

## AIDING THE POOR SOLDIERS' FAMILIES: THE ASKER ÂİLELERİNE YARDIMCI HANIMLAR CEMİYETİ

Nicole A.N.M. van OS\*

### Abstract

The Ottoman Empire had a vibrant associational life during the Second Constitutional Period. As research has shown, women too were actively involved in the creation and continuation of this associational life. In this article one of the many women's organizations established in this period, the Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti, is explored: using the newspapers of the time, detailed information on its membership, its beneficiaries and its activities is collected. By analyzing these details, the author seeks to understand the importance of associational life for the changing concept of citizenship, and for community and/or nation building and state formation. As such the article seeks to place the existence of this organization in the wider context of gendered historical processes taking place in the Ottoman Empire during the Second Constitutional Period and, more specifically, during the First World War.

**Key words:** Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti, nation building, state formation, First World War, (women's) organizations.

## ASKER AİLELERİNE YARDIMCI HANIMLAR CEMİYETİ

### Özet

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda, İkinci Meşrutiyet döneminde çeşitli cemiyetler (dernekler) kurulup faaliyete geçtiler. Araştırmanın da işaret ettiği gibi kadınlar da bu dönemde ortaya çıkan derneklerin bazılarının kurulması ve onların devamlılığı sağlamakta önemli katkılarda bulunmuşlardır. Bu makalede bu dönemde kurulan kadın derneklerinden bir tanesi, yani Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti, ayrıntılı olarak incelemeye alındı. O dönemin gazetelerini taramak suretiyle bu derneğin üyeleri, onların faaliyetleri ile dernek tarafından destek ve yardım alanlar ile ilgili bilgiler toplanıp değerlendirirken, bu bilgiler ışığında o dönemde değişen vatandaşlık kavramı ile toplum, ulus ve devlet inşası için Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti gibi

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\* Leiden University, Department of Turkish Studies, the Netherlands,  
n.a.n.m.van.os@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

derneklerin varoluşunun önemini açıklamak amaçlanmıştır. Böylece bu ve benzeri derneklerin ve oluşumların, İkinci Meşrutiyet ve özellikle Birinci Dünya Savaşı döneminde, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda gelişen toplumsal cinsiyetçi tarihsel süreç çerçevesindeki önemi ele alınmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti, ulus inşası, devlet inşası, Birinci Dünya Savaşı, (kadın) dernekler(i).

In his book on the development of philanthropic and charitable associational life in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Watt points at the importance of this development for particular groups in society. His book evolves around the argument that, for example, women and adolescents belonged to those new social groups which were brought into public life through the associational networks which were developed.<sup>1</sup> Marwick, on the other hand, argues that war, and more specifically “total war” combined with the concept of a “nation in arms” formed the driving force behind the “participation of hitherto underprivileged groups in the community (...) [who] tend to benefit from such participation”.<sup>2</sup>

Watt also stresses the importance of associational life for the formation of communities. He even reproaches those historians who ignored the role of social service and voluntary activities on the one hand, and the notions of active, devoted citizenship they imbued, on the other hand, in the process of nation building.<sup>3</sup> The importance of some form of associational life in the development of “communities”, through the creation of horizontal and vertical ties between hitherto unrelated or even non-existing groups is stressed by several authors. The new social groups which were brought into public life through the developing associational networks and individuals belonging to more or less the same social stratum who hitherto had had little to no contact were now convening on a regular base to undertake a variety of activities.<sup>4</sup> At the same time persons belonging to various social strata were linked to each

<sup>1</sup> Carey Anthony Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association, and Citizenship in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Marwick, “Problems and Consequences of Organizing Society for Total War”, in: Nándor F. Dreisziger (ed.), *Mobilization for Total War: the Canadian, American, and British Experience 1914-1918, 1940-1945*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo 1981, pp.3-21, quotation pp.3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Watt, *Serving the Nation*, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.202-203.

other through the organizational activities, especially in the philanthropic and charitable organizations. Depending on the size of the associational network and the scale of the voluntary activities the communities also varied in scope: from the smaller “lived” or “experienced” communities of the local neighborhood or small town referred to by Winter in his book on capital cities during the First World War<sup>5</sup> to the larger “imagined” community of a (nascent) nation(-state) as referred to by Anderson.<sup>6</sup>

The creation of communities, however, may have as a flipside that “others” may be excluded: associations may be very specific as to who may participate in or benefit from their activities and who may not. Moreover, while philanthropic and charitable associations created communities of individuals and groups of various social strata, they also constructed hierarchies by accentuating the socio-economic differences within these communities between the beneficent patrons and their beneficiaries, between the have’s and have-nots.

Stressing the importance of the often ritual character of, specifically, dynastic philanthropic practices, Quataert points out, that:

*[t]he ritual process was not imposed solely “from above” but mediated “in between” in the specific institutional and associational milieu of each locality. (...) The dynastic world of voluntary philanthropy was instrumental in the continued evolution of a patriotic civil elite.*<sup>7</sup>

Where this “civil elite” was in majority formed by persons who, in the eye of the public, represented the state because they were, for example, civil servants, their activities were experienced to be state activities. As such, as Quataert writes, these activities “constitute[d] an understanding of the state itself” and shaped “[n]otions of the state (...) for example, as ‘caring’”<sup>8</sup>. The associational networks thus engendered patronage systems through which not only the “definitions of community membership”, but also “state identities” were produced.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jay Winter, “Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919: Capital Cities at War”, in: Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, etc. 1999, pp.3-24, pp.4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1991 (revised ed. of original 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Jean H. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2001, pp. 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

Through these state identities, the state and its representatives could legitimize their existence and their actions. These identities were highly gendered and women played an important role in their formation through their philanthropic activities. In dynastic Germany, for example, the “caring” state was symbolized by a wide network of philanthropic associations with at its pinnacle the figure of the *Landesmutter* (translated by her as ‘Mother of the People’), the leading female of the ruling dynasty whose involvement in philanthropy was widely publicized. The male heads of state, however, represented the “military” state. The “military” and “caring” state, however, were closely intertwined. In fact, in many countries the first forms of secular philanthropy were directly or indirectly triggered by military activities: civilians organized to support the soldiers and their families during and after their active service at times of war. In an era in which the identity of the state was closely interconnected with the military apparatus and universal conscription formed the basis of male citizenship, the philanthropic and charitable activities within associational networks thus offered those who were not drafted, notably women, youngsters and those exempted from active service, an alternative form of active citizenship and civil identity.

In the Ottoman Empire, the first forms of secular, philanthropic women’s activities were indeed undertaken in such a context.<sup>10</sup> When Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in July 1876, Ottoman women, Muslim and non-Muslim, in, for example, Istanbul and Salonika responded positively to the calls in the newspapers to get organized to give assistance to the wounded soldiers.<sup>11</sup> It would last until 1909, however, before a legal framework would allow for such organizations to be formally established. From the 1860s, when the first associations were founded, until 1909, their existence depended largely on their being tolerated by the sultan and the authorities. Under the rule of Abdülhamid II the relative freedom which had existed under his predecessor was increasingly curbed: the establishment of a literary or charitable organization became liable to the explicit permission of the government by 1890, while they

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<sup>10</sup> In the last chapter of her book on philanthropy and charity in Muslim societies, Singer points out that, during the nineteenth century, the practice of charity in, for example, the Ottoman Empire changed in several ways. The increased state control over the finances of *wakfs* combined with an ongoing secularization also of the Muslim community opened the way for Muslims to other, more secular forms of charity through, for example, private (as in non-governmental) philanthropic organizations. Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, etc. 2008, pp. 176-216.

<sup>11</sup> Nicole A. N. M. van Os, “Ottoman Women’s Organizations: Sources of the Past, Sources for the Future”. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, XI/3, 2000, pp. 369-383, p. 370.

came under strict surveillance by 1900.<sup>12</sup> Part of the philanthropic and patriotic activities undertaken during this period, however, were actively supported by Abdülhamid II and his palace entourage or even initiated by them in a conscious effort to create a unified social and political space. Moreover, through his patronage of such activities Abdülhamid II sought to portray himself as the caring monarch of all Ottomans, Muslim and non-Muslim alike and “to foster feelings of unity between the people and the state and of belonging to an imagined imperial community”.<sup>13</sup> Particularly the educated sectors of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities were allowed to develop philanthropic initiatives as long as they did not pose the risk of invoking separatism amongst his non-Muslim subjects or of an inclination towards Westernization of his Muslim subjects. Towards the end of his reign, however, Abdülhamid II seems to have curbed especially the establishing of Muslim organizations.<sup>14</sup>

After the Young Turkish Revolution of July 1908 the situation changed. The revolution created a spirit of freedom among the urban administrative and intellectual elite, male and female, and resulted in an outburst of civil activities, which had been forbidden or suppressed under the old regime, including initiatives to publish newspapers and periodicals and to establish organizations in an effort to redefine citizenship and to create a community based on the new values of “Freedom, Justice, Equality, and Brotherhood”.

In the direct aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution Ottoman Muslim women fully participated in these civil activities: women not only authored articles in the newly established newspapers and articles but founded new

<sup>12</sup> Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “Sivil toplum kurumlarının hukuksal çerçevesi 1839-1945”, in: A.N. Yücekök, İ. Turan & Mehmet Ö. Alkan (derl.), *Tanzimat’tan günümüze İstanbul’da STK’lar*, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul 1998, pp.45-73.

