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

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CHAPTER NINE

# *Gendering the War Time Community*

Some authors have argued that war and the introduction of armies which remain standing in peace time and conscription were important factors in the development of nationalism and in the establishment of modern nation-states. Tilly, taking the state as a starting point, for example, argues that an army which remains standing even in peace time, requires direct rule from a central state to ensure an adequate infrastructure of provisioning, transport and communication and thus a large national political apparatus. The state, furthermore, had to ensure that the populace would comply with the inclusion of an important, because young and vital, part into the army. To ensure effective direct rule over the populace at large a certain level of homogeneity amongst that populace was needed. This homogeneity, through a common language, religion and ideology, argues Tilly, simultaneously made it easier for the population to identify with its ruler(s) and to reduce the danger of revolts.[1]

Giddens points at the importance of, more particularly, mass conscription as an important impetus for the development of nationalism. Through mass conscription the "cultural homogeneity" was created which was needed to turn a mere "administrative and territorially ordered unity" into a "bounded nation-state," with a "conceptual community."[2] To be able to communicate and to establish a sense of community among the soldiers a common language had to be created both literally and symbolically.

Both Tilly and Giddens build their argument around the military system per se and seem to regard the military and warfare as exclusively male zones. As Yuval-Davis, however, points out, "women have always fulfilled certain, often vital, roles within [militaries and warfare]" although, in general, these roles were based on very strict gender divisions of labour.[3]

Women, however, cannot be overlooked if civilians are included in the analysis of the military and war. As Ginio points out, at times of war not only

[1] Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*.

[2] Anthony Giddens, "Class, Sovereignty and Citizenship," in: idem, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1985, 198-221, quotations 219.

[3] Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 93.

soldiers need to be motivated, but also civilians. He continues stating that "[c]oncepts and representations of collective identity are not purely products of wartime, yet it is then that they become fundamental and therefore receive much emphasis and clearer definitions."[4] He quotes Marwick, who wrote that

> [w]ar is an enormous emotional experience, during which loyalty towards one's own group, or those with whom one comes to identify in wartime (one's trade union, the working class, other women, the entire nation), intensifies, as does hostility to 'out groups' (principally of course, the enemy).[5]

Hagemann agrees with Tilly and Giddens that "military conflicts played a crucial role in shaping the process of nation-building." She, like Ginio, explicitly includes civilians in her argument, stressing that a state fighting a war with mass armies based on general mobilization needed to motivate "both soldiers and civilians – men and women."[6] The measures to enhance this motivation and the mobilization of men and women might imply changes in the existing gender order. The military and war thus are, according to Hagemann, not only important in shaping the process of nation-building, but also for shaping the gender order. Since the two of them are inevitably intertwined – as was also discussed in the introductory chapter – studying the activities of women related to the military and war is a prerequisite for those interested in gender history and nation-building, she feels.[7]

The Ottoman army had been thoroughly reorganized in the nineteenth century: conscription had been introduced in the 1840s, but discussions on who should be subject to this conscription continued until 1909, when conscription finally became more or less universal. Moreover, the Second Constitutional Period proved to be a period of almost continuous military struggles with internal and external forces: from the Turco-Italian War which lasted from 29 September 1911 until 18 October 1912, to the First Balkan War which started on 8 October 1912 and was formally ended on 20 May 1913, to the Second Balkan War which broke out on 16 June 1913 and lasted until 18 July 1913, to the First World War in which the Ottoman Empire got involved on 2 August 1914 and

[4] Eyal Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912 - 1913): Awakening from the Ottoman Dream," *War in History,* XII, 2, 2005, 156-177, quotation 160.

[5] Marwick, A. (ed.), *Total War and Social Change,* New York, 1988, xvi quoted in Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912 - 1913), 160.

[6] Hagemann, "Female Patriots," quotations 399.

[7] Hagemann, "Female Patriots," 400.

which ended for the Ottoman Empire with the Armistice signed at Moudros on 30 October 1918. The First World War, moreover, was followed by yet another war, the "War of Independence," which ended with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Several studies have been dedicated to the military reforms, while also the military conflicts in the early twentieth century have been duly studied. The effects of these reforms and conflicts on women and gender notions in the Ottoman Empire have so far received little attention. The studies of, for example, Hagemann and Quataert on Germany, however, show that such reforms and conflicts can affect the lives of a women in several, very diverse, ways as have the studies of other scholars.

During the last three decades of the twentieth centuries a shift took place in the study of wars in general and of the First World War, more particularly. Instead of, or rather, besides, the traditional studies of warfare and its military and political aspects, attention has been directed to the consequences of war for social life. In this context, the number of publications on the effect of war on gender relations, women and family life has increased. Authors like Greenwald for the United States[8], Downs for France and Great Britain[9], Daniel for Germany,[10] Darrow, also for France,[11] and Healy for Austria-Hungary[12] to mention only a few authors, have extensively dealt with the impact of the First World War on women's lives and the importance of the changes which occurred for the social and political processes taking place in the respective societies.

