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

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Citation

Os, N. A. N. M. van. (2013, October 31). *Feminism, philanthropy and patriotism : female associational life in the Ottoman empire*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/22075>

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

Issue Date: 2013-10-31

CHAPTER TEN

Taking Care of Soldier's Families

In the introduction to an edited volume on military conscription in the Middle East, Lucassen and Zürcher introduced various forms of military recruitment and of resistance to, especially, universal and direct conscription through which the state, in principle, made every adult male subject or citizen liable to military service. They wrote that one of the requirements to successfully introduce military conscription is “an efficient apparatus for the actual recruitment and (...) efficient *sanctions* (...) to combat desertion” [emphasis added].¹ The authors ignore, however, another means states had to deal with possible objections to conscription: forms of remuneration during or after active service for the conscripts and their dependents through the creation of a (kind of) state welfare system for these conscripts and their dependents.

In many states the introduction of modern systems of military recruitment – both in the form of conscription and of voluntary service – entailed the first steps towards forms of state welfare for those involved in the military through the introduction of pensions for retired and/or wounded soldiers and for their widows and orphans. In France, for example, the existing pensions for officers were extended to disabled and needy common soldiers, while also the widows of soldiers who died in service started to receive a pension in the aftermath of the French revolution.² The United States introduced pensions for soldiers in the first half of the nineteenth century in the aftermath of the War of Independence. These pensions were relatively small compared with the pension payments which were introduced after the 1860s and the Civil War. Through the introduction of these higher pensions the government of the United States not only hoped to “buy” the votes of the American white males after they had given them suffrage rights, but it also wanted to attract soldiers for its volunteer army.³ In the Ottoman Empire, too, the first modern forms of a state welfare system for

¹ Jan Lucassen and Erik Jan Zürcher, “Introduction: Conscription and Resistance: The Historical Context.” in: Erik Jan Zürcher (ed.), *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775 - 1925*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999, 1-19, quotation 10.

² Isser Woloch, *The French Veteran from the Revolution to the Restoration*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

³ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, especially Chapter Two.

the military were developed with the introduction of modern forms of military recruitment. Thus in 1866 the Military Pension Fund (*Askeri Tekaüd Sandığı*) was established followed 15 years later by a similar pension scheme for civil servants.⁴

State welfare for military was not only directed at the military themselves, as their dependents were also incorporated in the system. State support for the military and their dependents took two forms. On the one hand, the payments made *after* active service: the regular pensions for those who retired, the pensions for those who had been wounded during active service and the pensions for the widows and orphans of the casualties. On the other hand, the payments which were made *during* active service, which were not paid to the soldier himself, but to his dependents: what by various authors has been referred to as “separation allowance,” “family aid” or “state support subsidy.”

In Britain the “separation allowance” was very limited until the start of the First World War. Britain, which did not have a conscript army until 1916, allowed only a very limited number of its soldiers, 4%, to get married as a reward for a long and outstanding service. Only the wives of these soldiers could receive a separation allowance. The “off the strength” wives of the other soldiers did not have any right to such an allowance and could only hope for support from public or private poor relief in the case they could not take care of their own subsistence. In the years before the outbreak of the First World War, these restrictions were heavily discussed, but changes were rejected for moral reasons and due to the costs they would entail. Once the British joined in the First World War and were in dire need of industrial and military manpower, however, the tide turned: when British Members of Parliament and military officers argued that “[r]espectable male workers would only join up, (...), if their wives and children were adequately cared for in their absence - and by the state, not by the charities” the British government gave in and announced on 10 August 1914 that separation allowances would also be paid to “off the strength” wives. Moreover, the allowances would be need-blind: the separation allowance would be granted independently of the recipients need. Furthermore, also other

⁴ Documents in the Ottoman archives show that retired or wounded military and civil servants as well as their widows and orphaned children had been receiving allowances from the state before, but it lasted until 1866 and 1881 before the pension funds for military and civil servants (*mülkiye*) were formally established. Özbayrak, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Uygulanan Sosyal Yardım Politikaları*, 49-79.

dependents who could prove that they had been dependent on the soldier before war were liable to receive the allowance.⁵

The Prussians, who had introduced a conscription army more than a century earlier, introduced a system of family aid for the dependents of their military as early as 1850. Until that year, local communities had been expected to look after the families of Prussian soldiers in arms. In 1850, however, a law was issued which determined that the families of conscripts had a right to a minimum income to be paid by “administrative districts and free cities,” if they proved to be in need of such a financial aid. The Prussians used an argument similar to the British M.P.s and officers: alleviating the burden of conscription for the soldiers by ensuring that their families were not left in dire straits.⁶ These “administrative districts and free cities,” however, had to finance this financial aid scheme themselves and received no refunding from the central authorities at all. In the following decades, the concept of family aid (*Familienunterstützung*) gradually spread over the other German states. During this process the regulations were continuously adjusted. After the Franco-German war of 1870 - 1871 the newly constituted Reich reimbursed the North-German states partly out of the payments made by France. In 1888, a “Law concerning the support of families of conscripted men,” was passed, which stipulated that the central authorities, the *Reich*, would reimburse the minimum benefits to the local authorities charged with the payment of family aid. The law left open, however, when this refund would be paid; a later law had to take care of this aspect. It listed those eligible for family aid in detail and also stipulated the amount of the minimum allowance. This family aid scheme stayed in place with only minor changes due to the changing circumstances: the minimum allowance was raised a few times and the categories of eligible persons extended.⁷

In Austria a law on “state support subsidy” (*staatliche Unterhaltsbeitrag*) was issued in 1912, according to which

⁵ Susan Pedersen, “Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War,” *American Historical Review*, VC, 4, 1990, 983-1006, quotation 989.

⁶ Margerete Hoffmann, “Das Gesetz betreffend die Unterstützung von Familien in den Dienst eingetretener Mannschaften vom 28.2.1888/4.8.1914 und seine Anwendung,” (Dissertation Berlin), 1918, 19 as quoted in Simone Ernst, “Frauen im Ersten Weltkrieg” (Studienarbeit) Universität/Gesamthochschule Paderborn, 1997, 5 [Dokument nr. 11461 aus den Wissensarchiven von GRIN, www.grin.com].

⁷ Daniel, *The War from Within*, 173-177.

[f]amily members (wife, children, parents, grandparents, parents-in-law, step-parents, siblings and also illegitimate children) of conscripted Austrian citizens whose livelihood was heretofore dependent primarily on the wage of the conscripted citizen, have a right (*Anspruch*) to a support subsidy⁸

Healy, who does not tell whether this law was totally new or based on earlier practices and regulations, points out that the payment scheme was severely disliked by many women for three reasons. Firstly, the payment women received hardly provided subsistence. Secondly, women who thought to have a right to payment did not receive it. Especially women who found a job and received a small wage were shocked to find that their subsidy was cut off for that reason. Finally, women resented the way the subsidy qualified them as dependents of their men instead of individual citizens suffering from war with a right of their own to support, a problem which was also formulated by British Labour women.⁹

It is important to make a distinction between these payments and public relief. These payments formed a circumscribed right to which these families were entitled recognized by the state and fully paid for by that same state. Public relief, or charity, equally paid for from taxes and other (government) revenues, was rather an act of consideration from (local) authorities. As Healy also pointed out, for the beneficiaries the distinction was, however, not always clear. Especially when both the payments from a family aid scheme and those of some public relief scheme were distributed by the same institution and from the same location confusion was created.

For many women receiving a separation allowance, however, extra support in the form of relief, both public and private, proved to be indispensable: the money they received was for several reasons not adequate, especially towards the end of the war when states ran out of money, all private reserves were spent and inflation was raging.

This chapter discusses how needy soldier's families were supported during the wars in the late Ottoman Empire. It describes the Ottoman version of family aid from its beginning until the end of the First World War. It analyses the adjustments made during this period and shows how and why this scheme proved to fall short of fulfilling the needs of the soldier's dependents. The charitable organizations which were founded by the women (and men) of the

⁸ Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 194.

⁹ Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 193-197.

urban bureaucratic elite who stepped in to fill in the gaps left by the authorities are dealt with in the second part of the chapter.

The *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* (Allowance for Families without Breadwinner): Laws and Regulations

As mentioned in the Chapter Nine, Von der Goltz aimed at including more people into the army to create a true “nation in arms.” Despite the efforts of Von der Goltz and his students to extend the military service to as many men as possible, many able-bodied men remained exempted from active service. The *Seferbirlik Nizamnamesi* (Mobilization Regulation) of 1889 in which the regulations introduced by Von der Goltz were further explained and worked out, contained a separate section giving a detailed list of those exempted from regular military service.¹⁰ In the recruiting law of 1909 a similar list was given. By then, however, the list had become shorter: many of those traditionally exempted, amongst them non-Muslims and inhabitants of Istanbul were now liable to regular conscription. One group which remained exempted from active service in peacetime until the end of the Ottoman Empire, however, was the *muinsiz*. According to Pakalın, *muinsiz* “is a term used for a person who does not have anybody to look after his mother, or, if married, his wife;”¹¹ or, in short, for a breadwinner.

The conscription law of Von der Goltz of 1886 defined in detail who would be regarded a *muinsiz*. Factors such as the degree of kinship to those left behind, the latter’s age, sex, and their physical and mental health were all factors relevant to determine whether someone was exempted from active military service or not. Another factor was the availability of other relatives who could potentially look after those left behind.¹²

¹⁰ *Seferbirlik Nizamnamesi*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Ceride-i Askeriye, 1305 (1889).