<sup>13</sup> Nadir Özbek, “Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXXVII, 2005, pp.59-81, quotation pp.71-72. As Singer points out: “charity is not only about well-meaning assistance offered to people in need; [it is also] used for personal gains of power and status and [to] manipulate recipients and [givers]”. Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> I.e. according to an article in the newspaper *İttihâd ve Terakki*, foreigners and even non-Muslims were allowed to establish charitable organizations or e.g. organizations for educational purposes, but “Turks” were not in Selanik. “Osmanlı Kadınları “Şefkat” Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi” *İttihâd ve Terakki*, 4 Teşrin-i sâni 1324 (17 November 1908), pp.2-3. A similar remark was made by the Finnish Baroness Gripenberg who visited Istanbul in 1906 on behalf of the International Council of Women in an effort to establish a national council in the Ottoman Empire and wrote that “no organizations of Turkish subjects are allowed by the Government”. Alexandra Gripenberg, “Special Reports of New Organising Work: From Baroness Gripenberg, in Greece and Turkey”, in: Ogilvie Gordon (ed.), *International Council of Women: Report for 1905-1906*, International Council of Women, Aberdeen 1906, pp.134-137, quotation p.136.

women's periodicals of their own; they also established women's organizations. The development of these activities not only evoked the reaction of the central authorities which seem to have recognized that they were losing control, but also from the more conservative public which did not appreciate the public visibility of women. While the central authorities set to work to create a legal framework through which the publishing of newspapers or the establishment of organizations could be channeled, the conservative forces launched a counterrevolution in which they also directed their arrows at those women who had deployed civil activities publicly.<sup>15</sup> The counterrevolution meant a setback for the public activities of Ottoman Muslim women. Some women no longer dared to be publicly active, while the authorities seem to have started to behave more cautiously regarding what were perceived to be too sudden changes in the existing gender order.

Thus, when in August 1909 the *Cemiyetler Kanûnu* (Law on Associations) was issued<sup>16</sup> and the authorities were confronted with the formal existence of women's organizations, questions were raised as to the permissibility of women's organizing. When, for example, in February 1910 the *Teâlî-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Ladies' Organization for the Advancement of the Fatherland), which had been founded in November 1909, submitted its *beyanname* (written statement), the authorities in Salonika were not sure whether a women's organization fell under the new Law on Associations. They sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior asking for information. The Ministry asked the Council of State for its opinion. Although the Council of State made clear that there were no provisions in the law which prohibited women from establishing organizations, its members obviously felt uncomfortable with the possible transgression of existing gender borders by these women. Therefore, it demanded an additional article to its *nizâmnâme* (statutes) to provide for "a commission of confidants to manage the external relations and activities of the organization".<sup>17</sup> The authorities in Salonika were informed about the decision and the organization duly added the required article in which it stated that the "Fifth Club of the Salonika Committee of Union and Progress" and in other places the local Committees of Union and Progress were

<sup>15</sup> Nicole A. N. M. van Os, "Kandilli Sultânî-i İnâs: Bir devlet adamının teşebbüs-i şahsisi nasıl sonuçlandı?" *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXVIII/163, 1997, pp. 26-34.

<sup>16</sup> "Cemiyetler Kanûnu", *Düstur*, II/1, Matbaa-i Osmâniye, Dersâadet 1329/1913, 604-608.

<sup>17</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter, BOA), Şurâ-yı Devlet / Selânik (Council of State / Salonica), 2068/4 (6), 10 Mart 1326 (23 March 1910); BOA, Dâhiliye Nezâreti, Muhaberât-i Umûmiye İdâresi (hereafter DH. MÜİ), 76-1/70, 6R1328.

to take up this duty.<sup>18</sup> Thus the organization was able to continue its activities as it proudly announced in its periodical, *Hanımlara Mahsûs Gazete*.<sup>19</sup>

Once the legal framework was thus set and the authorities were equipped with the instruments to control the growth of civil organizations, associational life in the Ottoman Empire became less vibrant. When the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) grabbed power in 1913, it tried to further control the existing organizations by forcing them to cooperate and coordinate their activities with the major three semi-public organizations, the *Donanma Cemiyeti* (Fleet Organization), the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (National Defense Organization) and the *Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* (Red Crescent Organization).

Most of the women's organizations founded in the direct aftermath of the Young Turkish Revolution seem to have been short-lived; others, such as, for example, the *Teâlî-i Nisvân Cemiyeti* (Association for the Advancement of Women) were able to survive longer and lasted even beyond the take over of the CUP. The women's organizations founded after the take over seem to have been in majority auxiliaries of local branches of the three semi-public, national organizations mentioned above. The few "independent" organizations which were founded between 1913 and the end of the First World War, were almost all established by women closely affiliated with the ruling elite at the national or local level; one of them being the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Women's Association for the Assistance of Soldier's Families).

In this article, I have a closer look at this organization, which authors writing on Ottoman women during the Second Constitutional Period such as Çakır<sup>20</sup> and Kurnaz<sup>21</sup> only briefly referred to in their works. Who were its members, what were its aims and its activities. Who were their beneficiaries? And what do the answers to these questions tell us about the existing concepts of citizenship, about the prevalent ideas on community and/or nation building and about the process of state formation? Thus, besides merely describing the organization, an effort is made to place the existence of this organization in the wider context of historical processes taking place in the Ottoman Empire during

<sup>18</sup> Zafer Toprak, "İttihad Terakki ve Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 43-44, 1989, pp.83-190.

<sup>19</sup> "Teâlî-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti hakkında hükûmet-i seniye'nin tasdik-i resmîsi", *Hanımlara Mahsûs Gazete*, XVI/10, 20 Mayıs 1326, 6 (I am indebted to Prof. Dr. Zafer Toprak for providing me with a photocopy of this periodical).

<sup>20</sup> Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul 1994, pp. 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> Şefika Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet döneminde Türk kadını*, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, İstanbul 1996, p. 212-213.

the Second Constitutional Period and, more specifically, during the First World War.

### **The organization, its members and its aims**

The *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* or *Heyeti*, or the *Muhtâç Asker Âilelerine Muâvenet Cemiyeti* (Association for the Support of Needy Soldiers' Families)<sup>22</sup> or *Bî-kes Asker Âilelerine Muâvenet Cemiyeti* (Association for the Support of Indigent Soldiers' Families)<sup>23</sup> as it seems to have also been called in the very beginning, was founded by the wives and daughters of prominent German and Ottoman men on the initiative of the daughter of Field Marshal Liman von Sanders, probably in December 1914.<sup>24</sup> The organization was set up as a twin organization with a German and an Ottoman department joining forces.<sup>25</sup>

Nâciye Sultan, the wife of the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, and granddaughter of Sultan Abdülmecid, became its honorary president and its patron.<sup>26</sup> Initially she assumed this honorable task on her own, but by September 1915, the wife of the German Ambassador, *Freiin* von Wangenheim, became the second honorary president for the German department.<sup>27</sup> The organization had two presidents: Nelly, the daughter of Field Marshal Liman von Sanders and the wife of the Director of Public Security, Nuriye Canbolat. Emîne Reşîd was its first secretary and İrfân Bedrî, wife of Bedrî Bey, the General Director of the Police, its accountant. Amongst the other founding

<sup>22</sup> Lebîb Selîm, "Türk Kadınlığının harb-i umûmîdeki faâliyeti", *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 3, 22 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799. Lebîb Selîm calls the organization *Muhtâç Asker Âilelerine Muâvenet Cemiyeti* (Organization for the Support of Indigent Soldiers' Families). However, from the text it is clear she refers to the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*.

<sup>23</sup> According to Kurnaz an organization with this name was founded in 1916. A document in the Red Crescent archives referring to the organization under this name, however, is dated 15 February 1915 (and not 2 Şubat/February 1914 as is jotted down on the document with pencil). Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 12/202, 1 Şubat 1330. Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet döneminde Türk kadını*, p.214.

<sup>24</sup> Rahmi Çiçek, "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti'nin faaliyetleriyle ilgili bir belge", *Tarih ve Toplum*, XX/116, Ağustos 1993, p.13. The first announcement of its being established was published in the newspapers in January 1915. "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Heyeti", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 29 Kânûn-ı evvel 1330 (11 January 1915), p.3. Based on articles in *Tanîn* and *İçtihat* Kurnaz gives a different date. However, both sources just mention the foundation of the organization without giving an exact date. Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 212fn.

<sup>25</sup> "Remerciements à la Baronne de Wangenheim (sic!)" *Lloyd Ottoman*, 26 Septembre 1915, p. 6; "Teşekkür", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Eylül 1331 (27 September 1915), p.2.

<sup>26</sup> "Asker âileleri için", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 25 Haziran 1331 (8 July 1915), p.2.

<sup>27</sup> "Remerciements à la Baronne de Wangenheim (sic!)" *Lloyd Ottoman*, 26 Septembre 1915, p. 6; "Teşekkür", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Eylül 1331 (27 September 1915), p. 2.

members were the wife of Talât Pasha, Hayriye Talât, the wife of the Director of the Press Office, Celîle Hikmet, the wife of the first Ottoman sports instructor, Hâdiye Selîm Sırrı, and the wives of other prominent Ottomans, who were supposedly known to the readers of the newspapers. Furthermore, the other daughter of Liman von Sanders, the wife of General Erich Weber, Madam Weber Pasha, and a further unknown Madam Prag Bey were referred to as members “who had been elected”.<sup>28</sup> Besides these “elected” and active members, the organization also had “assisting” members with whom meetings were convened on a regular basis.<sup>29</sup> By November 1916, the organization was forced to discontinue its activities, but its Board remained intact to resume them whenever the circumstances would allow it to do so.<sup>30</sup> The Board continued to meet even though the organization was less active.<sup>31</sup> It seems, however, that by the beginning of 1918 the German members were no longer participating in the organization.<sup>32</sup> At that time, Nuriye Canbolat was still referred to as its president, while Emîne Reşîd was still its secretary. Hayriye Talât, the wife of Talât Pasha, however, had become its vice-president. At a meeting in February, they were re-elected. The former accountant İrfân Bedrî was replaced by Suâd Reşâd, while its cashier was reported to be Sabîha Nurî. İrfân Bedrî, Nezîhe Velî, Tevhîde Osmân, Hâdiye Selîm Sırrı, Kamîle İsmail and Madame Pançiri, the wife of the aide-de-camp of the Sultan were listed as members by that time.<sup>33</sup> The new Board seems to have had regular meetings again.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Heyeti”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 29 Kânûn-ı evvel 1330 (11 January 1915), p.3; “Asker âilelerine”, *Tanîn*, 11 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (24 January 1915), p. 4; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179; “Grande fête au Jardin du Taxim au profit des familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 28 Juin 1915, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> “Séance extraordinaire du comité des Dames”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 4 April 1915, p.3; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti tarafından”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 29 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (11 November 1915), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 988/4, 22 Haziran 1335 (22 June 1919). This is the document also discussed in Çiçek, “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti’nin faaliyetleriyle ilgili bir belge”.

