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

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Heroes, Brothers and Sons: Ottoman Muslim Women and the Wounded Soldiers

While the Ottomans hardly had any money to equip their soldiers in the field properly, they had even less to spend on the wounded. The situation in general in health care was bad, the war and the influx of wounded soldiers made it even worse. There was a lack of everything: hospitals as such, beds, bandages, clothes for the wounded, personnel, and more.[1] The scarcity of money, materials and people opened opportunities for women who wanted to foster their patriotic feelings. This chapter describes and discusses the activities of Ottoman (Muslim) women and their organizations for those who got wounded in the war. It seeks to find the answer to questions such as what duties these women and their organizations took up in the caring and curing of the casualties being brought in from the battle fields, in providing the hospitals both with materials and womenpower, how these activities altered the traditional roles of the women involved in them and how these changes were justified or otherwise dealt with.

Linen for "Our Wounded Soldiers"

In the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution, the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was one of the first organizations founded explicitly with the aim to improve the situation of the Ottoman soldiers through focusing on the improvement of the situation in the hospitals, as we have seen. Until 1913 the core activities of this organization, which existed until the end of First World

[1] See for an overview of the sanitary situation in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War based on German archival materials Helmut Becker, *Aeskulap zwischen Reichsadler und Halbmond: Sanitätswesen und Seuchenbekämpfung im türkischen Reich während des Ersten Weltkrieges,* Herzogenrath: Murken-Altrogge, 1990.

War, indeed were related to improving the fate of the Ottoman soldiers and mariners by providing the hospitals and wounded soldiers with linen as was shown in Chapter Three.

The *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was not the only women's organization active in this field. The series of successive wars evoked many women of different national and religious backgrounds to participate in alleviating the burdens of the wounded soldiers. The activities ranged from donating goods, to equipping complete wards or even founding and equipping small hospitals. During the Tripolitanian War, for example, a group of women connected to a branch of the *İttihad ve Terakki Kulübü* (Union and Progress Club), donated a variety of linen goods, like sheets, pillowcases, blankets, towels, and nightgowns, but also 37 rolls of bandages.[2]

During the Balkan Wars, the Women's Committee of the Red Crescent became the coordinating force behind many of the activities of women in this field. It actively called upon women to sew underwear for the wounded soldiers, distributed cloth to this aim and also provided examples which women could use. The materials could be picked up from the Red Crescent Headquarters, but the sewing was supposed to take place at the private homes of the women.[3] While women and women's organizations thus actively participated in producing linen and bandages for the Red Crescent, they also opened and equipped hospitals for the wounded soldiers brought in from the front lines.

The *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti,* for example, opened a small hospital with 100 beds, which it kept going for two months.[4] A further unidentified group of "Turkish ladies" fit out two of the in total thirty hospital wards in the Taşkışla Barracks.[5] The members of the *Kadıköy Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Hanımlar Şubesi* (Kadıköy Ladies' Branch of the National Support for the Ottoman Fleet) [6] spent close to 1,000 *lira* of the money they collected on establishing a hospital with 100 beds at the building of the *Osmanlı İttihad*

[2] "Hanımlarımızın hamiyeti," *Tanin*, 8 Kanunusani 1327 (21 January 1912), 3.

[3] "Hilal-i Ahmer," *Tanin,* 1 Teşrinievvel 1328 (14 October 1912), 5

[4] "Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti," *Halka Doğru*, 48, 6 Mart 1329 [sic! This should be 1330] (19 March 1914), 383; Messadet Bedir-Khan, "A propos de l'article de Madame Delaunay," *Kadinlar Dunyassi,* 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 1-2; "Halide Hanımefendinin hitabesi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 134, 8 Mart 1330 (21 March 1914), 4-5; Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk Kadını*, 84-85.

[5] "Sanitätshilfe: die österreichisch-ungarische Hilfsaktion," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 4. Dezember 1912, 2. A message a few days earlier mentions that ladies from Şişli and Nişantaşı had equipped 100 beds in these barracks. Whether or not these are the same women and the same beds is not clear. "Sanitätshilfe: eine Danksagung," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. Dezember 1912, 2.

[6] See Chapter Twelve.

Mektebi (Ottoman Union School) in Haydarpasha.[7] Messadet Bedir-Khan wrote that women opened in total twelve hospitals during the Balkan Wars while she explicitly referred to the hospital of the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* and the hospital in Haydarpasha plus one in Erenköy with 60 beds and one in Kadırga with 200 beds.[8] The two photographs from *Servet-i Fünun* shown below portray groups of women from the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* at the Gülhane hospital.

Figure 26 A photograph from *Servet-i Fünun*, 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), 604. The caption under this photograph reads in Turkish "Ladies and young girls serving our wounded soldiers at Gülhane Hospital." The French caption under the same photograph reads "Turkish ladies and young girls working in a room of the Gülhane Hospital."

[7] *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329 - 1331 Salnamesi,* [İstanbul:] Ahmet İhsan ve Şürekası, n.d.[1332 (1915 - 1916)], 172-174.

[8] Messadet Bedir-Khan, "A propos de l'article de Madame Delaunay," *Kadinlar Dunyassi,* 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 1-2.

Figure 27 A photograph from *Servet-i Fünun*, 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), 604. The captions under this photograph read "Ladies from the *Hilal-i Ahmer* serving our wounded soldiers" and "The Turkish ladies (*les dames turques*) who for the first time are nurses (infirmières) for the Red Crescent" in Turkish and French, respectively.

The two photographs are clearly taken in the same room of the hospital, but the two groups are different. The women and girls in black probably belong to a group serving the soldiers by providing linen. There are no men with them in the room. Of the women in white some very prominently show the armlet indicating that they are certified sick attendants. In this photograph a few men are visible, too, as opposed to the first photograph.

Although some of the women in white wear the armlet of Red Crescent trained sick attendants, the women in both photographs seem to be mainly occupied with preparing bandages. Many women, including those of the imperial family, contributed linen, bedding and bandages, to be used for the wounded soldiers. Most of the activities in this context were coordinated by the Red Crescent's Women's Committee, which published lists with the names of

the donors in the newspapers.[9] The Committee also cooperated with foreign women's organizations in Istanbul. When the *Deutsche Frauenverein zu Konstantinopel* (German Women's Organization in Constantinopel), the German sewingclub *Idelda* and the *Österreichisch-ungarische Frauenverein* (Austrian-Hungarian Women's Organization) offered the Red Crescent their assistance just before the Balkan war broke out, the organization immediately sent them cloth to be sewn into linen and clothing for the wounded soldiers. All three organizations set to work and within a few days handed the goods to Princess Nimet Muhtar, the president of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent. Immediately they were given new materials so they could continue their supportive work. The "Singer Manufacturing Company" contributed its share by donating two sewing machines and sending female instructors to teach the women how to operate them. Another firm selling sewing machines followed suit.[10] Like the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,* the ladies' committee of an international committee which supported the Children's hospital in Şişli equipped six beds for the wounded soldiers in that hospital.[11] The women of the French community in Istanbul gathered at the French embassy under the leadership of Mrs. Bompard, the wife of the Ambassador, and set to work, as shown in figure 28. At the American Embassy, too, a room was vacated for a workshop.[12]

[9] See e.g. "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi Heyet-i İdaresi'nden," *Canin (=Tanin),* 2 Teşrinievvel 1328 (15 October 1912), 5; "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi Heyet-i İdaresi'nden," *Canin (=Tanin),* 3 Teşrinievvel 1328 (16 October 1912), 5; "Hilal-i Ahmer Kadınlar Merkezi'ne eşya hediye eden hanım efendiler," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 16 Teşrinisani 1328 (29 November 1912), 3; "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Kısmı Heyet-i İdaresi'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 19 Teşrinisani 1328 (2 December 1912), 4. According to the last article the women connected to the Women's Center of the Red Crescent had succeeded in turning out 55,396 pieces of underwear in 1,5 months which were all sent to the numerous hospitals in Istanbul. See also Messadet Bedir-Khan, "A propos de l'article de Madame Delaunay," *Kadinlar Dunyassi,* 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 1-2.

[10] Der Vorstand der Deutschen Frauenvereins, "Aufruf," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 15. Oktober 1912, 1; Das Komitee des Oesterreichisch-ungarischen Frauenvereins, "Aufruf!" *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 17. Oktober 1912, 1; "Der Deutsche Frauenverein...," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 20. Oktober 1912, 2; "Oesterreichisch-ungarischer Frauenverein," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 23. Oktober 1912, 1; "The Singer Manufacturing Company," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 24. Oktober 1912, 1; "Die Hilfsaktion. Dank." *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 8. Dezember 1912, 2; "Dank." *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 20. Dezember 1912, 1. See also "İnsaniyete hizmet," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1126, 20 Kanunuevvel 1328 (2 January 1913), 191-192.

[11] "Das Komitee des Internationalen Kinderspitales," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 19. Oktober 1912, 1.

[12] Dwight, *Constantinople,* 473.

Figure 28 "The ladies of the French colony working for the wounded Ottomans at the French Embassy," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1127, 27 Kanunuevvel 1328 (9 January 1913), 197.

The American College for Girls also donated beds and garments for wounded soldiers, but did not forget to send support to Sofia and Athens, too. The College, after all, had many Bulgarian and Greek students and needed to maintain its neutrality.[13]

During the First World War, the British and French women had left, but several women, Ottoman and non-Ottoman, Muslim and non-Muslim, as individuals[14] and in women's organizations, got involved in equipping the hospitals founded in Istanbul.

Especially when, with the battles at Çanakkale, the number of wounded soldiers flowing into Istanbul increased, the women sat to work to produce and gather linen for the soldiers in the hospitals. Many Ottoman women's organizations involved in activities for the hospitals applied to the *Mecruhin-i Gaza-ı Asakir-i Osmaniye İane Komisyonu* to obtain the necessary goods, as

[13] Jenkins, *An Educational Ambassador*, 196-197.

[14] The mother of the Egyptian Khedive, for example, opened and equipped a hospital in Bebek. *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Salnamesi, 1329 – 1331*, [İstanbul:] Ahmet İhsan ve Şürekası, n.d.[1332 (1915 - 1916)], 172.

mentioned before, or turned the goods acquired through the Committee in useable items.

The head physician of the Taşkışla hospital, for example, informed the Committee that the widow of a further unidentified Ferid Pasha, Nimet *hanım*, had turned the *Amerikan bezi* donated by the Committee into sheets, pillow cases, shirts, underpants and nightcaps.[15] So had the women's committee of the Maçka Hospital, the *Maçka Hastahanesi Kadınlar Heyeti* (Maçka Hospital Women's Committee), which seems to have been presided over by one of the daughters of Şakir Pasha,[16] Hakkiye Emin. She was also a member of the Board of this hospital.[17] The *Kadıköy Fukaraperver Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Kadıköy Ladies' Organization for Poor Relief) forwarded the 500 towels it had been given by the Committee to the Haydarpasha Hospital.[18]

The members of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* also turned their attention to the wounded soldiers. When the numbers of wounded soldiers being brought from the battlefield at Gallipoli to Istanbul increased, the members of the organization decided to open a hospital of its own. The *Kondüktör Mektebi İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi* as the hospital was officially named, was founded at a large mansion on Divan Yolu in the old part of Istanbul where formerly the *Kondüktör Mekteb-i Alisi* (Polytechnic for Technicians) had been housed.[19]

[15] Letter dated 2 Eylül 1332 (15 September 1916) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

[16] And thus sister of the poet Cevat Şakir and the painters Fahrünnisa Zeyd and Aliye Berger. She was also the mother of the ceramist Füreya Koral. For more information on the Şakir Family, see, amongst other publications, Shirin Devrim, *A Turkish Tapestry: The Shakirs of Istanbul,* London: Quartet Books, 1996.

[17] Letters dated 31 Mart 1331 (13 April 1915) and 28 Temmuz 1332 (10 August 1916) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. See also Devrim, *A Turkish Tapestry*, 39.

[18] Letter of the head physician of Haydarpasha Hospital dated 17 Mart 1332 (30 March 1916) in: BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

[19] The *Kondüktör Mekteb-i Alisi,* a predecessor of Yıldız Technical University, had been established in 1911 and was originally housed in a building at Divan Yolu at Sultan Ahmed (present day's *Sağlık Müzesi*). During the Balkan Wars the school moved to another venue and the building was turned into a hospital for the first time. It is unclear what happened to the building between the end of the Balkan War and the time the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* founded its hospital. Emre Dölen, "Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Vakfı, 1994-1995, VII, 527-529.

At the same Divan Yolu one could also find the *İstihlak-i Milli Sineması* (National Consumption Movie Theatre). See "Divan Yolu İstihlak-i Milli Sineması," *Tanin*, 9 Ağustos 1331 (22 August 1915), 2.

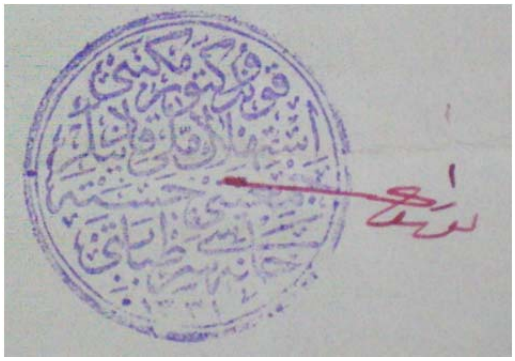

Figure 29 Stamp of the Kondüktör Mektebi İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi Sertababeti (Office of the Head Physician of the Kondüktör Mektebi İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi) under an undated note [August – September 1915] acknowledging the receipt of 70 lira from the "Committee for Wounded Soldiers" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

It was financed with the income generated by its shop, the *İstihlak-i Milli Mağazası*, and the workshops of the organization. The organization not only provided the textiles for the beds, but also full equipment for the surgery and first aid rooms. Initially the hospital had 95 beds, but a few months later another 55 beds were added and thus the total number of beds was brought at 150. The organization, moreover, donated a field hospital with 300 beds and necessities.[20] To gather additional financial means for its hospital, the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* organized a lottery.[21] It was also supported with donations from, for example, grateful ex-patients[22] and other organizations. The charitable organization of Swiss citizens in Istanbul, *Heloctia*, for example, donated 630 bandages to the hospital prepared by the Swiss women in the city.[23] The organization also received regular donations from the "Donations Committee" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The president of the organization, Melek *Hanım*, duly acknowledged the contributions and, giving detailed lists of the goods purchased, accounted to the Committee for the money she had received.