¹¹ Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* [3 Vols], İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983, II, 573.

¹² So, for example, a man whose father was aged over seventy, or under seventy but unable to earn his living and who had in his household (*hane*) neither someone (son, brother, son-in-law, grandson or nephew) who was healthy and over fifteen, nor a son living in another house in the village (*kariye*), would be clasfied as a soldier on leave (*efrad-ı mezune meyanına idhal olunur*). *Asakir Nizamname-i Şahanenin Suret-i Ahzını Mübeyyin Kanunname-i Hümayundur*, [İstanbul]: Matbaa-i Ceride-i Askeriye, 1302 (1886), 14-15.

Although these so-called *muinsiz* were exempted from active military service in peacetime, they were called in arms in times of war and mobilization. In order not to leave their families without any support, the Ottoman state introduced special provisions for them. What these provisions existed of and how these families were taken care of, however, remains unclear. This is probably partly due to the fact that the Ottomans only fought one brief war between 1886 and 1909, and therefore did not need to mobilize the reservist *muinsiz*.

For the period after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 more information is available. The series of wars the Ottomans got involved in during the second decade of the twentieth century forced the Ottoman government to actually apply the provisions for the families of the *muinsiz*. Immediately after the Tripolitanian War (September 1911 - October 1912) was ended and another war, the First Balkan War had broken out (October 1912) and reservists had to be mobilized a separate *ad hoc* law was passed. An official circular containing this (provisional) law, dated 5 December 1912, dealt with the allowances to be given to the families of “breadwinner reservists and rear reservists who were taken into arms” (*taht-ı silaha alınan muinsiz efrad-ı redife ve mustahfıza*). The law consisted of three articles only, which stipulated that the family of a *muinsiz* was to receive an allowance of 30 *kuruş* per month from 1 *Teşrinievvel* 1328 (14 October 1912) until the first of the month following the month in which the soldier was discharged; that a part of the national budget was allocated to this aim; and that the Ministry of Finance was responsible for the execution of the law. The circular, furthermore, contained seventeen points of instructions for the authorities on how to implement this law.¹³

The law was passed by the government in December 1912 and published in the Ottoman official gazette, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, on 5 February 1913.¹⁴ Before this law was published, the government had decided that the categories of people qualifying for an allowance should be broader, and a day later the official gazette carried a supplement to the law, stating that an allowance would be paid not only to the families of *muinsiz efrad-ı redife ve mustahfıza*, but also to the families of breadwinner reservists of the *nizamiye* army (*muinsiz efrad-ı ihtiyatiye*) and the families of regulars and reservists who after having taken up

¹³ BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, Siyasi Kısım (hereafter DH.SYS), 112-19/35, 26 Kanunusani 1331 (8 February 1914).

¹⁴ “Hal-i harb münasebetiyle taht-ı silaha celb olunan muinsiz efrad-ı redife ve mustahfızanın ailelerine tahsis olunacak maaş hakkında kanun-ı muvakkat,” *Düstur*, II, 5, 25 Zilhicce 1330 / 22 Teşrinisani 1328 (5 December 1912), 34-35.

arms had become *muinsiz*, but who nevertheless had to continue to serve until the end of the war.¹⁵ To finance these extra allowances a special fund of 10 million *kuruş* was created in the budget of the year 1329 (1913 - 1914).¹⁶ In the subsequent years other large sums were allocated to this special budget several times.¹⁷

In the months following the introduction of the law, however, the people charged with its implementation at a local level met with so many problems in the interpretation that they wrote to the central authorities asking for further explanations on how to deal with the specific cases they ran into. The Ministry of War and the Ministry of Interior regularly corresponded on these questions, trying to formulate answers to them and relaying the answers back to the local authorities. The correspondence creates the impression that the law was not always regarded as fair and emphasizes the problems that arose because of its *ad hoc* character.¹⁸

With the new Provisional Law on Military Service, issued in May 1914, the institution of allowances for soldier’s families became embedded more deeply in the system. Many articles of this law were revised in the following two years and in 1916 a new version was published.¹⁹ Some of the articles 49 - 55, which particularly concerned “soldier’s families in need of support,” were modified in July and August 1915.²⁰ Before these alterations were introduced, however, an extra law was promulgated to solve an obviously urgent issue. Based on this law,

¹⁵ “Hal-i harb münasebetiyle taht-ı silaha celb olunan muinsiz efrad-ı redife ve mustahfıza ailelerine tahsis olunacak maaşa mütedair 25Z1330 tarihli kanun-ı muvakkata müzeyyel kanun-ı muvakkat,” *Düstur*, II, 5, 24 Sefer 1331 / 20 Kanunusani 1328 (3 February 1913), 53.

¹⁶ “Taht-ı silaha alınan muinsiz efrad ailelerine mahsus maaşat için 1329 maliye bütçesi’ne tahsisat-ı fevkalade olarak 10.000.000 kuruşun sarfı hakkında kanun-ı muvakkat,” *Düstur*, II, 5, 27 Cemaziyelahir 1331 / 18 Mayıs 1329 (31 May 1913), 510.

¹⁷ For instance, at the end of that budget year (1329/1913 - 1914) an extra 5 million *kuruş* was allocated to the budget. “Muinsiz efrad aileleri için 1329 maliye bütçesine zamimeten 5.000.000 kuruşun sarfı hakkında kanun-ı muvakkat,” *Düstur*, II, 6, 14 Rebiülahir 1332 / 27 Şubat 1329 (12 March 1914), 300.

¹⁸ BOA, DH.SYS, 112-19/35, 26.11.1331 (27 October 1913). Questions regarded, e.g. who should pay the costs of the documents needed to apply, or what to do with the families of soldiers who had disappeared and of whom it was not clear whether they had deserted or had been lost in action.

¹⁹ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1330 (1914); *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332 (1916).

²⁰ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 19-22; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 19-22.

also the dependents of *muinsiz* who had answered the call for *cihad* by applying as a volunteer were now entitled to the allowance.²¹

Article 49 of the Provisional Law on Military Service remained identical in the two versions of 1914 and 1916. It stipulated that a family in need of support would get that (financial) support from the moment the soldier concerned had enlisted at the required place until the end of the month in which the soldier was discharged. The allowance was set at 30 *kuruş* per month per person. All the families of those reservists (*efrad-ı mezune, ihtiyatiye ve mustahfıza*) who served for more than forty-five days would receive the allowance. Those who had a right to this financial support were exempted from the administrative costs which normally were involved in filing a request with the authorities, such as *harç* and *resm*, while they were also not required to pay for the obtaining of an identity paper from the local elder (*muhtar*).²²

Article 50 clarified in graph form (see tables 1 & 2) those who were potentially entitled to an allowance and those who might be appointed as substitute breadwinner (*muin*) for them. Whether a particular relative was regarded as a potential substitute breadwinner depended on his (or her!) grade of kinship as well as on the geographical proximity to the *muinsiz*. The father of a draftee breadwinner's dependent(s) was obliged to feed the child(ren) of his son, if he lived in the same district (*kaza*); a son, brother, grandfather or father-in-law if he lived in the same village (*kariye*) or neighbourhood (*mahalle*); other potential candidates only if they resided in the same house (*hane*).²³ The article was modified in June 1915 on the initiative of the Ministry of War, which was of the opinion that wealthy mothers should be included in the list of potential breadwinners.²⁴

²¹ “İfa-yı farize-i cihad için gönüllü olarak orduya iltihak eden muinsiz efrad ailelerine de maaş tahsis hakkında kanun,” *Düstur*, II, 7, 19 Rebiülahir 1333 / 21 Şubat 1330 (6 March 1915), 433.

²² *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 19; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 19. See also “Asker ailelerine aid ilm ü haberler,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Kanunusani 1330 (4 February 1915), 4 for a warning directed at the officials not to ask for money.

²³ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 20; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 20.

²⁴ See also the general dispatch of 24 Mart 1915, which seems not to have been issued. BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-8/15, 10 Receb 1333 (24 May 1915).

| | Their relatives [i.e. of the dependents] who according to their grade of kinship can replace the breadwinner | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Relatives of the conscript of whom it should be investigated whether they need support | 1 | | | | | | | |
| The disabled or physically incapable father of the conscript or his widowed mother | son | father | son's son and grand-father | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The first or other wives of the conscript | son | father | son's son and grand-father | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The disabled or physically incapable grandfather of the conscript or his widowed grandmother | son | son's son | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | |
| The unmarried or widowed sister of the conscript and his brothers who are disabled or physically incapable or younger than sixteen | father | grand-father | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |
| The unmarried or widowed nieces and nephews younger than sixteen | father | grand-father | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |
| The daughters of the conscript who are not yet married and his sons younger than sixteen | grand father | brother | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | | | |

Table 1 Source: *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1330 (1914), 20.*

| | Their relatives [i.e. of the dependents] who according to their grade of kinship can replace the breadwinner | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Relatives of the conscript of whom it should be investigated whether they need support | son | father | wealthy mother | son's son and grand-father | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | mater-nal uncle | |
| The disabled or physically incapable father of the conscript or his widowed mother | son | father | wealthy mother | son's son and grand-father | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | mater-nal uncle | |
| The first or other wives of the conscript | son | son's son | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | maternal uncle | | | |
| The disabled or physically incapable grandfather of the conscript or his widowed grandmother | son | son's son | daughter's son | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | maternal uncle | | | |
| The unmarried or widowed sister of the conscript and his brothers who are disabled or physically incapable or younger than sixteen | father | wealthy mother | grand-father | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | maternal uncle | | | |
| The unmarried or widowed nieces and nephews younger than sixteen | father | wealthy mother | grand-father | brother | brother's son | pater-nal uncle | maternal uncle | | | |
| The daughters of the conscript who are not yet married and his sons younger than sixteen | wealthy mother | grand-father | brother | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | | | | |

Table 2 Source: *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muavakat*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332 (1916), 20.