<sup>31</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 3 Mart 1333 (3 March 1917), p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Freiin* von Wangenheim, for example, had left Istanbul in November 1917 after the death of her husband. “Madam (Wangenheim)”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 19 Teşrîn-i sâni/November 1333/1917, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti”, *Vakit*, 19 Şubat/February 1918, p.2; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 163, 2 Mart/March 1918, p.13; “Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti”, *Vakit*, 1 Mart/March 1918, p.2; “L’association des Yardımcı hanımlar”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 1 Mars 1918, 3; “Der Verein Jardimdsche Hanum”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. März 1918, p.3.

The main aim of the organization was, as the name indicates, to help the families of soldiers, and especially those families who were left behind without a breadwinner (*muînsiz*), because “[i]t is true that the government provides support to a certain degree, but the remainder is the duty of private initiatives”.<sup>35</sup> Initially the organization wanted to help the *muînsiz* families by providing them with a bowl of soup every morning. However, finding it difficult to distribute soup, it decided to distribute (uncooked) food and goods instead.<sup>36</sup> For this aim it needed money.

### Financing charity

Since we do not have any extensive (financial) year reports accounting for the incomes and expenditures of the organization, it is impossible to get a complete picture on the financial sources of the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*. According to Yalman, the organization “did most of its work with funds from the army”.<sup>37</sup> Özbek found that the Istanbul Prefecture (*Şehremâneti*) had allocated 307.800 *kuruş* to the organization in the budget year 1331 (1915-1916).<sup>38</sup> Since the organization reported in December 1915 that it had generated an income of approximately 1.41 million *kuruş* and spent about 1.23 million *kuruş*, this contribution constituted approximately 22% of the organization’s income while it covered 25% of its expenditures.<sup>39</sup>

The *Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* also received money from other organizations. A part of its money came, for example, from the *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (National Defense Organization). In an interview

<sup>34</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti’nden”, *Vakit*, 22 Mart/March 1918, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), 179. For state assistance to the families without breadwinners and its shortcomings see, Nicole A. N. M. van Os, “The Ottoman State as Breadgiver: the *Muînsiz Aile Maaş*”. In Erik Jan Zürcher (ed.), *Arming the State: Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925*, I. B. Tauris, London 1999, pp.95-110.

<sup>36</sup> Lebîb Selîm, “Türk Kadınlığının harb-i umûmîdeki faaliyetleri”, *Türk Yurdu*, IX/3, 22 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (4 November 1915), pp. 2797-2799.

<sup>37</sup> [Yalman], Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1930, p.259.

<sup>38</sup> Özbek, Nadir, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda ‘Sosyal Yardım’ Uygulamaları, 1839-1918”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, Kış 1999/2000, pp.111-132, p.126. It had also donated 82.080 *kuruş* to the support the *Hilâl-i Ahmer Hanımlar Dâr-üssınaası* and the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu*.

<sup>39</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 22 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (5 December 1915), p.2. According to Lebîb Selîm the organization had spent 120,000 Turkish lira by November 1915, while its income until that date had been 130,000 Turkish lira. Given that one lira was approximately 100 *kuruş*, these figures seem to be highly exaggerated. Lebîb Selîm, “Türk Kadınlığının harb-i umûmîdeki faaliyetleri”, *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 3, 22 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (4 November 1915), pp. 2797-2799.

published in *Servet-i Fünûn*, the founders of the organization stated that they had received the money left on the account of the *Topkapı Fukarâperver Heyeti* (Topkapı Committee for Poor Relief) when it was closed down.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the *Hilâl-i Ahmer* (Red Crescent) gave 100 Turkish *lira* when the organization was founded and promised to support it further.<sup>41</sup> It kept its promise and transferred another 5,000 *lira* in February 1915.<sup>42</sup> It seems that the two organizations cooperated closely and that the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* took over the care for soldiers' families in Istanbul which the Red Crescent had provided for before:<sup>43</sup> in publications of the *Hilâl-i Ahmer Hanımlar Merkezi*, the *Bî-kes Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Cemiyeti* or *Bî-kes Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* as the organization was also called, was referred to as its "very sister" (*öz hemşire*) organization.<sup>44</sup>

Another source of income were the fundraising activities developed by the organization. Besides the methods to generate money known from other organizations, the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* developed some other, quite specific fundraising activities.

Like other organizations, this organization too financed its activities partially through donations, the income generated through the organization of concerts and similar events, and by selling rosettes. One of the larger donations was made by the Sultan. When, a few weeks after the foundation of the organization, the daughter of Liman von Sanders and the wives of Bedrî Bey

<sup>40</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Heyeti", *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179. It is not clear which organization was meant by this "committee". One would expect this to be the *Osmanlı Fukarâperver Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi Topkapı Şubesi*. This organization was indeed closed down in 1913. However, it continued as an independent organization under a slightly different name: *Osmanlı Fukarâperver Cemiyeti Topkapı Müessesesi-yi Hayriye*. Nadir Özbek, "90 yıllık bir hayır kurumu: Topkapı Fukarâperver Cemiyeti", *Tarih ve Toplum*, XXX/180, 1998, pp. 4-10. See also Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 72/75, 14 Mart 1329 (27 March 1913); Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 645/197, 8 Nisan/April 1919.

<sup>41</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Heyeti", *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179.

<sup>42</sup> In the document of the Red Crescent, the organization was referred to as *Bî-kes Âilelerine Yardımçı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*. According to Kurnaz an organization with this name was founded in 1916. A document in the Red Crescent archives referring to the organization under this name, however, is dated 15 February 1915 (and not 2 Şubat/February 1914 as is jotted down on the document with pencil). Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 12/202, 2 Şubat 1330. Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p.214.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 12/182, 4 Nisan 1239 (17 April 1913); Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 12/183 (17 April 1913); Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 12/184 (17 April 1913).

<sup>44</sup> Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvîm - 4 -*, [İstanbul], 1918, pp. 175-176; *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Hanımlar Merkezi Dâr-üssınaası: eytâm ve erâmil-i şühedâya muavenet*, [İstanbul:] Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsi, 1339, pp. 27-28.

and Mehmed Ali Bey paid a visit to the Imperial harem, they were received by the Sultan. He donated 100 lira, while the first and second *Kadın* donated 50 lira each.<sup>45</sup> Nâciye Sultan donated another 40 lira.<sup>46</sup> *Freiin* von Wangenheim not only was actively involved in the distribution of goods, but also contributed by giving donations.<sup>47</sup> The members, too, donated money, while some shops contributed by giving clothes or provisions.<sup>48</sup> The rather large sum of 500 lira plus a wagon full of green beans were donated by the German Mr. Richter, who owned one of the companies in charge of supplying the Ottoman army.<sup>49</sup>

Some authors donated the sales revenues of their book,<sup>50</sup> while the organization also received the yield of, for example, the entrance fees to a submarine conquered from the French in the Dardanelles, hauled to Istanbul and opened to the public,<sup>51</sup> and the sales revenues of the program of the first play put on stage by students of the newly opened *Dâr-ül-bedâyi* (conservatory).<sup>52</sup> During the summer of 1915, an obviously regular source of income was formed by a part of the yields generate from the sales of tickets for shows at a (movie)theatre in Erenköy.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> “Der Wohltätigkeitsausschuß der Damen beim Sultan”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 16. Januar 1915, p.3. According to the article in *Servet-i Fünûn* this was 150 Lira. “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179.

<sup>46</sup> “Asker âilelere için”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 25 Haziran 1331 (8 July 1915), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> “Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Tanîn*, 21 Eylül 1331 (4 October 1915), p.2; “L’Association des dames de secours”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27 Novembre 1915, p.3; “Hilfsverein der Damen”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27. November 1915, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179.

<sup>49</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 7 Kânûn-ı evvel 1331 (20 December 1915), p. 2; “Remerciements publics”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 20 Décembre 1915, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. the sales revenues of the reprint of a book by the deceased Makbûle Leman were donated to the organization by her widower: Makbûle Leman, *Makes-i Hayâl*, Dersaâdet: Matbaa-i Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsi, 1331; “Makes-i Hayâl”, *Sabâh*, 22 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (5 December 1915), p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 5 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (18 November 1915), p. 2. See also Ali Şükrü Çoruk, “Turkuaz yahut Müstecip Onbaşı’nın hikâyesi...” *Mostar*, 61, Mart 2010, at <http://mostar.com.tr/> (accessed 22 July 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Orhan Alkaya, “Mevcudu biraz daha temiz tutalım”, *Radikal*, 1-4-2007 at [http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek\\_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=6895](http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=6895) (accessed 22 July 2010); Filiz, Hayrettin, “Saygıdeğer bir madam üzerine: Kıran Sivacıyan’ın hikayesi”, *Bilimsel Tiyatro Atölyesi*, 9 Ocak 2007, at <http://www.btasahnesi.net/yazilar/hf/hf8/saygidegerbirmadam.htm>. (accessed 23 July 2010). At the latter website a copy of the programme of the play can be found with the announcement that the yields of the play were to be donated to the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*.

