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**Poor Ottoman Turkish women during World War I:
women's experiences and politics in everyday life,
1914-1923**

Ikbal Elif Mahir Mahir-Metinsoy

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EUROPÉENNES**

Cultures et Sociétés en Europe

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Ikbal Elif MAHIR METINSOY

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**Les femmes défavorisées ottomanes
turques pendant la Première Guerre
mondiale**

**Les expériences des femmes et la politique
féminine dans la vie quotidienne, 1914-1923**

**[Poor Ottoman Turkish Women during World
War I : Women's Experiences and Politics in
Everyday Life, 1914-1923]**

THÈSE dirigée par :

M. DUMONT Paul

Mme. KOKSAL Duygu

Professeur des universités, Université de Strasbourg

Professeur associé HDR, Université de Boğaziçi

RAPPORTEURS :

M. GEORGEON François

M. GRANDHOMME Jean-Noël

M. TOPRAK Zafer

Directeur de recherche émérite, CNRS

Maître de conférences HDR, Université de Strasbourg

Professeur des universités, Université de Boğaziçi

AUTRES MEMBRES DU JURY :

M. KARAKISLA Yavuz Selim

Professeur assistant HDR, Université de Boğaziçi

This Ph.D. dissertation was performed under the joint supervision of Prof. Dr. Paul Dumont and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duygu Köksal.

Ce travail de thèse a été réalisé dans le cadre d'une co-tutelle sous la direction du Prof. Dr. Paul Dumont et du Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duygu Köksal.

Prof. Dr. Paul DUMONT

Directeur du Département d'études turques
Faculté des Langues et des Cultures Etrangères
Département d'études turques
Le Patio. Bât. 4
22, rue René Descartes
F-67084 STRASBOURG Cedex
Tél : +33 (0)3 68 85 65 99
Tél 2 : +33 (0)3 68 85 60 95 (secr.)
E-mail : pdumont@unistra.fr

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duygu KOKSAL

The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Bogaziçi University
34342 Bebek-Istanbul / Turkey
Tél.: +90-212-359 66 45
Fax : +90-212-265 80 03 (Atatürk Institute)
E-mail: koksald@boun.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

İkbal Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Poor Ottoman Turkish Women during World War I: Women’s Experiences and Politics in Everyday Life, 1914-1923”

This dissertation examines the social impact of World War I in the Ottoman Empire on ordinary poor Turkish women and their everyday response to the adverse wartime conditions and the state policies concerning them. Based on new archival sources giving detailed information about the voice, experience and agency of these women and based on the history from below approach, this study focuses on poor, underprivileged and working Turkish women’s everyday experiences, especially their struggle against and perception of wartime conditions, mobilization and state policies about them. By doing so, it contributes to filling the great gap in late Ottoman historiography and women studies, which rarely examine ordinary women and their everyday problems and struggles for survival and rights. This monograph, in this respect, is centered on two major themes. First, it scrutinizes how ordinary women experienced the war and argues that, in contrast to the modernization accounts that overlook women’s sufferings at the cost of post-war developments in women’s rights and liberties and of upper and middle class educated women’s activities and experiences, ordinary Turkish women had great difficulties during the war years. In this regard, it presents a major caveat to accounts accepting the war years as a period during which Turkish women monolithically experienced a gradual liberty and “emancipation.” Second, focusing on their everyday activities to deal with difficulties, problems and sufferings, it brings the undiscovered and unexamined forms and aspects of women’s critical and subjective views, their everyday politics to circumvent the adverse conditions and state policies, to make their voices heard, to pursue their rights, and to receive government support into the light.

Keywords: World War I, women’s history, Ottoman women, poor women, ordinary women, social impact of the war, home front, women’s everyday politics, social policy.

ÖZET

İkbal Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Yoksul Osmanlı Türk Kadınları: Gündelik Yaşamda Kadınların Deneyimleri ve Politikaları, 1914-1923”

Bu doktora tezi Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nın sıradan yoksul Türk kadınları üzerindeki sosyal etkilerini ve kadınların olumsuz savaş koşullarına ve kendileriyle ilgili devlet politikalarına yönelik tavırlarını incelemektedir. Kadınların sesleri, deneyimleri ve tarihsel rolleri hakkında detaylı bilgiler veren yeni arşiv kaynaklarına ve aşağıdan tarih yaklaşımına dayanan bu tez yoksul, temel sosyal haklardan yoksun ve çalışan Türk kadınlarının gündelik deneyimlerine, özellikle de savaş koşulları, seferberlik ve devlet politikalarını algılayış ve bunlarla mücadele biçimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu tez, sıradan kadınları ve onların gündelik problemleriyle hayatta kalma ve hak mücadelelerini çok az inceleyen Osmanlı tarihçiliği ve kadın araştırmalarındaki büyük bir boşluğu doldurmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu tez, bu anlamda, iki temel temaya odaklanmaktadır. Öncelikle, sıradan kadınların savaşı nasıl deneyimlediklerini mercek altına almakta ve onların çektikleri acıları savaş sonrası kadın hak ve özgürlüklerindeki ve üst ve orta sınıf eğitimli kadınların etkinlik ve deneyimlerindeki gelişmelerin bir bedeli olarak algılayıp gözden kaçıran modernleşme anlatılarının tersine sıradan kadınların savaş yıllarında büyük güçlükler çektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, Türk kadınlarının savaş yıllarında bütün olarak görece bir “özgürleşme” yaşadıklarını kabul eden anlatılara önemli bir uyarıdır. İkincil olarak, bu tez, kadınların zorluklarla gündelik mücadelelerine odaklanarak kadınların eleştirel ve öznel tutumlarının ve olumsuz koşullar ve devlet politikalarından kaçmak, seslerini duyurmak, haklarının peşine düşmek ve destek görebilmek amaçlı gündelik politikalarının keşfedilmemiş biçim ve yönlerini gün ışığına çıkarmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Birinci Dünya Savaşı, kadın tarihi, Osmanlı kadını, yoksul kadınlar, sıradan kadınlar, savaşın sosyal etkileri, iç cephe, kadınların gündelik yaşam politikaları, sosyal politika.

RÉSUMÉ

İkbal Elif Mahir Metinsoy, “Les femmes défavorisées ottomanes turques pendant la Première Guerre mondiale : les expériences des femmes et la politique féminine dans la vie quotidienne, 1914-1923”

Cette thèse de doctorat porte sur l’expérience de la vie quotidienne des femmes défavorisées turques (les femmes de la classe ouvrière, les paysannes, les femmes à faibles revenus, les migrantes pauvres, les veuves de guerre) pendant la Première Guerre mondiale dans l’Empire ottoman jusqu’à la signature du traité de paix final à Lausanne en 1923. Elle examine à la fois les souffrances et les réactions quotidiennes des femmes ordinaires face à l’impact social de la guerre, aux mesures de l’État concernant les femmes, aux conditions négatives dans lesquelles elles vivaient et au traitement défavorable qu’elles ont reçu. À cet égard, cette thèse étudie les expériences de guerre des femmes, leurs stratégies pour survivre, leurs négociations avec l’État et leur résistance contre les difficultés socio-économiques, la mobilisation de guerre et autres pratiques exploitantes, oppressives et contraignantes dont elles souffraient dans la vie quotidienne.

L’argument principal de cette thèse est que les femmes turques défavorisées ont vécues des grandes difficultés pendant la guerre tout en devenant des actrices sociales et politiques importantes par leurs expériences quotidiennes de la mobilisation et leurs stratégies pour survivre et renforcer leurs pouvoirs. Cependant, la grande majorité des études historiques concernant les expériences de guerre des femmes dans l’Empire ottoman portent sur les femmes qui ont contribué à la mobilisation ou sur les activités des femmes des classes supérieures ou moyennes qui ont publié des journaux ou fondé des associations. Contrairement à ces études, cette thèse, basée sur l’analyse de nouveaux documents officiels des archives nationales turques, tente de lever le voile sur le rôle des femmes pauvres et ordinaires en tant

qu'actrices historiques qui avaient leurs propres buts, différents de ceux qui leurs étaient imposés par l'État et une société patriarcale. L'histoire de ces femmes est encore inconnue. L'objet principal de cette thèse est de contribuer à combler cette lacune.

Cette thèse de doctorat tente d'affirmer que les femmes turques n'ont pas eu un expérience de guerre homogène qui peut être expliquée par une certaine « émancipation » et que les luttes quotidiennes des femmes défavorisées pendant la Première Guerre mondiale faisaient aussi partie des luttes politiques de cette époque et eurent une influence sur les lois et les mesures concernant les femmes. Ces arguments sont fondés sur certaines approches théoriques qui ont été développées au cours des dernières décennies comme l'approche de l'histoire du genre, l'approche de l'histoire sociale de E. P. Thompson, la théorie et la méthodologie de l'école des « subaltern studies », les nouvelles approches pour définir le concept « politique » et le concept de « sphère publique », les outils théoriques qui ont été introduit par James C. Scott pour montrer les moyens subtils ou secrets de faire de la politique par les classes inférieurs contre les dirigeants et leur discours hégémonique et finalement les outils théoriques de l'histoire de la vie quotidienne (*Alltagsgeschichte*).

Cette étude souligne d'abord que malgré l'accent remarquable sur l'émancipation des femmes au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale dans la littérature, ces dernières ont perçu la guerre comme source de la pauvreté incroyable produisant famine, épidémies, migration, exploitation, harcèlement sexuel et la violence dans l'Empire ottoman et dans tous les autres pays combattants à des degrés divers.