A change like this is remarkable, because it meant a serious breach of Muslim law which stipulates that *men* had to provide for their family and not women. Still the change was approved by the *Sheikh ül-Islam*, the highest religious authority. After his approval, a three-article law was issued, in which article 50 of the Provisional Law on Military Service was modified. According to this modification, wealthy mothers were recognized as breadwinners for their unmarried daughters and for their sons aged under sixteen if they were living in the same district.²⁵ Moreover, the father-in-law of the wife (or wives) of the soldier (that is, the soldier’s father) was included as a potential breadwinner for his daughter(s)-in-law.

Article 51 stated that a substitute breadwinner had to be over eighteen and that he or she had to be physically and financially able to fulfil his or her duty. In August 1915, this article was revised, too. Before the revision, the precondition of physical and financial ability had counted indiscriminately towards all potential breadwinners.²⁶ After the revision, however, the precondition of physical health was only applicable to fathers who were appointed breadwinner.²⁷ In both versions of the article students at boarding-schools, prisoners, soldiers in arms and those of whom it was unknown whether they were alive or dead were excluded from becoming breadwinners.²⁸

The remaining articles, 52-55, remained unchanged. The stipulations of article 52 show that the allowance was entirely need based and determined who was entitled to it and who not. According to this article the persons in the graph were to be considered in need of support only if they did not have any of the relatives mentioned as potential breadwinners in that graph, if their yearly income was insufficient for their livelihood according to the local market prices of the district, and if they did not work in the agricultural sector or as trader or artisan. It also stated that any salary or allowance would be regarded as income and that the wealth and income of the soldier in arms would be considered the wealth and income of his dependent relatives. Furthermore, it stipulated that applications for an allowance had to be handled by the recruitment centers. Those whose right to support was acknowledged would be put under the supervision of the municipality or the local committee of elders. The civil

²⁵ BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Harbiye, 662/21 (n.d. [July 1915]).

²⁶ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 21.

²⁷ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 21.

²⁸ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 21; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 21.

authorities were also responsible for the safeguarding of the possessions of a soldier who had no relatives to take care of them.²⁹

Article 53 specified that the soldier on active duty needed to have been actually caring for those applying for the allowance and it limited the number of people anyone would have to care for to one person outside his own immediate family (*aile*). If he (or she) was a potential *muin* for more than one person, he (or she) was free to choose one. The others had to be cared for by the next person listed in the graph, or, if there were none left, were to be given the state allowance.³⁰ The last two articles, 54 and 55, dealt with the administrative handling of the allowances.³¹

Even with the changes introduced in June and August 1915, however, these articles did not suffice to deal with all the complex situations created by the war. The authorities charged with the implementation of the law continued to refer regularly to the central authorities with questions on its exact interpretation.

By October 1915 the need for a separate law on the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* (“Allowance for Families without a Breadwinner” or “Separation Allowance”) was felt. A bill for this law was discussed in the Council of State.³² Taking the 1914 Temporary Law on Military Service as a starting point, the articles were modified according to the ideas of the council members. The new, separate law was to have thirty-one articles, in which the allowance was regulated in more detail than ever before. The changes related to issues such as which soldiers were eligible to be classified as *muinsiz*, what to do with the families of soldiers on (sick-)leave, deserters, prisoners of war, those whose whereabouts were unknown and casualties of war. The changes clearly were aimed at answering the questions of the local authorities about problems with the interpretation of the old, less detailed rules. Furthermore, the articles on who could be appointed a substitute breadwinner were revised, with a broadening of the category of *muin* (see Table 3), probably in order to alleviate the financial burden of the state.

²⁹ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 21-22; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 21-22.

³⁰ *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 22; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 22.

³¹ For example, article 55 pointed out that the assigned allowance was to be paid in the presence of the local committee of elders without delay. The committee in turn would receive the money from the agents of the Ministry of Finance (*maliye tahsildarları*) in exchange for a signed receipt. *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1330, 22; *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, 1332, 22.

³² BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye, 480/6, (n.d. [March 1916]).

| | Their relatives [i.e. of the dependents] who according to their grade of kinship can replace the breadwinner | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Relatives of the conscript who may have a right to the | | | | | | | | | |
| The disabled or physically incapable father of the conscript or his widowed mother | son | father | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The first or other wives of the conscript | son | Father | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The disabled or physically incapable grandfather of the conscript or his widowed grandmother | <i>son</i> <i>father</i> | Son's son or daughter's son | mother | brother | brother's son | maternal uncle | | | |
| The widowed sister of the conscript or his disabled or physically incapable brother or his brothers older than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>son</i> | <i>father</i> | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The unmarried sister of the conscript or his brother or his brothers under (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>father</i> | <i>grandfather</i> | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |
| The widowed nieces of the conscript or his disabled or physically incapable nephews older than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>son</i> | <i>father</i> | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |

Table 3 Source: BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye, 480/6, (n.d. [March 1916]).

| | Their relatives [i.e. of the dependents] who according to their grade of kinship can replace the breadwinner | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Relatives of the conscript who may have a right to the allowance | | | | | | | | | |
| The unmarried nieces of the conscript or nephews younger than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>father</i> | <i>grand-father</i> | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |
| The widowed daughters of the conscript without a husband or his disabled or physically incapable sons older than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>son</i> | <i>father</i> | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The unmarried daughters of the conscript or his sons younger than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>father</i> | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |
| The widowed granddaughters of the conscript without a husband or his disabled or physically incapable grandsons older than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>son</i> | <i>father</i> | son's son or daughter's son | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle |
| The unmarried granddaughters of the conscript or his grandsons younger than (<i>sixteen</i>) eighteen | <i>father</i> | grand-father | mother | brother | brother's son | paternal uncle | maternal uncle | | |

Table 3 (Continued). Note: the items in italics were probably still under discussion.

According to the proposed new law a person could, for example, be a substitute breadwinner for three persons besides his family instead of just one. The “family,” moreover, was in this bill clearly defined as a soldier’s wife (wives), children and parents. The number of dependents was increased, though: more relatives could now ask for support than under the earlier regulations (see table 3). A difference was made between the allowances for those living in Istanbul and those living elsewhere; the maximum allowance per family would be equal to the allowances of five persons. Other modifications were related to the implications of changes in the family situation, to the question of what to do with the lands of *muinsiz* in arms, and to the administration of the allowances.

In short, this bill contained much more detail, to help the local authorities cope with the questions and problems which had resulted from the lack of clarity of the former law. More clarity, however, did not mean the system became more adequate. Moreover, it is not clear to what extent the new rules were ever actually applied, because the bill was not forwarded to the Board of Ministers until August 1918.³³

In February 1917, for example, one of the issues dealt with in this bill was promulgated as a separate law: this law stipulated that the families of the *muinsiz* whose breadwinner (*muin*) had died or been wounded would continue to receive the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* until they actually started to receive the pension for widows and orphans (*Eytam ve Eramil Maaşı*) or the pension for wounded soldiers.³⁴

The Inadequacy of the System

Although the Ottoman government had set all these rules to provide the families of its soldiers with a basic income, the system was by no means adequate. According to Morgenthau “thousands of them were dying from lack of food and many more were enfeebled by malnutrition.”³⁵ There were several reasons for this.

³³ From there it was sent on to Parliament with the Board’s amendments, which softened the strict rules proposed by the Council of State. BOA, MV, 212/106, 19 Şevval 1336 (28 July 1918).

³⁴ “Muinsiz efrad aileleri maaşının muinlerinin vefat ve maluliyeti halinde eytam ve eramil veya maluliyet maaşı tahsisine kadar devam-ı tediyesi hakkında kanun,” *Düstur*, II, 9, 29 Rebiülahir 1335 / 9 Şubat 1332 (22 February 1917), 187-188.

³⁵ Henry Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, London: Hutchinson & Co., [1918], 42.

One of the most important reasons was that the number of persons applying to receive the separation allowance was enormous. By early November 1914 more than 10,000 persons in the district of larger Istanbul (including Üsküdar, Markiköy, the islands, Kartal, Beykoz, Gezbe, and Şile) had applied to receive the allowance. A few months later, by the end of February 1915, more than 27,000 families of soldiers in the district of Edirne had filed an application.³⁶ Initially, and without doubt with the idea that the war would not last very long, the *muinsiz* reservists were supposed to serve only for one year.³⁷ The duration of the war, however, did not allow for such short services and the number of families without breadwinners, consequently, was much larger than originally foreseen. Morgenthau wrote that “[o]ut of 4,000,000 male adult population more than 1,500,000 were ultimately enlisted, and so about a million families were left without breadwinner, all of them in an extreme state of destitution.”³⁸

The allowances the families received were allowances in cash. The allowance *per capita* was set at 30 *kuruş* per month with a maximum per family of 150 *kuruş*.³⁹ The Council of State suggested raising this figure for those living within the borders of the Greater Municipality of Istanbul to 40 *kuruş* per person per month in 1915, leaving it at 30 *kuruş* per person per month for those living elsewhere.⁴⁰ While this money was hardly enough, many local committees decided that the money women or other dependents earned through work had to be deducted from the sum received.