[20] Draft letter of Melek hanım dated 15 Ağustos 1331 (28 August 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915. In this letter she quotes the number of beds as 95 and 150, respectively. Other sources refer to 100 and 160 beds and even 170 beds, respectively. "Frauenschiksal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer junge Türkin aus Constantinopel," *Die Islamische Welt,* 7, 380-383; Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığın harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799; Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816; "İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti,"*Tanin,* 17 Eylül 1332 (30 September 1916), 3.

[21] "Piyango," *Tanin,* 24 Ağustos 1331 (6 September 1915), 3.

[22] "Gazilerimiz için," *Tanin*, 19 Eylül 1331 (2 October 1915), 3.

[23] "Dons à l'armée," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 9 Septembre 1915, 5.

The organization received sums of 100, 70 and 40 Ottoman *lira*, respectively, in August and September 1915, but when it asked for goods to add another 50 beds in December 1915, the request was turned down and the organization referred to the army's Health Office.[24] In May 1916 the hospital was closed for unclear reasons. Subsequently, the organization assisted in the opening of another hospital, *Zapyon Askeri Hastahanesi* (the Zapyon Military Hospital), by providing a fully equipped hospital ward with 150 beds.[25] In October 1917 the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* organized a concert at the Taksim garden "to finance its activities."[26] What, by that time, was meant by these activities, however, is not clear. At a meeting in November 1918, its members decided to respond to the call made by the *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti* (Organization for National Education and Upbringing) to "defend the rights of the fatherland" and to join forces with other organizations in what would become the *Milli Kongre* (National Congress).[27]

The *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Merkezi Hanımlar Şubesi* (Women's Branch of the (Central) Kadıköy National Defense Organization) was closely involved with the "Botter" Hospital in Kadıköy[28] as we learn from the correspondence between women from the organization including its president, Reşide Bekir, the widow of the famous confectioner Hacı Bekirzade Muhittin, its vice-president, Pakize Zeki, the wife of a retired *kaymakam*, and another

[24] BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915; BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915; "İstihlak-i Milli Hastahanesi'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 2 Eylül 1331 (15 September 1915), 2.

[25] "İktisadi haberler: İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti," *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, 69, 21 Eylül 1332 (4 October 1916), 7; "İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi," *Tanin*, 21 Nisan 1332 (4 May 1916), 4; "Teşekkür – İstihlak-i Milli Hastahanesi sertababeti' nden," *Tanin*, 22 Nisan 1332 (5 May 1916), 3; "İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Hastahanesi sertababeti' nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Nisan 1332 (5 May 1916), 2. The Zapyon hospital was located in a Greek school, which had been confiscated by the authorities to be used as a hospital. During the war many schools (especially those of Christian minorities) were indeed (partly) turned into hospitals. Bozis, *İstanbullu Rumlar*, 60-61.

[26] "Konser," *Tanin*, 15 Teşrinievvel/October 1333/1917, 4.

[27] "Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti'nin teşebbüsü," *Vakit,* 23 Teşrinisani 1918, 2 (quotation); "İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti'nde," *Vakit,* 24 Teşrinisani 1918, 2. In the statement of the *Milli Kongre* issued two weeks later, however, the name of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* was not mentioned. The only "women's" organization referred to in this statement was the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti.* "'Milli Kongre'nin beyannamesi," *Vakit,* 7 Kanunuevvel/December 1918, 2. In 1922 the organization was still listed as "active" in a police report. BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

[28] This hospital was housed in the "Botter" mansion which is actually located at Fenerbahçe and had been built as a summer house by one of the tailors of Abdülhamid II, J. Botter, who was of Dutch origin.

woman, who probably was its treasurer, and the "Donations Committee" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So, for example, on 3 October 1915 the organization received the 150 pairs of slippers from the Committee it had asked for mid-September. These slippers were directly forwarded to the hospital.[29]

Figure 30 Seal of *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti Kadıköy Merkezi Hanımlar Şubesi* with the signature of its president, Reşide Bekir. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

In October 1915 the organization informed the Committee that it was in dire need of linen for the soldiers and asked it to send 50 bolts of *Amerikan bezi.* The Committee informed them, however, that it could send only 20 bolts.[30] In November 1915, the organization requested another 50 bolts. The Committee responded negatively referring the organization to the Health Office of the Ministry of War, while it meanwhile sent a letter to that Office explaining the situation. Although the Health Office promised to send 50 bolts, the organization in the end received only 40 bolts, which were turned into bedding, 200 *nevresim* (sheets), for the soldiers at the Haydarpasha hospital.[31]

[29] Letter signed Pakize dated 31.6.1331 (13 September 1915); draft letter of the Committee dated 10 Eylül 1331 (23 September 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915; Receipt signed Pakize Zeki dated 20 Eylül 1331 (3 October 1915) reporting the arrival of the slippers; account for the transporting costs of the slippers dated 21 Eylül 1331 (4 October 1915); letters expressing gratitude from the women's organization and the board of the hospital dated 27 Eylül and 3 Teşrinievvel 1331 (10 and 16 October 1915), respectively, all in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

[30] Letter from Reşide Bekir dated 11 Teşrinievvel 1331 (24 October 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915; draft letter from the Committee dated 21 Teşrinievvel 1331 (3 November 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915.

[31] Letter signed Reşide dated 9 Teşrinisani 1331 (22 November 1915); draft letter of the Committee dated 17/18 Teşrinisani 1331 (30 November/1 December 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/3, 20 May 1915; Letter from *Sıhhiye Dairesi* to the Presidency of the Committee dated 29 Teşrinisani 1331 (12 December 1915); Letter signed Reşide dated ? Kanunuevvel 1331 (? December 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915. The documents in this file also show

Figure 31 Reşide Bekir. Courtesy Nazlı İmre.

The women of this organization, moreover, donated 12,000 blankets and other parts of bedding. An entertainment program at Fenerbahçe in the summer of 1917 yielded more than 8,000 *lira* of which 5,000 *lira* was spent on the wounded soldiers and the remaining 3,000 *lira* to meet the needs of the hospitals

how the transport of the goods was organized and how much was paid for this. For these 40 bolts, for example, a fee for the bridge, a ticket for the boat (for a person), a fee for the transport of the goods by boat, for a porter to unload the goods and for a car were paid. Note signed Naciye (?) dated 29 Teşrinisani 1331 (12 December 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

In the letter of the Board of Haydarpasha Hospital the organization was referred to as "a women's organization founded within the Union and Progress Club" (*İttihad ve Terakki Kulübü'nde müteşekkil bir hanımlar cemiyeti*). Letter from the Board of Haydarpasha hospital dated 10 Kanunuevvel 1331 (16 December 1915) in BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

at Moda and Haydarpasha.[32]For their work in procuring goods for the hospitals in "Anatolia" the president of the organization, Reşide Bekir, its vice-president, Pakize Zeki and 22 more women from Kadıköy were rewarded with a Red Crescent Medal in bronze in January 1917.[33]

The *Rumeli Hisarı Donanma-yı Osmani Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Women's Branch of the Rumelihisar Ottoman Fleet Organization) turned its attention from ships to soldiers: with the money collected by its members blankets, beds, sheets, towels and pillows were purchased which were handed over by its president to the Mirgün recovery home.[34] The influx of wounded soldiers from Çanakkale also led the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* to contribute to the equipping of the military hospitals.[35]

The *(Şişli) Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye,* as we have seen, was affiliated with the hospital in Feriköy. It paid for the electrical appliances of the hospital and distributed sweets and oranges amongst its patients.[36] Members of this organization received a Red Crescent medal in bronze for their work on behalf of the wounded soldiers at the hospital in August 1916.[37]

In the provinces, too, hospitals were opened with the help of women. A group of women in Syria set up a field hospital in Rayak in 1915.[38] In Damascus the *Şam Nisvan-ı Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Damascus Women's Organization for National Support) assisted the Fourth Army in setting up hospitals. Its members were in June 1916 accordingly awarded with medals of different degrees.[39]

[32] "Fenerbahçe'de kır eğlenceleri," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 3 Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 2 ; "Kadıköy Müdafaa-i Milliye Hanımlar Cemiyeti," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 23 Mayıs/May 1333/1917, 2; "Grande fête champetre," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 2 Août 1917, 3; "Grande fête champetre," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 3 Août 1917, 4; "La fête de Féner Baghtché," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 3 Août 1917, 4; "Kadıköyü'nde nafi bir teşebbüs," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 3 Temmuz/July 1918, 2; "Kadıköy hanımlarının faaliyeti," *Tanin,* 7 Temmuz/July 1334/1918, 4.

[33] BOA, DUİT, Taltifat-ı Memurin / Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 47/1-31, 14 Rebiülevvel 1335 (8 January 1917); BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 147-150.

[34] "Gazilerimiz için," *Tanin*, 11 Ağustos 1331 (24 August 1915), 3.

[35] Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu,* IX, 5, 5 Teşrinievvel 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816.

[36] *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniyesi 1333 Senesi Rapor ve Bilançosudur*, Dersaadet: Matbaa-i Orhaniye, 1334, [7; 9].

[37] BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 53-54.

[38] "Un hôpital à Rayak," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 18. Novembre 1915, 2.

[39] BOA, DUİT, 44/11, 26 N1334 (27 July 1916). See also Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, 204.

The uncoordinated activities of private persons and organizations seem to have worried the authorities. Over the years they tried more than once to (re)gain control over such initiatives and to curtail private organizations. In September 1915, for example, the Ministry of Interior formulated a dispatch to the provincial authorities (*Vilayet*) ordering that the hospitals and charitable organizations which had been established with the aim of supporting the wounded soldiers since the beginning of the war had to report to the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* to check whether they were established according to the existing laws and regulations.[40]

While several women and women's organization thus showed their love for the soldiers by donating goods and establishing hospitals, another way to show their sympathy was by giving more luxury presents, such as candies and cigarettes, for the soldiers or even visiting them to hand them over personally. Although some earlier incidents of these kinds of visits were reported,[41] it seems that such visits became more common during the First World War only.[42]

The women of the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu,* for example, collected money amongst themselves to buy sweets, chocolate and cigarettes and distributed them personally to the soldiers in the hospital. Together with members of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* they visited the Hospital at the Military School in May 1915 to distribute cigarettes and to assist the soldiers in writing letters to their beloved ones. During their visit, moreover, the women of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*, donated 60 nursing overalls promising to deliver 200 more later.[43] Two weeks later the members of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* went to see the soldiers at the *Şişli Etfal Hastahanesi* and to give them flowers.[44] Members of the board of the *Esirgeme Derneği* paid a visit to the wounded at the *Darüşşafaka* distributing two oranges

[40] BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-4/27, 25 Şevval 1333 (6 September 1915); BOA, DH.İ-UM, E-94/70, Şevval 1333 (6 September 1915); BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti Kalem-i Umumi, 15/47-A, Şevval 1333 (6 September 1915). See also Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I,* Vol. 1, 176-177.

[41] The daughters of Midhat Pasha and Rasim Pasha, one-time governor of Tripolitania, for example, visited the soldiers who got wounded during the revolt of April 1909 in the hospital bringing them presents. "Les femmes ottomanes," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, III, 6, 1909, 249.

[42] Or that only then they became widely reported in the newspapers…

[43] "Gazileri Ziyaret," *Sabah*, 22 Nisan 1331 (15 May 1915), 2; Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu,* IX, 5, 5 Teşrinievvel 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816.

[44] "Şişli Etfal Hastahanesi'nde," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 16 Mayıs 1331 (29 May 1915), 1.

to each of them,[45] while also the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* visited the wounded in the hospitals as mentioned before.

The influx of wounded soldiers from the battle fields at Çanakkale evoked such a compassion and outcry of patriotism amongst the public that it even triggered the women of the Ottoman and Egyptian dynasties into widely published action. Women of both dynasties had been amongst the founding members and generous donors of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi.* From early 1915 onwards, however, they started to figure more prominently as individuals in the press. So in May 1915, Nazime Sultan, daughter of Abdülaziz donated 50 Turkish *lira*s to a hospital to purchase beds and other goods for soldiers, while Mediha Sultan, daughter of Abdülmecid and sister of Abdülhamid II, donated unspecified goods to another hospital. Şadiye Sultan, daughter of Abdülhamid II, donated two packages of cigarettes and some money to each of the soldiers at the hospital in Şişli and, Muhibbe, the second *kadın* of Murad V, gave them cigarettes and oranges.[46] Cigarettes were a favored present to the soldiers: Fatma, one of the daughters of Ismail Pasha, a former Khedive of Egypt, donated 4,000 packages, while two other women, handed 1,932 and 900 packages, respectively to the Directorate of Health (sic!) to be distributed to the officers and wounded soldiers.[47]

Some of these women also started to visit the soldiers in the hospitals to hand over their presents in person. Hatice Sultan, daughter of Murad V, for example, visited the Kadırga hospital distributing handkerchiefs and cigarettes amongst the soldiers and donating tea and sugar to the hospital. The second wife of the Sultan visited the soldiers at the Haydarpasha Hospital together with some other women from the imperial harem. During her visit she also addressed the soldiers:

> How are you, my soldier sons, my soldier brothers! What do you wish for? We are all at your service! If I knew how to bandage your wounds, I would pay great attention and devotion to you and circle around your head end like a capable nurse. You are very precious to us.[48]

[45] "Gazilerimizi ziyaret," *Sabah*, 12 Mayıs 1331 (25 May 1915), 3.