Ensuite, cette thèse de doctorat montre que le mouvement des femmes avant la fondation de la République de Turquie et l'introduction du « féminisme d'État »

kémaliste ne peut pas être réduit aux activités organisées des femmes de la classe moyenne, éduquées et faisant partie de l'élite. Ce travail de doctorat renforce l'idée que les efforts inorganisés des femmes défavorisées étaient également importants. En examinant les diverses réactions des femmes pauvres face à la guerre, cette étude révèle que non seulement la participation des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre mais aussi leur résistance à celle-ci ont forcé les politiciens à les considérer comme des actrices importantes au cours du conflit.

Cette thèse de doctorat démontre aussi, par une lecture critique des documents officiels, que l'aide évidente des femmes défavorisées à la mobilisation de guerre ou leur utilisation d'un discours nationaliste, religieux ou patriarcal pouvaient avoir quelques raisons pragmatiques.

Finalement, cette étude confirme que dans diverses régions de l'Empire ottoman les femmes pauvres turques avaient eu une expérience plus difficile et plus brutale de la guerre que les femmes de la plupart des pays combattants de l'Occident.

La géographie étudiée dans cette étude concerne surtout l'Anatolie et la Thrace. Entre les groupes des femmes ottomanes de diverses ethnies et religions cette thèse de doctorat examine seulement les femmes turques. Finalement, et afin de ne pas isoler les femmes turques des femmes des autres pays belligérants, il nous a semblé nécessaire de mener un certain nombre de comparaisons, sur une géographie élargie pour mieux comprendre les problèmes similaires rencontrés par les femmes d'autres régions. Les sources utilisées pour cette thèse de doctorat sont principalement les documents des archives nationales turques comme les Archives Ottomanes du Premier Ministre (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*), les Archives du Croissant Rouge Turc (*Türk Kızılay Arşivi*) et les Archives de la Direction de l'Histoire Militaire et des Etudes Stratégiques de l'État-major Général Turc (*Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve*

Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi). Par ailleurs, on a utilisé les rapports, les mémoires des observateurs contemporaines, la littérature de cette époque, journaux et magazines, et les documents visuels comme les photographies, cartes postales et caricatures qui représentent les femmes défavorisées.

Après le chapitre d'introduction de cette thèse de doctorat, le chapitre deux porte sur l'impact de la Première Guerre mondiale sur le front intérieur des pays combattants, tandis que le chapitre trois étudie l'impact économique de la guerre sur la société ottoman, les conséquences démographiques des pertes humaines et la mobilisation de guerre et la propagande concernant les femmes. Le chapitre quatre présente la lutte des femmes contre la faim et les pénuries ; le chapitre cinq examine les aides financières aux familles des soldats et la perception des femmes de ces mesures et leurs exigences et leurs plaintes sur eux ; le chapitre six se concentre sur les problèmes liés au logement et à l'éducation des enfants et la lutte quotidienne des femmes pour percevoir les aides (logement et maternité) ; le chapitre sept analyse les problèmes des femmes pauvres, et leurs réactions, dans le cadre professionnel tels que l'exploitation, les conditions négatives de travail, les bas salaires, les pratiques discriminatoires, le mauvais traitement et les pertes d'emplois dans les régions occupées par l'ennemi ; finalement, le chapitre huit traite de la résistance des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre : conscription de leurs hommes, impôts de guerre élevés, réquisitions des outils agricoles et des animaux, obligation du service agricole et contrôle d'État de la moralité des femmes et la vie conjugale.

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Map 1. Ottoman Provinces in 1914



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores ordinary Turkish women's everyday experience of World War I in the Ottoman Empire until the final peace treaty was signed in 1923. It focuses on not only women in the capital city but also in Anatolia and eastern Thrace. It examines the history of the largest group of civilians on the Ottoman home front who had sent their men to the front and who had become very important for the war mobilization as labor force or as wives and mothers at home. It sheds light on two different but interrelated aspects of ordinary Turkish women's experience that have not been examined yet in Ottoman-Turkish history. It scrutinizes both the suffering and daily responses of ordinary women to the social impact of the war, the state policies concerning them, the adverse conditions in which they lived, and the unfavorable treatment of them. In this regard, this is a sort of monographic survey of these wartime experiences of ordinary women, most of whom were lower-class and poor, their sufferings, survival and resistance forms, and negotiation strategies in the face of war-related economic and social hardships, war mobilization, and other exploitive, oppressive and restrictive practices that afflicted them in daily life.

The main argument of this dissertation is that ordinary lower-class poor Turkish women faced great difficulties in the war years, but became important social and political actors of the war through their everyday experience of war mobilization and their subjective strategies for survival and empowerment. Nevertheless, historians generally have ignored most of their agency. Even those studies on Ottoman-Turkish women's agency in this period generally have been captured by the influence of the modernization paradigm and nationalism. These studies have

conventionally focused on upper and middle class, educated women. Taking their experience into account exclusively, scholarly accounts generally have accepted the war years as a “progressive” phase for the “emancipation” of Turkish women through their contribution to work life, mobilization efforts, or through the limited secular reforms undertaken by the Unionist Ottoman government. Surely, World War I provided an important experience which helped some privileged and educated women to claim or acquire comparatively further civil, political or economic rights and positions. However, for the majority of Ottoman women the war, in fact, was a disaster.¹ In this sense, this study attempts to discover this lost and unwritten chapter of ordinary women’s stories in their own terms which have been overshadowed and overlooked by modernist, nationalist and elitist narratives so far. By doing this, what it unveils is the ambiguities, contradictions and mostly new problems, for ordinary women, posed by socio-economic upheavals, transformation, and modernization in the war years which were mostly praised as a step forward the formation of a new secular nation-state and of emancipated women.²

On the other hand, women’s war time experiences consisted of not only disastrous deprivations, sufferings and difficulties. These were accompanied by women’s struggles for survival and economic rights. In this regard, it is important to remember that the development of the women’s movement for citizenship rights had a long process in the Western context that was not restricted to women’s struggle for political emancipation, but included their fight for socio-economic rights and their

¹ For the wartime reforms concerning women, see Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, 3rd ed. (London; New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1989), pp. 31-33.

² For critical accounts which discuss the complex, contradictory and ambiguous characteristic of modernity for women and feminism in the Middle East, see Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

everyday struggles for survival as well.³ Unfortunately, women's, especially ordinary women's social and economic struggles have not been noticed in most of the historical accounts on Turkish women. This shows itself significantly in the inadequate scholarly interest on lower-class women's World War I experience. However, the war forced many low-income women more than ever to deal with adverse economic conditions, state bureaucracy and to create their own strategies to cope with the increasing hardships. Women's bodies as workforce or as families of the soldiers became an integral part of wartime politics. Despite this political importance of the great masses of lower-class women, the historical accounts of wartime women's experience in the Ottoman Empire have been restricted to women who contributed to the war mobilization and to the associational and publishing activities of upper or middle-class women.⁴ This was partly because ordinary women did not pursue organized and intellectual activities, as elite women did. Another reason for this is the difficulty of locating records of lower-class women's life experiences since it is hard to access to the historical sources about them.

In this regard, this dissertation aims to broaden the horizons of the historiography on Turkish women by going beyond the history of the middle class and educated women and by scrutinizing lower-class Ottoman-Turkish women's daily experiences and their everyday politics to circumvent the adverse conditions, state policies, exploitation and oppression, on the basis of new archival sources that give detailed information about these women and reach us their voice. Rather than accepting the World War I years as a period during which Turkish women

³ For the account of this process of women's movements in the European context, see Gisela Bock, *Avrupa Tarihinde Kadınlar*, trans. Zehra Aksu Yilmazer (İstanbul: Literatür, 2004), pp. 149-201; and Riot-Sarcey, *Histoire du féminisme* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2002), pp. 54-75.

⁴ For exemplary works that emphasizes the importance of class in writing women's history, see Leonore Davidoff, *Feminist Tarihyazımında Sınıf ve Cinsiyet*, ed. Ayşe Durakbaşa, trans. Zerrin Ateşer and Selda Somuncuoğlu and with a foreword by Ayşe Durakbaşa; and an article by Ferhunde Özbay, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009); and Aksu Bora, *Kadınların Sınıfı: Ücretli Ev Emeği ve Kadın Öznelliğinin İnşası*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), pp. 53-58.

monolithically experienced a gradual liberty and “emancipation” regardless of their social and economic status, this study emphasizes the socio-economic problems, pressures, exploitation, and patriarchal restrictions that ordinary women endured and struggled against in this period. In other words, this dissertation attempts to shed light on lower-class women’s role as historical actors who had their own subjective goals other than those imposed on them by the state and a patriarchal society. Therefore, it brings into light the lower-class and poor women’s roles and their indirect influence in politics through their everyday struggles, which had an impact on the formation of women’s citizenship rights in the long-run. I argue that women were not emancipated automatically by the war; however, women’s sufferings and accompanying struggles for survival forced the governments to consider them more than ever before due to their indirect political importance.

On the other hand, this study does not argue that ordinary lower-class women were as organized as Ottoman feminists in attaining their political rights. Nevertheless, it attempts to give the background of the future developments of the Republican period and Turkish feminism later on by examining the wartime activities and strategies of the impoverished ordinary women. The stories of the disadvantaged women include vital and undiscovered information about the changing social structure and the problems that ordinary people endured in a period in which the Ottoman Empire collapsed. However, the ordinary women have been underrepresented in the scholarly works on the World War I until now. The primary object of this dissertation is to contribute to fill this gap.