<sup>53</sup> “Sinema”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 8 Temmuz 1331 (21 July 1915), p.2; “Erenköyü’nde Osmâniye bahçesi sinemasında”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Temmuz 1331 (26 July 1915), p.2; “Erenköyü’nde eski

Three months after its foundation, on 25 March 1915, the organization organized its first fundraising activity near Taksim at the newly opened “Variété Sinema Theatre”. These afternoon activities were open to women only. The program offered consisted of music by the Imperial band, Ertuğrul, under the direction of Lanka Bey, circus acts by women on horses, a film and patriotic poems recited by young boys. The entrance fee varied from 15 to 50 kuruş, which is relatively high.<sup>54</sup> A program of “afternoon entertainment” including “shooting with a carabineer for ladies and gentlemen and ‘games of massacre’” (*jö dö masak, jeux de massacre*)<sup>55</sup> was organized in Gülhâne Park in the first week of June 1915.<sup>56</sup> Less than a week later a concert took place at the Tepebaşı gardens. During the concert a lottery would be held where people could win one of the presents donated to the organization.<sup>57</sup> This minor amusement was followed by a large festivity at the Taksim Gardens on 1 July of that year.<sup>58</sup> The electricity company sponsored the illumination of the gardens and the various “electric games” which could be played.<sup>59</sup> This activity was organized by a committee completely composed of men: its president was the prefect of Istanbul, İsmet Bey; its vice-president the Governor of Pera, Kiâni Bey, while its members were men belonging to the Ottoman Muslim, Christian and Jewish establishment.<sup>60</sup> These men probably belonged to the “men’s section” of the organization. The men’s section was also in charge of another *grande soirée*,

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İstasyon caddesindeki Osmâni sinemasında”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 16 Temmuz 1331 (29 July 1915), p.2; “Erenköyü’nde Osmâni sinemasında”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 27 Temmuz 1331 (9 August 1915), p.2; Erenköyü’nde Osmâni sinemasında”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 3 Ağustos 1331 (16 August 1915), 2; “Hâsilatı kısmen...”, *Tanîn*, 18 Ağustos 1331 (31 August 1915), p.4.

<sup>54</sup> “Fevkalâde oyun”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 10 Mart 1331 (23 March 1915), p.2; “Wohltätigkeitsvorstellung [sic!]", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 19 März 1915, p.3; “Wohltätigkeitsvorstellung”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 23 März 1915, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> A *jeu de massacre* was a kind of bowling game of French origin in which people had to try to overthrow wooden figurines with a cloth ball stuffed with hay (I’m indebted to Gisela van Duijnen-Minach for this information).

<sup>56</sup> “Gülhâne Parkı’nda parlak bir gün”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 18 Mayıs 1331 (31 May 1915), p.2; “Topkapı Parkı’nda mutena bir gün”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 20 Mayıs 1331 (2 June 1915), p. 2; “Gülhâne Bahçesi’nde”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 22 Mayıs 1331 (4 June 1915), p.2; “Pour les familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 31 Mai 1915, p.4; “Pour les familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 2 Juin 1915, p. 4. In the second announcement in the *Lloyd Ottoman* the *jeux de massacre* had disappeared. In *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* the *jö dö masak* was also mentioned in the announcement of 2 June.

<sup>57</sup> “Konser ve piyango”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Haziran 1331 (14 June 1915), p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> “Taksîm Bahçesi’nde konser”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Haziran 1331 (27 June 1915), p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> “Taksîm Bahçesi’nde eğlence”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 17 Haziran 1331 (1 July 1915), p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> “Grande fête au Jardin de Taxim au profit des familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 28 Juin 1915, p.5; “La Kermesse au Jardin de Taxim”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 30 Juin 1915, p. 4; “La Kermesse au Jardin de Taxim”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 7 Juillet 1915, p.5.

under the patronage of Enver Pasha in November 1915.<sup>61</sup> His wife, Nâciye Sultan, was the patron of a concert for women only, on 4 December of that year, which also included a lecture on the factory which had newly been opened in Adapazarı in an effort to establish a national industry.<sup>62</sup> This concert was followed by a concert for men two weeks later on Saturday and another one for women on Sunday.<sup>63</sup> The sale of rosettes at the occasion of the anniversary of the Sultan's accession to throne, one of the favorite fundraising activities of Ottoman women's organizations, yielded the amount of almost 5,000 kuruş at the end of April 1915.<sup>64</sup>

Yalman, moreover, refers to two other activities of the organization to finance its activities: it set up a model trench including "barbed wire entanglements" and "communication lines", which people could visit after having paid an entrance fee, and the wooden gun or cannon.<sup>65</sup>

### ***The wooden cannon; Hâtra-i Celâdet Topu***

The idea of a wooden statue or other similar patriotic objects in which the public, against payment, could hammer a nail, originated from Vienna where in March 1915 the first *Wehrmann in Eisen* (Man-in-arms in Iron) was erected at one of the central squares. The first nails were driven into this statue of a medieval knight by, amongst others, the Ottoman ambassador, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha. From Vienna the idea spread fast, not only to other cities in Austria-

<sup>61</sup> See "En faveur des familles des soldats", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 5 Novembre 1915, p.6; "Müsâmere-i fevkalâde", *Sabâh*, 22 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (4 November 1915), p.3 and "Müsâmere", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 22 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (4 November 1915), p.2 which all three refer to a "men's section".

<sup>62</sup> "Müsâmere", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 17 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (30 November 1915), p.2; "Müsâmere", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 19 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (2 December 1915), p.2; "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti'nden", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 21 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (4 December 1915), p.2; "En faveur des familles des soldats", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 1 Décembre 1915, 3. This factory had been established on the initiative of Enver Pasha and produced, amongst other things, furniture, wagons and agricultural machinery. Gustav Hertl, "Kriegswirtschaft in der Türkei", *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, XI/3, 1917, pp. 245-250.

<sup>63</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti'nden", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 3 Kânûn-ı evvel 1331 (16 December 1915), p.2; "Müsâmere", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 5 Kânûn-ı evvel 1331 (18 December 1915), p. 2; "Galaabend zum besten der Soldatenfamilien", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 14 Dezember 1915, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> "Asker âileleri için", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 10 Nisan 1331 (23 April 1915), p.3; "Asker âilelerine", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Nisan 1331 (26 April 1915), p.2; "Asker Âilelerine Hanımlar Cemiyeti [sic!] tarafından varîd olmuştur", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 25 Nisan 1331 (8 May 1915), p.2; "Der Damenausschuß zur Unterstützung der Soldatenfamilien...", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 8 May 1915, p. 4. The *Osmanischer Lloyd* refers to a yield of 48,849 kuruş, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* reports a yield of 4,884 kuruş.

<sup>65</sup> [Yalman], Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930, p. 259.

Hungary, but also to Germany and other countries, including the Ottoman Empire.<sup>66</sup> In November 1915 the women of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* asked for permission to place a wooden cannon on a central location in the city “in which persons, against payment of a certain sum, could hit an iron nail until the whole cannon would be covered by iron”.<sup>67</sup> Enver Pasha obviously liked the idea and gave his permission. It took some time for the cannon to arrive from Austria, but when it arrived it was placed at the Beyazıt Square, a central location in old Istanbul in front of the Ministry of War. The original idea had changed somewhat: anyone who wanted could still hit a nail into the wood against payment. Those interested, however, could choose between different nails, each with their own price: a gold nail costing five Turkish lira, a silver one one Turkish lira and an iron one one kuruş. The contributors were rewarded with a certificate and a gilded, silvered or tin rosette, respectively.<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 1** An example of the certificate handed to those who had driven a silver or golden nail into the cannon. *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1299, 28 Nisan 1332 (11 May 1916), coverpage. Note the canon in the medallion on the top center.

<sup>66</sup> Munzel-Everling, Dietlinde, *Kriegsnagelungen Wehrmann in Eisen Nagel-Roland Eisernes Kreuz*, Wiesbaden, 2008, (consulted at [http://www.munzel-everling.de/download/munzel\\_nagelfiguren.pdf](http://www.munzel-everling.de/download/munzel_nagelfiguren.pdf), 4-8-2011); [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wehrmann\\_in\\_Eisen](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wehrmann_in_Eisen) (consulted 4-8-2011).

<sup>67</sup> “Aufstellung einer ‘eisernen Kanone’” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 9 November 1915, p.3.

<sup>68</sup> “Hâtıra-i Celâdet”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 26 Mart 1332 (8 April 1916), p.2.

Finding the nails in the Ottoman Empire, however, proved difficult. Thus, in March 1916 the Minister of Interior, Talat Pasha, asked the Ambassador in Vienna, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, to purchase them from the Skoda factory in Austria. He informed him that he had handed the money for this purchase to the representative of the Skoda factory in Istanbul, Mr. Rosenthal, who was travelling to Vienna at that time.<sup>69</sup>

The cannon was a wooden copy of the Skoda cannon with which the Ottomans presumably had sunk three enemy ships of Çanakkale in March 1915.<sup>70</sup> It was named *Hâtıra-i Celâdet* (Souvenir of Bravery), a reference to the “bravery shown specifically at Çanakkale by the Ottoman Army” as the president of the organizing committee, Nuriye Canbolat, explained in her speech at the women’s inauguration of the cannon. The men’s inauguration took place in the presence of many prominent Istanbul men on 12 April 1916. Princes of the Ottoman dynasty and ministers joined in the occasion, while all the Members of Parliament, for example, were explicitly and urgently invited to be present. One day later the ceremony was repeated for women. After the speech by Nuriye Canbolat and the unveiling of the cannon, Nâciye Sultan was the first one to drive a golden nail into the wood. She, furthermore, donated an additional 100 Turkish pounds. The other women present amongst whom the wives of almost all ministers as well as the wife of the Ambassador of Austria-Hungary, *Markgräfin* Pallavicini, the wives of officials from the German Embassy and the presidents of the *İstihlâk-i Millî (Kadınlar) Cemiyeti* (Women’s Organization for National Consumption) and the *(Türk Kadınları) Biçki Yurdu* (Turkish Women’s Sewing Home) followed suit.<sup>71</sup>

From the date of its inauguration until the second half of May, the newspapers published lists of donors almost every day. Amongst them were also women’s organizations, their leaders or members such as the *Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniyesi* (Şişli Philanthropic Women’s Organization),<sup>72</sup> the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* itself, the *Kadıköy Fukarâperver Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi* (Women’s Branch of the Kadıköy Charitable

<sup>69</sup> BOA, Dâhiliye Nezâreti, Kalem-i Mahsûs Müdüriyeti (hereafter, DH.KMS), 37/42, 25B1334.