³⁶ BOA, DH.İ-UM, nr: 88-2/4-25, ek 8 (14 Şubat 1330 / 27 February 1915) and BOA, DH.İ-UM, nr: 88-2/4-25, ek 10 (23 Teşrinievvel 1330 / 5 November 1914) quoted in Kıranlar, “Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye’de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914 - 1923),” 183-185. Kıranlar seems to have mixed up the dates here giving 27.04.1914 and 15.01.1915, respectively, as date.

³⁷ “1306, 1307, 1308 ve 1309 tevellütlü muinsiz efradın bir sene müddetle taht-ı silaha alınması ve ailelerine maaş itası hakkında kanun-ı muvakkat,” *Düstür*, II, 6, 5 Rebiülahir 1332 / 18 Şubat 1329 (2 March 1914), 239-240; BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-3/11, 5 Rebiülahir 1332 (2 March 1914); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-3/31, 23 Rebiülahir 1332 (20 March 1914).

³⁸ Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, 42.

³⁹ Stuermer states that the families of soldiers received 5 *kuruş* per day in 1916. Multiplied by 30 days this is indeed 150 *kuruş*. Harry Stuermer, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel*, Lausanne: Verlag Payot & Co., 1917, 97.

⁴⁰ BOA, Şura-yı Devlet Maliye, 480/6, (n.d. [March 1916]). The demand for a raise of the allowance for dependents living in Istanbul was justified by pointing at the higher cost of living in the city.

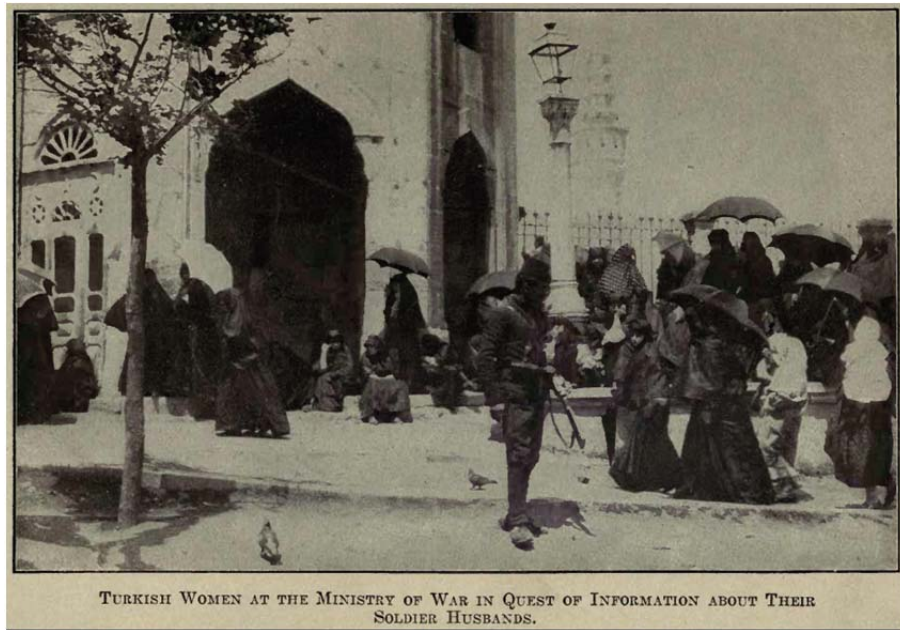


Figure 15 Vahan Cardashian, *Actual Life in the Turkish Harem*, [n.p.: n.p.], 1914³ [1911], 65.

Another proposal to increase the allowances made in April 1917 had to be rejected due to the financial situation of the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ The allowances remained stable at 30 *kuruş* until the very end of the war, when, after all the soldiers were formally demobilized, the allowances for their families were suddenly cut.⁴² According to the German economist Gustav Herlt the Ottomans had spent more than six million pounds on “the families of drafted soldiers” by 1917, while another two million had been budgetted for what would be the last year of the war (1917 - 1918).⁴³

While the allowances remained unchanged, the prices of food soared during the war years and especially during the later years of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1918 the price of one *okka* (approximately 1300 grams) of rice

⁴¹ BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-29/108, 4 Cemayiyelahir 1335 (27 March 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-30/90, 21 Cemayiyelahir 1335 (13 April 1917). See for information on the deteriorating financial situation of the Ottoman Empire during the war despite the increase in taxes, Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Ekonomisi*, 83-94.

⁴² “Muinsiz Aile Maaşlarının kıtai,” *Vakit*, 3 Kanunuevvel/December 1918, 2

⁴³ G. Herlt, “Kriegswirtschaft in der Türkei,” *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, IX, 1, 1917, 286-288, quotation 287.

rose from 3 to 95 *kuruş* in Istanbul. The price of sugar increased even more: from 3 to 140 *kuruş*.⁴⁴ Put differently: while a salary of 250 *kuruş* per month was enough to buy the necessary consumer goods for a family living in Istanbul in July 1914, the same family would need more than 4,500 *kuruş* for the same goods in September 1918.⁴⁵ Staple foods like bread and sugar could hardly be found and were of very poor quality.⁴⁶ So, while the maximum allowance of 150 *kuruş* for a family hardly met the needs of a family at the start of the First World War, by the end of the War it was a mere pittance.

The main reason for the price increases was the shortage of food on the market, which had several causes. The first one was a drop in the agricultural production within the Ottoman Empire. Temporary decreases were caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, draughts or plagues of locusts. A more structural reason for the fall in agricultural production was the lack of manpower due to the mobilizations. The majority of the population of the Ottoman Empire was living in a rural environment and earned its living from this sector of the economy. Eighty percent of the drafted soldiers were estimated to be of rural extract. Moreover, in many cases also the animals needed for agricultural work were confiscated.⁴⁷ The government took several measures to diminish the effects of the drain on agricultural labour force but they were only partly successful, as is shown in the next chapter. An additional reason for the shortage of food was that the Germans also pressured the Ottomans to sell a part of their production to them to feed their own army.⁴⁸

Apart from the natural disasters, lack of manpower and the needs of the Ottoman and German armies, other causes of high food prices were hoarding

⁴⁴ [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War*, 147-148. See also Lewis Einstein, *Inside Constantinople: A Diplomatist's Diary during the Dardanelles Expedition, April-September, 1915*, New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, [n.d.], 242-247.

⁴⁵ Zafer Toprak, *İttihat - Terakki ve Devletçilik*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, 149.

⁴⁶ İrfan Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family [2nd edn]*, London: Eland, 1993, 152-176; Cahit Uçuk, *Bir İmparatorluk çökerken*, İstanbul: Yapı kredi Yayınları, 1993, 200-249; Hasene İlgaç, *1915'ten 1921'e kadar yatılı bir kız okulun öyküsü*, İstanbul: [private publication], 1991, 10-11. See also Stuermer, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel*, 95-99; Herlt, "Kriegswirtschaft in der Türkei," 169-170.

⁴⁷ See e.g. an appeal to the public in Britain from the wife of the British Ambassador to Constantinople, Lady Lowther. She refers explicitly also to this problem: "But who is to care for those left behind – the thousands of women and children, their breadwinner gone, the fields unploughed and unsown for next year's crops, every horse, mule and donkey taken," Alice Lowther, "Help for Turkish Women and Children," *The Spectator*, 2 November 1912, 705.

⁴⁸ E.F. Benson, *Deutschland über Allah*, London, etc: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917, 18-20.

and profiteering: merchants kept food in stock instead of bringing it onto the market, thus driving up prices. The government tried to prevent this by decentralized control:⁴⁹ in February 1916 it asked the local authorities to take charge of food distribution, allocating 100,000 Turkish pounds to each municipality.⁵⁰ In May 1916 it authorized the local authorities to determine the price of bread.⁵¹ Obviously, this was not sufficient, because in July 1916 a central distribution committee, the *İaşe-yi Umumiye Merkez Heyeti* (Central Committee for Public Food Supply) supervised by representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of War, the Ministries of Finance and of Trade, and from the General Directorate of the Agricultural Bank was established. The Ministry of Finance allocated 3.5 million Turkish pounds to the committee to fund the food distribution.⁵² For the distribution of this food, ration cards were introduced. With these cards a person could in March 1917, for example, get 100 *dirham*⁵³ of beans per person for one month and 50 *dirham* of sugar, while rice was only available for families with children.⁵⁴

By May 1917, the Unionist government realized that the shortage of food on the market was partly due to hoarding and that those willing to pay could purchase the goods and food they wanted. To make an end to these practices it established the *Men-i İhtikar Heyeti* (Committee for the Prevention of Hoarding).⁵⁵ The non-Muslim traders were affected much harder by the measures taken by the Committee for the Prevention of Hoarding, while the Ottoman Muslims close to the Unionists actually profited from them.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ See also Toprak, *İttihad – Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, particularly Chapter Six, 127-150.

⁵⁰ BOA, DUİT, 50-1/5-1, 26 Safer 1335 (19 February 1917); BOA, DUİT, 50-1/5-2, 7 Cemaziyelahir 1334 (10 April 1916).