Problems with the Existing Literature

There are several reasons why the existing literature on the wartime period from 1914 to 1923 has failed to notice the historical experience of lower-class women. In fact, not only lower class women, but also the experiences of lower class men, children and soldiers await detailed examination. The main reason for this is that works of social history on this period are very few, compared to political, economic, diplomatic and military history accounts. Furthermore, for long decades the official nationalist historiography mainly concentrated on writing the history of the National Struggle, which resulted in the emergence of the Turkish Republic, rather than focusing on the social consequences of World War I, triggering the final developments that resulted with the demise of Ottoman Empire.

However, the lack of interest in the war experiences of poor women is related not only to these general characteristics of historical writing. Although in recent decades new works have emerged on the Ottoman women's movement, even the feminist literature that has studied the late-Ottoman and early-Republican period largely have remained silent about the historical experience of ordinary women due to some methodological and ideological reasons.

Until the 1980s, literature on the social and economic consequences of World War I on Ottoman society remained rather limited. A book by Ahmed Emin [Yalman] titled *Turkey in the World War* was the first study on this subject written by a Turkish scholar and journalist, and have remained the sole comprehensive work for many decades.⁵ Outside this book, there were a few second hand contemporary accounts, albeit less comprehensive, to trace the wartime social developments and

⁵ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).

conditions in Turkey. A few American researchers wrote books on social and cultural landscape of Turkey in the early 1920s. *Constantinople To-day or the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life*, written under the direction of Clarence Richard Johnson, who was a professor of sociology at Robert College in İstanbul, described the social conditions in İstanbul in 1920.⁶ One year later, American professors of the International College of İzmir also prepared a similar study on İzmir, with the title *A Survey of Some Social Conditions in Smyrna, Asia Minor – May 1921*.⁷ In addition to these two monographs, another study that gave information about the social developments during the World War I was *Modern Turkey: A Politico-Economic Interpretation, 1908-1923*, published in 1924, with the contributions of Ottoman and American experts on the Ottoman Empire under the editorship of Eliot Grinnell Mears.⁸

It was only after the 1980s that new works were published on the social and economic impact of the war in the Ottoman Empire. Some initial studies emphasized the wartime reforms of the Young Turk politicians. Zafer Toprak, in an article titled “The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918” showed how women and family became important parts of the politicians’ agenda during the Second Constitutional period and especially during the war years.⁹ Likewise, Feroz Ahmad in an article titled “War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-18” discussed the legal impact of the wartime reforms undertaken by the

⁶ Clarence Richard Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day or the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922).

⁷ Rifat N. Bali, ed., *A Survey of Some Social Conditions in Smyrna, Asia Minor - May 1921* (İstanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, [2009]).

⁸ Eliot Grinnell Mears, ed., *Modern Turkey: A Politico-Economic Interpretation, 1908-1923 Inclusive* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924).

⁹ Zafer Toprak, “The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918,” in *Première rencontre internationale sur l’Empire ottoman et la Turquie moderne*, ed. Edhem Eldem (İstanbul-Paris: Édition ISIS, 1991), pp. 441-452.

Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihâd ve Terakkî Cemiyeti*) on Ottoman society and to some extent on women.¹⁰

Wartime social conditions in the big cities constituted another issue in which scholars have been interested. In a volume of articles edited by Stéphane Yerasimos titled *Istanbul, 1914-1923: capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires* (İstanbul, 1914-1923: Capital of an Illusory World or the Agony of the Old Empires) social and cultural change in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1923 was studied.¹¹ Mehmet Temel also wrote on the social conditions in the Armistice period İstanbul, focusing on such phenomenon as food shortages, migrants, fires, gangs and banditry, epidemics and venereal diseases in his book *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu* (Social Conditions of Istanbul during the Occupation Years).¹² Furthermore, a book by Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923*, revealed important information about the socio-economic and political situation in İstanbul and to some extent the patriotic demonstrations and underground national resistance activities of middle and upper-class women in the city.¹³ Finally, Engin Berber examined the administrative developments in İzmir from the beginning of the Armistice to the occupation of the city by Greek army in *Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak: İzmir (30 Ekim 1918 – 15 Mayıs 1919)* (A County under the Shadow of the New Ten Thousands: İzmir, 30 October 1918 – 15 May 1919).¹⁴

¹⁰ Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-1918," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson (London: I. B. Tauris Co., 1993), pp. 265-286.

¹¹ Stéphane Yerasimos, ed., *Istanbul, 1914-1923: capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires* (Paris: Autrement, 1992).

¹² Mehmet Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998).

¹³ Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999).

¹⁴ Engin Berber, *Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak: İzmir (30 Ekim 1918 – 15 Mayıs 1919)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999).

The most informative and comprehensive accounts of the social history of the war period have been those studies which focused on the economic impact of World War I. A study by Vedat Eldem titled *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (The Economy of Ottoman Empire during the War and Armistice Years) on the economic impact of World War I and the National Struggle years; a book by Zafer Toprak titled *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye'de Devletçilik, 1914-1918* (İttihad-Terakki and World War I: War Economy and Statism in Turkey, 1914-1918); and an article by Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I" are the most important of these.¹⁵ All these studies provide important information to grasp the social and economic change and conditions and the state policies, which is vital for interpreting the wartime poverty of women in this study.

Another group of scholars are interested in the mobilization efforts of the Ottoman Empire, which also required the support of the Ottoman women who had sent their breadwinners to the front. Erol Köroğlu studied the impact of war propaganda during World War I in the literature of the time in his book *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I*.¹⁶ Mehmet Beşikçi also wrote on the Ottoman mobilization of manpower during World War I and its impact on state-society relations in his dissertation, "Between

¹⁵ Vedat Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994); Zafer Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye'de Devletçilik, 1914-1918* (İstanbul: Homer, 2003); and Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," in *The Economics of World War I*, ed. Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 112-136.

¹⁶ Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies: in the United States of America and Canada distributed by Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Voluntarism and Resistance: The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War.”¹⁷

Problems like food shortages, poverty, migration and epidemics due to the war also have been studied to some extent. Safiye Kıranlar wrote the history of social measures during the war years in her dissertation, “Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye’de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri, 1914-1923” (Welfare Work Activities in Turkey during the War Years, 1914-1923).¹⁸ Oya Dağlar Macar examined the wartime epidemics and measures against them in her book *War, Epidemics and Medicine in the Late Ottoman Empire (1912-1918)*.¹⁹ Likewise, Hikmet Özdemir studied the impact of wartime diseases on Ottoman military casualties in World War I in his book *The Ottoman Army, 1914-1918: Disease & Death on the Battlefield*.²⁰ The wartime migrations during World War I and the population exchange between Turks and Greeks that followed the war also have been examined in recent years in various studies.²¹ Finally, Stanford Shaw wrote the Ottoman Empire’s war experience from prelude to war to July 1916 in his two volumes book *The Ottoman Empire in World*

¹⁷ Mehmet Beşikçi, “Between Voluntarism and Resistance: The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War” (Ph. D. diss., Boğaziçi University, 2009).

¹⁸ Safiye Kıranlar, “Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye’de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914-1923)” (Ph.D. diss., İstanbul University, 2005).

¹⁹ Oya Dağlar-Macar, *War, Epidemics and Medicine in the Late Ottoman Empire (1912-1918)* (Haarlem; Netherlands: Turkestan and Azerbaijan Research Centre, 2008).

²⁰ Hikmet Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army, 1914-1918: Disease & Death on the Battlefield* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008).

²¹ For the migration of Muslim and Turks into the Anatolia and Thrace, see Tuncay Öğün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi: Vilayât-ı Şarkiye Mültecileri (1915-1923)* (Ankara: Babil Yayıncılık, 2004); and Erol Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele’de Türk Mültecileri: Vilayât-ı Şarkıyye ve Aydın Vilayeti Mültecileri, 1915-1923* (Ankara: Ebabil, 2007). For the population exchange between Turkey and Greece after World War I, see Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). See also Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1996).

War I, but the third volume in which he planned to study the Ottoman society during the war was not completed, since he passed away in 2006.²²

Undoubtedly, all of these studies provide partial and indirect knowledge on ordinary Ottoman-Turkish women by focusing on the social and economic conditions and the state policies, which surrounded and affected the women. However, ultimately these women have remained one of the least known subjects in this literature. As Murat Metinsoy first draws attention, the experiences and struggles of the Ottoman-Turkish ordinary people, specifically lower-class women during the World War I, have been barely touched in the Ottoman-Turkish historiography.²³

As for specific accounts on ordinary Ottoman-Turkish women during the war years, although few in number, there were some earlier studies, which motivated the writing of this dissertation. Ottoman working-class women's conditions during World War I were first discussed in 1918 by a German woman scholar, Charlotte Lorenz, in her work, "Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der arbeitenden Klasse" (The Women's Question in the Ottoman Empire with Special Reference to the Working Class).²⁴ This study remained the first and only specific account on lower class Ottoman-Turkish women until the recent years.

In the last ten years, Yavuz Selim Karakışla has written the history of working women and state policies regarding the employment of women in his

²² Stanford Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006-).

²³ Murat Metinsoy, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye: Savaş ve Gündelik Yaşam* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2007), pp. 20-21. He writes, although World War I and National Struggle caused a deep social transformation in Turkey, a social history of ordinary people and their everyday experiences in these extraordinary years have not been examined in detail in the lights of new methods and sources. Metinsoy states that although Turkish historians conventionally focus on especially the military and diplomatic aspects of the Great Offensive (*Büyük Taarruz*), little is known about preparation of this final battle and experiences of lower classes during the mobilization.