<sup>70</sup> Munzel-Everling, *Kriegsnagelungen Wehrmann in Eisen Nagel-Roland Eisernes Kreuz*, p.23.

<sup>71</sup> “Bugünkü Âbide-i Celâdet merâsimi”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 30 Mart 1332 (12 April 1916), p.1; “‘Hâtıra-i Celâdet’ topu”, *Tanîn*, 1 Nisan 1332 (14 April 1916), 2; “Die Holzkanone”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10 April 1916, p.3; “Die hölzerne Kanone”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 12 April 1916, p.3; “Hâtıra-i Celâdet”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1295, 31 Mart 1332 (13 April 1916), 250; “Die hölzerne Kanone”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 14 April 1916, p.3; “Hâtıra-i Celâdet”, *Tanîn*, 30 Mart 1332 (12 April 1916), p.1; “Hâtıra-i Celâdet topu: hanımlar tarafından resm-i küşâdı”, *Tanîn*, 1 Nisan 1332 (14 April 1916), pp.2-3.

<sup>72</sup> “Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler”, *Tanîn*, 5 Nisan 1332 (18 April 1916), p.2.

Organization), the students of the (*Türk Kadınları*) *Biçki Yurdu* and the presidents of the *Yeniköy ve İstinye Müdâfaa-i Milliye (Cemiyeti)*, *Seraste Hanım*, and of the *İstihlâk-i Millî (Kadınlar) Cemiyeti*, *Melek Hanım*.<sup>73</sup> Not only from Istanbul, but also from places further afield<sup>74</sup> and even from abroad<sup>75</sup> donations arrived. An appeal was especially made to children and schools and their pupils visited the cannon and donated their share.<sup>76</sup> After May, however, interest seems to have waned, but incidental notices of donations continued to appear.<sup>77</sup> Photographs of the wooden cannon formed an important part of the organization's premises at the exhibition of the *Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* at Galatasaray in February 1917.<sup>78</sup> Two months later the organization proudly announced that it had succeeded in raising 17,517 lira with this activity. The cannon remained on the square until 26 April after which it was moved to the Military Museum.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler", *Tanîn*, 6 Nisan 1332 (19 April 1916), p.2. The *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* was referred to as the *Muhtâç-ı Muâvenet Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (Organization of Lady Helpers for Soldier Families in Need of Assistance) in this list.

<sup>74</sup> BOA, DH.KMS, 40/7, 20Ş1334; BOA, DH.KMS, 40/17, 10N1334; BOA, DH.KMS, 41/48, 07Ca1335; BOA, DH.KMS, 45/28, 09Za1335. See also "Hâtıra-i Celâdet", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 19 Nisan 1332 (2 May 1916), p.2.

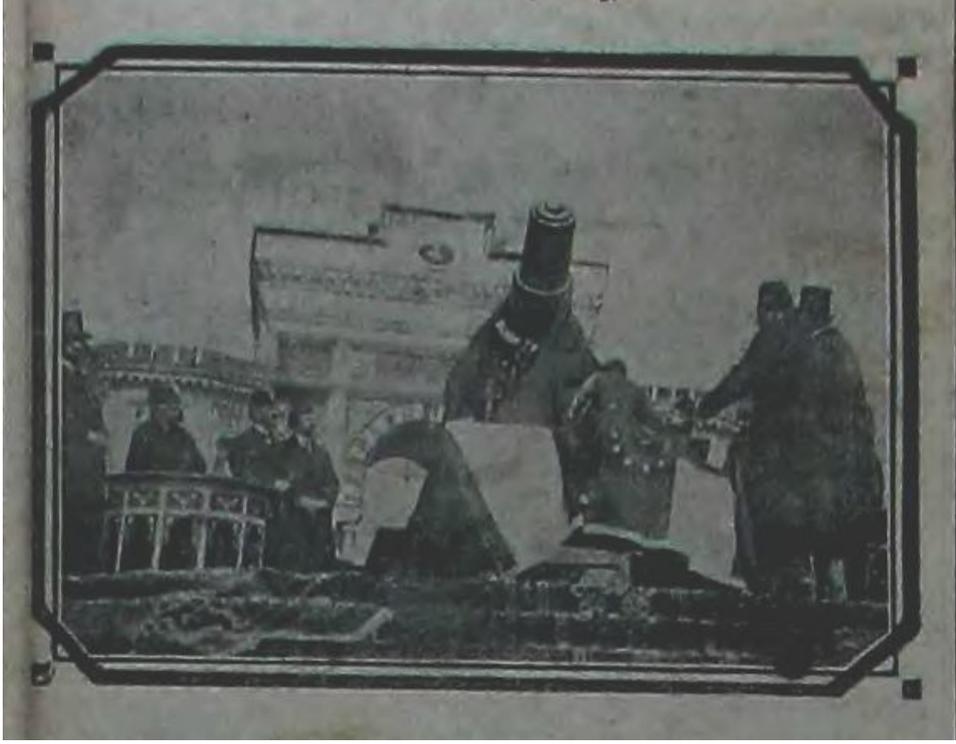
<sup>75</sup> BOA, Hâriciye Nezâreti, Siyâsî Kısım (hereafter, HR.SYS, 2420/21, 4 May 1916; BOA, HR.SYS, 2420/40, 9 May 1916.

<sup>76</sup> "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topu", *Tanîn*, 14 Nisan 1332 (27 April 1916), p. 3. By May the lists of donors consisted largely of schools: "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler", *Tanîn*, 22 Nisan 1332 (5 May 1916), p.3; "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler", *Tanîn*, 27 Nisan 1332 (10 May 1916), p.2; "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler", *Tanîn*, 4 Mayıs 1332 (17 May 1916), p.2; "Hâtıra-i Celâdet topuna iâne verenler", *Tanîn*, 6 May 1332 (19 May 1916), p.2.

<sup>77</sup> "Hâtıra-i Celâdet Topu'nda" *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 20 Haziran 1332 (3 July 1916), p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Galatasaray'nda Tertîb ve Küşâd Olunan İlk Hilâl-i Ahmer Sergisi Rehberi*, [İstanbul: Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti], 1332 (1916-1917), p.34.

<sup>79</sup> "Teşekkür", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 6 Nisan/April 1333/1917, p.2.



**Figure 2** The wooden cannon on Beyazıt Square in front of the Ministry of War. “Bugünkü Âbide-i Celâdet merâsimi”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 31 Mart 1332 (13 April 1916), 1.

### **The logistics of distributing charity**

The money obtained through all these fundraising activities was used to purchase food for the organization’s target group: soldiers’ families in need of, especially, food. These families actually had a right to state welfare in the form of the *Muînsiz Âile Maâşı* (Family Allowance) since their husbands were serving their fatherland, but the state provisions proved to be far from sufficient.<sup>80</sup> Through advertisements in the newspapers the indigent families of soldiers were invited to apply for additional assistance. Families who wanted to apply needed to obtain a “certificate of poverty” stating that their breadwinner was called in arms from the local *imâm* and *muhtâr* (headman). This certificate had to be presented to the local police station. After a further investigation into their situation, the police would provide them with a *vesîka* (official document) attesting to their poverty. This document together with the booklet showing

<sup>80</sup> Van Os, “The Ottoman State as Breadgiver: the *Muînsiz Aile Maâşı*”. pp.95-110.

their income as soldiers' families had to be handed to the organization in order to obtain goods. The organization did not distribute any money.<sup>81</sup> The assistance to these families was thus need-based, that is, only those who needed the assistance and could testify to it had a right to assistance. Moreover, the women were not just poor women as such, but very explicitly the wife of soldiers.

Initially the food distribution, which started on 14 January 1915, took place from the mansion of Nuriye and İsmail Canbolat.<sup>82</sup> By the end of that month, however, the number of applicants had increased to such a degree that the organization was forced to professionalize its distribution network. It informed its potential "clients" that the

*Committee has for the moment decided to open four branches, that is, in İstanbul, Şişli, Kadıköy and Bebek. At every branch one month of provision will be distributed once a month. On Monday 19 January (1 February) at our branch at Bozdoğan Kemerî at Şehzâdebaşı, on Monday 26 January (8 February) at our center at the house of İsmail Canbolat at Şişli, on Monday 2 February (15 February) at the Müdâfaa-i Milliye branch at Kadıköy, on Monday 9 February (22 February) at our branch near the quay in Bebek.*

*On the aforementioned days the distribution will start from four o'clock Turkish time. Since the city is at this moment divided into four districts, those living in İstanbul are requested to apply at our Şehzâdebaşı branch, those living between Beyoğlu and Kuruçeşme at our Şişli branch, those in Üsküdar and its environments at our Kadıköy branch, those living beyond Kuzguncuk and Kuruçeşme at our Bebek branch.*

*It is announced that the needy in these districts have to apply to these branches with their bowls for beans, rice and oil carrying the numbered documents which have been issued by our organization in their name upon their application to their local police station.<sup>83</sup>*

While the mansion of the Canbolat's thus originally continued to be one of the distribution centers, the Teşvikiye Mosque in Nişantaşı took over this

<sup>81</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hamımlar Heyeti", *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179; "Asker âilelerine muâvenet", *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p. 4; "Les secours aux familles des soldats", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 7 Octobre 1915, p. 3; "Asker âilelerine erzâk tevzî", *Tanîn*, 17 Nisan 1332 (30 April 1916), p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Heyeti", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 29 Kânûn-ı evvel 1330 (11 January 1915), p.3; "Müesser-i hamiyet ve şefkat", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (14 January 1915), p.5.