[46] "S.A. la princesse Nazimé Sultane…," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 9 Mai 1915, 6; "Gazilerimiz için," *Sabah*, 12 Mayıs 1331 (25 May 1915), 3.

[47] "Les objets suivants ont été remis...," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 16 Mai 1915, 7.

[48] "İkinci Kadınefendi hazretlerinin mecruhin gazatı ziyaret," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 8 Mayıs 1331 (21 May 1915), 2. See also "Pour les blessés," *Lloyd Ottoman,* 18 Juin 1915, 5.

Most of these activities, such as donating money, sewing uniforms, linen, underwear and bandages, did not require any trespassing of the spatial gender borders for women. Women could do all these things from within the safe surroundings of the walls of their homes, or by gathering in all-female groups. The skills needed to do these things did not entail any real shifts in gender borders, either. Most of the women involved in the sewing were probably used to handle needle and thread in some way or another.[49]

Visiting the wounded soldiers, however, did mean that gender borders were crossed and it seems to have taken considerably more time for Ottoman Muslim women to take that step. The upsurge of patriotism due to the influx of wounded men from Çanakkale seems to have been the major drive behind women's taking this step, including those for whom seclusion had been rather strict until then: women of the Ottoman imperial dynasty. The spirit of patriotism caused by the very visibility of war brought home also seems to have been the main impetus behind Ottoman Muslim women going even one more step further: nursing the Ottoman soldiers.

Ottoman Muslim Women and the (Para-)Medical Profession

In the nineteenth century Ahmed Midhat, the famous author, had already expressed his opinion that women possessed the right qualifications to become medical doctors. They should, because of their natural qualities, also make better sick attendants than men argued someone else in 1908.[50] The first profession, however, was blocked for women by a decision of the Council of State of August

[49] Using a sewing machine, however, was differently. Cahit Uçuk mentions in her memoirs that her mother had to be taught first how to work on a sewing machine. The fact that the Singer Company sent female instructors to the German (!) women's organization also indicates that not all women were used to working with a sewing machine. The fact that these women had to learn how to handle a sewing machine, might have pointed at a possible class division rather than at a gender division. The women involved in the donations were not working class women, but belonged to the higher strata of Ottoman society. Although most of them were likely to have been educated in fine needle work like embroidery, for the coarse work they were probably used to invite a dressmaker to their home or to visit one. Uçuk, *Bir İmperatorluk Çökerken...,* 237.

[50] Orhan Tahsin, "Musahabe-i Tıbbiye," *Demet*, 1, 17 Eylül 1324 (30 September 1908), 13-14. See also "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti reis-i saniyesi muallim doctor Besim Ömer Paşa'nın nutku," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1212, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1914), 124-125.

1910. According to this decision, female doctors who by that time could only be foreign, because there were no Ottoman female doctors, were not allowed to practice their profession in the Ottoman Empire. Women, the argument was, were not allowed to be doctors even in "civilized countries." Moreover, the members of the Council were afraid that the hidden aim behind this request for permission to allow foreign female doctors might have been to undertake missionary activities.[51] Despite this prohibition, foreign women were known to work as medical doctors in hospitals in the Ottoman Empire during the Second Constitutional Period. Amélie Frisch, a member of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti,* for example, worked as a medical doctor at the Austrian-Hungarian hospital at Pangaltı.[52]

Mary Mills Patrick, the president of the American College for Girls at Constantinople, who was generally well informed on the topic of women's education, moreover, refers to the existence of so-called "half-doctors." These "half-doctors" were women who had attended basic lectures especially given for female attendances at the medical college starting from the 1880s. She pointed out that these classes were regarded to be quite superficial by 1910, but that Besim Ömer *Bey* had started to teach regular classes for women, 50 of them aged between 20 and 40, by then. The lectures were supplemented with practical demonstrations in a hospital.[53] Mary Mills Patrick was probably referring to women who were officially educated as midwives (*kabile* or *ebe*). A school for midwives had been founded as early as 1843, but the level of education remained questionable due to the omission of any entry requirements for the students. From 1908 onwards, however, women entering the programme needed to have at least a primary school diploma. The school, which had been located at a birth clinic within the premises of the Gülhane Park from 1892 until 1909, moved to the Kadırga Birth Clinic (*Veladethane*) in that year.[54] Although the women

[51] "Kadın Doktorlar," *Tanin*, 16 Ağustos 1326 (29 August 1910), 3.

[52] Feldmann, Odette, "La femme comme médecin," *Kadinlar Dünyassi,* 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 2-3; "Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti aza-yı müzaherisinden Amélie Frisch" (photograph), *Kadınlar Dünyası,* 138, 4 Nisan 1330 (17 April 1914), 11. Amélie Frisch was an Austrian born in Constantinople. She graduated from the American College for Girls at Constantinople in 1901 after which she continued her studies in Austria where she received her M.D. degree in 1907. *Constantinople College, the American College for Girls at Constantinople, Reports for the year 1911 - 1912,* [n.p.: n.p., n.d.], 75.

[53] Mary Mills Patrick, "Among the Educated Women of Turkey."

[54] Nuran Yıldırım, "Viladethane," *Dünden bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Vakfı, 1994 - 1995, VII, 388-389; Osman Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi,* İstanbul: Eser Neşriyat ve Dağıtım, n.d., 543.

educated in this institution lacked any professional standard, Mary Mills Patrick stated that some of them were quite capable and were called upon by prominent Ottoman families to look after their women in cases of minor illnesses.

In 1914 the discussion was taken up again by the editors of *Kadınlar Dünyası* and the members of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*. When the Minister of Education, Şükrü *Bey*, in February 1914 promised that he would allow girls to attend a medical school, referring to Russia where Muslim women had been allowed to do so before, he met with their approval.[55] In an editorial the editors of *Kadınlar Dünyası* argued that many potential mothers of soldiers died because women were prevented from becoming doctors.[56] Mahmud Sadık also argued in favor of opening the medical profession to Ottoman women. He thought this to be a logical step towards social progress. Well educated women including female doctors, he argued, were needed to assess the needs of families in Anatolia and to prevent the untimely deaths of women and children.[57]

The discussions bore fruit. Two Ottoman Muslim girls from Izmir, Suat Mahmud and Fatma Saade, were sent to Switzerland by the Governorship of the province of Aydın in 1915 to become doctors.[58] In May 1916, the Ministry of Education decided to give an Ottoman Muslim girl and graduate from the American College for Girls, Safiye Ali, a scholarship to pursue a medical study in Germany.[59] Moreover, from September 1917 onwards the Higher Committee of Health agreed to allow Muslim women to practice the profession of medical doctor. While it also announced that women would be allowed access to the Medical Faculty of the University, it would last until 1922 before the Faculty of Medicine actually opened its doors to women.[60] Meanwhile, *Bilgi Yurdu* announced preparatory courses for women who wanted to become doctors, chemists or dentists. The Council of Ministers confirmed this permission for Muslim women to practice the profession only in September 1918, because "the

[55] Ulviye Mevlan, "Kadınlık - Naarif Nazırı," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 131, 15 Şubat 1329 (28 February 1914), 1.

[56] Kadınlar Dünyası, "Kadın – Tababet," *Kadınlar Dünyası,* 134, 8 Mart 1330 (21 March 1914) 2.

[57] Mahmud Sadık, "Hastabakıcıları," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1180, 2 Kanunusani 1329 (15 January 1914), 228-229; Mahmud Sadık, "At başı beraber: kızlar ve erkekler," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1207, 10 Temmuz 1330 (23 July 1914), 173-175.

[58] Nuran Yıldırım, *Türkiye'nin ilk Kadın Doktoru Safıye Ali,* İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011, 5-6.

[59] Yıldırım, *Türkiye'nin ilk Kadın Doktoru Safıye Ali,* 6-21.

[60] "Les doctoresses," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 5 Septembre 1917, 3; "Weibliche Ärtze," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 7. September 1917, 3; "Maarif şuunu: kadın doktorlar," *Muallim*, 15, 15 Teşrinievvel 1333 (15 October 1917), 552.

number of physicians, which had been limited and less than sufficient before the war had become totally insufficient due to that war." The very few foreign and non-Muslim women, to whom this permission had been granted earlier, could not make up for the losses which occurred during the war.[61]

Although (Ottoman Muslim) women thus were not allowed to get employed in the medical profession as doctors until 1918, the continuous wars of the decade offered Ottoman Muslim women ample opportunity to get involved in nursing for the first time. The Red Crescent would become the main agent in creating at first an Ottoman Muslim voluntary, and later also an Ottoman Muslim professional, nursing staff by organizing its education.

Nursing the Wounded of the Balkan Wars

The arguments in favor of such an education were initially not directed at public sick care. One of the arguments used in favor of women's learning the basics of *hastabakıcılık* (literally, attendance of the sick) was that they would become better mothers. The authors of the women's and other press stressed the reproductive role of women and their importance for the nation as such. Turning it into a civic motherhood, they claimed it for the nation. As mothers of the nation women were not only responsible for the first education of their children, but also for their physical upbringing. Since mothers were responsible for their children's physical well-being, women needed to have, for example, sufficient knowledge of hygiene and on the topic of illnesses and their cures. The result of women's ignorance on this topic was the untimely death of many Muslim children, it was argued.[62] Moreover, only with the assistance of a well-educated (house-)wife and mother the prescriptions of a doctor for a member of the family would be applied properly and thus bring about the desired result.

[61] "Die Türkin als Ärtzin und Beamtin," *Die Neue Türkei*, II, 6/7, Januar 1918, 283; Z[eynetullah] N[uşirevan], "Türk aleminde: kadınlar hukuku," *Türk Yurdu,* XIII, 8, 6 Kanunuevvel 1333 (6 December 1917), 3654-3656; "Hanımlardan doktor eczacı dişçi...," *Bilgi Yurdu Mecmuası*, 16, Ağustos 1334 (August 1918), in- and outside backcover; "Kadınların icra-i tababete mezuniyetleri Meclis-i Vukelace tensib olunmuştur," *Vakit*, 27 Eylül (September) 1918, 2; "Die Aertzinnen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 28. September 1918, 3; "Les femmes médecins," *Lloyd Ottoman*, 28 Septembre 1918, 3.

[62] See e.g. Zühre, "Kadın bilgileri," *Mehasın*, 7, Mart 1324 (March/April 1909), 369-372; "Bazı hususat-ı içtimaiye," *Mehasın*, 10, Eylül 1325 (September/October 1909), 736-738 [taken from İkdam].

Since all women were supposedly equipped with the innate qualities of compassion and kindness, motherhood would only benefit from a more scientific basis, the argument ran.[63] From the scientifically supported compassion and kindness shown to the members of the own family to the scientifically supported compassion and kindness shown to the members of the larger family of the nation was rhetorically a small step. For Besim Ömer Pasha, the president of the Red Crescent, there was therefore no doubt that Ottoman (Muslim) women should and could follow the example of the women working as hospital attendants and nurses whom he had heard about and witnessed both in the Ottoman Empire and abroad.[64]

Although the initiative to start courses for *Ottoman Muslim* nurses in the historiography of the Red Crescent Women's Central Committee was dated 1914,[65] earlier efforts directed towards the education of *Ottoman* women to become properly educated sick attendants were undertaken. From 1895 onwards the women studying midwifery at the birth clinic at the Gülhane Park received elementary training in sick attendance during the first year of their studies.[66] These women, however, were not meant to work in hospitals, but rather within the confinement of private homes. When the German Medical Doctor and director of the Gülhane Military Hospital, Robert Rieder, was asked to reform the military hospitals, he explicitly rejected employing Ottoman female sick attendants. Instead he proposed to educate soldiers who had been in arms for at least one year to become sick attendants. To assist the Ottoman and German

[63] Orhan Tahsin, "Musahabe-i Tıbbiye," *Demet*, 1, 17 Eylül 1324 (30 September 1908), 13-14. See also the foreword to the translation of a book on *hastabakıcılık* by Fatma Zeliha Osman. Zeliha Osman, "Mukaddeme," in: *Hastabakıcılık Kitabı*, [Türkçe'ye tercümesi merhum Osman Sadık Paşa kerimesi, Fatma Zeliha], İstanbul: Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti, 1331, 4-5.

[64] See e.g. Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer'e dair konferans*. For a photograph of a French and British nurse at the Şişli Hospital looking after the wounded soldiers in the aftermath of the counterrevolution of April 1909, see Eugène Beylier, "l'Hôpital militaire de Chichly à Constantinople," *Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer*, juin-novembre 1909, 126; on, e.g. the Dutch Red Crescent Ambulance to the Ottoman Empire in 1913 - 1914, see Bas Plaatsman, "De Nederlandse Rode Kruis ambulance in het Osmaanse Rijk ten tijde van de Eerste Balkanoorlog (1912 - 1913)," [Unpublished MA-thesis (doctoraal-scriptie), University of Utrecht, Utrecht, 2007].

[65] See also Nil Sarı & Zuhal Özaydın, "Türk hemşireliğine Osmanlı hanımefendileri'nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)'in desteği," *Sendrom*, IV, 3, 1992, 66-78; Nil Sarı & Zuhal Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve kadın hastabakıcı eğitiminin nedenleri (I)," *Sendrom,* IV, 4, 1992, 10-18; Nil Sarı & Zuhal Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve kadın hastabakıcı eğitiminin nedenleri (II)," *Sendrom,* IV, 5, 1992, 72-80.