²⁴ Charlotte Lorenz, "Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der arbeitenden Klasse," *Die Welt des Islams*, Bd. 6, H. 3/4 (Dec. 31, 1918), pp. 72-214.

various works about the late-Ottoman period including World War I. His book *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire: Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, 1916-1923* examined Muslim women's entry into professional life in large numbers by being employed through the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (*Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*) during World War I. This is the only book written after the work of Lorenz on lower-class Turkish-Muslim women in the Great War.²⁵

Finally, although it is not a study of lower-class women, Fatma Türe's dissertation, "Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s" examined the popular obscene literature of the 1920s and revealed the concerns and fears of society due to the increasing sexual autonomy and potential moral decadence of Turkish women in those years.²⁶ Evidently, the problems regarding women's morality in the 1920s were to a large extent related to the legacy of the war, and they influenced many poor Turkish women.

It should be noted that not only historians but also feminist scholars have remained silent about Ottoman ordinary women. Works concerning the Ottoman women's struggle for their rights during the late-Ottoman and early-Republican period mainly have focused on some women writers, like the famous Turkish writer Halide Edib [Adivar], reforms in women's education, women's associations founded for patriotic and philanthropic goals, women's journals and periodicals, and changes in women's clothing.²⁷ Surely, many of these works reveal that there were

²⁵ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire: Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, 1916-1923* (İstanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2005).

²⁶ Düriye Fatma Türe, "Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s" (Ph. D. diss., Boğaziçi University, 2007).

²⁷ See for example, Serpil Çakır, "Bir Osmanlı Kadın Örgütü: Osmanlı Müdâfaa-ı Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti," *Tarih ve Toplum* 11, No. 66 (June, 1989), pp. 16-21; Serpil Çakır, "Osmanlı Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 45 (Spring 1989), pp. 91-97; Serpil Çakır, "Osmanlı Kadın Dernekleri," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 53 (Spring 1991), pp. 139-157; Şefika Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet*

considerable efforts by Ottoman women, though limited to the upper class and a small number of educated women, to attain some rights and acceptance prior to the Republican reforms concerning women.²⁸ They especially show that Turkish women did not attain their political rights only as an “endowment” of the Republican politicians.²⁹ However, while the ideological, cultural, legal and political struggle of middle and upper-class women were discovered in these studies, the struggle of lower-class Turkish women is not studied in detail. Even the feminist scholars have been under the influence of the conventional versions of the Ottoman-Turkish historiography, which regard the direct involvement in the organized movements or intellectual and publishing activities as the *sine qua non* of being historical agents.

This is also related to the methodological restrictions of making research on ordinary women such as difficulties in accessing to organized and reliable sources in the archives that give detailed data on women. Another main obstacle is related to conducting research on Muslim women in the Middle East with theoretical tools borrowed from the West. As Deniz Kandiyoti argues, the development in feminist scholarship has been integrated in studies about Middle Eastern women only partially and selectively, which primarily is due to “the historical connection between

Döneminde Türk Kadını (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1996); Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını: (1839-1923)* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1997); Leyla Kaplan, *Cemiyetlerde ve Siyasî Teşkilatlarda Türk Kadını (1908-1960)* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1998); Ayşe Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002); and Şefika Kurnaz, *Yenileşme Sürecinde Türk Kadını, 1839-1923* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2011). For a preliminary study, see Bernard Caporal, *Kemalizmde ve Kemalizm Sonrasında Türk Kadını (1919-1970)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1982).

²⁸ See for instance, Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1993); Şirin Tekeli, “Kadın Hareketi,” in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 4 (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1994), pp. 349-354; and Aynur Demirdirek, “In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women’s Movement,” trans. Zehra F. Arat, in *Deconstructing Images of “The Turkish Woman”*, ed. Zehra F. Arat (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 65-81.

²⁹ Zafer Toprak, “Halk Fırkası’ndan Önce Kurulan Parti: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 9, No. 51 (Mar., 1988), pp. 30-31; Ayşegül Yaraman, *Türkiye’de Kadınların Siyasal Temsili* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1999), pp. 39-50; Ayşegül Yaraman, *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine: Elinin Hamuruyla Özgürlük* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001); and Yaprak Zihnioglu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003).

feminism and nationalism” and “enduring legacy of concerns around the effects of cultural imperialism.”³⁰ In other words, the history of women also has remained under the influence of the nationalist, modernist and state-centered narrative, homogenizing women’s particular and different experiences and discouraging the exploration of local variables and class differences through grand narratives of social and national development and transformation.

Until now, scholars writing on Middle Eastern women have shown that these women were under a “dual hegemony,” by which is meant both the imperialist hegemony of the West and the patriarchal hegemony of their society.³¹ They have explained how women were accepted and depicted as the cultural bearers and symbols of national identity.³² Furthermore, they have revealed the particular difficulties of women in the colonized countries of Middle East in their struggle for rights in a political, cultural and ideological environment in which both the colonial rulers and the local elites strived to maintain gender hierarchies.³³ They have showed how some modernizing states devoted importance to the transformation of the Muslim family by adopting “state feminisms” in countries like Turkey and Iran in the interwar period.³⁴ However, while making these contributions, the subjects of history

³⁰ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Contemporary Feminist Scholarship and Middle East Studies,” in *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (London; New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1996), p. 18.

³¹ Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi, “Introduction: Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East Through Voice and Experience,” in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 1

³² See for example, Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2005).

³³ See for example, Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and Beth Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994).

³⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, “End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey,” in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 22-47; Mervat F. Hatem, “Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women’s Studies,” in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 63-87; and Ellen L. Fleischmann, “The

in their works has been mostly the modernizing-nationalist elite, intellectual-elite women as leaders of the women's movements, and the associational and intellectual activities of middle and upper-class women, like writing books, publishing women's periodicals, and founding women's associations.

In contrast with these ideological limits in writing the history of women in the Middle East, from 1970s onwards, feminist historians in Europe and the United States who have written women's history and gender history have produced works on a wide spectrum of issues, although these studies largely have been restricted to the Western context.³⁵ Revisionist works of some Western feminist scholars on the experiences of women during World War I have started to underline not only the emancipation of women through their contribution to the war mobilization and war work, but also the negative impact of the war on women in terms of economic problems that particularly influenced lower-class women, and the wartime patriarchal pressures and violence that women suffered.³⁶ However, because of the hegemony of the modernization paradigm and nationalism, combined with grand, homogenizing, elite-centered narratives or Marxian overemphasis on socio-economic transformation which has been assumed deterministically as a catalyst of the emergence of women's liberties and rights, women's specific experiences and

Other 'Awakening': The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940," in *ibid.*, pp. 89-139.

³⁵ For example, see George Duby and Michelle Perrot, eds., *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, 5 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1991-1992); Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, *Connecting Spheres: European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jess Wells, *Kadın Gözüyle Batı Avrupa'da Fahişeliğin Tarihi*, trans. Nesrin Arman, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 1997); and Yannick Ripa, *Les femmes, actrices de l'Histoire France, 1789-1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2004).

³⁶ For example, see Ute Daniel, *The War from within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1997); Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, ed., *1914-1918: combats de femmes: les femmes, pilier de l'effort de guerre* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2004); and Chantal Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre* ([Saint-Cloud]: 14-18 Éditions, 2011). For violence against women, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *L'enfant de l'ennemi, 1914-1918* (Paris: Aubier, 1995).

struggles have not been studied particularly in the historical literature on World War I.

A close look at the negative impact of the war shows that there was a great divergence between the real conditions of poor women and the depiction of them in the official discourse and press as “the honor of the country” and “devoted helpers of the country.” Yet, this negative impact of the war has not been studied for Ottoman women, and especially for Turkish women who were symbolized as the self-sacrificing “mothers of the nation.” Most of the works on World War I and the National Struggle periods rather emphasized women’s contributions to the war and their patriotic activities by taking the official sources and the limited number of middle and upper class women’s magazines for granted. What the historical writing generally have meant by the concept of “women’s agency” is either their self-denying contributions to the war effort or their intellectual activities. The conflicts and struggles between the lower class Turkish women and the Ottoman state and then the nationalist forces, their discontent with and resistance to the state policies, wartime measures, propaganda, social and economic conditions or appropriation of these measures for their self interests or very survival have not been examined so far.³⁷

³⁷ For example, see Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, *Millî Mücadele’de Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1986); Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *İstiklâl Harbi’nde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988); Aynur Mısıroğlu, *Kuva-yı Milliye’nin Kadın Kahramanları* (İstanbul: Sebil Yayınevi, 1994); *Millî Mücadele’de ve Cumhuriyet’in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: T.C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 1998); Osman Alagöz, *Millî Mücadele’de Kınalı Eller* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2006); Zeki Sarıhan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Kadınları*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007); Ferit Erden Boray, *Kuvvayı Milliye ve Ölümsüz Kadın Kahramanlar* (İstanbul: Kum Saati Yayınları, 2008); Zümrüt Sönmez, *Kızıl Toprak Ak Yemini: Savaşın Kadınları* (İstanbul: Yarımada Yayıncılık, 2008); Necmeddin Şahiner, *Tarihi Değiştiren Kadınlar* (Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2008); and Bahrem Yıldız, *Kadının Adı Anadolu: Kurtuluş Savaşı’nda Kadınlarımız* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011).

Theoretical Background

This dissertation claims that Turkish women did not have a homogenous wartime experience which can be explained with “self-sacrifice” and “emancipation,” and that the everyday struggle of lower-class women during World War I was also part of the political struggles of this period and had an impact on the laws and measures concerning society, particularly women. These arguments are based on new archival sources and some theoretical approaches developed in recent decades.

