakit*, 20 Kanunuevvel/December 1917, 2.

¹³⁰ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” *Vakit*, 22 Kanunuevvel/December 1917/1333, 2.

¹³¹ This increase might have been more due to the inflation rate than to an actual increase in volume of business.

the need was felt to increase the capital of the company almost immediately after the shop opened its doors. The General Board (*Heyet-i Umumiye*) was invited to meet on 6 January to discuss the doubling of its capital and to elect a provisional Board of Directors (*Meclis-i İdare*).¹³² Initially, a capital injection of the set maximum of 30,000 *lira* was suggested. However, more was needed. Thus the decision was taken that the company needed to increase its capital by 70,000 *lira* to a total of 100,000 *lira* by issuing another 14,000 shares of 5 *lira*. To do this the owners had to apply separately to the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture and ask for permission for this change. The director of the company, Rıfat Bey, accordingly applied to request the change in the statutes. In January 1918, the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture asked the Council of State for its opinion on this matter, since normally the capital of a joint stock company could at most be doubled at one time. The Committee invited one of the members of the Board of Directors of the company to visit the Committee for an explanation. Obviously, this explanation was satisfactory and the permission was granted without much discussion.¹³³ Thus, in March 1918, another imperial decree was issued to raise the capital of the company to 100,000 *lira*.¹³⁴ Immediately afterwards a general meeting of shareholders was held where a report on the previous year, 1917, was read and the budget for the next year was discussed.¹³⁵

Little is known about the company after this. An announcement published in *Tanin* and *Tasvir-i Efkar*, however, gives the impression that the shareholders were indeed mostly women or at least that the general meetings of the Board of Shareholders were attended by women (only?).¹³⁶ In September 1918, the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* opened a branch in Beyoğlu, which was robbed a year later. Goods worth of 10,000 *lira* were stolen, but the robbers were caught shortly thereafter and a part of the goods could be recovered.¹³⁷

¹³² “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı,” *Tanin*, 20 Kanunuevvel/December 1333/1917, 4; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Şirketi’nden,” *Vakit*, 6 Kanunuevvel/December 1333/1917, 2.

¹³³ BOA, DUİT, 65-1/32-2, 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1336 (9 March 1918); BOA, ŞD.ML.NF, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339 (1 August 1921).

¹³⁴ BOA, DUİT, 65-1/32-2, 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1336 (9 March 1918); BOA, ŞD.ML.NF, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339 (1 August 1921); BOA, MV, 149/41, 22 Cemaziyelahir 1336 (4 April 1918); BOA, A.DVN.MKL, 64/26, (1336).

¹³⁵ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi’nden,” *Vakit*, 14 Mart 1918, 2.

¹³⁶ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Müdüriyetinden,” *Tanin*, 5 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, 4; “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Müdüriyetinden,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 6 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, 2.

¹³⁷ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı” *Vakit*, 2 Eylül/September 1918, 2 “Mühim bir sirkat,” *Vakit*, 21 Eylül/September 1919, 2.

In July 1920 the Boards of Managers of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* and the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi* decided to merge the two companies into one, the *Şark Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi*, (Eastern Goods Market Ottoman Company Ltd.) as a measure to fight “the financial and economic crisis which had hit the world of traders in the aftermath of the World War.”¹³⁸ The new company aimed at satisfying the needs of men, women and children and would produce and sell all sorts of household goods, while it would also make tailor made clothes and commercial goods.¹³⁹ Thus the new company formed indeed a continuation of its two predecessors. The article on loans for the potential clients, military and military affiliated persons, which also formed part of the statutes of the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*, disappeared, however. Thus, the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi*, which in a publication of the Ministry of Industry and Trade had been characterized as a “branch of the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*,” in effect, became one with it.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

Ottoman Muslim women showed to be active and conscious citizens in the struggle for a national economy. Their fight, however, revealed that they did this within the context of three different layers of identity. As Ottomans they fought the international division of labour which – in their view – had turned the Ottoman Empire into a producer of raw materials and a consumer of manufactured goods produced by the Europeans. Secondly, as Muslims they wanted to contribute to ending the “division of labour” between the ethno-religious groups within the Empire, which divided the Ottomans into financial, commercial and industrial entrepreneurs existing mainly of non-Muslims on the one hand and bureaucratic and military officers of almost exclusively Muslim background on the other hand. According to common belief, the latter only

¹³⁸ “Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi Meclis-i İdare Raporu” in: BOA, ŞD.ML.NF, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339 (1 August 1921).

¹³⁹ “‘Şark’ Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Ticaret Şirketi Nizamname-i Dahilisidir,” partly handwritten copy (specifics filled out in *Osmanlı Anonim Şirketleri Nizamname-i Dahilisi Numunesi*, İstanbul: Hukuk Matbaası, 1333) in BOA, ŞD.ML.NF, 1273/29, 25 Zilkade 1339 (1 August 1921).

¹⁴⁰ Ali Akyıldız, “Bir hanım iktisadî teşebbüsü: Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi,” *Kuruluşunun 700. Yıldönümünde Bütün Yönleriyle Osmanlı Devleti Uluslar Arası Kongresi*, 7-9 Nisan 1999, Konya (2002), 55-58.

spent the money of the treasury, while the former were believed to earn it. The form of *Milli İktisat* which developed especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912 - 1913, aimed at ending this division of labour: Muslims, too, had to become producers and entrepreneurs. The Ottoman Muslim women reading and writing in the women's periodicals felt they could contribute to this shift towards a division of labour *within* instead of *between* the ethno-religious groups, *in casu* the non-Muslims and Muslims, of the Empire. Thirdly, as women they were eager to make an end to the gender division of "labour," which turned men into the persons earning money and women into its spenders. Women, too, they felt, should be able to provide for their own (and their family's) bread and share in the production of a healthy economy from which the nation would benefit.