[66] Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi,* 543.

doctors in teaching these attendants, he suggested bringing in three experienced German nurses.[67] His successor, Julius Wieting, was less averse to employing Ottoman women and started courses for them in the Gülhane Hospital in December 1908. At the end of November of that year, *Yeni Gazete* announced that a "Red Crescent voluntary service" was established at the hospital and that courses were to start for women who wanted to become sick attendants (*hastabakıcı*). Although women without any previous education would be accepted, the announcement stated that the hospital preferred women who had had at least some education. The courses were taught by Asaf Derviş Pasha and Refik Münir *Bey* and included both theory and practice.[68] A few weeks later, Wieting published a letter in *Tanin* in which he referred to the application by a woman who wanted to become a sick attendant in his hospital. In his letter, he also wrote that an increasing number of *Ottoman* women were indeed attending the "Red Crescent voluntary service" and the courses for "female sick attendants" at the hospital.[69] According to Hester Donaldson Jenkins, however, the counterrevolution of April 1909 brought an end to these early efforts.[70]

In October 1910, the Medical Faculty in Haydarpasha announced the opening of a two-year course for sick attendants for boarders as well as non-boarders. During the first year the students would receive a monthly allowance of 100 *kuruş*, in the second year this would be raised to 200 *kuruş* per month. If the attendants wished to work in the hospital afterwards, their payment would go up to 250 *kuruş*. The preconditions were that the women should be between 20 and 30, of good reputation and that they should speak Turkish and write one other language.[71] A call upon men and women to become "Red Crescent volunteers" published in April 1912 referred to courses opened for men and women at the Gülhane hospital and to women who "had been taking these classes regularly for two years."[72] Just before the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, when the Balkan states mobilized for war, *Tanin* published another call upon

[67] Robert Rieder, *Für die Türkei: Selbstgelebtes und Gewohltes,* Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1903, I. Band, 21-35; 175-182.

[68] "Fevkalade mühim bir teşebbüs," *Yeni Gazete,* 17 Teşrinisani/November 1908, 2. See also "Şuun-ı nisvan: İstanbul Gülhane Seririyat Hastahanesi'nde...," *Kadın,* 6, 17 Teşrinisani 1324 (30 November 1908), 15; "İstanbul," *Ittihad ve Terakki¸* 21 Teşrinisani/November 1908, 4.

[69] "Hastabakıcı Kadınlar," *Tanin*, 6 Kanunuevvel 1324 (19 December 1908), 3. See also "Gülhane Seririyat Hastahanesi'nden," *Yeni Gazete,* 29 Kanunuevvel/December 1908, 4.

[70] Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 155.

[71] "Eine Schule für Krankenpflegerinnen," *Osmanischer Lloyd,* 21 Oktober 1910, 1.

[72] "Hilal-i Ahmer için: gönüllü aza," *Tanin,* 30 Mart 1328 (12 April 1912), 4.

"Ottoman ladies and gentlemen" to report to the Gülhane Hospital to take courses in "the attendance of and assistance to the wounded" (*hastabakıcılık ve muavenet-i mecruhin*).[73] By that time, Besim Ömer had started to try to convince the Board of the Red Crescent of the need to establish a so-called *hastahane-mektebi* (hospital with training facility) where male and female hospital attendants could be trained. Although the Board did not allow him to build new premises to that aim, he was allocated some space at the hospital of Kadırga to set up such a "hospital-school" to train ten women. These women would be sent to families in need of sick attendants and thus not employed at hospitals.[74] The classes were announced in the newspapers and both men and women were invited to apply. The classes for men would take place every day: on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays between 1 and 3. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, however, they took place from 10 to 12. On those days, the classes for women were scheduled from 2 to 4.[75] The school was closed down, however, before it even could get started, because the premises were needed for the wounded soldiers from the Balkan Wars.

These early efforts seem therefore to have been rather unsuccessful. The Kadırga Hospital, however, was one of the few hospitals where some Muslim women continued to work as hospital attendants. Of the 15 female sick attendants working there during the Balkan Wars, six were non-Muslim, including a princess Oblomovski, and nine were Muslim.[76]

These included the four Tatar women students from Russia who initiated the establishment of the women's branch of the *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, but who had initially come to the Ottoman Empire to work as volunteers to support the Red Crescent and "to wake up their Ottoman Muslim sisters."[77] The women figured prominently on photographs in *Servet-i Fünun* which were published

[73] "Vatana hizmet: vatanın hamiyetli kadınlarına ve erkeklerine," *Tanin*, 22 Eylül 1328 (5 October 1912), 3.

[74] Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer'e dair konferans*, 75-77.

[75] "Hilal-i Ahmer," *Tanin,* 25 Eylül 1328 (8 October 1912) 5.

[76] *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329 - 1331 Salnamesi,* 126. See also, TKA, 413/13, 14 Teşrinievvel 1328 (27 November 1912); TKA, 413/14, 14 Teşrinievvel 1328 (27 November 1912); TKA, 413/22, 22 Teşrinievvel 1328 (5 December 1912); TKA, 413/42, 29 Teşrinievvel 1328 (12 December 1912).

[77] "Türklük Şuunu - Şimali Hemşirelerimiz," *Türk Yurdu*, IV, 14, 18 Nisan 1329 (1 May 1913), 464; Ruşen Zeki, "Bizde hareket-i nisvan," 344. For a photograph of the four women see Chapter Twelve.

explicitly to show how, especially Muslim, female hospital attendants worked at this hospital.[78]

Figure 32 "Les blessés ottomans..." (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1126, 20 Kanunuevvel 1328 (3 January 1913), 172. Note how the woman in the back has put her hands on the shoulder of the officer in a quite intimate pose.

[78] Although the French captions under the first two photographs refer to *dames turques* and *nos infirmières turques*, respectively, the Ottoman Turkish subtitle refers to the women in the first picture as *hanımlarımız* without any further reference to ethnicity, while in the Ottoman Turkish subscripts of the other photographs references to the women portrayed are lacking. "La salle d'opération...., " (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1121, 15 Teşrinievvel 1328 (28 October 1912), front page; "Nos infirmières turques à l'hôpital Kadirgua" (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1126, 20 Kanunuevvel 1328 (3 January 1913), front page; "Les blessés ottomans..." (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1126, 20 Kanunuevvel 1328 (3 January 1913), 172; "La Croissant-Rouge..." (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1129, 10 Kanunusani 1328 (23 January 1913), 248. See also Dwight, *Constantinople*, 475.

Figure 33 "La Croissant-Rouge..." (photograph), *Servet-i Fünun,* 1129, 10 Kanunusani 1328 (23 January 1913), 248.

The reason why this particular hospital seems to have been one of the first to employ Muslim sick attendants was probably that it used to be a maternity ward which was also used for educating the above-mentioned midwives, who during their first year also had to take courses on sick attending. Obviously, the women working there stayed on when the birth clinic was turned into an actual hospital with male patients due to the war.

The work of these women in the hospital must have inspired Besim Ömer to undertake another effort to organize professional education for sick attendants. In February 1913 women were invited by the *Hilal-i Ahmer* to apply to attend a six months course. The women had to be healthy and between 25 and 35 years of age, able to read and write (without a specification of what language) and prepared to serve for at least five years with the *Hilal-i Ahmer*. They would receive food and clothes and a small payment if they had attended the courses during six months and participated in the practical exercises.[79] How many women applied remains unclear.

[79] TKA, 193/23, [23 Kanunusani 1328 (5 February 1913)].

Although the number of professional sick attendants thus remained limited, some "Turkish and Muslim" women seem to have worked as volunteers during the Balkan Wars at other hospitals.[80] *Servet-i Fünun*, for example, published photographs of Muslim women at work at Gülhane and Haydarpasha Hospitals during the Balkan Wars referred to as *hanımlarımız* and *les dames turques* in the captions in Ottoman Turkish and French, respectively.[81] Halide Edib visited the Kadırga Hospital and wrote that she hoped that the example of the women in this hospital would be followed by others.[82] This obviously incited some of the members of the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* to become actively involved in working at the hospital founded by the organization. In a speech in which the author commemorated this, she stressed that this had given her hope for the future. Not because it opened the horizon for women to have a profession, but because the meeting of women from Istanbul with men from Anatolia opened, in her view, perspectives for a different society.[83] Some of the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* are reported to have also actively participated in the nursing of in total 300 wounded soldiers and 60 wounded officers for a period of six months during the Balkan Wars.[84] At the Kandilli Hospital, founded at the palace of Cellaleddin *Bey*[85] with a capacity of 50 beds, on the other hand, not Ottoman women, but two *soeurs*, and a few English and French women worked as volunteers.[86]

[80] Selma Riza, "Turquie," in: International Council of Women, *Report on the Quinquennial Meetings, Rome 1914,* Karlsruhe: G. Braunsche Hofbuchdruckerei und Verlag, [1914], 391-394. (accessed through http://www.archive.org).

[81] "Mecruh gazilerimiz: Gülhane hastahanesi'nde bir koğuş [photograph]," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), front cover; "Gazi Osmanlılar: Haydarpaşa hastanesinde ameliyat salonu, hanımlarımızın muavenet-i şefkatkaranesi [photograph]," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1121, 15 Teşrinisani 1328 (28 November 1912), front cover.

[82] *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329 - 1331 Salnamesi*, 127-128.

[83] "Halide Hanımefendinin hitabesi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 134, 8 Mart 1330 (21 March 1914), 4-5; "Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti," *Halka Doğru*, 48, 6 Mart 1329 [sic! This should be 1330] (19 March 1914), 383; Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk Kadını*, 84-85.

[84] "Die Hilfsaktion. Dank." *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 6. Dezember 1912, 2; "Die Wohltätigkeitsgesellschaft der osmanischen Damen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2. März 1913, 1.

[85] Son of Cemile Sultan, daughter of Sultan Abdülmecid. The Palace was torn down in 1914. http://www.cemilesultan.com/hakkimizda.php (consulted 5 January 2011).

[86] *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329 - 1331 Salnamesi,* 165.

Despite these examples, the number of Ottoman Muslim women working in hospitals remained limited until at least 1914.[87] The number of 5,000 "*musulmanes*" (Muslim women), who supposedly had worked as sick attendants during the Balkan Wars, mentioned by Messadet Bedir-Khan, therefore, seems highly exaggerated.[88] This is, moreover, confirmed by the lists of names of women who received the Red Crescent Medal for their work during these wars.

The Ottoman Red Crescent Medal (*Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyası*) was created shortly after the start of the Balkan Wars in November 1912. This medal, which was to be awarded to both women and men, Ottoman and foreign alike, was meant for those who "would render beneficent services, materially or morally, to the Ottoman Red Crescent Organization."[89] The recipients of these medals were meticulously recorded by the Ottoman authorities and these records thus form a useful source of information on the activities of, amongst others, Ottoman women for the Red Crescent.[90] In the lists available not only the names of the decorated are given, but also the reason for their decoration and their function. Although the reasons for decoration are often put in very general terms, it becomes clear from this information that during the Balkan wars the hospital attendants in the wards at the Taşkışla barracks and at other hospitals were indeed males or foreign and non-Muslim women, which is confirmed in other sources.[91] The only Red Crescent medal given to an Ottoman Muslim

[87] It might well be that the members of the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* and the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* working in the hospitals were the non-Muslim or even foreign members of these organizations. This is, however, not clear.

[88] Messadet Bedir-Khan, "A propos de l'article de Madame Delaunay," *Kadinlar Dunyassi,* 125, 4/17 Janvier 1914, 1-2.

[89] "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Madalyaları Nizamnamesi," in: BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 31: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, no pagenumbers; "Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Madalyaları Nizamnamesi," *Düstur*, II, 4, 4 Zilkade 1330 / 2 Teşrinievvel 1328 (15 October 1914), 660; "Eine Medaille des Roten Halbmonds," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. November 1912, 2.

[90] The easiest accessible listing is that in the *Nişan Defterleri: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları*. Other places to find references to recipients of the Medals are the catalogues of the *Dahiliye Nezareti: Kalem-i Mahsus*, the *Meclis-i Vukela Mazbataları*, and those with the *İrade-i Taltifat.* Within the latter category especially the files with specific decrees related to decorations are relevant: *Taltifat-ı Nisvan* (BOA, DUİT 44) and the *Taltifat-ı Memurin: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları* (BOA, DUİT 47).

[91] See e.g. *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 7. November 1912, 2; or the report of the President of the Dutch Ambulance on its mission, which refers to Austrian, American and Belgians at Taşkışla and five Swedish nurses and some nuns at the Harbiye hospital upon their arrival. The members of the Dutch Ambulance themselves (including six female nurses and five male nurses) worked at the Harbiye hospital. Comité internationale de la Croix-Rouge '*Verslag der Handelingen van de Vereeniging Het Nederlandsche Roode Kruis*', deel 23, jaar 1913, Den Haag, Gebrs. J. & H. van

woman before the First World War was a medal in gold for the First Wife of the Sultan, who was the honorary president of the Women's Central Committee of the Red Crescent Organization.[92]

Ottoman Muslim Women as Sick Attendants during the First World War

The Initiatives of Wieting Pasha and Besim Ömer

That the number of "Turkish ladies" working as nurses had remained limited was confirmed by Professor Wieting – who by then had received the title of Pasha – in two articles which appeared in the *Osmanischer Lloyd* in January 1914. In these articles he elaborated on the deficiencies in the field of sick nursing in the Ottoman Empire. He pointed out that a well-organized army of professional hospital attendants was a precondition for the establishment of a well-organized voluntary army of hospital attendants. Although some Ottoman women had been working as nurses during the Balkan Wars, he pointed out that such an army was lacking. He wrote that there were no professional female hospital attendants in the Ottoman military hospitals, while the education of the male and female attendants of the civilian hospitals was not liable to any set standard or government control. These hospital attendants generally learned their job by practicing it. What was mostly felt, however, was the lack of well-educated and well-organized professional female nurses. Firmly vested in the late nineteenth century idea that citizenship was about duty, discipline and obedience rather than rights, he fulminated against the women's movement which was talking about obtaining rights for women, while, he argued, they should first show they were able to fulfil their duty. And their duty, out of their nature, was to take care of the ill, "their very own profession." He pointed out that no serious effort could be taken in this direction if Ottoman society, and

Langenhuysen 1914, 101-102 cited in: Plaatsman, "De Nederlandse Rode Kruis ambulance in het Osmaanse Rijk ten tijde van de Eerste Balkanoorlog (1912 - 1913)," 60-61.