Women’s history started with the aim of showing women’s historical agency in the 1970s, but it was challenged from the 1980s onwards with gender history, which studied not only the social construction of the dominance of men over women in a given context but also the differences and power relations among women of different class, race, religion and culture.³⁸ Although the term “gender” has an Anglo-Saxon origin and it suits much more American society where hierarchies according to “class, race, and culture” have a particular political importance, gender history has had an impact on feminist historians of countries other than the United States.³⁹ Women’s particularities and their differences has entered into historical writing with gender history, which has sought the diversified experiences of women

³⁸ Joan W. Scott, “Women’s History,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 50-57. See also, Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” in *Feminism & History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 152-182.

³⁹ For the impact of gender history, see Fabrice Virgili, “L’histoire des femmes et l’histoire des genres aujourd’hui,” *Vingtième Siècle Revue d’histoire*, No. 75, Numéro spécial: Histoire des femmes, histoire des genres (Jul. – Sep., 2002), pp. 5-14; Paula Schwartz, “‘Women’s Studies, Gender Studies’: le contexte américain,” *ibid*, pp. 15-20; Françoise Thébaud, *Écrire l’histoire des femmes*, with the preface of Alain Corbin (Paris: ENS Éditions, 2001); Michèle Riot-Sarcey, “L’historiographie française et le concept de ‘genre’,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, No. 47-4 (Oct. – Dec., 2000), pp. 805-814; “Genre,” in *Les mots de l’Histoire des femmes* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2004), pp. 42-43; and Françoise Thébaud, “Conclusion,” in *L’histoire sans les femmes est-elle possible?: colloque organisé par Anne-Marie Sohn, Françoise Thélamon, Rouen, 27-29 novembre 1997* ([Paris]: Perrin, 1998), pp. 389-400.

rather than a homogenous experience under the category of a single “womanhood” that is constant from one period to another or one context to another.⁴⁰

Second, this study is inspired by a social history approach as used by E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class*, which is a social history of lower-class people.⁴¹ In addition, theoretically and methodologically, the subaltern studies school is an important source of inspiration in unearthing disadvantaged women’s voices and agency.

Surely, this dissertation puts more emphasis to women’s experiences than Thompson or members of subaltern studies school do in their work. Indeed, as Joan W. Scott argues, even the above-mentioned monumental work of Thompson is gender-blind in the evaluation of working-class women’s role in history.⁴² As for subaltern school, as Lila Abu-Lughod criticizes, “it remained strangely silent on women’s agency.”⁴³

Indeed, even in working-class history, the wife of the “unknown soldier” has been silenced for a long time. The experience of the struggle and survival of proletarian women have not been examined thoroughly.⁴⁴ Therefore, a social history of lower-class women’s everyday experiences provides not only historical knowledge on women, but also links women’s history to larger historical writing and

⁴⁰ See for example, Denise Riley, “Does a Sex Have a History?” in *Feminism & History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 17-33.

⁴¹ For the evaluation of E. P. Thompson’s works, see Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: an Introductory Analysis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 167-220.

⁴² Joan Wallach Scott, “Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*,” in *Gender and the Politics of History*, writ. by Joan Wallach Scott, Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 68-90.

⁴³ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions,” in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁴ Fatmagül Berktaş, “Tarihyazımında Farklı Bir Perspektif,” in *Tarihin Cinsiyeti* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), p. 20; Fatmagül Berktaş, “Kendine Ait Bir Tarih,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, No. 183 (Mar., 1999), p. 48; and Andrée Michel, *Le féminisme*, 8th ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), p. 6.

working-class history in general.⁴⁵ In this respect, this dissertation is inspired from both the labor history and subaltern studies theoretically and methodologically. On the other hand, their common indifference to women's agency prompted the author of this dissertation to contribute to fill this gap.

It is possible to conceive of women's everyday struggle as political on the basis of recent theories concerning state-society relations and the division of public and private spheres. After Michel Foucault introduced the concept of "governmentality" for studying modern states, the intellectual boundaries between the political affairs of the state and private realm of the society became blurred.⁴⁶ Feminist scholars have also shown that the division between public and private is actually socially constructed.⁴⁷ They also convincingly proved that there is "no social sphere which is protected from state intervention."⁴⁸ Consequently, women with their role in the family as mothers, with their bodies, and with their morality were studied for their political importance for the modern states.⁴⁹ Feminist scholars also have shown the political role of women in history, in the sense that women's bodies became subjects of politics. This approach has a particular importance for World War I, because of the critical role that women played in the war effort. In that sense, it is important to look at the wartime experience of women's bodies such as exploitation at work, poverty and hunger, which eventually forced those working-

⁴⁵ Louise A. Tilly, Brigitte Yvon-Deyme, and Michel Deyme, "Genre, histoire des femmes et histoire sociale," *Genèses*, No. 2 (1990), pp. 148-167.

⁴⁶ See for example, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, with two lectures and an interview with Michel Foucault (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ Ann-Louise Shapiro, "Introduction: History and Feminist Theory, or Talking Back to the Beadle," *History and Theory*, Beiheft 31, *History and Feminist Theory*, ed. Ann-Louise Shapiro (Dec., 1992), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 80.

⁴⁹ For example, see the introduction chapter of, Jacques Donzelot, *La police des familles* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1977).

class women whose bodies became “sites of intensified intervention and regulation” of the state during the war to develop a kind of political consciousness.⁵⁰

New approaches in defining the public sphere also have enlarged its definition.⁵¹ Social historians have showed that there are multiple public spheres rather than one single “public sphere.”⁵² As Nancy Fraser has written, these public spheres might even be in conflict with each other as there are some “subaltern counterpublics formed under conditions of dominance and subordination.”⁵³

Women’s public spheres constitute an important example. Mary P. Ryan has shown that women in the nineteenth century also could be active in politics although they were not endowed with political rights through their voluntary work in the United States.⁵⁴ Taking this perspective a step further, Belinda Davis has pointed out that women found ways to participate in politics with their resistance to the wartime economic hardships. She has shown how lower-class women in Berlin during World War I, who were called “woman of lesser means,” who unlike the “soldier’s wife” received no financial help from the state in the face of severe shortage of food in wartime conditions ultimately became active agents of street protests and leading figures of everyday politics of German people.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Kathleen Canning, “Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience,” *Signs* 19, No. 2 (Winter 1994), p. 394. See also, Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class & Citizenship* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, Issue: 1 (Mar., 2000), p. 157; and Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 303.

⁵² Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵³ Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵⁴ Mary P. Ryan, “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *ibid.*, pp. 259-288.

⁵⁵ Belinda Davis, “Reconsidering Habermas, Gender, and the Public Sphere: The Case of Wilhelmine Germany,” in *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 397-426.

These approaches to diversified public spheres have been used for women of Muslim societies as well as those who live in much greater seclusion than Western women. As Elizabeth Thompson writes, the boundary between public and private is blurred in the Middle Eastern context.⁵⁶ This, however, does not render women the passive subjects of history. Historians like Leslie P. Pierce have shown for earlier centuries that Muslim women's seclusion from public and political life has not prevented them from being active beyond this private sphere.⁵⁷

Scholars like Partha Chatterjee have also shown that the symbolic role women did have in nation-building and modernization process of their societies made the women of colonized societies an important actor in politics, because political conflict over women continued much more at households than outside.⁵⁸ Many scholars have shown that women's activities in the private sphere, in roles such as mothers or wives, had a particular public and political importance in countries like Iran, Egypt, and Turkey.⁵⁹ Studies on women's press and their associations in the Ottoman Empire also have revealed women's role in the Ottoman public sphere.⁶⁰ However, the alternative public spheres of the Ottoman lower-class women have not been examined yet.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Thompson, "Public and Private in Middle Eastern Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 15, No. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 53.

⁵⁷ Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ Partha Chatterjee, *Ulus ve Parçaları: Kolonyal ve Post-Kolonyal Tarihler*, trans. İsmail Çekem (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 229.

⁵⁹ See for example, Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 91-125; Omnia Shakry, "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt," in *ibid.*, pp. 126-170; and Ferhunde Özbay, "Gendered Space: A New Look at Turkish Modernisation," *Gender & History* 11, No. 3 (Nov., 1999), pp. 555-568.

⁶⁰ See for example, Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1993); and Elizabeth Brown Frierson, "Unimagined Communities: Women and Education in the Late-Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909," *Critical Matrix: The Princeton Journal of Women, Gender, and Culture* 9, No. 2 (1995), pp. 55-90.

Finally, writing the history of lower-class women during World War I requires being familiar with the everyday politics of the subaltern people and historical writing on it. Especially the works of subaltern studies scholars on the everyday politics of peasants and their strategies of resistance⁶¹ have potentials to unveil the subtle forms of ordinary and peasant women's agency in Ottoman-Turkish history. In addition, the concepts of "weapons of the weak," "everyday forms of resistance," and "hidden transcripts" are useful to grasp covert and informal political means of the lower classes against the power-holders, particularly low-income women's own means of pursuing their rights, seeking the maximization of interests or minimization of losses, and survival methods that sometimes indirectly affect high politics and state decisions.⁶² Furthermore, the theoretical framework and approach introduced by German historians of everyday life history (*Alltagsgeschichte*) to understand the micro class formation processes and struggles in everyday life can also be useful to detect the working class women's everyday politics. For instance, Alf Lüdtke emphasizes the potentials of alternative everyday and informal actions of the working class, like "the small economic advantages that workers were able to acquire for themselves and their families 'underhandedly' and in the face of the demands of capital." The *Alltagsgeschichte* historians studied much more class and gender relations in order to attain a better understanding of "politics" which includes ordinary people.⁶³

⁶¹ See for example, Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, with foreword by James Scott (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999); and Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, "Everyday Politics in Peasant Societies (and Ours)," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36, No. 1 (Jan., 2009), pp. 227-243.