⁵¹ BOA, DUİT, 50-1/21-1, 13 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (5 April 1917); BOA, DUİT, 50-1/21-2, 8 Şevval 1334 (7 August 1916); BOA, DUİT, 50-1/21-3, 28 Şevval 1334 (27 August 1916).

⁵² BOA, DUİT, 50-1/19-7, 10 Muharrem 1335 (7 November 1916); BOA, DUİT, 50-1/19-10, 9 Zilkade 1334 (8 September 1916); BOA, DUİT, 50-1/19-11, 22 Ramazan 1334 (23 July 1916); BOA, MV, 207/88, 19 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (11 April 1917).

⁵³ 1 dirham is 1/400 of 1 *okka*, so approximately 3.25 grams (1,300 / 400).

⁵⁴ “Die Lebensmittelverteilung,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 25 März 1917, 3.

⁵⁵ Toprak, *İttihad – Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, 168-178.

⁵⁶ Toprak, *İttihad – Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, 175. Also Stuermer wrote that the measures were only taken to further enrich the members of the CUP, its “Wuchersyndicat” and its “bakalcıque.” He writes how those who had money could find anything they wanted. This indeed seems to have been the case given the many fundraising activities which included buffets and dinners such as the *Grande Fête Champêtre* organized by the Women’s Branch of the National Defence Organization under the patronage of Talaat Pasha where “there will be abundantly provided buffets and those who want to can have their evening dinner at Fenerbahçe at a fair

All the measures taken to decrease the prices of food did not bring the results wanted. As shown in Chapter Four, the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* had to cut back its activities since it was unable to procure sufficient food by November 1916. Private, but also semi-private organizations such as the Red Crescent and the CUP started to set up soup kitchens, which also remained far from sufficient to feed the Istanbul population. Meanwhile prices continued to rise inexorably. It was only when, at the end of the war, the banks stopped giving traders credit based on their stocks, that they were forced to sell their hoarded goods and prices fell somewhat. By that time, however, most people had by long exhausted any savings or capital they had had.

The inadequacy of the separation allowance was further exacerbated by the fact that payment was often unreliable. Some cases of corruption were reported,⁵⁷ but in general the reason for the non-payment was lack of money at the local and the national level. The provincial administrators regularly sent demands to Istanbul for more money, complaining that they were unable to pay the allowances in time,⁵⁸ while dependent women themselves also did not hesitate to demand a more regular payment of what they were entitled to.⁵⁹ Towards the end of the First World War, the situation got progressively worse. People were reported eating grass or simply starving.⁶⁰ Due to the high inflation rate and a widespread lack of confidence in paper money, local officials asked the central authorities not to send paper money, but copper coins, or even to turn the cash allowance into an allowance in kind.⁶¹ They were urged to do so by the families involved, who gave voice to their complaints by sending telegrams to the local authorities or by simply rebelling. The latter was the case in Aydın, for example, where in March 1916 families of soldiers attacked a bakery and beat

price.” Stuermer, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel*, 100-106; “Grande Fête Champêtre” [Advertisement], *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 12 August 1917, 4.

⁵⁷ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-34/49, 26 Şaban 1335 (16 June 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-42/71, 13 Safer 1336 (29 November 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-42/84, 16 Safer 1336 (2 December 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-44/56, 13 Rebiülevvel 1336 (28 December 1917).

⁵⁸ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-30/2, 9 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (1 April 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-30/100, 22 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (14 April 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-32/27, 17 Receb 1335 (9 May 1917).

⁵⁹ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, 4-3/9-60, 13 Şaban 1336 (24 May 1918); BOA, DH.İ-UM, 4-3/9-66, 26 Cemaziyelahir 1337 (29 March 1919); BOA, DH.İ-UM, 4-3/9-67, 2 Receb 1337 (3 April 1919).

⁶⁰ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-30/106, 23 Cemaziyelahir 1335 (15 April 1917).

⁶¹ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, 20-2/2-17, 2 Rebiülahir 1336 (15 January 1918); BOA, DH.İ-UM, 20-2/2-48, 23 Cemaziyelevvel 1336 (7 March 1918).

up the official in charge of the allowances because they had not received any money for three months. The government, fearing that the unrest would spread to other areas, decided to send 20,000 Turkish pounds.⁶² Most women, however, tried to convince the authorities of their pitiful situation by more peaceful means.

The central Ottoman archives contain many telegrams from local governors who complain about the starving population,⁶³ as well as from women complaining about the increasingly difficult situation, not only for themselves but often on behalf of all the soldier’s families in the village or neighbourhood.⁶⁴ They claimed their right to government support, which right, they said was based not on their position as women in need of money and food, but on their identity as the wives, daughters and mothers of men who had taken up arms to fulfil their duty towards their faith and their fatherland.

These telegrams were sent from all over the empire, showing that the situation was equally bad everywhere. The women living in Istanbul with their families, on the other hand, can hardly be traced in the records of the Ministry of Interior. There may be various reasons for this. One possibility is that their letters or telegrams would end up not at the Ministry of Interior but at a lower level such as, for example, the *vilayet* (province). If that is the case, further research might one day unearth these telegrams. Another possibility is that their situation was relatively better, though this seems highly unlikely in view of the accounts in some of the autobiographical works available.⁶⁵ Another possibility is that the women in the city did have more opportunities to find a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation. The lack of manpower combined with the effort to

⁶² BOA, DH.İ-UM, 4-1/33, 20 Cemaziyelevvel 1334 (25 March 1916). Foreign newspapers reported regularly on food riots and anti-war demonstrations by women in Istanbul and elsewhere. “Anti-German riots in Constantinople,” *New York Times*, 13 May 1915, 1; “Riots in Istanbul,” *New York Times*, 11 October 1915, 2; “Selon Nea Helas, ...,” *Le Figaro*, 14 Août 1916, 2; “Refugees arriving at Tiflis ...,” *Poverty Bay Herald*, 16 December 1914, 3; “Anti-war rioting reported in Turkey,” *The Hartford Courant*, 6 March 1916, 10; “Women whip German officers,” *Poverty Bay Herald*, 20 April 1917, 3; “Riots against Germans in Turkish Capital,” *Poverty Bay Herald*, 30 May 1917, 6. Under pressure of the public opinion the Ottoman government was forced to stop the export of meat to Berlin. See “Turks stop meat export,” *New York Times*, 8 March 1916, 4.

⁶³ Kıranlar, “Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye’de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914 - 1923),” 32-34.

⁶⁴ See, for example, BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-14/117, 28 Receb 1334 (31 May 1916); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-24/35, 26 Muharrem 1335 (12 November 1917); BOA, DH.İ-UM, 21-7/7, 10 Şaban 1334 (11 June 1916).

⁶⁵ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, 152-176; Uçuk, *Bir İmparatorluk Çökerken*, 200-249; Ilgaz, *1915’ten 1921’e Kadar Yatılı Bir Kız Okulun Öyküsü*, 10-11.

establish a national economy made it possible for women to obtain jobs within the lower bureaucratic levels or the service sector as was shown in Chapter Eight. Other women managed to find work in the war industries, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Moreover, while the women living in the small towns and rural areas of the Ottoman Empire were probably completely dependent on the allowance, women in the urban centers such as Thessalonica and Istanbul may have had access to one of the private or semi-private organizations providing charity in various forms described in the following section.

Beyond the State: (Semi-)Private Initiatives to Assist the Needy Soldier's Families

As the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* and other state welfare schemes for soldiers and their families such as the pensions for widows and orphans and for war veterans proved to be inadequate charity organizations stepped in.⁶⁶ Occasionally, (local) authorities would provide additional assistance to soldier's families through public charity such as the *Mal Sandığı*,⁶⁷ but also (semi-)private charity organizations tried to alleviate the burden. The CUP, its male members and their wives were involved in the establishment of many of the philanthropic and patriotic organizations which aimed at providing assistance to the needy families of soldiers.

The *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*, founded in the first year of the First World War and discussed in Chapter Four, was one of those organizations. This was not, however, the first organization aiming at soldier's families. Compassion with soldiers and their families was also the driving force for women belonging to Unionist circles to establish some of the first women's organizations during the first years of the Second Constitutional Period.⁶⁸ Examples of such organizations are the earlier mentioned *Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* and the *Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* which was established in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk revolution of 1908.

⁶⁶ Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914 - 1923)."

⁶⁷ Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914 - 1923)," 182.

⁶⁸ See also Chapter Twelve.

The Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi

The *Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was founded in Thessalonica towards the end of October 1908,⁶⁹ “by the wives of members of the *İttihad ve Terakki*, of the staff and officers of the Third Army and of the notables of the city.”⁷⁰ The organization was open “only [to] ‘Ottoman’ women without making any distinction regarding race (*kavmiyet*) and religion (*mezhep*).” In the article announcing its establishment, interested women were invited to become members. As members they could contribute cash money but also goods. At that moment, that is, October 1908, the unknown author of the article wrote, they were still working on the statutes.⁷¹

Although these statutes are not available and its aims were nowhere else clearly stated, it seems that the organization was established to help indigent families in general and those of soldiers, more specifically.⁷² So, the Thessalonian *Kadın*, which served as the organization’s bulletin board, reported that by December 1908 the organization had alleviated the burdens of 5 - 10 families such as one women with a sick child whose husband had been away for fifteen years fighting “under the black claw of tyranny.”⁷³ In January 1909 it again provided some 5-6 families with food and daily necessities, plus an income. Its compassion even stretched beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire: when a large earthquake hit Messina (Italy) on 28 December 1908, the organization sent 230 franks to the Italian Consulate for relief work.⁷⁴

A few weeks after its foundation, the executive committee had been established and the publication of the statutes was announced. Its first general meeting was held on 22 November 1908.⁷⁵ Although the organization promised

⁶⁹ “Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Kadın*, 1, 13 Teşrinievvel 1324 (27 October 1908), 13-15. See also Zekiye, “Beyan-ı hakikat,” *Kadın*, 17, 2 Şubat 1324 (15 February 1909), 7.