[92] BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 31: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 51-72. Something confirmed by articles in the *Osmanischer Lloyd*. *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 7.11.1912, 2; "Sanitätshilfe: die österreichische-ungarische Hilfsaktion," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 6. Dezember 1912, 2. Some women, like the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınları Cemiyet-i Hayriye*, however, would be decorated at a later date for their activities during the Balkan Wars.

more particularly, Ottoman women did not show their patriotic zeal. He suggested that a group of Ottoman "ladies" should be sent abroad to be educated for several years. After at least three years of experience these women would have to set up the professional education for other Ottoman women in the various cities and towns of the Empire. Meanwhile other women should be educated in the existing civilian hospitals under the supervision of foreign, experienced and skilled nurses (*Schwestern*). However, since it would take some time before such professional personnel would be fully educated, he stressed the importance of the use of volunteers and their education, which should be undertaken by the Red Crescent.[93]

The plea of Wieting met with approval in the Ottoman Turkish press. So, for example, the *Kadınlar Dünyası* dedicated an article to the subject, but only in its French annex.[94] Mahmut Sadık published a reaction in *Servet-i Fünun* stressing that in order to reach the goals set by Wieting, it was firstly necessary to change the mentality of the people and give women full access to social and economic life, including the para-medical and medical profession.[95]

The day after the articles of Wieting appeared, the president of the Red Crescent, Besim Ömer Pasha, discussed his ideas of establishing a school for hospital attendants on a meeting of the Red Crescent's Women's Committee. He told them about his earlier effort to establish a hospital-school and how this plan had fallen apart due to the war. Instead he announced that, while the Red Crescent was looking for a new location, he had gotten permission to teach two theoretical classes per week to women at the headquarters of the organization and one practical class only in the Kadırga hospital.[96] Approximately one month later, in February 1914 the Red Crescent announced the start of a course for nursing aids, which would consist of eighteen lessons of two hours each on Fridays and Sundays. The classes were to be taught by Besim Ömer and Akıl Muhtar.[97] Between 40 and 50 women participated in the course and at the end of

[93] Professor Dr. Wieting Pascha, "Die Forderungen des Krankenpflegedienstes I," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 7. Januar 1914, 1-2; Professor Dr. Wieting Pascha, "Die Forderungen des Krankenpflegedienstes II," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 8. Januar 1914, 1-2.

[94] "On demande des infirmières turques," *Kadinlar Dünyassi*, 127, 18/31 Janvier 1914, 3-4

[95] Mahmut Sadık, "Hastabakıcıları," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1180, 2 Kanunusani 1329 (15 January 1914), 228-229. See also "Der 'Sabah' über den Artikel Professor Wietings," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 8. Januar 1914, 2.

[96] "Der Frauenverein des 'Roten Halbmonds'," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 9. Januar 1914, 1.

[97] "Die Kurse für Krankenpflegerinnen," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 15. Februar 1914, 2; "Havadis-i dünya: kadınlar hastabakıcılığı," *Kadınlar Dünyası,* 130, 8 Şubat 1329 (21 February 1914), 9.

the five months' course 27 women successfully took the exam. These 27 women, who were all wives and daughters of prominent Ottoman officials, received their certificate during a ceremony in the presence of the First *Kadın* of the Sultan, of Naciye Sultan and her mother and other palace women.[98] Although the announcement in *Osmanischer Lloyd* did not mention anything on the course being exclusively for Muslim women or not, all the women receiving their diplomas were indeed Muslim.[99] The yearbook for women published by the Women's Committee of the Red Crescent in the subsequent year explicitly stated that for the first time Muslim women had gotten education in this field and received a certificate.[100] From his speech at the commencement ceremony, it is clear that Besim Ömer was very much aware of the opposition Ottoman Muslim sick attendants could potentially evoke. He stressed the importance of the event and pointed out that these women served as examples to counter any social resistance the professional nursing school the *Hilal-i Ahmer* wanted to establish might generate.[101] Another means to publicly legitimize the activities of women in this field was that these women were rewarded – strangely enough – not with the Red Crescent Medal, but with the Medal of Industry (*Sanayi Madalyası*) in silver in August of that year.[102]

Ottoman Muslim Women as Sick Attendants and Public Opinion

Understanding that the involvement of Ottoman Muslim women in the nursing of wounded males would mean a serious transgression of existing gender norms for which it would not be easy to create public support, the Red Crescent made

[98] "Der Rote Halbmond," *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 14. Juli 1914, 3; "Hilal-i Ahmer'de bir resm-i bihin," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1206, 3 Temmuz 1330 (16 July 1914), 74. The last article contains a full list of all the women receiving their diploma including the names and ranks of their fathers and husbands. See also Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer'e Dair Konferans*, 77-78 (footnote).

[99] A year later, in retrospect, Besim Ömer declared that the aim had been "the creation and instruction of a corps of *Muslim* male and female nurses." Bessim Ömer, "La fondation, la réorganisation du Croissant-Rouge," 428 (emphasis added).

[100] Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, Takvim - 1* -, [İstanbul], 1331, 57; Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer'e dair konferans*, 77-78 (footnote).

[101] "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti reis-i sanisi muallim doktor Besim Ömer Paşa nutku," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1212, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1914), 124-125.

[102] BOA, İ.Tal., 1296/ 33, 26 Ş 1332 (20 July 1914); Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, Takvim - 1* -, [İstanbul],1331, 58; Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, Takvim - 5* -, [İstanbul], 1335/1919, 168.

conscious efforts to massage public opinion into accepting this shift. Firstly, it continued to organize courses for "ladies" (*hanımlar*) who wanted to serve as volunteers, as nursing aids. Secondly, it launched a strong public campaign in the popular press. Meanwhile, especially Besim Ömer continued to try to establish schools for those who wanted to become professional sick attendants.

With their relatively high profile, the volunteers had to serve as examples to create public support for a large scale entrance of Muslim women into the profession of nursing. In Bursa, for example, a course for volunteers was opened by Princess Hatice, the wife of the Governor, Abbas Hilmi Pasha, only briefly after the courses in Istanbul had started. Twenty five women, including some princesses of the Egyptian Khedival dynasty, received their diploma from this course in a public ceremony, like the women in Istanbul.[103] Aware of the potentially positive effect on public opinion decorating the women could have, the president of the local branch of the Red Crescent asked the Central Committee of the Red Crescent to award these women too with a medal.[104]

Meanwhile, the courses continued also in Istanbul. In November 1914, the heir apparent to the throne visited the Women's Center to hand a group of new successful candidates their diplomas.[105] Ten days after this ceremony another series of courses for "ladies" commenced at the *Darülfünun*. Twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays, the women could take classes on first aid, nursing and hygiene.[106] On the social status of the women involved in these last courses we do not have any information, but it is likely that they also belonged to the higher social strata of urban society. Thus, slowly, an increasing number of women belonging to the Ottoman establishment were educated to become nursing aids.

Another way to massage public opinion into accepting the activities of women for the Red Crescent was to follow a conscious public relations policy including regular dispatches of announcements, messages and communiqués to

[103] TKA, 336/1, 10 Nisan 1330 (23 April 1914); TKA, 193/183, 17 Temmuz 1330 (30 July 1914); Besim Ömer, *Hanımefendilere Hilal-i Ahmer'e Dair Konferans*, 77-78 (footnote); Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 5 -*, [İstanbul], 1335/1919, 155. See also Sarı & Özaydın, "Türk hemşireliğine Osmanlı hanımefendileri'nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)'in desteği," 76.

[104] TKA, 156/27, 5 Ağustos 1330 (18 August 1914).

[105] "Veliahd-ı Sultan Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Merkezi'nde," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 1 Teşrinisani 1330 (14 November 1914), 3.

[106] TKA, 193/112, 10 Teşrinisani 1330 (23 November 1914); "Hastabakıcılık dersleri," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 11 Teşrinisani 1330 (24 November 1914), 4.

the newspapers, the many public lectures of Besim Ömer and other members of the *Hilal-i Ahmer,* the publication of photographs and articles in popular magazines, and the "vulgarization of the work of the Red Crescent through illustrated post cards."[107] The fact that prominent members of the Ottoman press and their wives were active within the Red Crescent facilitated this policy. The yearbooks published by the Central Women's Committee of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society contributed to familiarizing the public with the activities of the Red Crescent and creating public support. They reported extensively on the activities of the *Hilal-i Ahmer* and its Women's Committee and of Ottoman women working in other ways for the *Hilal-i Ahmer*. Furthermore, a popular magazine like *Servet-i Fünun* almost served as a publication board of the organization. This periodical regularly featured articles on the activities and history of both the International Red Cross and the Ottoman Red Crescent,[108] and articles by popular Ottoman authors in favor of women's participation in the war effort as sick attendants.

These authors used several arguments to justify the work of Ottoman Muslim women in the hospitals. In one of her articles, which was entitled "our heroic women," Fatma Aliye juxtaposed a distinctive feminine form of heroism to the masculine heroism of the battle field. Claiming *two* "pasts," she stated that such heroism was not alien to Ottoman Muslim women. Women in the "Age of Felicity," the lifetime of Muhammed, were educated to be full participants in society, she argued. As such, some of them turned even into active and highly appreciated warriors. Ottoman Muslim women, moreover, also had Turkish foremothers, she added, who were known to have received an education equal to that of men and to have been accomplished and heroic fighters. Under the influence of Iranian culture, however, the role of Muslim, Turkish women changed, she wrote. From then on women only had to be pretty and young and were only educated in music and literature. Given the changes brought on by Iranian influences, she argued, contributions to war in other ways, for example, by donating goods as Ottoman princesses had done, were also a form of heroism. Even more so were the steps taken by Ottoman Muslim women during the Balkan and World Wars. The women, who due to the Iranian influences had lingered in idle femininity for ages fainting when seeing a drop of blood, were

[107] Bessim Ömer, "La fondation, la réorganisation du Croissant-Rouge," 428.

[108] See, e.g., *Servet-i Fünun,* 1212, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1914) in which several articles were published regarding the International Red Cross and the *Hilal-i Ahmer* and their histories and activities.

now heroically bandaging the horrific wounds of soldiers without having anything to fear from these men. These wounded men, she wrote, knew how to show respect to these women as the Turks had done in long foregone times, implying that the soldiers from Anatolia had been less affected by the Iranian corruption and had stayed closer to the old Turkish morals and values which allegedly warranted such respectful behavior *vis à vis* women.[109]

The physical health of the nation had been an argument used earlier to justify women's education in the field of health care, as mentioned above. During the wars another argument was added to this: a country at war lacking a good health system including well-educated sick attendants and nurses would inevitably loose more men and might eventually even loose the war due to this.

Other arguments referred to the idea that the Ottoman Empire was "lagging behind" compared with Britain, Germany and France and referred to more general terms such as the uplifting of the country and the nation. According to these arguments men alone could not ensure a country or nation's progress through a social and scholarly revolution; they needed women to join forces with them. Women's civic participation was required for progress and women's work and education as sick attendants was only one form of civic participation through which women could contribute to that progress.[110] Lack of good nursing practices was a feature of "primitive" (*ibtida)* societies, as was the case in "our country until recently" as one author wrote.[111] The *Hilal-i Ahmer* and its women's center, therefore, had only taken important steps towards progress by raising well-educated, female sick attendants, who not only took care of the wounded soldiers and prevented many from dying, but also enlightened others with their knowledge and were thus doing their civic duty.[112]

[109] Fatma Aliye, "Kahraman kadınlarımız," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1253, 28 Mayıs 1331 (10 June 1915), 66-67. See also Sarı & Özaydın, "Türk hemşireliğine Osmanlı hanımefendileri'nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)'in desteği," 68.

[110] See e.g. "Bu resimde masa üzerinde..." *Servet-i Fünun*, 1249, 30 Nisan 1331 (13 May 1915), 4; Fatma Aliye, "Kadınlar hakkında," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1289, 18 Şubat 1331 (4 March 1916), 178-179.

[111] "Hastabakıcılık ulvi bir hizmettir: Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin müfid bir teşebbüsü," in: Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 4* -, [İstanbul], 1918, 167-170, quotation 167.

[112] "'Hilal-i Ahmer' hanımları - Hilal-i Ahmer hastabakıcı hanımları," in: Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 4* -, [İstanbul], 1918, 62-81; "Hastabakıcılık ulvi bir hizmettir: Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin müfid bir teşebbüsü," in: Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 4* -, [İstanbul], 1918, 167-170. The first article is a reprint from *Servet-i Fünun,* 1350, 31 Mayıs/May 1917, 403-404.

Even for those who were illiterate, periodicals such as *Servet-i Fünun* and *Harb Mecmuası,* provided ample opportunity to appropriate the desired representation of Ottoman female patriotism through the publication of photographs. *Servet-i Fünun*, as we have seen, not only regularly published photographs of non-Muslim and Muslim women during their activities for the Red Crescent at its Headquarters and charity workshop or otherwise,[113] but also of women working as sick attendants in the hospitals. During the Balkan Wars it published, amongst others, the photographs of the women in the Kadırga Hospital shown above.[114] Only a few weeks after the Dardanelles Campaign started, it again prominently featured photographs of Muslim women working as sick attendants at Kadırga Hospital and at one other hospital of the *Hilal-i Ahmer*.[115] And when fifteen female Muslim sick attendants were sent off to serve at the front in the Sinai in May 1917, their photographs covered its front page.[116] *Harb Mecmuası* published some photographs in the course of 1916 and 1917,[117] while *Kadınlar Dünyası* featured a photograph of a military officer and three young girls who served as sick attendants in Ladik near Samsun on its front cover in April 1918 and a photograph of a group of sick attendants with some patients and a few doctors in August 1918.[118]

The postcards, nor the photographs, which are all clearly posed and in most cases probably even staged, show the reality filled with grime and dirt, nor the

[113] See, e.g., *Servet-i Fünun,* 1214, 30 Ağustos 1330 (12 September 1914) which featured nine photographs of women selling paper flowers to collect money for the organization (278-279). Interestingly, seven of the nine photographs show non-Muslim women including *Beyoğlu muteberan-ı nisvan* (Beyoğlu female notables) and only two of them Muslim women referred to in the captions as *hanım*.