⁶² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See also, James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁶³ Alf Lüdtke, "Introduction: What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are Its Practitioners?" in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 19. See

Historians of a few other countries also have shown specifically that ordinary women from working class and peasant families have played a particular role in lower-class politics and especially in resistance practices in different periods and contexts. For instance, Barbara Alpern Engel has written about how Russian peasant women participated in the peasant rebellions from 1870 to 1907, and how they used their womanhood and motherhood to defend their community by taking advantage of “gender-related conventions that allowed them greater immunity from repression by outside authorities.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Mark Pittaway has shown that in Stalinist Hungary working class households began to center their protest on the private sphere as collective protest became increasingly difficult, which also showed itself in women’s involvement with the household for its maintenance rather than accepting to work outside as advocated by the Stalinist state.⁶⁵ Based on these approaches of the history of everyday life and subaltern studies, this dissertation tries to reveal ordinary Turkish women’s agency in wartime conditions. Drawing on the broader concept of politics which encompasses not only legal and institutional activities of middle classes, intellectuals and bureaucrats, but people’s everyday struggles for allocation of resources as well, it argues that lower-class women’s self-seeking strategies and everyday and informal struggles for survival, which indirectly affected state’s decisions and macro political processes, might be accepted as part of politics.⁶⁶

especially, Harald Dehne, “Have We Come Any Closer to Alltag? Everyday Reality and Workers’ Lives as an Object of Historical Research in the German Democratic Republic,” in *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶⁴ Barbara Alpern Engel, “Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance, 1870-1907,” in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 47.

⁶⁵ Mark Pittaway, “Retreat from Collective Protest: Household, Gender, Work and Popular Opposition in Stalinist Hungary,” in *Rebellious Families: Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Jan Kok (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), pp. 200-201.

⁶⁶ For such a conception of politics, see Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, *Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). Benedict Kerkvliet shows how the everyday politics thwarted the state plans in the context of Communist Vietnam. For a new study which unveils the political aspects and effects of the everyday survival struggles of peasants and working class in early republican Turkey, see Murat Metinsoy,

Methods and Sources

The main focus of this dissertation is the everyday life experiences, struggle for survival, and resistance of lower class Ottoman-Turkish women in the face of the adverse effects of the World War I and the state policies in the core lands of the Empire, the Anatolian peninsula and Thrace, which constitute modern Turkey. It is particularly difficult to reach a women's historical experience with its all aspects due to some methodological problems. It is not easy to delve into ordinary women's life experiences and voices in a period when women were deemed secondary people secluded from public life and were exposed to exclusionary treatment. Especially finding the appropriate and sufficient sources about them among diverse documents dispersed in several archives, and making comparisons with the women of other combatant countries for better understanding of the history of a particular group of women were important difficulties this study undertook.⁶⁷ Indeed, considering the fact that writing on even lower class men poses a challenge because it is difficult to find sufficient sources giving information about these mostly illiterate people, searching for the experiences and voices of these men's women, who were under much more pressure, is more problematic. When some sources were found, their reading also created new and difficult problems with which to cope.

During the research for this study as well, there was a danger of searching for the right document in the wrong place due to the problem of anachronism. Even for searching women in the catalogues of the archives, the Turkish word for "woman" (*kadın*) does not give the expected results, because during World War I and long

"Everyday Politics of Ordinary People: Public Opinion, Dissent, and Resistance, 1925-1939" (PhD dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2010).

⁶⁷ For similar problems in writing women's history, see Micheline Dumont, *Découvrir la mémoire des femmes: une historienne face à l'histoire des femmes* (Montréal, Québec: Les Éditions de Remue-Ménage, 2002), pp. 26-27.

before women were catalogued as “the family” (*aille*) of men as civilians or as soldiers since these women were significant for the state bureaucracy particularly because of their role in the family. This example is only one among many others that warn the researcher about the necessity to understand first of all the mentality of the studied epoch and its impact on cataloging the documents.

Furthermore, the documents in the archives or in historical sources are gender-blind, and they are distributed throughout different archives or sources according to the traditional military or political history paradigms. This situation necessitated working in different archives and searching for documents scattered in different catalogues in order to reach to a more complete picture of some of the particular problems of women. Accordingly, the research for this dissertation took place in three national archives: The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*), the Turkish Red Crescent Archives (*Türk Kızılay Arşivi*), and the Turkish General Staff Military History and Strategic Studies Directorate Archives (*Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi*). Although a considerable number of documents written in Ottoman Turkish were examined for this dissertation, since they were in diversified places and catalogues, making in-depth research on the problems of specific geographic regions was not possible due to the limitations of the length, scope and duration of this study. Therefore, further research is required on many points studied in this dissertation for a better understanding of some local variations of women’s wartime experiences.⁶⁸

The existence of women from many different ethnic and religious groups in the Ottoman Empire during World War I also forced me to limit the focus of this

⁶⁸ In order to learn more about women of different Ottoman provinces it is important to reach to the sources at the local archives as well, see Nicole A. N. M. Van Os, “Osmanlı Kadın Dernekleri: Geçmişten Gelen Kaynaklar, Gelecek İçin Kaynaklar,” trans. Kaya Genç, *Toplumsal Tarih* 17, No. 99 (Mar., 2002), p. 13.

study to one of these groups, the largest one, Muslim-Turkish women. Undoubtedly, other women also experienced equal suffering and similar deprivation during the period. However, in order to narrow down the subject of this dissertation and to focus better on the historical experiences of lower-class women in the Ottoman Empire, the wartime experience of other ethnic and religious communities are rarely mentioned in this study.

Furthermore, the language barrier forced me to write especially on Turkish women. Indeed, a study on all of the communities of the Empire requires knowledge of languages like Armenian, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic. Finally, the symbolic importance of Turkish women in the Turkish nationalism of this period and at the foundation of the Republican Turkey, and Turkish women's double subordination to the Orientalism of both the Turkish nationalist accounts and the Western accounts motivated me to examine Muslim-Turkish lower-class women, who constituted the most ignored and one of the most silenced and oppressed groups of Ottoman society. However, undoubtedly this research had no intention to overlook or underestimate the experiences and voices of non-Turkish Ottoman women, whose wartime experiences were as tragic as those of Turkish women.

Finally, in order to avoid studying Turkish women in isolation from other contemporary women, additional research was done to make comparisons and to understand some parallel problems that women of different geographies endured during World War I. The research on the women of other belligerent countries allowed me to ask new questions about Turkish women as well. However, since Turkish women lived in a poorer and unindustrialized society and since many of them had a longer war experience, which could be extended to over a decade between the years of 1911 and 1923, Turkish women's war experience had important

differences that cannot be compared easily with the World War I experience of western women.

In order to understand the experiences and voices of lower-class women, a wide range of sources were examined in this study. They included archive documents such as women's petitions and telegrams given and sent to the state bureaucracy; the reports written on these women's problems by the government agents; reports by some associations like the Red Crescent society and women's associations; reports of parliamentary committees; memoirs of the contemporary observers among whom were also foreigners living in the Ottoman Empire in war years; literature of this epoch and that of the later years written by eyewitnesses of the war years, newspapers and periodicals of the time including women's press; and visual material like photographs, postcards and caricatures that represented lower-class women.⁶⁹ The information collected from these different sources was cross checked to prevent the impact of possible biases, censures, inaccuracy and false information, which could be found in the official documents due to wartime conditions.

Despite their variety, nearly each category of the sources used for this study has its specific benefits and failures to provide knowledge about the lower-class women's historical experience. Women's periodicals of the Second Constitutional period present important knowledge about not only women but the change through

⁶⁹ For other sources and methods which can be used in writing Ottoman women's history, see Serpil Çakır, "Tarih İçinde Görünürlükten, Kadınların Tarihine: Türkiye'de Kadın Tarihi Yazmak," in *Farklı Feminizmler Açısından: Kadın Araştırmalarında Yöntem*, ed. Serpil Çakır and Necla Akgökçe (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1996), pp. 222-229; Serpil Çakır, "Tarih Yazımında Kadın Deneyimlerine Ulaşma Yolları," *Toplumsal Tarih* 17, No. 99 (Mar., 2002), pp. 28-35; D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, eds., *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu / Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources* (İstanbul: Women's Library and Information Center Foundation in collaboration with Kadir Has University, 2009); and D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, eds., *Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

which the Ottoman society went as well.⁷⁰ However, even the women's press of the time might not bring about in-depth knowledge about lower-class women, because most of the issues in the wartime women's press reflect first of all the problems of middle-class or elite women of the time rather than lower-class women's wartime poverty and hunger.⁷¹ Furthermore, many of the Ottoman women's periodicals contain misleading articles that were written by Unionist male authors writing under female pseudonyms.⁷²

Usage of visual material also creates similar problems because most of the photographs, postcards or caricatures that represent women, just like the literature on women, were produced by men for war mobilization and propaganda. In that sense women were not represented as what they were, but as how they were imagined.⁷³ Indeed, women had an important symbolic role as they represented the nation in the popular iconography of many different countries and the republic with the well known figure of Marianne in the French context as an example.⁷⁴ However, it is difficult to find accurate knowledge about the real everyday practices of women in most of the visual material.

Contemporary literature as well, just like the memoirs of contemporary observers, provides important knowledge about the wartime Ottoman society and

⁷⁰ Serpil Atamaz-Hazar, "Reconstructing the History of the Constitutional Era through Women's Periodicals," in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, p. 425.