<sup>83</sup> "Asker âileleri için", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (27 January 1915), p.4.

function later in 1915.<sup>84</sup> By February 1915, the number of families applying in the old part of Istanbul (Istanbul *intra muros*) had grown so much that the organization decided to open three sub centers in this part of town: Şehzâdebaşı, Eyüp and Şehremîni.<sup>85</sup> Initially the goods were distributed to all four parts of the city once every month on Mondays in different weeks, so that the poor of every neighborhood would receive their ration once a month, as mentioned in the announcement.<sup>86</sup> Later the distribution centers started to operate on other days as well.<sup>87</sup> In May 1915, the organization widened its scope and opened a distribution center in Makriköy (present-day Bakırköy).<sup>88</sup> Its activities remained, however, limited to larger Istanbul. The telegram of two women from Malatya who applied for help, therefore, was forwarded to the provincial governor with the request to deal with this case.<sup>89</sup>

The number of beneficiaries grew fast. The month following the foundation Nuriye Canbolat hosted the first 150 needy families, totaling 520 persons in her mansion to distribute food and clothing.<sup>90</sup> Initially the families received two weeks of goods on Wednesdays and thus were supposed to come every other week. In an advertisement the organization explained that the organization distributed food to the families of soldiers in arms only and not to other poor (*fukarâ-yı sâire*). Receiving 30 kuruş of *ekmek parası* (lit. “cost of bread”, and as such probably referring to the *Muînsiz Âile Maâşı*) was not an impediment to receiving the benefits. Working as a servant or seamstress and thus earning an additional income besides the family allowance was. The organization furthermore called upon the readers to point out the existence of

<sup>84</sup> “Asker âileleri için”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (27 January 1915), p.4; “Asker Âilelerine”, *Tanîn*, 10 Eylül 1331 (23 September 1915), p.2; “Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Tanîn*, 21 Eylül 1331 (4 October 1915), p.2.

<sup>85</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Şubat 1330 (26 February 1915), p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> “Asker âileleri için”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (27 January 1915), p. 4; Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 988/4, 22 Haziran 1335 (22 June 1919).

<sup>87</sup> “L’association des dames au secours”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27 Novembre 1915, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 30 Nisan 1331 (13 May 1915), p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> BOA, Dâhiliye Nezâreti – İdâre-i Umûmiye (hereafter, DH.İUM), E-8/83, 16Ş1333. According to Lorenz the organization closely cooperated with the women’s branch of the Red Crescent. She refers to the existence of workshops for the wives and daughters of soldiers opened by the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* including one in Bursa. However, these must be the Dâr-üssınâa of the Red Crescent. Charlotte Lorenz, “Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der arbeitenden Klasse”, *Die Welt des Islams*, VI/3-4, 1918, pp.72-214, p. 190.

<sup>90</sup> “Müesses-i hamiyet ve şefkat”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (14 January 1915), p.5; “Für die Familien der türkischen Soldaten”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 17. Januar 1915, p.4.

the organization to the illiterate and to share with them the other announcements which would appear in the future.<sup>91</sup>

According to an article in *İçtihad* the “committee” distributed more than 500 *okka*<sup>92</sup> of oil, rice, beans, and salt to 297 families on the first day it opened its doors officially, 22 January 1915.<sup>93</sup> By the end of January 1915, the organization had assisted 721 families with in total approximately 2,000 persons.<sup>94</sup> At the end of February, the organization informed the public that more than 3,000 families had been registered.<sup>95</sup> Although the distribution centers had been established by then, registration for the Beyoğlu district still took place at the mansion of the Canbolats.<sup>96</sup> The first week of March, more than 10,000 persons belonging to 3,000 families received beans, bulgur and oil.<sup>97</sup> Approximately, a month later, the Eyüp center distributed food to 5,096 families totaling 10,408 persons.<sup>98</sup> By the end of April 1915, the organization announced that it had provided food for 12,000 families with in total 30,000 persons.<sup>99</sup> Early May, the women in Kadıköy reported to have distributed food to 3,545 persons.<sup>100</sup> The Bebek branch fed another 2,305 persons that same month.<sup>101</sup> For the month of Ramadan in July and August 1915, all registered families, including 2,244 of them that had applied to the Nişantaşı distribution centre, received double rations.<sup>102</sup> This exhausted the stocks of the organization to such an extent that it had to postpone its distribution in September with a fortnight and at some distribution points even longer.<sup>103</sup> By the end of September, the organizations had procured so much funding from a further unknown source, that it decided to not only resume, but to even expand its

<sup>91</sup> “Muhtaç asker âilelerine”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 8 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (21 January 1915), p.4.

<sup>92</sup> 1 *okka* is approximately 1,300 grams.

<sup>93</sup> “Bir fazilet dersi”, *İçtihad*, 126, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.462.

<sup>94</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179.

<sup>95</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Şubat 1330 (26 February 1915), p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 23 Şubat 1330 (8 March 1915), p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 25 Şubat 1330 (10 March 1915), p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> “Asker âilelerine yardım”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 20 Mart 1331 (2 April 1915), p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> “Asker âilelerine”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Nisan 1331 (26 April 1915), p. 2.

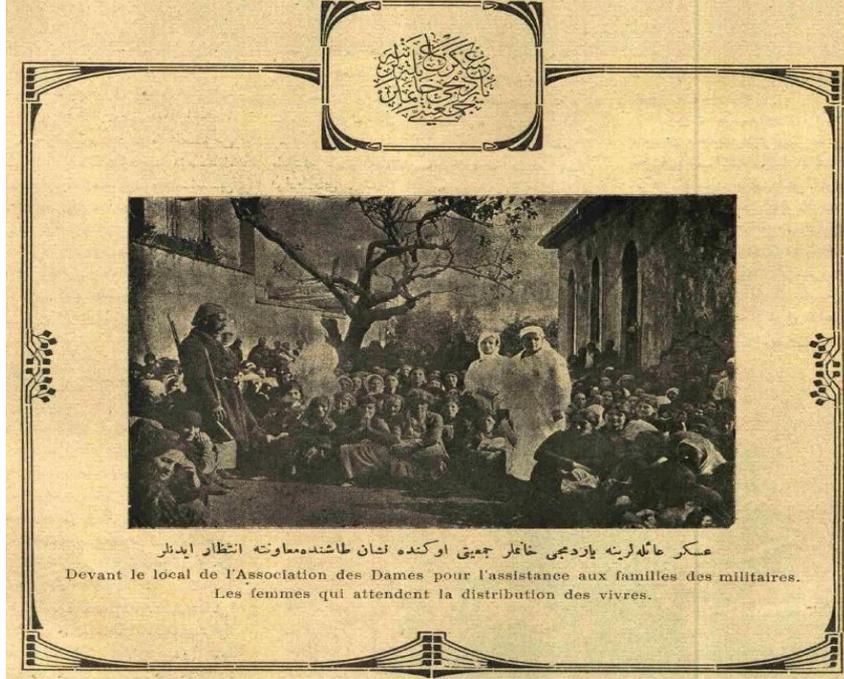
<sup>100</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Mayıs 1331 (14 May 1915), p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 6 Mayıs 1331 (19 May 1915), p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> “Erzâk tevziî”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Haziran 1331 (27 June 1915), p. 2; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 16 Haziran 1331 (29 June 1915), p.2.

<sup>103</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 26 Ağustos 1331 (8 September 1915), p.2; “Asker âileleri hakkında”, *Tanîn*, 26 Ağustos 1331 (8 September 1915), p.3; “Asker âilelerine”, *Tanîn*, 8 Eylül 1331 (21 September 1915), p. 3; “Asker âilelerine”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 8 Eylül 1331 (21 September 1915), p.2.

activities and to invite more families to apply.<sup>104</sup> Early October 1915, one month worth of potatoes, chickpeas and other staples were distributed to 7,000 families by *Freiin* von Wangenheim and the wives and daughters of other German “notables” from Istanbul.<sup>105</sup> In the first week of October, the organization assisted more than 15,000 families with in total 37,000 persons.<sup>106</sup>



**Figure 3** *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1332, 22 Kanunuevvel 1332 (4 January 1917), coverpage. Note the logo of the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* at the top of the frame. The photograph is not only clearly posed, which is inevitable given the technique

<sup>104</sup> “Asker âilelerine”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 10 Eylül 1331 (23 September 1915), p.2; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 12 Eylül 1331 (25 September 1915), p.2; “Asker âilelerine muâvenet”, *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p.4 ; “Les secours aux familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 7 Octobre 1915, p.3.

<sup>105</sup> “Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Tanîn*, 21 Eylül 1331 (4 October 1915), p.2; “Secours aux familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 4 Octobre 1915, p.3 ; “Asker âilelerine muâvenet”, *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p.4.

<sup>106</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Muâvenet”, *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p.4. *Lloyd Ottoman* mentions 10,000 families and more than 35,000 persons. “Les secours aux familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 7 Octobre 1915, p.3. The figures mentioned by *Tanîn* seem more likely, though, given the average size of the families accounted based on the figures given earlier.

available at the time, but probably also staged to accentuate the contradiction between the matrons towering high in white over their beneficiaries squatting low on the ground.

When the weather conditions deteriorated in fall, the organization announced that it had decided to distribute two months worth of goods to the applicants in Kadıköy.<sup>107</sup> In November 10,000 families of in total 25,000 persons received *bulgur*, olives and (broad)beans for one month.<sup>108</sup> In December 1915 a brief year report was published in *Tasvir-i Efkar*. According to this report, the organization had during its first year of existence assisted 15,379 families with, in total, 41,014 persons. These families had received goods, such as beans, oil, rice, olives, chickpeas, bulgur, potatoes and salt up to the amount of in total 545,000 okka.<sup>109</sup> The number of families in need of assistance continued to increase, however. A few days before the wooden cannon was unveiled *Tasvir-i Efkar* informed its readers that the organization had until then assisted more than 25,000 families.<sup>110</sup> According to another report sent to the General Secretariat of the *Hilâl-i Ahmer*, dated 22 June 1919, the number of persons registered with the organization between 24 January 1915 and 28 November 1916 totaled 65,491 of whom 49,116 were Muslim and 16,370 non-Muslim. They had, by November 1916, received nine different kinds of food up to a total of almost 1,900,000 okka.<sup>111</sup>

Despite these numbers, the situation in Istanbul was so desperate that the organization was not able to help all the poor who applied for assistance and regularly had to halt the registration of needy families and even the food distribution itself. By the beginning of 1916, for example, the organization had to temporarily withdraw from its activities due to problems in procuring sufficient food stuffs. The activities around the *Hâtıra-i Celâdet Topu*, however, were so successful that according to an announcement in *Tanîn*, the organization was able to resume its distribution in April of that year as formerly because it had by then succeeded in acquiring an adequate amount of goods. It, therefore, invited families in, particularly, Üsküdar and Kadıköy, to come with

<sup>107</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden:” *Tanîn*, 2 Teşrîn-i evvel 1331 (15 October 1915), p.4.