Their work shows that during the First World War the objective position of women in society indeed changed, but that their relative (subjective) position did not. In the societies studied, the gender differences were not leveled out during war, but, on the contrary, solidified. Gender notions which were patriarchal and organicist shaped women's participation in the war. Men and women were and remained complementary. Men were the brave soldiers. Women were the persons whom the soldiers defended, who took care of the soldiers, who supported the soldiers' relatives and who supplied the soldiers with

[8] Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: the Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990 (1980).

[9] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914 - 1939*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995.

[10] Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working Class Women in the First World War*, Oxford & New York: Berg Publishers, 1997.

[11] Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*.

[12] Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*.

ammunition. Women were indeed incorporated in the military system, but had auxiliary roles: they were clerks, nurses, ambulance drivers, but not soldiers.[13]

So, while Ahmed Emin Yalman in his book entitled *Turkey in the World War*[14] which was published in 1930 stated that the First World War had an emancipatory effect on women because they took the places of the men marched off to the battlefields in a paragraph he even called "War Work the Emancipator,"[15] the work of the above-mentioned scholars on women during the First World War shows that his conclusion may warrant some more nuance.

In this part of the book, the activities of Ottoman Muslim women and their associations are described and analyzed showing how, what Özkırımlı calls, the "identity claims" of nationalism which occur within a specific military context are gendered. It describes and analyzes the intricate relationship of Ottoman (Muslim) women with "the military and warfare" in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution and during the internal and external military conflicts occurring in the first decade thereafter. How did the activities of these women and their associations related to the military and the war remold the existing gender order? What did these activities entail for the identities which existed? Did they remain the same or were they reshaped and reformulated? How were they relevant in the context of the formation of a community or communities?

These questions are posed and should be answered within the context of more than a century of military reforms which carried consequences not only for the men directly involved, but also for the society at large.

## Military Reforms in the Late Ottoman Empire

During the nineteenth century the Ottoman army underwent considerable changes. With the introduction of conscription its internal structure was reorganized, new schools were opened, while new technologies and equipment were introduced.

In the Ottoman Empire conscription (albeit not universal) had replaced the traditional way to recruit soldiers by the middle of the nineteenth century. The

[13] "Introduction," in: Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (eds), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987, 6-9; Daniel, *The War from Within*, 22.

[14] [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War*.

[15] [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War*, 235-238.

Gülhane Rescript of November 1839 had contained promises regarding the limitation of the formerly life-long duration of the military service and regarding the regional spread of the recruited. Based on these promises new regulations were promulgated on 6 September 1843 according to which the army was divided into a standing (*Nizamiye)* army in which the conscripts had to serve five years and a reserve (*Redif*) army in which the men had to serve seven years. The army was furthermore divided into five regional armies (with a sixth one added in 1848).

In 1846 the regulation was transformed into the first conscription law in which the procedure of drawing the lots was described in detail while also the responsibilities of the authorities involved were laid down. The law, furthermore, specified the number of draftees for each region and stipulated who was exempted.[16] Following the example of the Prussian army which was reformed in the mid-1800s, a new army regulation and conscription law were issued in 1869 and 1871, respectively. A seventh army (for Yemen) was created and two other categories were added to the existing *Nizamiye* and *Redif*: *İhtiyatiye* and *Mustahfız.* The *İhtiyatiye* soldiers were reservists within the same structure as the *Nizamiye* soldiers, while the *Mustahfız* formed a kind of reservist troops to take over the duties of the *Nizamiye* and *Redif* soldiers when they went to war. The number of years an able bodied man had to serve after these reforms totaled twenty, four years as a regular soldier (in the *Nizamiye* army*)*, two years as a reservist regular (*İhtiyat* service*)* and six and eight years as *Redif* and *Mustahfız* soldiers, respectively.[17] With each of these changes the number of soldiers, active and reservist, increased considerably.[18] All these soldiers had to

[16] Handan Nezir Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 5-6; Veysel Şimsek, "Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Military Recruit, 1826 - 1853," [Unpublished MA-Thesis, Ankara: Bilkent University, Department of History, 2005], 50-55; Tobias Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına: Osmanlı İmperatorluğu'nda Genel Askerlik Yükümlülüğü 1826 - 1856*, İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008, 131-160.

[17] M.E. Yapp, "The Modernization of Middle Eastern Armies in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparative View," in: V.J. Parry & M.E. Yapp (eds), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975, 330-366, 348-349; Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844 - 1918," in: idem (ed.), *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775 - 1925*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999, 79-94.