⁷⁰ BOA, DH.MKT, 2698/45, 7 Zilhicce 1326 (31 December 1908).

⁷¹ “Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Kadın*, 1, 13 Teşrinievvel 1324 (27 October 1908), 13-15.

⁷² “Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi” *İttihad ve Terakki*, 4 Teşrinisani 1324 (17 November 1908), 2-3.

⁷³ “Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 13-15, quotation 13.

⁷⁴ “Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi...” *Kadın*, 14, 12 Kanunusani 1324 (25 January 1909), 8.

⁷⁵ See e.g. “Osmanlı Kadınları ‘Şefkat’ Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 14-15; “Şefkatperver Hanım Efendiler ...,” *Kadın*, 6, 17 Teşrinisani 1324 (30 November 1908), 15-16.

to publish a report of this meeting, it never did. At its first meeting the executive committee had, however, decided to sell all the goods which had started to be donated at a *Şefkat Pazarı* (Compassion Fair) to generate money besides the financial donations which the organization also had started to receive.⁷⁶

The organization was financed through donations and their sales, but also organized other fundraising activities. Donators and their gifts were, if wanted, listed in *Kadın*, where indeed such lists were published regularly.⁷⁷ The *Selanik Heveskaran Kulübü* (Thessalonian Theatre Club) staged a play at the Jupiter theatre, of which the yield of 50 *lira* was donated to the organization.⁷⁸ Moreover in December 1908 it was announced that Aka Gündüz (or Enis Avni)'s play called *Aşk ve İstibdat* (Love and Despotism) was going to be put on the stage and that the income generated from it was going to be handed to the women's organizations of Thessalonica.⁷⁹ The play was later serialized in *Kadın*. Also the yields of a film which was shown were transferred to the organization.⁸⁰ So were the revenues of the "national song" (*milli şarkı*) composed by one of the members of the organization, Nadire hanım.⁸¹

By January 1909 the organization announced that it had opened a branch in Siroz which succeeded in obtaining a membership of more than 30 women within just about a week after its foundation. The involvement of the CUP with

⁷⁶ "Osmanlı Kadınları 'Şefkat' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 4, 3 Teşrinisani 1324 (17 November 1908), 13; the fair was announced in January 1909, but without a specific date. "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 12, 29 Kanunuevvel 1324 (11 January 1909), 14.

⁷⁷ See e.g. "Osmanlı Kadınları 'Şefkat' Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 5, 10 Teşrinisani 1324 (23 November 1908), 14-15; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 13-14; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 20, 23 Şubat 1324 (8 March 1909), 11.

⁷⁸ "Selanik," *İttihad ve Terakki*, 12 Teşrinisani 1324 (25 November 1908), 2; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *İttihad ve Terakki*, 1 Kanunuevvel 1324 (14 December 1908), 3; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi menfaatına..," *Kadın*, 7, 24 Teşrinisani 1324 (7 December 1908), 16; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 13-14.

⁷⁹ "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *İttihad ve Terakki*, 1 Kanunuevvel 1324 (14 December 1908), 3; "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 13-15.

⁸⁰ "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi," *Kadın*, 9, 8 Kanunuevvel 1324 (21 December 1908), 13-15.

⁸¹ "Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi..." *Kadın*, 16, 26 Kanunusani 1324 (8 February 1909), 11-12.

this organization is further shown by the gift of 10 Ottoman *liras* by its local branch to the organization.⁸²

Over the years it continued to give assistance to those in need of support: not only the poor of the town, but also, during the Tripolitanian War, the soldiers at the front could count on the members of the organization. Together with the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* and its Greek counterpart, the *Rum Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye* (Greek Women’s Charitable Organization)⁸³ it sew bedding and clothing for the poor in the town’s hospital, while the call by the CUP to support the heroes in Tripoli did not fall on deaf ears either.⁸⁴

Many of the existing organizations which were established for poor relief or which originally had had other aims changed their orientation over the long periods of war during the Second Constitutional Period. Organizations such as the *Fukaraperver Cemiyetleri* (Organizations for Poor Relief) automatically also got involved in assistance to the dependents of soldiers in arms, while also the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* assisted the soldiers’ families.

The CUP itself had been, in December 1908, the initiator of an organization for poor relief, the *Osmanlı Fukaraperver Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ottoman Charitable Organization for Poor Relief).⁸⁵ According to Özbek, this organization was dissolved in 1913, because the Balkan Wars caused the CUP to turn its attention to establishing semi-official organizations which aimed rather than purely at philanthropy at the creation of a patriotic public spirit such as the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.⁸⁶ Some of the branches of the *Fukaraperver Cemiyeti* which had been established, such as those in Topkapı and Kadıköy,

⁸² “Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Kadın*, 12, 29 Kanunuevvel 1324 (11 January 1909), 14. See also “Himemat-ı Nisvan,” *Yeni Asır*, 7 April 1909, 2.

⁸³ “Eser-i şefkat,” *Rumeli*, 19 Kanunuevvel 1326 (1 January 1911), 3. This was probably the *Philoptochos Adelphotis ton Kyrion Thessalonikis*, which had been founded in 1876, referred to in Chapter One.

⁸⁴ “Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye’nin ilk eser-i şefkatı,” Zekiye, “Trablusgarb Muavenet-i Milliye Heyet-i Muhterimesine;” “Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesine arz-ı şükran,” all in *Rumeli*, 31 Teşrinevvel 1327 (13 November 1911), 1. See also Chapter Twelve.

⁸⁵ *Osmanlı Fukaraperver Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nin Nizamname-i Esasidir*, Dersaadet: Sabah Matbaası, 1327, 2 in BOA, DH.İ-UM, 89-2/1-23, 15 Ramazan 1333 (28 July 1915). In February/March 1911 another *Fukaraperver Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was founded in Ortaköy in the province of Edirne. “Beyanname,” *Âftab*, III, 61, 19 Temmuz 1327 (1 August 1911), 4.

⁸⁶ Nadir Özbek, “90 yıllık bir hayır kurumu: Topkapı Fukaraperver Cemiyeti,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXX, 180, 1998, 4-10; Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet (1876 - 1914)*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002, 278-290; Ginio, “Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).”

however, continued to exist as independent organizations with sometimes separate women's departments.⁸⁷ Thus, supposedly in 1911⁸⁸ the *Kadıköy (Osmanlı) Fukaraperver Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* was established under the patronage of Adile Sultan.⁸⁹ It provided food, medicines and clothes to orphans, widows and old and disabled women. In 1915 - 16, for example, it distributed a total of 30,000 *okka* of coal and 2,500 *okka* of olives. Furthermore, it provided clothing for the children of two schools and gave a breakfast consisting of a bowl of soup and a slice of bread to more than a hundred persons every day. By November 1916 it was reported to feed more than 700 to 800 families per day. Moreover, by that time the members of the organization had started to provide some of the families with looms so they could earn their own living, while they had also collected sufficient money amongst themselves to open a place where impoverished girls and women could be educated on the traditional Turkish handicrafts.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ See also Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914 - 1923)," 284-293.

⁸⁸ I.e. according to an article in *Tanin*, the organization had been active for five years by April 1916. However, in June 1913 Halide Edib was complaining that men had established the first *Fukaraperver Cemiyeti* in Topkapı and that women until then had not yet founded any such organization. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the article in *Tanin* referred to the foundation of the *Kadıköy Fukaraperver Cemiyeti* instead of to its women's branch. According to the 1919 almanac of the *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, the *Kadıköy Fukaraperver Hanımlar Cemiyeti Kadıköy Fukaraperver Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Ladies' Branch of the Kadıköy Charitable Organization) was founded in 1333 (1917). This seems to be quite late unless this means that by that time the organization became an independent women's organization instead of a women's branch of the *Kadıköy Fukaraperver Cemiyeti*. "Müşamere," *Tanin*, 28 Mart 1332 (10 April 1916), 4; Halide Edib, "Yirminci asırda kadınlar," *Mekteb Müzesi*, I, 3, 1 Haziran 1329 (14 June 1913), 66-69; *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, Takvim - 5 -*, [İstanbul], 1919, 199.

⁸⁹ "Müşamere," *Tanin*, 28 Mart 1332 (10 April 1916), 4. This is probably the granddaughter of Murat V (through his son Mehmet Salahattin) who lived from 1887 until 1973. She was also the patron of the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy (Merkezi) Hanımlar şubesi* (Women's Branch of the (Central) Kadıköy National Defense Organization). Her choice to take up the patronage of these women's organizations in, particularly, Kadıköy may have been because of her namesake, a daughter of Mahmud II. The latter Adile Sultan, who died in 1899, was known for her beneficiary works in the Asian parts of Istanbul. "Fenerbahçe'de kır eğlenceleri," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 3 Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 2; "Grande fête champetre," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 2 Août 1917, 3; "Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Hanımlar şubesi merkezinden," *Vakit*, 22 Mart/March 1918, 2; Murat Bardakçı, *Son Osmanlılar*, İstanbul: Gri Yayın, 1991, 213; M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985, 135-138; Ferdâ Mazak, *Sultan II. Mahmud'un Kızı Âdile Sultan*, İstanbul: Çamlıca Kültür ve Yardım Vakfı, 2000.