<sup>108</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (27 November 1915), p. 2; “Hilfsverein der Damen”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27. November 1915, p.3; “L’association des dames au secours”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27 Novembre 1915, p.3.

<sup>109</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 22 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (5 December 1915), p.2.

<sup>110</sup> “Hâtıra-i Celâdet”, *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 26 Mart 1332 (8 April 1916), p.2.

<sup>111</sup> Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 988/4, 22 Haziran 1335 (22 June 1919).

their old registration cards and soldiers' passes to collect their rations.<sup>112</sup> By that time, however, another commission, the *Âile Erzâk Komisyonu* (Family Food Commission), had started to distribute food to soldier's families as well.<sup>113</sup>

To show its appreciation for the activities of the organization, the *Hilâl-i Ahmer* decided in May 1916 to award the *Hilâl-i Ahmer* Medal in silver to its Ottoman Muslim members.<sup>114</sup> By November of that year the situation had deteriorated to such an extent, however, that the organization could no longer continue its work. According to the above-mentioned report to the *Hilâl-i Ahmer*, the organization decided to stop its activities temporarily by that time because "the procurement of food was difficult and the organization was increasingly experiencing problems in feeding those registered with them".<sup>115</sup>

That the situation had become increasingly severe was also recognized by the authorities. Despite all the public and private initiatives, there were so many people in dire need of food in Istanbul by 1917 that also (semi-)official organizations such as the Red Crescent and the CUP started to set up soup kitchens. A charitable committee of women in Bebek chaired by the wife of

<sup>112</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti'nden", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 17 Nisan 1332 (30 April 1916), p.2; "Asker âilelerine erzâk tevzi", *Tanîn*, 17 Nisan 1332 (30 April 1916), p.4; "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti'nden", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 24 Nisan 1332 (7 May 1916), p.2; "Asker Âilelerine muâvenet", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 16 Haziran 1332 (29 June 1916), p.2.

<sup>113</sup> "Zâbitân ve mensûbîn-i askeriye âilelerinin nazar-ı dikkatine", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 12 Nisan 1332 (25 April 1916), p.2. When the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* had to stop its distribution, this committee seems to have taken over its distribution centres. "Asker âilelerine erzâk tevzi", *Tanîn*, 8 Teşrîn-i evvel/October 1333/1917, p.4; "Âile Erzâk Komisyonundan", *Tanîn*, 28 Teşrîn-i sâni/November 1917, p.3.

<sup>114</sup> Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 168/70, 13 Mayıs 1332 (25 May 1916); BOA, Dosya Usûlü İrâdeler Tasnîfi, 47/1-3, 20C1334 (23 April 1916); BOA, Nişân Defterleri, no. 32, Hilâl-i Ahmer Madalyaları, pp.7-10.

In December 1917, these women (Nuriye Canbolat, İrfân Bedri, Hayriye Talât, Sabiha Nurî, Didâr Ârif, Hâlet Zekî, Meliha Kasım İzzeddin, Celile Hikmet, Hâdiye Selim Sırrı, Emîne Reşid) received the ribbon going with the medal which for an unclear reason had been forgotten earlier. BOA, Dosya Usûlü İrâdeler Tasnîfi, 47/106, 8Ra1336 (23 December 1917); BOA, Nişân Defterleri, no. 33, Hilâl-i Ahmer Madalyaları, [pp. 62-63].

The two daughters of Liman von Sanders received a Şefkat Nişanı of the second degree in December 1915 and a silver Hilâl-i Ahmer Medal in June 1916 not for their work with the organization, but for their work at the Hospital of the Military School. BOA, Nişân Defterleri, no. 34, Şefkat Nişân-i Hümayun irâde-i seniye defteri, 5; BOA, Nişân Defterleri, no. 32, Hilâl-i Ahmer Madalyaları, pp. 17-18.

<sup>115</sup> Türk Kızılayı Arşivi, 988/4, 22 Haziran 1335 (22 June 1919). See also Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvîm - 4 -*, [İstanbul], 1918, pp. 175-176.

Cevat Pasha had opened such an institution in Bebek in November 1916.<sup>116</sup> In March 1917 the CUP opened its first “family kitchen” (*âile matbahı*) to distribute food and bread to the needy.<sup>117</sup> By April 1917 the Committee announced that it planned to open 40 kitchens to feed more than 100,000 people and a *Âile Matbahları Müdiriyet-i Umûmiyesi* (General Directorate of Family Kitchens) was established.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile organizations from the Christian and Jewish communities in town started to found soup kitchens as well.<sup>119</sup> According to a rough census made on 24 May 1917, there were about 710,000 persons in need of food and other materials in Istanbul besides military, foreigners and nursing children. In July 1917 the president of the organization in charge of the food provisioning in Istanbul announced that he planned to set up soup-kitchens for a total of 200,000 persons.<sup>120</sup> The Red Crescent, however, became by far the largest provider of cooked food. After it had decided in February 1917 to establish soup kitchens,<sup>121</sup> it managed to open 12 of them in various parts of Istanbul between 1 March 1917 and the end of January 1921, some of which were set up only for a brief period after a large fire. The six kitchens that were open for a longer period distributed a total of approximately 35,5 million bowls of food during that period. This amounts to an average of somewhat more than 25,000 bowls per day, only a drop in an ocean.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>116</sup> “Eröffnung der Suppenküche in Bebek”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 26 November 1916, p.3. A few years earlier, in November 1913, the *Teâlî-i Nisvân Cemiyeti* had announced that it wanted to open a soup kitchen in Gedikpaşa. Whether or not this soup kitchen was ever materialized remains unknown. “Teâlî-i Nisvân Cemiyeti’nden”, *Tanîn*, 19 Teşrin-i evvel 1329 (1 November 1913), p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> “Âile matbahı küşâdı”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 10 Mart 1333 (10 March 1917), p.2.

<sup>118</sup> “Die Volksküche des Ausschusses ‘Einheit und Fortschritt,’” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. April 1917, p.4; “Âile Matbahları Müdiriyet-i Umûmiyesi’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 27 Nisan/April 1333/1917, p.2; “Eröffnung einer neuen Volksküche”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 12. Mai 1917, p.3.

<sup>119</sup> “Les cuisines populaires”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 11 Août 1917, p.3; “Cuisine populaire de Moda”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 4 Septembre 1917, p.4; “Cuisines populaires”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 6 Mart 1918, p.3; “La cérémonie de la cuisine populaire”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 21 Mars 1918, 3; “Cuisines populaires”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 23 Mars 1918, 3; “Les cuisines populaires”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 20 Avril 1918, p.3; “Die Volksküchen”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 8. März 1918, p.3; “Die Volksküchen”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 9. März 1918, p.5; “Eine neue Volksküche”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 23. März 1918, p.3.

<sup>120</sup> Toprak, Zafer, *İttihad – Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye’de Devletçilik 1914-1918*, Homer Kitabevi, İstanbul 2003, pp.142-143.

<sup>121</sup> “Volksküche des Roten Halbmonds”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27 Februar 1917, p.3; “Hilâl-i Ahmer’in hayırlı bir teşebbüsü”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 15 Şubat 1332 (28 February 1917), p.2; “Hilâl-i Ahmer’in hayırlı bir teşebbüsü”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Mart 1333 (1 March 1917), p.2.

<sup>122</sup> “Die erste Volksküche des Roten Halbmonds...”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 2 März 1917, p.3; “Hilâl-i Ahmer Aşhânesi’nin küşâdı”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 2 Mart 1333 (2 March 1917), p.2; “Volksküche”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10 März 1917, 3; “Aşhânelerin tevzi”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 10 Mart 1333 (10 March 1917), p.2; “Hilâl-i Ahmer’in ikinci aşhânesi”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 26 Mart

Despite the problems in the procuring of food the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* tried to continue its activities albeit on a much more modest scale. According to the 1918 Almanac of the Ottoman Red Crescent's Women's Committee, which was supposedly prepared in the course of 1917, the organization had started to distribute lunches to 50 school children at four different neighborhoods, "Fatih, Eyüp, Feriköy, and Beşiktaş", while it also paid the school expenses for 15 students. It also (financially) supported the Kadirga Birth Clinic to ensure that it could continue to assist the poor wives of soldiers in arms.<sup>123</sup> By January 1918, the members of the organization had donated three milk cows<sup>124</sup> to the children's hospital to ensure the daily delivery of fresh milk for its patients<sup>125</sup> and in February it opened a soup kitchen where school children, the children of soldiers and others could obtain a meal.<sup>126</sup> In May it started to distribute food to schools to provide lunches for indigent day students.<sup>127</sup> According to the report in the *Türk Kızılayı* Archives, 4,500 kilo's of olives, grapes and figs were thus distributed to the school children and to the victims of the large Fatih fire of early June 1918. Moreover, 5,000 lira and food were donated to the committee in charge of the victims of the fire as well as 5,000 lira to the *Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Dâr-üs-sınaası* (Red Crescent Crafts Home) to educate and employ the wives and daughters of soldiers.<sup>128</sup>

It remains unclear what happened to the organization after the summer of 1918 and whether it, for example, participated in the *Millî Kongre* (National

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1333 (26 March 1917), p.2; "Üsküdar Hilâl-i Ahmer aşhânesi küşâdı", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 26 Mart 1333 (26 March 1917), 2; "Die Volksküchen des Roten Halbmonds", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 26 März 1917, 3; "Die Volksküche des Roten Halbmonds", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27 März 1917, 2; "Yeni bir Hilâl-i Ahmer aşhânesi", *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 2 Haziran/June 1333/1917, 2; "Bu hafta", *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1351, 7 Haziran 1917, 420; *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umûmisi Tarafından 1339 Senesi Hilâl-i Ahmer Meclis-i Umûmisine Takdîm Edilen (1335-1338) Dört Senelik Devresine Ait Rapor*, İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsi, 1339/1923, p.104 as reproduced in Safiye Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914-1923)" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, İstanbul University, 2005), p.436.