[18] The numbers given in the (secondary) sources vary for the different years. Heinzelmann refers to a document of July 1856 which states that every year 50.000 new soldiers had to be recruited. This would mean an active army of 250.000 soldiers (five years x 50.000). According to Zürcher the strength of the army was put at 150.000 in 1848, while he states that after the changes of

be dressed and trained,[19] and the active soldiers also needed to be provided with food and drinks. When the revolt in Bosnia and Herzegovina broke out, the Ottomans seem to have met with similar problems as the Prussians: it turned out to be difficult to meet the needs of all these soldiers, especially since the economy of the Ottoman Empire was deteriorating fast and foreign credits were increasingly hard to get due to the financial state of the Ottoman Empire and the world economic crisis of 1874. As shown in Chapter One, the Ottomans called upon the Ottoman public to assist in the equipping of their soldiers appealing to their patriotism, a newly introduced concept in the Ottoman Empire.

The concept of patriotism had been introduced to the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 1830s by Ottoman bureaucrats who had travelled and lived in Europe. The issuing of the Gülhane Rescript which foresaw in a more equal treatment of non-Muslims and Muslims opened the way for this new, more secular sense of community which was supposed to replace the sense of community based on religion. The introduction of conscription in the years following the Gülhane Rescript led to discussions at the highest level on the desirability and advisability of including non-Muslims into the Ottoman army.[20] One of the arguments against the inclusion of non-Muslims was that the Ottoman Muslims had always fought based on *gaza* and *şehadet,* two Islamic concepts which referred to warfare and martyrdom on behalf of Islam, respectively. In order to become a modern army which would also include non-Muslims, the religiously inspired motivation to fight had to be replaced by a secular one: patriotism. *Cihad* (religion based war) had to be replaced by *muhafaza-i vatan* (defense of the fatherland).[21] And to successfully recruit soldiers and mobilize the public, they had to identify with this unit called *vatan.*

Although the word *vatan* eventually was used to translate the French concept of *la patrie*, the word originally carried a different meaning: when the Ottoman bureaucrats introduced the idea of patriotism around 1840, no such notion

1869 the active army totaled 210.00 active soldiers, 190.000 reservists (*redif*) and 300.000 back up reservists (*mustahfız*). Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 257; Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice," 82-83; Yapp, "The Modernization of Middle Eastern Armies in the Nineteenth Century," 348-349.

[19] According to Karal reservists had to serve actively one month a year. Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi: VII. Cilt, Islahat Fermanı Devri 1861 - 1876*, Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Basımevi, 1983, 188.

[20] See Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerlerının Askerlık Serüveni,* İstanbul: Simurg Yayınları, 2000; Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*; Şimsek, "Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Military Recruit, 1826 - 1853."

[21] Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 206-261.

existed in Ottoman Turkish. Sami Pasha who, according to Berkes, introduced the concept of patriotism, for example, used the term *hubb-i memleket ve millet*.[22] Namık Kemal in his patriotic play *Vatan yahut Silistre* (1873) used *vatan muhabbeti*.[23] The book published by Zafer *hanım* in 1877 and mentioned earlier was titled *Aşk-ı Vatan*.[24] The latter two translations seem to indicate that by the 1870s the shift of meaning of the word *vatan* from an apolitical "the place a person was living or born" to a more encompassing, political "fatherland" had taken root.

Abdülhamid II, however, felt that the introduction of French ideas such as "fatherland" and "patriotism" could pose a threat to his regime. Under his strict censorship, all political debate was banned from the press. Namık Kemal's play was forbidden and Namık Kemal exiled. Abdülhamid II, rather than using these foreign concepts, preferred to look for other means to create a "corporate political identity,"[25] which explicitly included a role for him as a symbol for that identity, as shown in the introductory chapter.

The creation of a strong "corporate political identity" was also deemed important by the German Major Von der Goltz who became advisor to the Ottoman Sultan in 1883. Von der Goltz was a social Darwinist who believed only the strongest nations were able to survive the struggle for existence. Therefore not only a limited number of armed forces, but whole nations should be ready to fight. The book in which he presented his ideas, *Das Volk in Waffen* (translated into English as *The Nation in Arms*), was translated into Ottoman Turkish in 1885. This translation became staple reading for the students at the newly established military schools and shaped the minds of whole generations of Ottoman officers.[26] The "nation in arms" of Von der Goltz was, however, a nation without women. In his book he refers to women only twice: once in the context of (uncivilized) hordes where men, women and children used to fight side by side and once in a footnote to point out that the hands of women were useful in times of war to turn out enough bread from the bakeries whose ordinary (male) workers were in arms.[27]

[22] Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 130; 219-222.

[23] Namık Kemal, *Vatan yahut Silistre,* (hazırl. Sabahattin Çağın), İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 2000.

[24] Zafer hanım, *Aşk-ı Vatan*, 1294 (1877); Zafer hanım, *Aşk-ı Vatan* [Zehra Toska], 1994.

[25] Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 208.

[26] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 19-33; 68-72.

[27] Colmar Von der Goltz, *The Nation in Arms,* London: H.W. Allen & Co., 1887, 13 and 386, respectively.