⁷¹ Elif Mahir-Metinsoy, "Kadın Tarihi Araştırmaları Açısından *Türk Kadını* Dergisi," in *Türk Kadını, 1918-1919 (Yeni Harflerle)*, trans. Birsen Talay Keşoğlu and Mustafa Keşoğlu, ed. Elif Mahir Metinsoy (İstanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı, 2010), pp. xxxi-xxxv.

⁷² Fatma Kılıç, "Maskeli Erkekler; Gölgeleyen Kaynaklar; II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Kadın Dergilerinde Jön Türkler'in Ağzından Feminist Söylevler," in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, p. 433.

⁷³ For a similar interpretation, see Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l'histoire* (Manchecourt: Flammarion, 1998), p. iii.

⁷⁴ Annie Duprat, *Images et Histoire: outils et méthodes d'analyse des documents iconographique* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2007), pp. 188-199.

wartime women's specific problems that the archive documents are unable to show.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, they also represent more or less personal opinions or observations of their authors and might have been politically biased or manipulated. This risk is especially high for those literary works written especially after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, because most of them constructed the past in the light of the reforms and nationalist ideology of the post-war years, not as it really was.

One of the main methodological challenges of this study was about finding the voices of lower-class women in official documents, which also required interpreting their discursive strategies. For instance, not only the state bureaucracy, but also many women frequently claimed to be "soldiers' families." Again, they often used discourses emphasizing their sacrifices for the Empire, Sultan, the nation, the religion and their attachment to the country and the state. Especially their discourse in the petitions and telegrams they sent to the state departments share some of the nationalist and religious elements of the state elites. They used, for example, patriarchal discourse such as motherhood, piety, and chastity. Does this mean that they were under the full control of the hegemonic discourse and propaganda? Undoubtedly, some women really believed in the words they used. However, when some of these texts are read against the grain, as suggested by the subaltern studies scholars, the use of hegemonic discourse by the ordinary people may have been a resistance practice that was supposed to legitimize the demands and complaints of the people. In that sense, even defining oneself as a "soldier's family" was part of the discursive strategies and the particular language with which women fought for their rights as a disadvantaged group seeking justice from the state. Therefore, this similar language is studied as an element of lower-class women's everyday politics rather

⁷⁵ For the usage of realist literature in historical writing, see Judith Lyon-Caen and Dinah Ribard, *L'historien et la littérature* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2010), pp. 15-18.

than as proof that these women accepted the hegemonic discourse and propaganda of the authorities.⁷⁶

It is difficult to know to what extent a particular case or event, even several, recorded in the archival documents represent a common reality. Is it possible to reach the general picture from the particular stories of women derived from the archives? As Eric Hobsbawm states, “once our questions have revealed new sources of material, these themselves raise considerable technical problems.”⁷⁷ One important problem in this sense is whether new information discovered in the archives can represent the reality or a common pattern worth examination. However, given the fact that the state documents contain only a limited part of the ordinary people’s voices and experiences, the information in them can be regarded as the tip of the iceberg, but not isolated cases. In other words, although the cases reflected in the archival documents are limited in number, they have the potential to represent a common situation. In this respect, a history from below of ordinary Ottoman-Turkish women who left a small amount of written material behind has to rely on this limited information to draw some conclusions about the general or some partial but important experiences of women.

Finally, it should be stressed that this study is a first, general monographic survey and inventory of specific behaviors and experiences of a specific group of women in a specific period. Therefore, it ventures to uncover the common and widespread aspects, forms, characteristics, and dynamics of women’s experiences and politics in everyday life. Although local variations of women’s experiences and responses changing according to the place and time are taken into consideration, this

⁷⁶ Marc W. Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 12-13.

⁷⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “History From Below-Some Reflections,” *History From Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology*, ed. by Frederick Krants (Oxford; New York: Basil Blackwell, 1998), p. 17

study particularly gives priority to the common experiences and responses of women throughout the Ottoman Empire during the war years.

Map of the Study

This study has two important parts. The first three chapters focus on the problems of the home front both in the Ottoman Empire and other combatant countries. For this aim, Chapter Two is on the impact of World War I on the home front of the belligerent countries and especially on their lower-class women. In this chapter, women's war experience concerning welfare measures, work and mobilization in different countries, most of them from Europe and the United States, are examined to give a comparative perspective which enables us to understand the specific and local problems of Ottoman women more effectively. In Chapter Three, the economic impact of World War I on Ottoman society, the demographic consequences of military and civilian casualties and the war mobilization and propaganda concerning women are discussed in general to give a background to the struggles of women.

The following five chapters deal with the different problems that ordinary poor Ottoman-Turkish women experienced in everyday life during World War I and their response to these problems through negotiation with the state and other institutions. Chapter Four studies women's struggle with hunger and shortages due to wartime inflation and black-marketeering. Chapter Five examines the monetary aid such as wartime pensions to soldier's families and the negotiation of this aid by lower-class women. Chapter Six focuses on the women's problems in housing and raising children, which were largely demographic problems that negatively influenced the Turkish women as well as non-Muslim families who were forced to

deportation during the war years. Chapter Seven analyses poor women's problems in finding a work in an empire that was not as industrialized as other fighting European countries and the United States were. It shows women's attempts to improve their working conditions mostly in the capital city and some industrial regions of the Empire. Finally, Chapter Eight deals with women's resistance to war mobilization such as conscriptions, high wartime taxes and agricultural work obligation. It largely deals with the problems and struggles of poor peasant women who were further impoverished generally as a result of the corruptive practices of some civil servants and army officers.

CHAPTER TWO

WORLD WAR I AND ORDINARY WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

World War I had a deep impact on millions of women living in the combatant countries. As a “total war,” it demanded the participation of women in the mobilization efforts in various ways as labor force, mothers, or wives of the soldiers. In addition, the war created various social problems for them. In order to ensure the cooperation of women with the state’s war effort and to prevent social problems, the warring states issued new laws and measures for the welfare of soldier’s families, to force women to work in the war industries and agriculture, and to ensure women’s morality in the absence of their men. None of the women in the belligerent countries were exempted from such nationalist or patriarchal expectations of the states or of the societies in which they lived. Although the war partially and temporarily decreased the patriarchal control over women by their conscripted men, the state and many associations substituted for this role so as to sustain the war effort. Again, despite the new opportunities for some middle and upper class women who cooperated with the war efforts, the vast majority of women generally suffered from the social circumstances, economic policies and war mobilization measures.

In spite of the socio-economic burden that the war brought to their lives, the entry of millions of women to jobs left by men during World War I and women’s attainment of their political rights during or after the war in many countries in the West have long been considered as the main indicators of the “emancipation” of women. However, in recent years scholars have begun to question whether this “emancipation” was real and long lasting. In many studies, it is argued that the changing social and economic roles of men and women during the war years were

reversed quickly after the war with the emergence of pro-natalist politics, the authoritarian-conservative states, or the demand by society to return to “normalcy,” which meant the reconstruction of masculinity and the patriarchal institutions.

It is even possible to argue that World War I was a catastrophe for many women on the home front, especially for ordinary women of the poorer belligerent countries of different geographies. According to Françoise Thébaud, the lack of studies on countries other than Western Europe and the United States of America also enforces the idea that the war brought “emancipation” to women as a whole. She proposes that further research especially on the Eastern Europe or the occupied regions might show that women’s emancipation was limited to only a selected geography in the West and even for a particular period.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, there are very few scholarly works on the World War I experiences of women living in non-Western geographies.⁷⁹

This chapter proposes that the comparison with the Western countries might help to reconsider the war experience of Ottoman women. It will examine the common wartime developments that had an influence on women in all of the Western combatant countries and how they experienced these developments differently because of the exceptional conditions of their respective countries. Comparing these particularities in terms of nation, class and social status might actually provide new questions about the war experience of Ottoman Muslim-Turkish women as the largest group of women in the Ottoman Empire who had sent their men to the front.

⁷⁸ Françoise Thébaud, “Penser la guerre à partir des femmes et du genre: l’exemple de la Grande Guerre,” *Astériorion* [Online], No. 2 (2004). Online since 5 April 2005, consulted on 30 January 2012. URL: <http://asterion.revues.org/103>

⁷⁹ For one exceptional study, see Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

For this aim, this chapter starts with an examination of World War I as the first “total war,” which blurred the distinction between the military front and the home front and at the same time the gender roles between men and women. Second, the women’s experiences of the welfare measures in different countries are examined to show the functions of the state’s welfare measures for women in the war efforts. Third, women’s wartime participation in work life, which is taken for granted as the most important indicator of women’s liberation in the West, is examined in terms of both the opportunities and the problems it brought to women. Finally, women’s resistance to the war mobilization, war time social and economic policies, the government’s discourse and war time survival struggle for their particular reasons are examined briefly. Women’s experiences on all of these levels prove that the conventional assumption of women’s emancipation because of their contribution to the mobilization in wartime conditions is actually open to discussion even in the context of many Western countries.