⁹⁰ "İş Ocağı," *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, I, 32, 20 Teşrinievvel 1332 (2 November 1916), 8.

Money came from various fundraising activities such as theater shows and concerts.⁹¹ It organized another fundraising activity in March 1916 which yielded more than 23,500 *kuruş*. But since it aspired to do even more in the year 1916 - 17, it organized another activity, a “flower fest”⁹² in May 1916.⁹³ This flower fest became a kind of tradition and another one was held in May 1917 in cooperation with the Union Sport’s Club (*İttihad Spor Kulübü*) which had supposedly been organizing similar flower fests since 1912.⁹⁴ In 1919 the organization was still active: it obviously operated a medical consulting room for the poor.⁹⁵

Another organization through which the CUP government tried to support soldier’s families was the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*.⁹⁶ Although the organization was originally founded during the Balkan Wars “to organize and to spread propaganda among the civil population and to mobilize it for the war effort,”⁹⁷ its activities seem to have shifted somewhat over time due to the changing circumstances. In January 1915, it received a donation from Burhaneddin Efendi, one of the Ottoman princes, explicitly meant for the poor families of soldiers in arms.⁹⁸ Three months later, the Mersin branch of the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* announced that it had allocated 30,000 *kuruş* to supply the families of soldiers with food.⁹⁹ By September of that year the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* in Izmir provided food for 4,000 persons, while it also paid the rent for many soldier’s families.¹⁰⁰ The Kadıköy branch reported to

⁹¹ “Kadıköy Osmanlı Fukaraperver Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi,” *Tanin*, 9 Ağustos 1331 (18 August 1915), 4.

⁹² “Flower fests” were also a favorite way of fundraising of the *Hilal-i Ahmer*. During these fests mostly women sold pins with (paper) flowers and rosettes to the public. See for nine photographs of women selling “flowers” for the *Hilal-i Ahmer: Servet-i Fünun*, 1214, 31 Ağustos 1330 (13 September 1914), 278-279.

⁹³ “Müsamere,” *Tanin*, 28 Mart 1332 (10 April 1916), 3; “Kadıköy Fukaraperver Cemiyeti’nin müsamere hasılatı,” *Tanin*, 12 Mayıs 1332 (25 May 1916), 4; “Çiçek Bayramı,” *Tanin*, 26 Mayıs 1332 (9 June 1916), 3.

⁹⁴ “Ein Blumenfest in Kadiköj,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 3. Mai 1917, 3; “Blumenfest,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 7 Mai 1917, 3; “Çiçek Bayramı,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 2 Haziran/June 1333/1917, 2; “Bu hafta,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1351, 7 Haziran 1917, 420.

⁹⁵ TKA, 74/94, 8 Kanunusani 1335 (8 December 1919).

⁹⁶ More on this organization will follow in Chapters Twelve and Thirteen.

⁹⁷ Ginio, “Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)” 160.

⁹⁸ “Müdafaa-i Milliye ianesi,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 15 Kanunusani 1330 (28 January 1915), 4.

⁹⁹ “Asker aileleri için,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 Nisan 1331 (27 April 1915), 2; “Pour les familles necessiteuses de Mersine,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 14 Avril 1915, backpage.

¹⁰⁰ BOA, DH.İ-UM, 89-3/1-22, 26 Şevval 1333 (7 September 1915).

have spent more than 10,000 *kuruş* each on allowances to “soldier’s families without breadwinners” and on rent for these families in June 1915.¹⁰¹ The *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* had started to pay the rent of the families of enlisted soldiers in- and outside Istanbul from 23 March 1915 onwards.¹⁰² The funding was supposed to come from gifts from the “patriotic population” as a form of contribution of those who could not actively participate in the *cihad* including women.¹⁰³ The casualties and the influx of wounded soldiers during the Battle of Gallipoli led the organization, moreover, to start fundraising activities to the particular benefit of widows and orphans.¹⁰⁴

As mentioned in Chapter Eight, many of the women’s organizations such as the *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, the *Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği* and the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* as well as the *Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Darüssınaası* provided work at charity workshops to poor and destitute girls and women to improve their fate in the wake of the Balkan Wars. Their efforts were mainly directed at refugees from the Balkans.

Many of these charity workshops continued to exist during the First World War, shifting their attention to the wives and daughters of the soldiers in arms and the widows and orphan girls of the casualties. The *Biçki Yurdu*, for example, opened special lace making courses which “the families of our martyrs and poor and necessitous Muslim ladies” could attend free of charge.¹⁰⁵ In the course of the First World War more workshops were even opened. The *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*, which was founded in June 1916, for example,

¹⁰¹ “Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy şubesinde,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 15 Temmuz 1331 (28 July 1915), 2.

¹⁰² BOA, DH.İ-UM, 78-2/13, 29 Muharrem 1334 (8 December 1915); “Pour les familles des mobilisés,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 12 Avril 1915, 4; “Muhtaç asker aileleri,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 1 Temmuz 1331 (14 July 1915), 2; “Asker aileleri için,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 25 Temmuz 1331 (7 August 1915), 2; “Müdafaa-i Milliye Kadıköy merkezinden,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 1 Ağustos 1331 (14 August 1915), 2; “Asker ailelerinin hane kiralari,” *Tanin*, 10 Ağustos 1331 (23 August 1915), 3; “Müdafaa-i Milliye Beyoğlu Şubesinde,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 11 Ağustos 1331 (24 August 1915), 2; “Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti’nden,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 13 Eylül 1331 (26 September 1915), 2; “Asker ailelerinin hane icarı ve maaşları,” *Tanin*, 10 Teşrinievvel/October 1333/1917, 4.

¹⁰³ “Pour les familles des mobilisés,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 12 Avril 1915, 4; BOA, DH.İ-UM, 78-2/13, 29 Muharrem 1334 (8 December 1915).

¹⁰⁴ “Eytam ve eramil-i şüheda için,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 20 Nisan 1331 (3 May 1915), 2; “Şüheda çocuklarına bayramlık,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 28 Mayıs 1331 (10 June 1915), 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Biçki Yurdu’nun yeni bir teşebbüsü,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 8 Teşrinisani 1331 (21 November 1915), 2.

became one of the organizations employing women in newly established charity workshops as is shown in the next chapter. Other women’s organizations developed other charitable activities directed at soldier’s families besides the workshops they operated. By November 1915, for example, the members of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* (the former *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlakı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*) took up visiting soldier’s families to give the indigent amongst them financial aid and, when needed, to pay their rent.¹⁰⁶ The *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*, to mention yet another organization, collected 1,000 *kuruş* under its members and the girls from a school under their protection to give 350 children of fallen soldiers new clothes for the feast at the end of the Ramadan in August 1915.¹⁰⁷

Foreigners living in Istanbul also founded charitable women’s organizations to assist the poor of the city, including soldier’s families. The wives of the British and French Ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire, for example, established such

¹⁰⁶ Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-i umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799.

¹⁰⁷ “Pour le Baïramdes (sic!) enfants des Chéhids,” *Lloyd Ottoman*, 10 Juin 1915, 4; “Şüheda evlatları için,” *Tanin*, 27 Temmuz 1331 (9 August 1915), 2; Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-i umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 3, 8 Teşrinievvel 1331 (21 October 1915), 2782-2784.

The first private organizations for the protection of children in Istanbul were founded during the Balkan Wars by women: the *Makriköy Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti* (Makriköy Organization for the Protection of Children) and the *Fakir Çocukları Esirgeme Derneği* (Organization for the Protection of Poor Children) which was founded in Istanbul proper. The president of the first one was, in October 1912, Fehime Nüzhet. Very little is known about these organizations except that they were both founded and led by women and that they were reported to be active in 1913. Fehime Nüzhet, “Varaka: Senin ceride-i muhterimesi müdüriyetine,” *Senin (Tanin)*, 8 Teşrinievvel 1328 (21 October 1912), 5; A(yn) S(in), “Cemiyet-i hayriyeler ve bunlarda en mühim unsur-u amil,” *İslam Dünyası*, 15, 18 Eylül 1329 (1 October 1913), 231-232.

The first private organization for the protection of children in the Ottoman Empire had been established in Edirne in March 1910 by some Unionist medical doctors, the *Edirne Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklarına Yardım Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*, (Edirne Ottoman Beneficent Organization for the Assistance to Poor Children). By August 1915 an *Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklara Yardım Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Organization for the Support of Poor Children) seems to have been established. In Mart 1917, finally, the (semi-)official *Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Protection of Children) was founded. Duhter Uçman-Yasemen Akçay, “Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklarına Yardım Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi Nizamnamesi,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXXI, 184, 1999, 4; Yavuz Selim Karakısla, “Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklarına Yardım Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (1910) Edirne’nin Fakir Ama Akıllı Çocukları,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXXX, 239, 2003, 19. See also “Edirne Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklarına Yardım Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nden,” *Aftab*, III, 60, 12 Temmuz 1327 (25 July 1911), 4; “Edirne’de müteşekkil...,” *Aftab*, III, 61, 19 Temmuz 1327 (1 August 1911), 3-4; “Osmanlı Fakir Çocuklara Yardım Cemiyeti’nden,” *Tanin*, 28 Temmuz 1331 (10 August 1915), 4; Cüneyd Okay, *Belgelere Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti 1917 - 1923*, İstanbul: Şûle Yayınları, 1999.

organizations during the Balkan wars. Mrs. Bompard, the wife of the French Ambassador, was the president of the *Société des Abeilles* (Organization of Bees).¹⁰⁸

In Fall 1912, Alice Lowther, the wife of the British Ambassador, asked the public in Britain to donate money to a War Relief Committee which served to help the families of soldiers and the refugees who arrived in Istanbul as a result of the Balkan Wars.¹⁰⁹ By the end of March 1913 her Committee had distributed food and goods to 8,700 soldier's families and 16,000 refugees. With the 7,000 Pounds Sterling left, she planned to open workshops in Bebek, Eyüp and Üsküdar where the widows and orphans of the war casualties could earn a living.¹¹⁰ It is not clear whether the workshops actually opened their doors.