Under the influence of Von der Goltz and his ideas the conscription law underwent new changes in 1886 to include more persons to approach the idea of "nation in arms." No longer could one get exemption from active service through replacement (*bedel-i şahsi*); the exemption through payment (*bedel-i nakdi*) which allowed non-Muslims to opt out of conscription continued to exist, though.[28]

While the army thus was reorganized, new schools were established and novel technologies and equipment were introduced. This introduction served two, interrelated, aims. The first was a purely military one: to strengthen the Ottoman army *vis à vis* the European military might and to put an end to the defeats on the battlefields. The second was related to the wish of the Ottoman Empire to be recognized as a partner in the conglomerate of modern European states.[29] To show the outside world that the Ottoman Empire was one of the modern states it should dispose over modern means of transport, defense and communication and the men to work with them. Thus, Sultan Abdülaziz, who reigned from 1861 until 1876, ordered ironclad warships to be built. He failed, however, to raise the appropriate personnel for it.[30] This meant that he might have succeeded to some extent in reaching the second aim, but would have hopelessly failed in the first one if he had had to fight such a battle.

His nephew Abdülhamid II was not interested in the building of a modern navy, but embarked on another project at the turn of the century: the building of a railroad between Damascus and Mecca.[31] During the nineteenth century several railroads had been built in the Ottoman Empire. They were concentrated in the European parts of the Empire and in the West of Anatolia and served mainly the European economic interests. They had all been built with foreign capital and expertise. The Hicaz railroad, as Abdülhamid's project was called, was planned to be different though. It was to be built in the Arab provinces connecting the coastal area of Syria with the Arab hinterland of the Hicaz, it was not to serve the economic interests of the Europeans, but to provide the Muslim pilgrims with a route from the coast to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and the Ottoman army with means of transport in case of need. Moreover, it was to

[28] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 109-110. Muslims too could opt out by paying a fee, but the fee they had to pay was higher than that of the non-Muslims.

[29] See on this subject Deringil, T*he Well-Protected Domains,* especially Chapters Six and Seven.

[30] Zürcher, *Turkey*, 60.

[31] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 60-61.

be built without the assistance of foreign finances and technological expertise. By undertaking this project Abdülhamid II wanted not only to impress his European counterparts as the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, but, in the context of his pan-Islamist policies, also to show his coreligionists that he as the Caliph was thinking of their needs. He indeed succeeded in impressing the Europeans: the project was (with the assistance of German technicians) finished much faster and was much cheaper than they had thought possible. The project also proved to be a success in the context of Abdülhamid's pan-Islamist policies. It had for a big part been financed with the donations from not only Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, but from Muslims all over the world. Approximately 18% of the 62.5 million *kuruş* worth of donations came from abroad. The remaining 82%, however, had been donated by Muslims within the Ottoman lands, with Egypt taking a large share in it. The public within and without the Ottoman Empire had been invited to contribute to this project through a cunning propaganda campaign in the Ottoman (and foreign) newspapers.[32]

With the campaigns for the Hicaz Railroad and, for example, also the previously mentioned campaign to raise money for the wives and children of the "martyrs" of the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, Abdülhamid II actively tried to portray himself as the head of the community living in the lands under his control, carefully balancing between two "options of identity" of that community: Ottomanism and (pan-)Islamism. Moreover, he wanted to be the caring head of the caring state within whose borders this community lived. Under his reign embryonic forms of a state welfare system were developed by the introduction of the first pension funds for military and civil officers, while the Ottoman dynasty with the Sultan at its head contributed considerably to the many social projects which were developed under his reign.[33]

[32] Orhan Koloğlu, "Hicaz demiryolu (1900 - 1908). Amacı, finansmanı, sonucu," in: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu & Mustafa Kaçar (haz.), *Çağını Yakalayan Osmanlı! Osmanlı Devleti'nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri,* [Proceedings of the International Symposium on Modern Techniques of Transport and Communication in the Ottoman State (IRCICA, 3-5 April 1989)], İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995, 289-334.; Ufuk Gülsoy, *Hicaz Demiryolu*, İstanbul: Eren, 1994; Orhan Koloğlu, *Avrupa'nın Kıskacında Abdülhamit*, İstanbul: İletişim, 1998, 215-217.

[33] İzi Karakaş Özbayrak, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Uygulanan Sosyal Yardım Politikalari (1876 – 1909)*, İstanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2011; Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876 - 1909,"; Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Poor Relief in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876 - 1914," *New Perspectives on Turkey,* XXI, 1999, 1-33; Nadir Özbek, "Imperial Gifts and Sultanic Legitimation during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876 – 1909," in: Michael Bonner, et al. (eds), *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, 203-220; Amy Singer, "The Persistence of

## Towards the Young Turk Revolution

After Von der Goltz left in 1895, those educated by him continued to disperse his ideas. The older generation of Ottoman officers, as Akmeşe calls them, seems to have been faithful to the Ottoman Sultan and to have maintained the idea of loyalty to him and the House of Osman as the main binding factor. At the same time, however, a new, younger generation of officers was increasingly influenced by the ideas of the Young Turk movement. They were inspired by Namık Kemal's ideas of "freedom" and "fatherland" and regarded the Ottoman Sultan as the symbol of oppression and backwardness. Rather than for loyalty to the Sultan they opted for loyalty to the fatherland or the state.[34] A group of these young officers from the Third Army stationed in Macedonia to fight local rebels would spark off the Young Turk Revolution of 23 July 1908.