[114] Also photographs of presumably Muslim women at, e.g. Gülhane and Haydarpasha Hospitals. "Mecruh gazilerimiz: Gülhane hastahanesi'nde bir koğuş [photograph]," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1118, 25 Teşrinievvel 1328 (7 November 1912), front cover; "Gazi Osmanlılar: Haydarpaşa Hastanesinde ameliyat salonu, hanımlarımızın muavenet-i şefkatkaranesi [photograph]," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1121, 15 Teşrinisani 1328 (28 November 1912), front cover.

[115] *Servet-i Fünun*, 1249, 30 Nisan 1331 (13 May 1915), 4-5.

[116] *Servet-i Fünun*, 1350, 31 Mayıs/May 1917, front page. See also Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 4* -, [İstanbul], 1918, 69-70.

[117] "Mechruh gazilerimiz İstanbul'da (Hilal-i Ahmer) hastahanelerinde," *Harb Mecmuası*, 3, Kanunusani 1331 (January/February 1916), 46; "Taşkışla hastahanesinde...," *Harb Mecmuası*, 7, Mart 1332 (March/April 1916), 111; "Yaralı gazilerimiz: beşinci ordu dört numeralı menzil hastahanesinde – İslam hanım kardeşlerimizin şefkatlı mahir ellerinde," *Harb Mecmuası*, 14, Teşrinisani 1332 (November/December 1916), 215; "Merzifon 'Şifa Yurdu' hastanesinde ...," *Harb Mecmuası*, 17, Mart/March 1333/1917, 267.

[118] "Ladik'te hastabakıcı kızlarımız," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 169, 13 Nisan/April 1918, 1; "Hilal-i Ahmer'de kadınlığın faaliyeti," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 185, 3 Ağustos (August) 1918, 1.

pain and grievance of wounded soldiers. Instead we see happily smiling men in clean uniforms with bandages without a trace of blood in a clean bed at a modern airy hospital taken care of by women in spotless, white uniforms with their heads properly covered. In almost all cases the work of the sick attendants is praised in the captions underneath the photographs. These pictorial representations thus clearly serve one single aim: propagating the work of female, Ottoman Muslim sick attendants.

Ottoman Muslim Voluntary Nursing Aids

The diligent work of Besim Ömer was not left without result: during the First World War a considerable, but still limited, number of Ottoman (Muslim) women worked as voluntary nursing aids or professional sick attendants in the hospitals. Initially, mostly in the hospitals in Istanbul, but later also elsewhere in hospitals in the towns of Anatolia and in field hospitals right behind the front.

So, for example, three women received 350 *kuruş* per month to work at the *Dersaadet Hilal-i Ahmer* Hospital which was founded briefly after the mobilization in September 1914.[119] It is unclear whether they were Muslim or not. In November 1914 the directorate of the hospital at Gülhane Park published an advertisement from which it is clear that some women who had attended courses before had worked at the hospital for six weeks at the beginning of the war.[120] The number of (Muslim) women working as voluntary nursing aids or professional sick attendants increased when the Dardanelles Campaign started in April 1915 and high numbers of wounded soldiers poured into Istanbul where numerous military hospitals were opened. The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* published pressing requests in the newspapers, appealing to the women who had taken courses in sick attendance to offer their much needed services.[121] Many Ottoman Muslim women responded positively to these requests and volunteered to work at these hospitals, including some belonging to the highest Ottoman elite.

On 15 May 1915, the head physician of the Cağaloğlu Hospital, for example, reported that at his hospital ten women, of whom seven Muslim, were working

[119] TKA, 327/41, 20 Ağustos 1330 (2 September 1914).

[120] "Gülhane Tababet-i Askeriye Tatbikat Mekteb ve Seririyatı Müdüriyeti'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 27 Teşrinievvel 1330 (10 November 1914), 4.

[121] TKA, 193/314, 18 Nisan 1331 (1 May 1915); TKA, 193/315, 19 Nisan 1331 (2 May 1915); "Hastabakıcı hanımlara," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 19 Nisan 1331 (2 May 1915), 2; "Hastabakıcı hanımlara," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 20 Nisan 1331 (3 May 1915), 2.

voluntarily in both day and night shifts, while another seven women, of whom two non-Muslim, were only working day time shifts. Four other Muslim women and one non-Muslim woman received wages.[122] By 24 May, the hospital reportedly had eighteen female volunteers amongst whom three non-Muslims, while the same five non-volunteers were also still listed. By the end of May, 27 women amongst whom four non-Muslims were active at this hospital.[123] Very content with the work the women were doing, the head physician of the hospital suggested making one of the women *serhastabakıcı* (head sick attendant).[124] A detailed list of all the personnel at the Cağaloğlu Hospital by September 1915, however, shows only one, male, head sick attendant. The list also shows that the interest of the women to work as volunteer had started to wane. Enumerated are the names of three non-Muslim and ten Muslim women only working voluntarily as sick attendants and five waged Muslim female sick attendants who apparently received a monthly wage of 300 *kuruş*. Eight of these women – six of the volunteers – had worked at other hospitals before. Besides these women, the hospital employed eight male sick attendants of whom three were volunteers and the others received wages of 300 or 400 *kuruş* per month.[125]

The same file from the Red Crescent Archives contains the lists of nine other Istanbul hospitals and the women working there, probably by the end of May 1915: the Russian Hospital, where four Muslim and two non-Muslim women served as sick attendants, Gülhane Hospital, with only one, non-Muslim woman listed, Haseki Hospital, with two Muslim women, the hospital at the military academy (*Harbiye*), with a staff of six Muslim and three non-Muslim women, the Hospital of the Medical Faculty, employing twenty Muslim and one non-Muslim woman,[126] Kadırga Hospital, where four Muslim women were working,

[122] TKA, 331/12, 2 Mayıs 1331 (15 May 1915).

[123] TKA, 44/97, [Mayıs 1331 (May/June 1915)]. This list with 27 names in document 44/97-3 does not provide information on whether the women were working voluntarily or not.

[124] TKA, 520/12, 10 Haziran 1331 (23 June 1915). The lists with names of women rewarded with medals mention only one Ottoman Muslim female *serhastabakıcı,* a woman referred to as Aliye Rıza hanım, who worked as a volunteer at the *Darüşşafaka*, which was a home for orphaned children rather than a hospital. BOA, Nişan Defterleri, no. 32, Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları, 41-42.

[125] TKA, 520/21, 10 Eylül 1331 (23 September 1915).

[126] Another document in the same file gives different figures: on this list of the hospital itself the names of thirteen volunteer sick attendants are given (12 Muslim and one non-Muslim), of one (German?) volunteer *schwester* and furthermore, one, non-Muslim, *başschwester* with five other *schwesters* of whom one Muslim. Finally, the names of 25 Muslim and two non-Muslim

Darüşşafaka, where sixteen Muslim women were engaged in sick attendance, Taksim, where only six Muslim, but fourteen non-Muslim women had taken up duty and Galata, with twelve Muslim and six non-Muslim women. Finally, the list also contained information on Beyoğlu Hospital where also a large number of women were working voluntarily. By the end of May 1915, 28 women were working at this hospital, of whom 20 were Muslim including two Egyptian princesses, Şivekar, the former wife of Fuad I and herself a descendent from Muhammed Ali, and Emire Rauf, granddaughter of Ismail Pasha through his daughter.[127] A few weeks later, by July 1915, another Egyptian princess had joined them, princess Behice, daughter of Hüseyin Kamil Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt, while also Şehriban, daughter of Nuri Ali Pasha[128] had offered her services as volunteer at the this hospital.[129]

At another hospital, the *Bahriye Merkez Hastahanesi* (Marine Central Hospital) ten volunteers were working by November of that year: two of them Ottoman Muslim ladies who had attended the classes at the Darülfünun and eight other volunteers, four of them Muslim, four of them non-Muslim, who had not partaken in these courses, but were educated at the hospital.[130]

The members of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* worked as volunteers at yet another hospital, the Maçka Hospital,[131] while the members of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti,* for example, not only worked as voluntary attendants in the hospital founded by them, but also employed several poor and destitute daughters and wives of soldiers as *hademe* (orderlies).[132]

With the influx of volunteers, the Red Crescent started to worry about their qualities and felt the need to send a dispatch to the military hospitals pointing out that volunteers were obliged to attend the courses of the Red Crescent at the *Darülfünun* and that the doctors in charge of the hospitals should make sure that the volunteers working for them would adhere to this rule.[133] In a reaction to this

women are given with the qualification *hademe* (orderly). The two lists only partly converge. TKA, 44/97, [Mayıs 1331 (May/June 1915)], document 44/97-1.

[127] TKA, 44/97, [Mayıs 1331 (May/June 1915)].

[128] It is not clear who this is: might this be Nuri Ali *Bey*, son of Tevfik Pasha and *Yaver* of the Sultan?

[129] TKA, 223/61, 7 Temmuz 1331 (20 July 1915).

[130] TKA, 331/10, 31 Mayıs 1331 (13 June 1915); TKA, 223/68, 20 Teşrinievvel 1331 (2 November 1915).

[131] "Maçka Hastahanesi'nde fahriyen...," *Tanin,* 31 Temmuz 1331 (13 August 1915), 2.

[132] Lebib Selim, "Türk kadınlığının harb-ı umumideki faaliyeti," *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816.

[133] TKA, 331/11, 29 Eylül 1331 (12 October 1915).

dispatch, the head physician of the hospital at the military academy pointed out that all his four Muslim, female volunteers were indeed attending the courses and that the Austrian and American volunteers had received their diplomas before.[134] Similar answers came from the head physician of Taşkışla Hospital, who wrote that two of his Muslim female volunteers were duly attending the courses, and the head physician of the *Ağahamam Mecruhin* Hospital, who reported that eight of his Muslim female volunteers were still attending classes while twelve others had received their certificates from the courses.[135]

By May 1915, the *Hilal-i Ahmer* reported that in the various hospitals in Istanbul approximately 150 women were working as sick attendants of whom the majority had received education at the Kadırga Hospital or taken courses at either the *Darülfünun* or the headquarters of the *Hilal-i Ahmer*. For *Servet-i Fünun* this was no less than a "national social revolution" (*inkilab-i içtimai-i milli*).[136] The agenda of the Red Crescent Women's Committee for 1332 (1916 - 1917) which was probably prepared by the end of 1915 or early in 1916, referred to a total of 353 women who had applied to work as sick attendant: 284 of them had actually taken up work in one of the military or civil hospitals. From these 284 women, only 20 had received a diploma of the *Hilal-i Ahmer*, 35 of them had a certificate stating that they had worked in hospitals during the Balkan Wars, and 73 were following classes at the Darülfünun or Kadırga Hospital. The remaining 156 did not have any education or experience at all.[137]

Due to the lack of information on the numbers of casualties reaching Istanbul and its hospitals at those times, it remains unclear to what extent the numbers given above sufficed to nurse the wounded and sick soldiers properly. They do, however, indicate that there was a need for properly educated nurses, sick attendants and nursing aids when the war continued.

[134] TKA, 331/39, 4 Teşrinievvel 1331 (17 October 1915).

[135] TKA, 331/48, 12 Teşrinievvel 1331 (25 October 1915); TKA, 331/51, 6 Teşrinievvel 1331 (19 October 1915);

[136] "Bir inkilab-i içtimai-i milli," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1249, 30 Nisan 1331 (13 May 1915), 4-5.

[137] Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, Takvim - 2* -, [İstanbul], 1332.

Professionalization

While professional sick attendants *cum* midwives continued to be educated at Kadırga Hospital[138] and the Red Crescent actively worked on creating an army of trained female, Muslim volunteers, it also set out to develop new schools where women (and men) could be educated to become professional sick attendants. So, just a few months after the widely published graduation ceremony of the Ottoman Muslim "ladies," in October 1914, the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* sent an announcement to the newspapers regarding the opening of two evening schools for the education of male and female sick attendants, respectively, in Istanbul. The courses would last for six months and the students would get free meals and a small wage. The students had to be younger than 35 and able to read and write Turkish. Moreover, the candidates had to pay a sum of 30 *lira* as a kind of security. Initially, nine Muslim women and one non-Muslim woman were admitted to the course, but others were invited to apply.[139]

That same month, the Red Crescent branch in Edirne decided to establish a school for sick attendants as well.[140] The *Association des Médecins Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman* started classes for sick attendants in Beyoğlu.[141] Upon request of the Patriarch, the "Organization of Armenian Doctors," too, started to educate sick attendants, also in Beyoğlu.[142] In the fall of 1915 a school for sick attendants was opened in Izmir under the protection of the Central Committee of the local branch of the Red Crescent. At this school 30 sick attendants per year were expected to be educated. Initially, a few (male) doctors were teaching at this school using French and English books. This proved to be impractical: the president of the local branch asked the central authorities of the Red Crescent for books in Turkish. Two notes scribbled underneath this letter indicate that the organization indeed was going to send the books "which would be printed by the

[138] In September 1914, for example, six Muslim women graduated from the courses at the Kadirga Hospital for female hospital attendants.TKA, 331/5, 11 Eylül 1330 (24 September 1914).

[139] TKA, 193/88, 23 Eylül 1330 (6 October 1914); TKA, 193/95, 12 Teşrinievvel 1330 (25 October 1914); "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nden," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 11 Teşrinievvel 1330 (24 October 1914), 4.

[140] TKA, 157/24, 23 Eylül 1330 (6 October 1914); TKA, 157/30, 4 Teşrinisani 1330 (17 November 1914).

[141] TKA, 331/6, 27 Teşrinisani 133 (10 December 1914).