The authors and readers of the Ottoman women's periodicals, however, belonged to a social stratum whose women did not consider performing manual tasks within an industrial (or agricultural) setting themselves. Instead they preferred to work in typically urban white collar jobs replacing non-Muslim women and, later, the men who went to war, or to serve as entrepreneurs and investors to contribute to development of a national, Muslim economy. A limited number of women set up a business as individual, by opening a shop or other commercial enterprise. Other women joined forces and opened workshops where they employed other women. These workshops, however, were founded not preliminary as commercial but rather as charitable activities. The number of women involved in commercial joint ventures remained limited. The exception seems to have been the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* whose establishment provoked discussions at the top level of Ottoman bureaucracy regarding the implications of such a development for the existing gender relations as the sheer founding of a women's organization had done earlier.

The regulations and laws aiming at the "nationalization" of foreign and Ottoman commercial institutions combined with the large scale mobilization of men during, especially, the First World War opened new opportunities for urban Ottoman Muslim women with a certain level of education. While before the First World War these women could at best become teachers and, from the 1890s onwards, journalists and authors, now they could also take up administrative jobs with these commercial institutions. The Ottoman government further stimulated the economic participation of these Ottoman Muslim women by opening up courses specifically geared to this aim and by setting an example through the hiring of women as civil servants. Not only the Ottoman authorities thus encouraged Ottoman Muslim women, the public opinion as reflected in the Ottoman women's press and other newspapers and

periodicals seems to have supported these developments. The Ottoman women's press also applauded the commercial entrepreneurship of Ottoman Muslim women. The number of individual female Ottoman Muslim entrepreneurs seems to have remained limited, though, both in scope and number. In most cases, these women set up businesses through which they catered to the needs of other women. Those women were thus able to incorporate their efforts to contribute to the establishment of a national economy without a transgression of existing gender roles which would have been unacceptable to the public.

Those gender roles were not transgressed either by the women's organizations which offered women the opportunity to work together and join forces in developing viable forms of entrepreneurship. Where they lacked sufficient leverage as individuals, Ottoman Muslim women, by organizing themselves, were indeed able to take their share in this aspect of the struggle for a national economy. By joining forces with others in women's organizations, these women were able to bring about sufficient energy and capital to create working places for other women. The question whether women could establish organizations had been settled some years before, and therefore there was no reason to question their opening of workshops for the production of, mostly, textiles in the form of clothes and other needlework within the context of such women's organizations.

Through these workshops the urban Ottoman Muslim women of the better off strata were able to kill two birds with one stone: by investing money and energy in the opening workplaces for mostly textiles' production they provided those women in need of work with a proper job and contributed to the economic production of the Ottoman Empire at the same time by turning these women into the much needed producers.

Despite the fact that there is hardly any information on the way the workshops were managed and their financial (lack of) success, it seems that the Ottoman Muslim women were to a certain extent able to meet the wishes of Atiye Şükran: they joined their financial forces to set up workshops which operated at least to some level commercially even though the women's organizations as such were not allowed to make any profits. Thus, these women were able to develop their entrepreneurial skills within the socially accepted context of women's organizations.

That the establishment of a joint stock company by Ottoman Muslim women was less acceptable, or, at least, questionable is clear from the process around the establishment of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı*. Although the women participating in the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* were not the first and only

Ottoman Muslim women to engage in business, the fact that they were participating in a joint stock company created problems. The problem was not that women were getting involved in business as such, but the need for intermingling with men which being a participant in a joint stock holding could entail. The owners of shares in such a holding were expected to participate in meetings with other stock holders, for example, in the general meeting of Shareholders. In such meetings men and women who were not direct relatives of each other would have to share the same room. The Council of State did not feel the need to change the statutes for this, but trusted the participants to obey the “national laws and habits” in this. Whether they did or not is not clear, although the announcement in *Tasvir-i Efkar* indicates that stock holders meetings were indeed attended by women. What seems to be certain, though, is that there was a strong connection with the *Eşya-yı Askeriye Şirketi*. This raises the question to what extent the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* was indeed an initiative of women. To answer this question it would be necessary to gather more information. What is important, though, is that the initiative to found the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* in the official documents and the newspapers was shown to be of women. This led to a discussion of the implications of women’s involvement in founding joint stock companies which resulted in the acknowledgement of the possibility for women to do so. In theory, therefore, the women founders of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Eşya Pazarı* paved the way for other women to establish such enterprises. However, it seems that their example was not followed by any other women during the Second Constitutional Period or any time shortly afterwards.

The efforts to establish a national economy formed the first impetus for urban Ottoman Muslim women of the better off social strata to get involved in socially accepted forms of female entrepreneurship such as the charity workshops. That the women working in the charity workshops had any ideological considerations in working in these workshops, however, seems unlikely. They were probably less concerned with the economic elevation of the Empire, their ethno-religious community or their fellow women as a group, than with the hardships of everyday life and the struggle to provide for a family in times of economic despair.

The almost continuous situation of war during the second decade of the twentieth century exacerbated the desperate situation of the women of the poorer urban strata. For the women belonging to the urban well-to-do these wars, however, opened more opportunities to widen their horizons and to venture out into new fields of patriotic and charitable expertise. Due to the wars

and the desperate situation of large numbers of girls and women caused by these wars a shift occurred in the primary goals of the organizations mentioned in this and the previous chapter as well: rather than contributing to the establishment of a truly national economy, the workshops turned into patriotic, philanthropic institutions where destitute girls and women could find work by sewing for the army under the leadership of the women belonging to the families of the urban bureaucratic elite.