Despite, or perhaps due to, the reforms in the nineteenth century, the lower ranks of the Ottoman army served under severe conditions, even in peace time: although their technical equipment was up to standards, they were poorly dressed and fed.[35] The arrears in the payment of soldiers had led to mutiny and army revolts just before the Young Turk Revolution and the high-ranking officers could no longer keep them under control. In September 1906 a group of revolutionary, lower officers together with some civil servants founded the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFC). The OFC got into touch with the Committee of Union and Progress, which at that moment was still an underground organization with its headquarters in Paris and which strove, amongst other things, to put an end to the despotism of the Sultan and his palace-*clique*. By September 1907 the two organizations merged into a new "Committee of Progress and Union"[36] whose main aim was to restore the Constitution of 1876 to the full. The lower ranked officers in the organization worked on establishing

Philanthropy," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* XXXI, 3, 2011, 557-568.

[34] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 33-40.

[35] Elsa Sophia von Kamphoevener, the daughter of the highest German military advisor to Abdülhamid in the late nineteenth century, for example, recalls how her father soon after his arrival was told that the soldiers were poorly clad in rags, without shoes, their feet wrapped in anything they could find. Moreover, since they were never paid their salaries, they were unable to return to their place of origin in Anatolia after having served their due, he was told. Elsa Sophie von Kamphoevener, *Damals im Reiche der Osmanen; ein Märchen der Wirklichkeit aus der Türkei des Sultan Abdulhamid*, n.p.: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, n.d., 90-92, 136.

[36] The name was later turned into Committee of Union and Progress again.

support for their case among their superiors. By July 1908 many of the officers, but not all, were supporters of the Unionist case.

Under the leadership of the Albanian Major Niyazi a group of volunteers consisting of reservists and rebellious civilians, who had been protesting increased taxation, revolted and taking money, weapons and ammunition took to the mountains. The general sent with his soldiers by the Istanbul government was murdered by a Unionist and the unrest spread to the Second Army in Edirne and to the troops in Izmir. The Istanbul government first tried to suppress the rebellion and when they could not prevent the spread of the unrest, to reconcile the rebels by declaring a general amnesty for Unionist officers and giving them promotion.

This did not work and the Committee decided to make an end to the absolutism of Abdülhamid II and to turn it into a constitutional parliamentary regime again as had been the case in 1876 - 1878 until Abdülhamid II had prorogued the Parliament one-sidedly due to the military struggles with Russia without calling for the constitutionally required new elections. The proclamation was made on 23 July 1908 simultaneously in several cities in Macedonia and Albania. Meanwhile the Sultan was told to endorse the new regime lest he would no longer be recognized as the ruler of the Empire. On 24 July, the Sultan, left with no other choice, agreed officially to call for elections to form a new Parliament in accordance with the constitution.[37] This resulted in the celebrations referred to in the introduction to this book.

In the new publications that appeared after the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908, both foreign and Ottoman military officers published their ideas on the future of the Ottoman army which in their view was inevitably intertwined with the future of the Ottoman nation: in accordance with the idea of *The Nation in Arms,* they regarded the civilian population the backbone of any successful army. Only an army that had the full support of a healthy and well-educated nation would be strong enough to fight external and internal enemies. Education in the army itself at one of the military schools or during the conscription period, therefore, was deemed crucial by the authors in the military periodicals.[38]

The military authors seem to have been divided on the identity of the nation which they deemed central to the army. While some identified the Ottoman

[37] Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, 29-101. Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 46-63.

[38] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 64-86.

army with the Turkish nation and referred to the glorious past of the Turks who were inspired primarily by religion, others felt that "the Ottoman army should be the Ottoman nation in arms."[39] The latter propagated universal conscription and explicitly incorporated the non-Muslims. This was, in their eyes, the only way to ensure the unification of the Ottoman army and the Ottoman nation. The changes in the conscription law introduced in 1909 reflected the ideas of the "Ottomanists" within the army. The period that able-bodied men were actively involved in the army and thus regularly trained was extended. Moreover, an(other) attempt was made to make conscription universal.

According to the new conscription law, an able-bodied man first had to serve in the *Nizamiye* army, where he would for three years be in active service as a *Muvazzaf*. After having completed his active service in the *Nizamiye* army, he would become a reservist for six years, within the *İhtiyat* troops of that army. Those who had fulfilled their duty in the *Nizamiye* army and those who had been exempted or whose lot had not been drafted became reservists in the, separate, *Redif* army. They served nine years as a *Redif* soldier and another two years as secondary reservists with the *Mustahfız*. Only the secondary reservists with the *Mustahfız* did not have a peace time organization, the others were supposed to be regularly trained also during peace time.