[142] "Hastabakıcılık dershanesi," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 15 Teşrinisani 1330 (28 November 1914), 3; "Hastabakıcılık dershanelerinde," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 27 Teşrinisani 1330 (10 December 1914), 4.

organization within two or three days"[143] and that a German *Schwester*, Margot Konrad, would be appointed as instructor.[144] The German (head)nurse and the building were paid for with 500 *lira* sent by the General Headquarters.[145] In July 1916, 25 women passed their exams at this school.[146]

Despite these initiatives plus the schools for female sick attendants which were opened in Erzurum and at the Güreba Hospital in Istanbul, the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* and Besim Ömer felt that the process of setting up a proper network of nursing schools within the Ottoman Empire was lagging behind what they had hoped for. An initiative of the Women's Center to open a course for women including both theoretical and practical classes in May 1915 was, however, turned down on formal and practical grounds.

The Women's Center asked the Board for permission to send out a press communiqué announcing the start of new courses for women. The communiqué clearly stated that women just like men could be expected to fulfil their duties towards the fatherland, but also conveyed the idea that these duties were different. It did not only make an appeal to the patriotism of women, but also hinted at an actual need for their work as sick attendants:

> All Ottomans are obliged to make generous sacrifices to be of use to the fatherland, to the country in these times. Today, at the borders, all Ottoman men are defending the fatherland against our enemies under the rumble of cannons and rifles and the clattering of swords. (…) In this case Ottoman women should hurry and are actually hurrying from every point of view to join and participate in social life and to pay their debt to the fatherland. Yes, the women of the Red Crescent Society are sewing clothes for the wounded day and night and the sick attendants raised with great care by, again, the Red Crescent Society are working in hospitals all over Istanbul, taking care of the wounded soldiers who are sent to Istanbul in flocks and the incessant activities of these women and girls who are dedicated to their work are duly appreciated at our health care institutions.
>
> Is this, however, sufficient? Do we know what the future is hiding from us and what important and serious services will be wanted from us? Should Ottoman

[143] TKA, 336/2, 6 Teşrinievvel 1331 (19 October 1915). The books referred to here must be the two volumes work *Hastabakıcılık* of which the first volume was written by Nureddin Ali and the second volume by Besim Ömer (İstanbul: Hilal Matbaası, 1331).

[144] TKA, 336/2, 6 Teşrinievvel 1331 (19 October 1915); N.O., "Eine Krankenpflegerinnenschule in Smyrna," *Welt des Islams (1)*, III, 3/4, 25 March 1916, 225.

[145] TKA, 336/3, 11 Teşrinisani 1331 (24 November 1915).

[146] "İzmir'de hastabakıcı hanımlar," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 30 Haziran 1332 (13 July 1916), 2.

> womanhood not be prepared, just in case, as an army of mother-and-sister sick attendants (*bir hastabakıcı valde ve kızkardeş ordusu halinde*) which is active and sacrificing, educated and trained?
>
> (…)
>
> Esteemed mothers and sisters, run! Learn how to look after the sick and wounded, and then devotedly pay your debt to the fatherland while earning the gratitude of your fathers and brothers who are waiting for your care and compassion, make yourself beloved, silence your conscience.[147]

The Board of the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti,* however, coldly pointed out to the Women's Center that according to the statutes and bye-laws of the organization not the Women's Center, but only the Board could take such initiatives. The Board, moreover, wrote that it did not expect the military authorities to agree to using the military hospitals for practicing purposes, because this would cause too much discomfort for the wounded soldiers.[148] The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Merkezi* thus was forced to abort this initiative. A few months later, Besim Ömer made another effort. On 24 November 1915 he sent a pressing letter to the Board of Directors of the Red Crescent urging for some action. Referring to the successful efforts even in countries such as "Siyam and China" and stressing the importance of a properly working health care system with well educated, professional sick attendants in times of war, he asked them to actually establish a nursing school with a hospital and to meanwhile organize good teaching facilities at the existing military, *Hilal-i Ahmer* hospitals. Added to his letter was a document listing eight articles in which four other authors,[149] moreover, suggested the formation of a *Hilal-i Ahmer Hastabakıcısı Heyeti* (Red Crescent Nurses' Committee*)* existing of both men and women (with, as explicitly stated, more men than women). Although the list contains several conditions which potential members of the committee had to fulfil, there are no clues to whatever its work was supposed to be.[150]

A year later, the General Inspector for Field Hygiene, Süleyman Numan, actually asked the *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* to extend its activities and to set up a course where women through the mediation of the *Kadınları Çalıştırma*

[147] Letter from *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi* dated 9 Mayıs 1331 (22 May 1915) quoted in: Sarı & Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve kadın hastabakıcı eğitiminin nedenleri (I)" 13.

[148] Sarı & Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve kadın hastabakıcı eğitiminin nedenleri (I)" 13-14.

[149] The four signatures are hardly readable except for the one of Akıl Muhtar and a Celaleddin.

[150] TKA, 336/3, 11 Teşrinisani 1331 (24 November 1915).

Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi could be trained to become sick attendants. He also indicated that he was willing to open up one of the military hospitals for practical training.[151]

Only in 1917, however, the decision was taken to allocate 10.000 *lira* to the opening of a boarding school for female sick attendants where 30 to 50 women per year could be educated by professional nurses-educators.[152] While education at the Kadırga Hospital still continued,[153] the opening of a special school for female sick attendants at the Medical Faculty was indeed announced in April 1918.[154] The students were to be boarders and would receive free medical treatment when necessary. The requirements were listed as follows: students had to

1. have the Ottoman nationality
2. be healthy while their length and posture had to be fit for the profession
3. be able to show a certificate attesting to their good behavior
4. be between 25 and 30 years of age and single
5. be able to read and write Turkish (and to have received preferably secondary education)[155]

Furthermore, they had to be willing to respond directly to any call of the Red Crescent during times of war or when otherwise necessary for a period of at least five years. The response must not have been overwhelming, since the ad reappeared several times in the newspapers.[156] The women who, finally, applied had to take an exam.[157] Sixteen of them, all Muslim, passed the entrance exam

[151] Sarı & Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve kadın hastabakıcı eğitiminin nedenleri (I)" 15. The quote in this article is actually referring to an *İslam Kadınlarını Cemiyeti*, but from the context it is clear that this is very likely to be the *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi.*

[152] "Hastabakıcılık ulvi bir hizmettir: Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin müfid bir teşebbüsü," in: Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi*, Takvim - 4* -, [İstanbul], 1918, 167-170. See also "Hilal-i Ahmer bir senede ne yaptı," *Vakit,* 17 Mayıs/May 1918, 2

[153] *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Merkezi Umumi Raporu (1330 - 1334)*, İstanbul: Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti, 1335, 35.

[154] "Kadın hastabakıcı mektebi," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 21 Nisan/April 1334/1918, 2.

[155] "Hastabakıcılık öğrenmek isteyenlere Hilal-i Ahmer Merkez-i Umumiyesi'nden," *Vakit*, 19 Nisan/April 1918, 2.

[156] "Hilal-i Ahmer'in kadın hastabakıcı mektebi," *Tanin*, 1 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, 4; "Kadın Hastabakıcı Mektebi," *Vakit,* 8 Mayıs/May 1918, 2; "Hastabakıcı olmak isteyenlere," *Tanin*, 11 Haziran/June 1334/1918, 4; "Kadın hastabakıcılık mektebi," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 12 Haziran/June 1918, 2.

[157] "Hastabakıcılık mektebine kabul olunacaklar," *Vakit,* 2 Ağustos/August 1918, 2.

and were invited for a medical examination.[158] When the courses started only ten of the twenty available places were filled.[159] In January 1919 some other Ottoman Muslim women passed the entrance exam and started their education at this school.[160] Due to the occupation and the subsequent war which followed the end of the First World War, however, this school did not succeed in turning out many graduates, either.

Hemşireler, Hastabakıcılar and *Hademeler*

Despite the lack of success in founding a solid and lasting school for the education of professional sick attendants, the number of women in the Ottoman Empire engaged in the caring of wounded soldiers certainly increased during the second decade of the twentieth century. But who were these women? What was their background?

In his article Wieting made a distinction between *Krankenpfleger(in*), on the one hand and *Schwester,* on the other hand. The latter were the women who, after a thorough education of several years, had made their profession out of nursing. The others, paid or unpaid, were much less educated and performed their nursing work on a much lower level often under the supervision of a professional nurse or the hospital doctors. In Britain a similar distinction was made. The professional, well-educated nurses, who had been working at hospitals before the war, were during the war assisted by nursing aids of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), an office which had been created in 1909 by the War Office to involve women in the national defense and had become the main agency sending off female volunteers.[161] In the Ottoman case, however, three, or even four, separate degrees of sick attending seem to have existed.

In the first place, there were a limited number of professional well-trained nurses (*hemşire*). During the Balkan Wars as well as during the First World War, almost all of them seem to have had a non-Muslim and/or foreign background. Then there were a small number of Ottoman Muslim female professional sick

[158] "Hastabakıcılık mektebine girecek hanımlar," *Tanin*, 12 Ağustos/August 1334/1918, 4.

[159] *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Merkezi Umumi Raporu (1330 - 1334)*, 61.

[160] TKA, 336/5, 22 Kanunusani 1335 (22 January 1919); TKA, 336/7, 30 Kanunusani 1335 (30 January 1919); TKA, 336/8, 22 Kanunusani 1335 (22 January 1919); TKA, 336/9, 30 Kanunusani 1335 (30 January 1919).

[161] Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters"; Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, 7-11.

attendants, who had had a limited amount of theoretical and, sometimes, practical education *(hastabakıcı)* at, in most cases, the Kadırga Hospital. During the period under discussion the number of Ottoman Muslim women *hastabakıcı* increased, but still seems to have remained limited. There is little information on their socio-economic background; we have some names, but no further information. The largest group, however, was formed by the voluntary nursing aids *(fahri hastabakıcı)*. It consisted of volunteers from the Ottoman establishment who had had some training and were also referred to as *muavin hastabakıcı* (nursing aid). Both the *hastabakıcı* and the *muavin hastabakıcı* worked under the supervision of the doctors in charge of the hospital or of the professional nurses, who were in general foreign.[162] At the lowest end of the scale were the *hademe*, men and women from the working class doing odds jobs such as cleaning floors, changing the beds and making tea.

The increasing participation of Ottoman Muslim women in hospital work in the second decade of the twentieth century is reflected in the photographs published in the various (propaganda) periodicals referred to above and in the lists of names of people decorated with the Red Crescent Medals.

The number of Ottoman Muslim women receiving a medal for their work as a hospital attendant (*hastabakıcı*) or voluntary hospital attendant (*fahri hastabakıcı*) in one of the hospitals in Istanbul or elsewhere in the Empire increased fast after 1915, while the number of non-Muslim and foreign women diminished.[163] For example, some of the members of the *Osmanlı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* who worked at hospitals in Istanbul were rewarded with Red Crescent medals, as mentioned earlier. The members of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti* who worked as volunteers in the hospital which was founded by them were decorated even more than once, but only several years after they had actually done their work.[164] The *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* was also aware of

[162] See e.g. Hilde Mordtmann, *Als ich die Türken pflegte*, Weimar: Verlag Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1916. In the lists with names of people decorated these foreign, well-educated nurses are referred to with either their foreign "title," *Schwester* or *Soeur*, or its Ottoman equivalent, *Hemşire* as opposed to the less-educated, who were referred to as *hastabakıcı*, a term used for both Ottoman and foreign women (and men).

[163] BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 31: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları; BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 32: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları; BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 33: Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyaları. See also BOA, DUİT, several documents within file 47.

[164] At the end of 1917 seven members of the organization received the *Hilal-i Ahmer Madalyası* (Red Crescent Medal) in bronze: Melek, Ismet, Feride, Leyla, Huriye, Nebile and Gavriel. Five other women working at the hospital also received the same medal. BOA, DUİT, 47/106, 8 Rebiülevvel 1336 (23 December 1917); BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 32: Hilal-i Ahmer

the increased number of Ottoman Muslim women available: in February 1917, it published an advertisement in which it explicitly invited *Muslim* women to apply to work at the Red Crescent Hospital in Ankara.[165] The fifteen women who, in May 1917, were leaving to serve at the Sinai front and as such prominently figured on the frontpage of *Servet-i Fünun* were certainly all Muslim.[166] The advertisements asking women to apply for the schools, on the other hand, do not refer to religion at all. The condition that one had to know how to read and write Turkish, however, will certainly have served as an impediment to women of other creeds. It is, therefore, not surprising that the women accepted for the nursing school established in 1918 were all Muslims.

The decoration registers not only provide us with information on the religious background of the women involved in sick nursing, but also on their social background. In France, as Darrow writes, "elite women founded hospitals, middle-class volunteers staffed them."[167] In Britain, the VAD nurses came from the upper middle- and upper-class, while the professional nurses in the hospitals belonged to the middle class.[168] Both authors, however, use these terms rather loosely.

In the Ottoman case, it is similarly difficult to pinpoint the exact socio-economic background of the women involved in sick attendance. From the decoration registers we can, however, get an idea. The women mentioned in these registers are often referred to with the name of their closest male relative. They are the "wife, daughter, sister or granddaughter of ..." What follows is generally not only the name of the male relative, but also his profession, his rank or other information. The lists with names in the registers thus indicate that a part of the *hastabakıcı*, and especially the initial volunteers amongst them, also belonged to the higher social strata of Ottoman society, that is, the male relatives referred to held functions at the upper-middle and middle levels of bureaucracy or military. As in Germany, France and Britain, working class women probably

Madalyaları, 53-56; "Hilal-i Ahmer merkez-i umumisinden," *Tanin,* 3 Kanunusani/January 1334/1918, 3. The president of the organization, Melek, "daughter of the late Abdullah Pasha," also received a *Şefkat Nişanı* of the second degree for her work in the hospital. BOA, Nişan Defterleri no. 34: Şefkat Nişan-ı Hümayunu İrade-i Seniye Defteri, 5.