<sup>123</sup> Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvîm - 4 -*, [İstanbul], 1918, pp.175-176. See also, "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Cemiyeti", *Vakit*, 14 Şubat 1918, p.2.

<sup>124</sup> The Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi, *Takvîm - 4 -*, [İstanbul], 1918, pp. 175-176 refers to two cows only.

<sup>125</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti'nin yeni bir muâveneti", *Tanîn*, 12 Kânûn-ı sâni/January 1333/1918, p.3.

<sup>126</sup> "Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Cemiyeti", *Vakit*, 14 Şubat 1918, p.2. "Cuisines populaires", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 14 Février 1918, p.3; "Volksküche", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 14. Februar 1918, p.5.

<sup>127</sup> "Muhtâç-ı muâvenet nehârî talebeye", *Tanîn*, 5 Mayıs/May 1334/1918, p.4; "L'association de Yardemci Hanemler [sic!]", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 31 Mai 1918, p.3.

<sup>128</sup> *Türk Kızılayı Arşivi*, 988/4, 22 Haziran 1335 (22 June 1919). See also "Don généreux", *Lloyd Ottoman*, 10 Juin 1918, 3; "Spende des Frauenvereins", *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 10. Juni 1918, p.3.

Congress), a conglomerate of associations formed in the direct aftermath of the First World War joining forces in protest to the outcome of the Armistice of Moudros.

### Conclusion

Ottoman Muslim women belonged to the “new social groups” referred to by Watts, which were brought into public life through the creation of charitable organizations in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although these women may have had a genuine interest in the needy men, women and children they took care of, the main argument behind doing this work was that they regarded this work to be part of their duty as true citizens. Their concept of citizenship was imbued with a sense of duty rather than a sense of right. As such their activities in charitable organizations were regarded to be the civil counterpart of men’s military duty: the “community” of women which was created through the voluntary mobilization of female civilians in civil associations formed the counterpart of the “community” of mobilized and conscripted male military.

In the case of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* this aspect is even more accentuated: the women participating in the organization were almost all the wives and daughters of high military officers and officials of a state at war. As such they took care of the families of those men, who their husbands had taken to war. Through this organization, the state incorporated the wives of its military and civil elite and their activities and turned them into “a service elite of civil volunteers”<sup>129</sup> whose activities could be regarded as an extension of the official state support. In fact, it seems that the state, directly and indirectly, contributed substantially to the organization. The patronage of Nâciye Sultan, the wife of the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, and a member of the Ottoman dynasty, both representatives of the Ottoman state, and her active participation in, for example, the inauguration of the wooden cannon, contributed further to the visible interconnection of the organization with that state.

Through their associational activities, the women of the organization did not enter the male, public sphere, but they rather created a counter-public sphere separately from that of men.<sup>130</sup> During the second decade of the twentieth

<sup>129</sup> Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*, p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> The term “counter-public” is borrowed from Fraser. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, *Social Text*, 25/26, 1990, pp. 56-80.

century, Ottoman Muslim women were, not unlike voluntary women in other countries, able to claim this counter-public sphere by extending their role as mothers of their own family to that as the nurturers and care-takers of a larger unit. Acting "within the parameters of cultural convention" as performers of caring labor,<sup>131</sup> the members of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* were able to "domesticate the public", while they, by their connection to the state through their husbands, also contributed to the constitution of a notion of the state as caring.<sup>132</sup>

Both the members of the organization and its beneficiaries seem to have belonged to various ethno-religious groups within the Ottoman Empire. About 25% of the persons receiving assistance between the start of the distribution of food by the organization and the time they had to halt these activities were reportedly non-Muslim. As such it followed the official state policy of Ottomanism. In this it differed from the more private women's organizations established by Ottoman Muslim women,<sup>133</sup> whose activities to a large extent explicitly were directed at the needy from the own ethno-religious group, that is, Turkish women and girls, whose Turkishness was more or less defined by their being Muslims.

While the "community" of conscripted men of whom Enver Pasha was in charge went beyond the traditional boundaries of the (local) community an Ottoman subject belonged to, the "community" of the members of the *Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti* and their beneficiaries were both limited to the local level. This seems to be characteristic for voluntary charitable organizations of women not only in the Ottoman Empire as also Lewis notices.<sup>134</sup> Writing about the development of a welfare state in Britain, she argues that local government and the voluntary sector were conceptualized as extensions of family and neighborhood, whereas national politics and policy-making were not. Although the situation in the Ottoman Empire was completely different, it might be possible to draw a parallel. Ottoman Muslim women may

<sup>131</sup> C.f. Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, etc. 2004, pp. 138-139.

<sup>132</sup> C.f. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*, p. 7.

<sup>133</sup> Such as, for example, the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* and the *Osmanlı ve Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*.

<sup>134</sup> Jane Lewis, "Gender, the family and women's agency in the building of 'welfare states': the British case", *Social History*, XIX/1, 1994, pp.38-55. The Ottoman (Muslim) women who participated in the male dominated national organizations, such as the Red Crescent, the National Defense Organization or the Fleet Organization, in general, did so through the establishment of local, auxiliary branches with often well circumscribed (feminine) tasks and duties.

have limited their activities to the local level, because the local level of the “lived” or “experienced” community was conceptualized as an extension of family and neighborhood and thus as a geographical space safe and permissible for women.

So, while Ottoman Muslim women definitely belonged to the new social groups which according to Watt and Marwick entered public life as a result of the development of associational life and of war, this did not mean that this was the same public life as that of men. It rather was a public life distinct both in content, scope and geography from its male counterpart. By consciously drawing women into this public life, though, the Ottoman state was able to create a (gendered) notion of itself as a caring state. A caring state not only for its Muslim inhabitants, but also for its non-Muslim inhabitants.

**Table 1:** Number of families and persons receiving food from the *Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*

		Number of families	Number of persons	Average number of persons per family	Source
First month of existence	Total	150	520	3,47	<sup>135</sup>
22 Jan 1915	Total	297			<sup>136</sup>
End of Jan 1915	Total	721	2,000	2,77	<sup>137</sup>
End of Feb early March 1915	Total	> 3,000	> 10,000	3,33	<sup>138</sup>
Last week of	Eyüp	5,096	10,408	2,04	<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> “Müesser-i hamiyet ve şefkat”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (14 January 1915), p.5;

“Für die Familien der türkischen Soldaten”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 17. Januar 1915, p.4.

<sup>136</sup> “Bir fazilet dersi”, *İçtihat*, 126, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.462.

<sup>137</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Servet-i Fünûn*, 1234, 15 Kânûn-ı sâni 1330 (28 January 1915), p.179.

<sup>138</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 25 Şubat 1330 (10 March 1915), p.3.

March 1915					
End of April 1915	Total	12,000	30,000	2,5	<sup>140</sup>
Mid May 1915	Kadıköy		3,545		<sup>141</sup>
Mid May 1915	Bebek		2,305		<sup>142</sup>
End of June 1915	Nişantaşı	2,244			<sup>143</sup>
Beginning of Oct 1915	İstanbul	7,000			<sup>144</sup>
Beginning of Oct 1915	Total	15,000	37,000	2,47	<sup>145</sup>
End of Nov 1915	Total	10,000	25,000	2,50	<sup>146</sup>
Jan – Dec 1915	İstanbul	8,084	21,216	2,62	<sup>147</sup>
	Beyoğlu	3,942	10,714	2,72	
	Üsküdar	2,354	6,387	2,71	
	Boğaziçi	999	2,697	2,70	

<sup>139</sup> “Asker âilelerine yardım”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 20 Mart 1331 (2 April 1915), p.4.

<sup>140</sup> “Asker âilelerine”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 13 Nisan 1331 (26 April 1915), p.2.

<sup>141</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 1 Mayıs 1331 (14 May 1915), p.2.

<sup>142</sup> “Asker âilelerine tevziât”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 6 Mayıs 1331 (19 May 1915), p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> “Erzâk tevziî”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Haziran 1331 (27 June 1915), p.2; “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 16 Haziran 1331 (29 June 1915), p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> “Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti”, *Tanîn*, 21 Eylül 1331 (4 October 1915), p.2; “Secours aux familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 4 Octobre 1915, p.3; “Asker âilelerine muâvenet”, *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p.4.

<sup>145</sup> “Asker âilelerine muâvenet”, *Tanîn*, 22 Eylül 1331 (5 October 1915), p.4. *Lloyd Ottoman* mentions 10,000 families and more than 35,000 persons. “Les secours aux familles des soldats”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 7 Octobre 1915, p.3. The figures mentioned by *Tanîn* seem more likely, though, given the average size of the families accounted based on the figures given earlier.

<sup>146</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 14 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (27 November 1915), p.2; “Hilfsverein der Damen”, *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 27. November 1915, p.3; “L’association des dames au secours”, *Lloyd Ottoman*, 27 Novembre 1915, p.3.

<sup>147</sup> “Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Heyeti’nden”, *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 22 Teşrîn-i sâni 1331 (5 December 1915), p.2.

	Total	15,379	41,014	2,67	
April 1916	Total	25,000			<sup>148</sup>
Jan 1915 - Nov 1916	Total		65,491		<sup>149</sup>

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