The conscription laws issued before 1909 had allowed for several exemptions. With the new law this was changed: categories of formerly exempted men such as non-Muslims and males living in Istanbul were no longer exempted from military service. There was much resistance against these measures and the extent of actual recruiting remained limited.[40]

The defeats during the Balkan Wars and the prospect of a new, large-scale war demanded further reforms, which Enver Pasha as the new Minister of War could implement with relatively little resistance since the Unionists had grabbed power in January 1913. In 1913, the *Redif* units were eliminated due to their poor performances during the Balkan Campaign: the new army units would only be of limited strength during peacetime to be extended to full strength with the reservists only in times of mobilization. Thus reservists would now be part of the same units as the regular soldiers instead of forming their own separate units as

[39] Ali Fuad, "Ordu ve millet," *Asker*, 1, 21 Ağustos 1324 (3 September 1908), 16 as quoted in Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 71.

[40] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 109-114.

formerly.[41] Moreover, with the new Provisional Law for Military Service (*Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*)[42] which was issued in May 1914, another effort was made to make conscription truly universal: no longer could able-bodied men be exempted, but only reservists could, after having been called in arms, evade mobilization by paying money or finding someone to replace them.[43]

A part of the problem during the Balkan Wars was perceived to be the lack of education amongst the soldiers and the lack of homogeneity in the army.[44] Thus with a new war imminent, measures were taken to prevent another defeat: while adults were educated through organizations as the *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth, for urban dwellers) and the *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti* (Villagers' Knowledge Organization, for villagers), other organizations directed their efforts at educating a future generation of soldiers. So, for example, (para-military) youth organizations were established where youngsters were trained physically.[45] At these youth organizations as well as at schools, the children were imbued with a strong patriotism calling for revenge.[46] In the military periodicals[47] as well as in the women's periodicals of the time, moreover, women were ascribed an important role in this: the moral education of children, after all, it was argued, began at the lap of their mother. Thus, military concerns were included in the arguments used in favor of women's education. The argument that a child gets its first knowledge on the lap of its mother and that a mother therefore should have some general knowledge and the skills to transmit it to her children was used regularly all through the Second Constitutional Period.[48] However, it took a different tone in the years following the Balkan Wars. The women who were

[41] Stanford. J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I (Volume I),* Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006, 115-118.

[42] *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1330 (1914).

[43] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 155-162.

[44] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 124-132.

[45] Sanem Yamak Ateş, *Asker Evlatlar Yetiştirmek: II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Beden Terbiyesi, Askerî Talim ve Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri,* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012. See also Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 163-177; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 192-203.

[46] See, for example, the short message in *Osmanischer Lloyd,* reporting that the Ministry of Education had sent patriotic poems to all girls' and boys' schools. "Schulwesen," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 5. Dezember 1915, 3.

[47] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 165.

[48] See, e.g., Halide Salih, "Mehasını okuyan kardeşlerime," *Mehasın*, 6, Şubat 1324 (February/March 1909), 418-421; S.L. "Hayat-ı nisviyemizde fikdan-ı maarif!" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 7, 10 Nisan 1329 (23 April 1913), 3-4. See also Ebülmuammer Fuad, *Vezaif-i Aile*, Dersaadet: Tefeyyüz Kitabhanesi, 1328, 5-8.

expected to raise their, especially male, children with hatred against the enemy needed very specifically knowledge of history and geography, it was argued. Knowledge on the glorious past of the Empire and on the extent of the territories it had lost over the years would enable them to transfer this knowledge to their sons, who, if it was mixed with the right patriotic feelings, would go out and fight bravely against the enemy with better results than hitherto. Especially in *Kadınlar Dünyası,* which started to be published during the Balkan Wars, articles pointing out the need for women's education using this, rather belligerent, argument appeared frequently.[49]

Another reason for the defeat was believed to be the failure of supply. After the Unionist Revolution three national organizations had been established which served, amongst other goals, to extract resources from the civilians: the *Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Organization for the National Support of the Ottoman Navy) in July 1909, the *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Red Crescent Organization) in April 1911 and the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (National Defense Organization) in January 1913, as will be discussed in the chapters to come. Despite the efforts of these organizations, the shortage in supplies which occurred for several reasons, remained a large problem during the Balkan Wars: as a result the soldiers could not be prevented from getting demoralized due to the lack of sufficient food, equipment and medical care. The military and civilian officers were well aware of this. Civilians – women and other non-combatants – were, therefore, to be mobilized on a much larger scale to prevent a similar problem during the First World War.