On 1 July 1913, Lady Lowther¹¹¹ had to return to Britain and she asked the Municipality of Istanbul to take over her work.¹¹² Whether by the Municipality or by others, it seems that her work was indeed continued. By October 1913, the *New York Times* reported that her organization had been able to raise more than 180,000 US Dollars of which almost 160,000 had been spent to alleviate the plight of 25,000 persons in "Constantinople and the surrounding villages."¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ L'Ambassadrice de France G.B. Bompard "Société des Abeilles: Rapport de l'année 1913," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 122, 14/27 Décembre 1913 (27 December 1913), 4.

¹⁰⁹ Lowther, "Help for Turkish Women and Children." See also H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople, Old and New*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915, 474; 521; 526-530; Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople: the Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears, 1873 - 1915*, London: H. Jenkins, 1916, 336-338. The latter refers to two other committees founded by foreign (British?) women which were active during the Balkan Wars: a committee lead by the head of the Quaker mission, Miss Burgess, and another one presided by a Lady Block. Pears' daughter was a member of the latter committee.

¹¹⁰ Kadınlar Dünyası, "İçtimai: Lady Lowther'e şükran-i azim," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, I, 32, 5 Mayıs 1329 (18 May 1913), 1; "Praise for Lady Lowther," *New York Times*, 13 May 1913, 3; "Grateful to Lady Lowther," *New York Times*, 1 July 1913, 3.

¹¹¹ She was also very concerned about the wellbeing of animals. Many of the refugees from the Balkans had brought their animals with them when coming to Istanbul. Not being able to feed them, they were left with no choice but to sell their animals or let them starve to death. Thus, in 1912, Lady Lowther also took the initiative to found the first Society for the Protection of Animals in the Ottoman Empire, the *İstanbul Himaye-i Hayvanat Cemiyeti* (Istanbul Society for the Protection of Animals). Berfin Melikoğlu, "Türkiye'de kurulan ilk hayvanları koruma derneğinin tarihsel gelişimi," *Veteriner Hekimler Derneği Dergisi*, LXXX, 1, 2009, 37-44. See also "Animals Victims of War: Lady Lowther's Appeal on Behalf of Starving Cattle and Horses," *New York Times*, 13 January 1913, C5.

¹¹² BOA, DH.SYS, 117-7B/7-28, 2.7.1331 (7 June 1913).

¹¹³ "Lady Lowther's Work of Mercy," *New York Times*, 29 October 1913.



Figure 16 H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople, Old and New*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915, 526.

During the First World War, the French and British Ambassadors and their wives had left, but the wife of the Dutch Ambassador¹¹⁴ – the Dutch remained neutral during this war –, and the wives of the German and Austrian-Hungarian Ambassadors¹¹⁵ – Germany and Austria-Hungary being allies of the Ottoman Empire – together with other members of the German and Austrian-Hungarian communities in Istanbul, remained actively involved in philanthropic, organizational activities.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. "Das Komitee des internationalen Kinderspitals in Schischli..." *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 19. Oktober 1912, 1.

¹¹⁵ See e.g. "Aufruf!", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 17. Oktober 1912, 1.

Conclusion

The introduction of a modern system of conscription not only changed the relationship of Ottoman (Muslim) men with the state, but also that of Ottoman (Muslim) women with the state. Through the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* which was introduced along with this modern system of conscription a new and specific relationship between women and the state was created.

The *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* was, like its European counterparts, based upon the premise of a particular model of family relations: a family consisting of at least one male who was responsible for the (financial) maintenance of his family. This family consisted in first instance of a nuclear family, *in casu* the wife (or, in the Ottoman case possibly also more wives) and the children who were dependent upon his income. The Ottoman regulations of 1914, however, explicitly also took into account that in the Ottoman case families were often not nuclear but extended. Calling a man into arms meant that the state had to take over his role as breadwinner for not only his wife/wives, but also his extended family; a role which the state fulfilled as long as that man was in active service. Instead of being dependent on their male relatives (their breadwinners), women became dependent on the state.

A woman's entitlement to this particular form of state benefit and that of her children was primarily determined by the relation of the state with the husband and father rather than with the woman or the children themselves. A woman received financial assistance from the state not as an individual in need of support, but as the wife of a soldier in arms. The Ottoman women writing to the authorities were well aware of this and used this exactly as an argument to demand their rights related to the family aid scheme. Ottoman women, and men, had never hesitated to petition the Ottoman authorities including the Ottoman Sultan himself to ask for some form of charity when they were in dire straits. In these traditional petitions women would ask for support, because, they, as individuals or as mothers of children, were in need of (financial) assistance. The telegrams sent by the women who complained about the lack of payment based on the family allowance during the First World War are representative of the shift in their relation with the state: women claimed the right to material support and protection from the Ottoman authorities based not on their position as women in need of money and food, but on their identity as the wives, and sometimes daughters and mothers of men who had taken up arms in order to fulfil the holy duty of defending their faith and their fatherland. They claimed their legal right to state welfare and did not ask for public charity.

Moreover, not a woman’s own behavior was relevant to a woman’s having right to benefit from this allowance, but that of her husband: a woman with her children could only appeal to this benefit scheme if her husband fulfilled his service properly. Women whose husbands had been lost in action, had deserted or had been wounded were not entitled to receive the allowance. In this sense, the scheme could also be characterized as one of the sanctions a state had to prevent able men from deserting. Thus, the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı* turned these women into “more formal citizens whose relationship to the state was licensed but limited by their familial capacities as mothers, wives, daughters or sisters” of the male soldier-citizens.¹¹⁶ As citizens, they not only fulfilled their duty by sending their menfolk to the battlefield, they also claimed their rights.

While in Britain these benefits were “need-blind,” in Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire this was not the case. So for a woman in the last three countries, the right to receiving benefits was only in the first instance depending on what her husband did. In the second instance, it depended on the absence or presence of other male relatives who could meet the needs of the women and children left behind. Only in the third instance it was relevant what a woman herself did or owned. If she, thus, started to earn a (small) living in money or in kind, a shift in the relation between the woman and the state took place: this woman would be regarded a breadwinner for at least herself. Although such a shift may be adequately representative of the normative system in Germany and Austria, it definitely was not in the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, where family relations were ruled by Muslim law, men were always responsible for earning a living for themselves and their wife (or wives) and children, even if that wife earned her own income or owned capital. So according to Muslim law a man would always remain the breadwinner independent of his wife’s (or wives’) income. The regulations in the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı*, which were inspired by the German system, however, did not take this into account. In a partial revision in June 1915, the Ottoman authorities went even one more step further: a wealthy mother of the children of the conscript, and thus the latter’s wife, was officially turned into a potential breadwinner. This change, being in flagrant contradiction with Muslim law, not only needed but was also granted the explicit approval of the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire, the *Sheikh ül-Islam*, before it could be implemented.

¹¹⁶ Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 165.

Despite the measures taken, the family aid scheme (and the other state benefit schemes) turned into an increasing burden on the already ravaged budget of the Ottoman State, due to the unexpected longevity of, particularly, the First World War and the number of soldiers involved in it. The Ottoman State was simply not able to fulfil the demands of its dependents. Although more information is needed for the towns and villages of Anatolia, it is clear that the local authorities in Istanbul tried to support the dependents with their own public charity schemes in kind. Additionally, the inhabitants of Istanbul impoverished by the war could turn to private, secular charities. During the wars, several long- and short-lived of these charities were established by foreign and Ottoman women, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, who, as mentioned in Chapter Four on the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* saw their civil activities in these associations as the counterpart of military duty of male citizens and a kind of debt to be paid by those who were not able to fulfil the ultimate duty of a citizen: dying for her country. This is further accentuated by their focus on soldier's families.

The line between private and public charity was a thin line, however. Due to the inter ethno-religious division of labour prevailing in the Ottoman Empire, private charities dominated by Muslims almost automatically carried a semi-private character: the Muslims involved in these forms of charity were almost all high military and bureaucratic officers and their wives and daughters. As a result the distinction between private and public, governmental and non-governmental, organizations was rather fuzzy. While, in general, women's organizations are regarded to be private organizations, in the Ottoman case this may be questionable as will also become clear in the following chapters. The organization founded by the Minister of War to tap into the female labour force in June 1916, the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*, discussed in Chapter Eleven forms an example of such a semi-private organization. In Chapters Twelve and Thirteen, which show how the shortcomings of the authorities stimulated Ottoman Muslim women belonging to the Ottoman Muslim establishment to get engaged in female associational life to the benefit of the soldiers more examples of such private and semi-private organizations are discussed.