[165] "Hastabakıcı hanımlar aranıyor," *Tasvir-i Efkar,* 31 Kanunusani 1332 (13 February 1917), 2.

[166] *Servet-i Fünun,* 1350, 31 Mayis/May 1333/1917, front page. See also Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 4 -*, [İstanbul], 1918, 69-70; Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvim - 5 -*, [İstanbul], 1335/1919, 168.

[167] Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, 134.

[168] Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters," 33.

could not afford to volunteer. Most of the 27 women receiving their diplomas in July 1914, for example, belonged to the middle and upper-middle class: their relatives, as far as they were mentioned, were pashas, directors of state institutions or otherwise bureaucrats.[169] However, in the registers dated towards the end of the First World War the information on the male relatives of most of the *hastabakıcı* women is lacking. The reason for this is unclear. It might be that the fast increase of the number of decorations left no time for jotting down such details. Another reason may have been that the whereabouts of many of these men were unknown. The women had become "women without men." It is also feasible that the positions of the male relatives of these women were not worthy of mention. While in the earlier registers the women decorated were in majority reportedly working as volunteers (*fahriyen*), this qualification is also lacking in the later registers. It is, therefore, likely that these women were in most cases not volunteering, but working to earn an honest living. The war and the many hospitals which were opened provided impoverished women with an opportunity to do so. These women were left with little choice, but crossing the gender borders and going out to earn a meager income, which was – more importantly – in most cases supplemented with a meal every day and sometimes even housing.[170]

Although there is thus some information on the social background of the women, the information on their place in the life-cycle is more limited. Both married and unmarried Muslim women were referred to as *hanım*. Only if there are references to the male relatives there might be more information: a woman indicated as the "daughter of ..." is unlikely to be married. The fact that there were no references to any Muslim "daughters of ..." who were rewarded for their work as sick attendants in one of the hospitals,[171] seems to indicate that the Ottoman Muslim women working (as volunteers) in the hospitals were, like their British VAD counterparts,[172] in general, more mature, married women.

[169] "Hilal-i Ahmer'de bir resm-i bihin," *Servet-i Fünun,* 1206, 3 Temmuz 1330 (16 July 1914), 74.

[170] See, e.g., the following ads which appeared in the newspapers: "Hastahane hemşiresi," *Vakit*, 20 Teşrinisani/November 1917, 2; "Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi'nden" *Vakit*, 5 Mayıs/May 1918, 2; "Hastabakıcı aranıyor," *Tanin*, 5 Mayıs/May 1918, 4; "Kolordu için hanım aranıyor," *Tanin*, 6 Haziran/June 1918, 4.

[171] This does not mean that there were no "daughters of ..." rewarded with the Red Crescent Medal at all. These women were generally rewarded for their money raising activities or donations of goods and/or money.

[172] See Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters," 33.

There might, however, have been unmarried women amongst those simply indicated as *hanım* in the later records. That the Red Crescent in its last effort to establish a school for sick attendants during the First World war asked explicitly for women who were between 25 and 30 years of age and single, is relevant in this context. Given that the mean age for a first marriage for women in Istanbul at that time was around 21 years,[173] it suggests perhaps another reason than just a need for sick attendants. Women who at that age were still single were probably regarded to be spinsters and through this school were offered an honorable alternative to marriage and satisfying way of earning their own living. Further research – in the archives of the Red Crescent – might reveal more on this topic.

While many of the activities of women for the benefit of the military did not entail any major trespassing of gender borders as we saw, nursing male patients in a male-dominated environment inevitably resulted in such a trespassing. The women had to actually leave their homes, to intermingle socially with males and even physically touch them. To what extent did this entail a change? And how was this change justified?

Dealing with Shifting Gender Borders

Seclusion, the desirable, (almost) complete separation of the female and male worlds, was not affordable for everyone. Only the women of the higher social strata in Ottoman society could afford to pay servants to upkeep the contacts with the outer world needed to keep the household running and other intermediates to take care of other business in the absence of male relatives. This means that especially for women from these strata nursing brought along an extension of their social space beyond the conventional gender borders.

For these elderly, Ottoman Muslim women of the urban elite leaving the safe surroundings of their homes to go out and nurse wounded soldiers might have meant a larger step across the gender border than for the non-Muslim women or the Ottoman Muslim women of the lower social strata, for whom going out to earn a living was not unusual anyway, as discussed in the previous chapter. Firstly, they had to attend courses which were taught by Ottoman males, then they had to work in a hospital supervised by male doctors, Ottoman and foreign

[173] Duben & Behar, *Istanbul Households,* 131.

alike, and furthermore they were taking care of male patients with whom they inevitably would have to have physical contact.

By the time Ottoman Muslim women started to take their nursing courses, however, the first steps towards the education of women by respected men had already been taken. The first high schools (*İdadi* or, later, *Sultani)* for girls had been opened, the women at the *Darülmuallimat,* teacher's college, were partly taught by men, conferences by famous men for all-female audiences had started to take place, while by the time the Red Crescent started to teach its courses more structurally, the University for Women was opening its gates.[174] This means that attending nursing courses taught by highly respected men such as Besim Ömer formed only one of many similar steps in the same direction which were taken at approximately the same time.

To what extent the Ottoman Muslim sick attendants and nursing aids were in touch with the doctors is not clear. Watson suggests that in the British case there was a distinction between the voluntary nurses and the professionals. The latter were supervising the former.[175] The same situation might also have been the case in the Ottoman Empire. It is not unlikely that the professional nurses, who in most cases were non-Muslim or foreign, formed a buffer between the Ottoman Muslim volunteers and the male doctors.[176]

Direct physical contact between the female nurses and the male patients, however, was inevitable. In her article on First World War nurses Holmes stresses the desexualization of this relation: the heavily wounded patients became the emasculated boys of the motherly nurses. This desexualized discourse was reflected not only in the contemporary press, but also in the personal writings, such as diaries and letters, of the nurses.[177] Such sources are lacking in the Ottoman case. From the texts quoted above, but also from the

[174] Baskın, "II. Meşrutiyet'te kadın eğitimine yönelik bir girişim: İnas Darülfününu."

[175] Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters," 33.

[176] While for Ottoman Muslim women the sheer meeting face to face with a male from outside the direct family environment meant the trespassing of existing gender borders, for British women it was the engagement in a sexual relation which would lead to such trespassing. In the British case, a "strategy" to prevent such a situation might have been a desexualization of the relation between doctors and nurses by turning the doctors into a fatherlike figure of authority and the nurses into their respected and respectful "daughters." Instead of trespassing gender borders, this actually meant that the gender roles were confirmed.

[177] Katie Holmes, "Day Mothers and Nights Sisters: World War I Nurses and Sexuality" in: Joy Damousi & Marilyn Lake (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 43-59.

articles which appeared in periodicals such as *Servet-i Fünun*, however, we are able to grasp an idea of how the Ottomans grappled with this dilemma.

The periodical, for example, published the aforementioned speech Besim Ömer gave at the diploma ceremony for the 27 women who had attended the course in 1914. In this speech, he pointed at the supposedly innate qualities of women which so well befit motherhood. He stressed that men could become sick attendants out of profession, but that women were sick attendants by nature: women had "softness and gentleness, mercy and compassion." As mothers, they were, moreover, "patient, perseverant and tender." Thus, he concluded, a woman looked after a patient as a mother would look after her child.[178] This example shows that Ottomans were using metaphors of mothering similar to those used in the British context.

In one of her abovementioned articles, which was published in the same periodical, the famous author Fatma Aliye also used the mother-child metaphor. Stating that the hospitalized soldiers were in dire need of motherly comfort and protection, she described a scene in which the patient and his female sick attendant indeed addressed each other with "my dear mother" (*anneciğim*) and "my son" (*oğlum*).[179] In a second article, she wrote how the wounded addressed the sick attendants with "*doktor nine*," "*doktor teyze*," or "*doktor abla*" (*nine, teyze* and *abla* meaning grandmother, maternal aunt and older sister, respectively).[180] The physical caring of the relatives at home, thus, was transposed to the physical caring of the wounded, metaphorical "nephews," "brothers" and "(grand)sons" in the hospital. Put differently, the unrelated, unknown wounded soldiers in the hospitals were metaphorically transformed into related, familiar "nephews," "brothers" and "(grand)sons."[181] Through these metaphors, the wounded soldiers were turned from *mahrem* into *namahrem* persons; from men with whom the women could potentially marry and from whom they should be shielded into relatives with whom they could intermingle more freely. Moreover, by portraying these women as the mothers and sisters of wounded sons and brothers, they remained the performers of culturally

[178] "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti reis-i sanisi muallim doktor Besim Ömer Paşa nutku," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1212, 14 Ağustos 1330 (27 August 1914), 124-125.

[179] Fatma Aliye, "Hilal," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1251, 14 Mayıs 1331 (27 May 1915), 34-35.

[180] Fatma Aliye, "Kahraman kadınlarımız," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1253, 28 Mayıs 1331 (10 June 1915), 66-67. See also Fatma Aliye, "Kadınlar hakkında," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1289, 18 Şubat 1331 (4 March 1916), 178-179.

[181] See also e.g. Hasim Nahit, "Yaralılar ve hanımlarımız," *Servet-i Fünun*, 1263, 13 Ağustos 1331 (26 August 1915), 226-229.

conventional caring tasks which confirmed rather than opposed their feminine roles.

Watson suggests that, for the British case, there were two more ways to shield women from unwanted intimacies: their outfit and their social standing.[182] She argues that the uniforms the women wore contributed to the further desexualization of the relation between the women and their patients and the doctors. It is unclear to what extent this factor was relevant for Ottoman Muslim women. From the photographs, however, it is clear that Ottoman Muslim were dressed according to the rules of *tesettür*: their hair was properly covered as it should be when meeting unrelated men, while their uniforms did not resemble what they would wear within the intimacy of the private home.[183]

The difference in social standing between the women from Istanbul belonging to the better-off strata and the (illiterate) soldiers who to a large extent came from Anatolia may well have worked as another shield from unwanted intimacies, as was also suggested in the article by Halide Edib mentioned above. After all, these men could not be considered true candidates for marriage, anyway and thus did not pose a serious threat.

Conclusion

Through the Ottoman Red Crescent and its Women's Center, whose membership consisted of the mothers, wives and daughters of men belonging to the Ottoman military and bureaucratic elite, the Ottoman authorities successfully mobilized the women of the urban upper middle and middle class to improve the circumstances of the wounded soldiers being brought in from the battle fields. Ottoman women and their organizations set to work to equip the sanitary services with the material needed and got involved in nursing the wounded.

The Balkan Wars and the subsequent First World War offered Ottoman (Muslim) women ample opportunity to show they were worthy citizens and true patriots through their activities for the many hospitals which were established in, for example, Istanbul. Women from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds contributed their mite by donating money or goods. Several

[182] See also Watson, "Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters," 33.

[183] See "Merzifon 'Şafa Yurdu' hastanesinde ...," *Harb Mecmuası*, 17, Mart 1333 (March/April 1917), 267.

women's associations and organizations were directly involved in procuring goods for the hospitals, while some of them founded even their own hospitals. As the correspondence with the Committee for Donations to the Ottoman Soldiers Wounded in the War shows, it seems that in some cases the supply of linen and bedding was almost completely left to women: they ordered the goods, and, when necessary, turned the half products into useable items. The work involved in this – from correspondence with the Committee for Donations to getting the sewing organized as well as the sewing itself – did not require any physical trespassing of existing (spatial) gender borders. It could be done from the elite homes and within all-female environments.

Visiting the wounded soldiers with small personal presents and goodies, however, could not be done without stepping out of the safe and secluded environment of the home. From the sources, it is clear that, therefore, it took Ottoman Muslim women of the urban elite considerably more time to take this step. The battles at Çanakkale, which the Ottomans successfully fought against the allied forces, proved to be a turning point in this regard. The influx of wounded men from the battle fields and the wave of patriotism following the victories at the front seem to have served as catalyst in this process. Even the women belonging to the Ottoman imperial dynasty whose philanthropic and charitable activities had never involved their physical presence, stepped out into the public and visited the wounded soldiers to hand them small presents.

Women from the palace were also present in July 1914 when a group of Ottoman Muslim women belonging to the most prominent families of Istanbul received the certificates showing that they had successfully followed a course on sick attendance. While earlier efforts had been made to involve Ottoman women including Ottoman Muslim women in the attendance of sick and wounded soldiers beyond the walls of private homes, these efforts had not been very successful. The invitation by Besim Ömer, who by that time carried the title Pasha, to these Muslim women belonging to well-known, prominent Ottoman Muslim families and the publishing campaigns around it combined with the upsurge of patriotism when the Ottoman got involved in the First World War proved to be effective: an increasing number of Muslim women of the well-off strata started to work as voluntary nursing aids having at least some training. Over the years, Besim Ömer and others made several efforts to found courses to train professional sick attendants despite the lack of cooperation from the authorities. The information regarding the numbers of female participants in the courses which were actually started is lacking in most cases. These numbers, however, seem to have been limited.

Although we can certainly conclude that the number of Ottoman Muslim women involved in sick attendance increased, the ideal of seclusion seems to have formed a major impediment for them to take up sick attendance and nursing either as a profession or voluntarily in large numbers. The existing texts seem to show that rhetoric similar to that in other countries was used to desexualize the male-female contacts in the context of nursing. Moreover, they confirmed women in their femininity; women as nurses were "publicly celebrated for the specifically feminine virtues of their service,"[184] which was, according to the publications, beyond any doubt a patriotic service performed by the dutiful citizens of a civilized country.

Sources telling about the personal experiences of the women such as diaries and memoirs which exist for, for example, Great-Britain and France, are, however, lacking in the Ottoman case. It remains, therefore, difficult to grasp a sense of the view from the work floor. What did the women themselves think and feel? What did working with men in the hospitals at this level of intimacy mean to them? These are questions which, yet, remain unanswered.

[184] Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 204.