[49] See, e.g., Fatma Bedia Adil, "Evrak-ı varide: mevkiimiz," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 12, 15 Nisan 1329 (28 April 1913), 2-3; Naciye Şerif, "Kadınlık," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 132, 22 Şubat 1329 (7 March 1914), 6-8; Bedia Kamuran, "Osmanlı kadınlığın ulvi vazifeleri," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 33, 1 Mart 1329 (14 March 1914), 5-6; Mesadet Bedirhan, "Esir öldü," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 133,1 Mart 1329 (14 March 1914), 7-8; "Kadınlar - Tababet," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 134, 8 Mart 1329 (21 March 1914), 2; Naciye Şerif, "Kadınlık," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 137, 29 Mart 1329 (11 April 1914), 8-10; Bedia Kamuran, "Terakki yolları," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 139, 18 Nisan 1330 (1 May 1914), 7; Aziz Haydar, "Kinimizi unutmayalım," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 142, 9 Mayıs 1330 (22 May 1914), 4; Bedia Kamuran, "Osmanlı kadınlığına taalluk eden vezaif-i mühimme," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 143, 16 Mayıs 1330 (29 May 1914), 7-8.

## Ottoman Muslim Women in Times of War

As described in Chapter One, Ottoman Muslim women were explicitly called upon to contribute as civilians to the military effort as early as the 1870s. During the Second Constitutional Period, their involvement increased and altered. A photograph published on the eve of the First Balkan War in October 1912 in *Servet-i Fünun* seems to symbolize (the wish for) their increased involvement.

**Figure 14 "Another picture of the war manifestations at Sultan Ahmed," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1114, 27 Eylül 1328 (10 October 1912), 508. Although the majority of demonstrators appear to be men, women are prominently figuring in the foreground of this photograph as if the photographer wanted to accentuate their presence.**

In the spring and summer of 1912 the tensions between several Balkan states, which had in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century gained independence from the Ottoman Empire, and their former rulers increased. On 2 October Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria, which had joined forces in the Balkan League, demanded that the Ottomans implemented reforms in Macedonia to, amongst other aims, improve the situation of the non-Muslim population in this province. The ultimatum evoked the reaction of the Ottoman public in Istanbul.

On 4 October 1912 a meeting took place at the Hippodrome in Istanbul (*Sultan Ahmed*) where war was demanded. Although the majority of participants were male, women were certainly not absent as the photograph above shows. Nor were women's voices lacking in the press of those days.

"Unlike our brave foremothers we cannot fight on the battlefield; we are deprived of the honor to fight our enemies face to face" complained Nezihe Muhlis in a letter to the daily *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (Interpreter of the Truth), which was reproduced in the bulletin board of the Ottoman Fleet Organization.[50] In this she was not unlike her British counterparts, who at the outbreak of the First World War envied their brothers who could show their patriotism by joining the army, while women had to find another way. The British women, however, were "lucky." During the First World War women for the first time in British history got the opportunity to become officially part of the army in auxiliary services and wear a uniform.[51] The Ottoman women, on the other hand, did not have such a chance.[52] With the exception of some cases,[53] they did not fight side by side with Ottoman men on the battlefield during the wars waged between 1908 and 1918.

Beyond discussion, however, was the idea that Ottoman women had to make a contribution to the war in one way or another. Examples of the past were used to point this out. The editors of the *Kadınlar Dünyası* referred to the women in the early days of Islam, who participated in battles like men, while they also reminded their readers of *Kara* Fatma (Black Fatma),[54] who "hiding her gender,

[50] Nezihe Muhlis (?), "Nezih bir nida-yı hamiyet," *Donanma*, III, 2 (26), Nisan 1328 (April/May 1912), 59-64, quotation 61.

[51] Janet S.K. Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters: Gender and Class in First World War Britain," *The International History Review*, XIX, 1, 1997, 32-51.

[52] Except perhaps for the "Women's Workers Battalions," discussed in Chapter Twelve, which might be regarded as auxiliary troops, having uniforms, ranks, etc.

[53] German sources quoted Ottoman sources showing the courage of Ottoman women related to the battle field. See e.g. M[artin] H[artmann], "Der Glaubenskrieg und unsere Frauen," *Welt des Islams* (1), III, 2, 1915, 144-145 which was a reproduction of an article in *Tanin* from 8 January 1915 on women at the border near Erzurum who were fighting side by side with men against Russians; and "Patriotismus eines türkischen Mädchens," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. März 1913, 1 an article which is supposedly the reproduction of a letter published previously in the *Tasvir-i Efkar* of a "Turkish" girl to her mother, in which she tells her she cut off her hair, dressed like a man and went on her way to Adapazarı to subscribe as a volunteer to join the forces fighting to regain Edirne.

[54] This Kara Fatma fought on the side of the Ottomans during the Crimean War. For an excellent analyses of the (ab)use of the image of this and other "Kara Fatma"s in Ottoman and Turkish nationalist rhetoric, see Zeynep Kutluata, "Gender and War During the Late Ottoman

succeeded in getting the rank of captain due to her courage and effort" in the Crimean War.[55] These references to Ottoman history and its Islamic and/or Turkish background were used not only in the *Kadınlar Dünyası,* but also elsewhere.

So, for example, Mehmed Ubeydullah in an article in *Türk Yurdu* published during the Balkan Wars argued that there were many examples of religious traditions (*hadith*) according to which women were active in war. Taking part in war was, he stated, a communal duty which, if observed by some, would absolve the others who did not observe it (*farz-ı kifaye*). For children, women, blind, and other "impaired," however, it was necessary (*vacib*), nor proper (*caiz*) to participate in war. On the other hand, if the enemy attacked, he wrote, taking part in the war became an individual duty applicable to all (*farz-ı ayn*). In such a case a woman did not even have to ask permission from her husband to participate in the war according to his interpretation of the religious laws related to this subject. Since the Balkan War had started with the Ottomans being attacked, Ottoman women had to take up their duty in his view.[56]

This was also the opinion of an unknown author writing in the same periodical during the First World War. He or she, however, referred to the Turkish past of the Ottomans: "[a]ccording to Turkish customs, women take part in war and battle side by side with the ruler."[57]

Contrary to what these texts seem to mean, none of these authors argued this way to incite women to participate as fighters on the front. For Ottoman Muslim women, who, in general, were expected to live a secluded life, becoming a soldier was (almost) as impossible as it was in most European countries.

Individual women were indeed involved in warfare all during history, but in most cultures, in most times fighting in an organized, army like form was a men's business. Therefore, participation of women in battles implied a trespassing of existing gender borders. Women who fought as soldiers at the front were anomalies[58] and as a result often got a special status in the local

and Early Republican Periods: The Case of Black Fatma(s)," [Unpublished MA-Thesis, İstanbul: Sabancı University, 2006].

[55] Kadınlar Dünyası, "Askerlik ve kadınlar," *Kadınlar Dünyası,* 148, 20 Haziran 1330 (3 July 1914), 2.

[56] Mehmed Ubeydullah, "İçtima ve siyaset: islam kadınları," *Türk Yurdu*, II, 1328, 861-866.

[57] "Kadın Efendi Hazretlerinin asker evladlarına muhabbet ve şefkatı," *Türk Yurdu*, VIII, 6, 21 Mayıs 1331 (3 June 1915), 2627.

[58] And would often chose to disguise themselves as men, like Kara Fatma did.

folklore.[59] For example, Lalla Fatma, who fought against the French in 1857 became a female saint in Algeria,[60] while Nene Hatun, who fought against the Russians in the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877,[61] and the earlier mentioned Kara Fatma became the heroines of many Ottoman and Turkish war stories and poems.[62] The heroine of Namık Kemal's play *Vatan yahut Silistre*, moreover, was, of course, also a woman who, disguised as a man, followed her beloved on the battle field. Through these war stories and poems Ottoman Muslim women were, however, not encouraged to join the men who were marched off to the fields and mountains to defend the Ottoman Empire against its potential and later also actual enemies, but rather to find other ways to show their patriotism.

The involvement of Ottoman Muslim women with war and the "military" in the broadest sense forms the topic of the following four chapters. The impact of state regulations related to warfare and the military on women, the efforts of the Ottoman authorities to mobilize women for the war effort and the private initiatives of men and women to involve women in the war effort are discussed. It aims at showing how women, who are excluded from conscription, through an intricate and changing relation with the military succeed in giving content to their citizenship and what this tells us about the formation of a community and a communal identity.

Chapter Ten deals with one particular aspect of the introduction of conscription in the late Ottoman Empire: the Ottoman version of family aid for breadwinners who were mobilized. It shows how the authorities tried to see to the needs of soldier's families through this rudimentary state welfare scheme from its inception in 1886 until the First World War and analyses the adjustments made during this period. It also shows how this scheme proved to be insufficient to mitigate the effects of a continuing war situation for the families of soldiers and how the initiatives of private persons and associations had to step in to fill in the gaps left by the authorities.

[59] Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 95-96. See also Karin Hagemann, "'Heroic Virgins' and 'Bellicose Amazons': Armed Women, the Gender Order and the German Public during and after the Anti-Napoleonic Wars," *European History Quarterly,* XXXVII, 4, 2007, 507-527; Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry 1650 - 1850*, Chicago & London: the University of Chicago Press, 1996 (reprint with new preface of original 1989).

[60] Willy Jansen, *Women without Men*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987, 83.

[61] Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *İstiklâl Harbi'nde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız*, Ankara: Atatürk, Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 1988, 5-7.

[62] Kutluata, "Gender and War During the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods."

Chapter Eleven discusses the war experiences of women from a different angle: it deals with the effects of war on women in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Using the insights gained by scholars on, specifically, the effects of war on women in various, other countries, these effects are described and analyzed. This chapter also includes a paragraph on the activities of the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*.

While Chapters Ten and Eleven largely deal with women belonging to the lower socio-economic strata, Chapters Twelve and Thirteen describe and analyze the patriotic and charitable activities of women belonging to the better off strata and their associations during the Second Constitutional Period. Chapter Twelve discusses the activities of Ottoman women and their organizations to improve the fate of the Ottoman army and that of its soldiers in the field. Chapter Thirteen covers the activities of these women and their organizations to enhance the situation of the soldiers who were wounded and needed to be taken care off.