The First “Total War”

Many historians consider World War I to have been the first “total war” that had ever been experienced although there is no consensus among the historians on the definition of the concept.⁸⁰ Unlike the “limited wars” of the nineteenth century, which required relatively smaller armies, World War I was almost limitless in terms of the war’s destructiveness, its social impact, and the mobilization of economic

⁸⁰ Jeremy Black, *The Age of Total War, 1860-1945* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Praeger Security International, 2006), pp. 1-2. Although the term “total war” was born during World War I there is also a debate among American historians over whether the American Civil War represented the first total war. For example, see Roger Chickering, “World War I and the Theory of Total War: Reflections on the British and German Cases, 1914-1915,” in *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918*, eds. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the German Historical Institute, 2000), pp. 35-36.

sources and human power.⁸¹ As Eric Hobsbawm claims, it was the first instance of global war. All of the most powerful imperial countries of the world were involved in World War I. In addition, all of the European countries, except for Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, became part of it.⁸² Whereas the social impact of the wars was limited to the battlefield before this war, as of the onset of the twentieth century, war became total and general and brought about a new concept of “home front” as a civilian sphere upon which the combatants fought. It was this front where other sorts of battles for propaganda, mobilization, and maintenance of social order occurred.⁸³

The development of war technology such as new weapons or technical factors in terms of transportation and communication during the nineteenth century were very important factors which made World War I a matter of mass warfare.⁸⁴ The introduction of the new war technologies and their usage in an “unlimited warfare” changed the nature of the warfare, making this war much longer and more brutal.⁸⁵ Because of the use of machine guns, hundreds of thousands of soldiers of all belligerent parts died in trench warfare campaigns like those at Somme and Verdun. Poisonous gas also was used extensively for the first time in this war.⁸⁶ Starting from

⁸¹ Ian F. W. Beckett, “Total War,” in *Total War and Historical Change: Europe, 1914-1955*, eds. Arthur Marwick, Clive Emsley and Wendy Simpson (Buckingham; Philadelphia, Pa.: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 25-29.

⁸² Eric Hobsbawm, *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl, 1914-1991: Aşırıliklar Çağı* (İstanbul: Sarmal, [2002]), p. 37.

⁸³ See Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), p. 168; and Peter Browning, *The Changing Nature of Warfare: The Development of Land Warfare From 1792 to 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 92-93.

⁸⁴ Dennis E. Showalter, “Mass Warfare and the Impact of Technology,” in *Great War, Total War*, eds. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, p. 74.

⁸⁵ Burak Gülboy, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Tarihi* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 2004), pp. 206-207; pp. 217-218.

⁸⁶ Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 211-221. For the first use of poisonous gas, see Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The First World War* (London: Cassell, 2003), p. 81; and Rolf-Dieter Müller, “Total War as a Result of New Weapons? The Use of Chemical Agents in World War I,” in *Great War, Total War*, eds. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, p. 109.

the Autumn of 1916, tanks were introduced to the battlefield.⁸⁷ Airplane technology and air attacks made World War I the first three-dimensional war, occurring on land, in sea, and in air.⁸⁸

Apart from these technological novelties, because of the conscription of an immense number of people, the war deeply affected the populations of the combatant countries. Of the strongest belligerents of World War I, France mobilized 8 million soldiers, Britain 5.7 million and Germany 13 million.⁸⁹ About 1,397,000 French soldiers died during World War I⁹⁰ whereas among the other strongest belligerents about 2,040,000 German, 1,800,000 Russian, 1,100,000 Austria-Hungarian, 700,000 British, and 114,000 American soldiers died.⁹¹ Out of more than 331,000 Australian men who were conscripted in by 1918,⁹² 60,000 soldiers never returned home.⁹³ The percentages of dead soldiers were not equal among the belligerent powers, although the numbers of dead soldiers were higher among the strongest belligerents compared to the smaller armies.⁹⁴ The percentage of casualties was less in more powerful

⁸⁷ On 15 September 1916 British army used tanks in Somme campaign. For example, see Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *Chronologie de la première guerre mondiale* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2004), p. 8. For the new technology in trench warfare see also, Jean-Jacques Becker, *L'Europe dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 1996), pp. 79-85.

⁸⁸ Gülboy, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Tarihi*, pp. 224-225.

⁸⁹ Françoise Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, eds. George Duby and Michelle Perrot, Vol. 5, *Le XXe Siècle*, ed. Françoise Thébaud (Paris: Perrin, 2002), p. 93.

⁹⁰ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français: l'incompréhensible* (Paris: Perrin, 1998), p. 421.

⁹¹ Gérard Vincent, "Une histoire du secret?" in *Histoire de la vie privée*, eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, Vol. 5, *De la Première Guerre mondiale à nos jours*, eds. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), p. 174.

⁹² Jonathan King and Michael Bowers, *Gallipoli: Untold Stories from War Correspondent Charles Bean and Front-line Anzacs: A 90th Anniversary Tribute* (Auckland; N.Z.: Random House, 2005), p. 5.

⁹³ Bruce Scates and Raelene Frances, *Women and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 103, 140.

⁹⁴ For the minimum estimates of dead soldiers of the principal belligerents, see Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), p. 541.

parties such as France and Britain compared to poorer ones like Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria or the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵

With the addition of worldwide soldier and civilian loss due to wartime epidemics and other factors, the human cost of the Great War reached up to 42 million people.⁹⁶ The new war technology, especially the bombardment of cities, made women and children more vulnerable to the war and changed the definition of the concept of front.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the battlefield in many cases was very close to the places where civilians lived.⁹⁸

Women and children were mostly victims of military attacks in the occupied regions. The occupation of Belgium and the northern and eastern regions of France by the German army, the violence against women in the forms of killing and rape at the beginning of World War I, and the deportation of French women in Lille by the German army to employ them compulsorily in other occupied regions in 1916 are well known examples.⁹⁹ Civilian deaths due to the war were even worse in Eastern Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire as empires vulnerable to disintegration due to internal national and religious clashes.¹⁰⁰ The civilian deaths were even more numerous than military deaths in countries like

⁹⁵ Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, and Mary R. Habeck, eds., *The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 2.

⁹⁶ Liebman Hersch, *Bugünkü Harplerin Başlıca Demografik Etkileri*, trans. Enis Behiç Koryürek (Ankara: Başvekâlet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1935), p. 11.

⁹⁷ Danièle Voldman, "Les bombardements aériens: une mise à mort du 'guerrier'?" in *De la violence et des femmes*, ed. Cécile Dauphin and Arlette Farge (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1997), pp. 146-147.

⁹⁸ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 64.

⁹⁹ Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre: humanitaire et culture de guerre, 1914-1918: populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris: Éditions Noësis, 1998), pp. 68-77. See also parts of chapter 1 on violence exerted on civilians of the book, Stéphanie Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18, retrouver la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000). Without any discrimination of gender, children were also victims of violence while girls had different difficulties in practice. For example, see Manon Pignot, "Petites filles dans la Grande Guerre: un problème de genre," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 89 (Jan. – Mar., 2006), p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen J. Lee, *Avrupa Tarihinden Kesitler, 1789-1980* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2002), p. 176.

Bulgaria, Russia and Serbia.¹⁰¹ In addition to epidemics or military attacks which damaged the population, the decrease in the numbers of wartime births and marriages, and the death of civilians due to malnutrition and poverty had an adverse impact on the demography of combatant European countries such as France and Germany even after the war years.¹⁰²

Since it lasted longer and depended on the new military technologies, unlike the previous warfare, economic warfare also became an integrated part of the struggle during World War I. The economically stronger combatant powers were able to send more ammunition to their soldiers at very long distances. The poorer countries, on the contrary, had to rely much more on human power and thereby to exploit their civilians much more. Such policies caused hunger in these countries more frequently.¹⁰³ For instance, the Ottoman Empire, which was economically and militarily a weak party of the war, was among the forces that relied on its human resources and therefore had a very high rate of human loss.¹⁰⁴

Because the economic performance was decisive in World War I, the war ended not due to military losses, but because the economies of the combatant countries such as Germany could no longer support the war efforts.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the Allied powers used blockade as an effective tool to exhaust German society and to

¹⁰¹ Gülboy, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Tarihi*, p. 297.

¹⁰² For the long impact of the war in demography of some European countries see Gabriel Kolko, *Un siècle de guerres: politique, conflits et société depuis 1914* ([Sainte-Foy, Québec]: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), pp. 88-90; Fabienne Daguët, *Un siècle de démographie française: structure et évolution de la population de 1901 à 1993* (Paris: INSEE, 1996), pp. 27-33; Jésus Ibarrola, *Les incidences des deux conflits mondiaux sur l'évolution démographique française* (Paris: Dalloz, 1964); and Michel Hubert, *L'Allemagne en mutation: histoire de la population allemande depuis 1815* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1995), pp. 288-289.

¹⁰³ Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, "The Economics of World War I: An Overview," in *The Economics of World War I*, eds. Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

force the German political leaders to stop the war.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, shortages and hunger in Russia paved the way for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and Russia's subsequent withdrawal from war.¹⁰⁷

Because the economy was vital for the war efforts, war propaganda was taken more seriously by the war governments to mobilize the population for both economic and military causes. In this regard, another feature of this war was the extensive use of propaganda for the first time through developing communication and publication facilities. Censure was very strong in all countries during World War I.¹⁰⁸ Even women such as those who worked for the associations like the Red Cross became active agents of war propaganda.¹⁰⁹ In general, the regulation of the home front and everyday life of the civilians became as important as the military efforts.¹¹⁰

Women played a significant role in this respect in the war economy as factory workers in especially the industrialized warrior countries. Substituting for the men sent to the battlefield, they worked in arms production factories as “*munitionnettes*”

¹⁰⁶ Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Lee, *Avrupa Tarihinden Kesitler*, pp. 191-192.

¹⁰⁸ Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918*, trans. Nicole Stone (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 138-139.

¹⁰⁹ See for example, Jean H. Quataert, “Women’s Wartime Services under the Cross: Patriotic Communities in Germany, 1912-1918,” in *Great War, Total War*, eds. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, pp. 453-483.

¹¹⁰ For the war experience of the European societies, see Jean-Jacques Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, eds., *Les sociétés européennes et la guerre de 1914-1918: actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Amiens du 8 au 11 décembre 1988 [par l’]Université Paris X-Nanterre, Centre d’histoire de la France contemporaine*, with the preface of Jean-Baptiste Duroselle (Nanterre: Publications de l’Université de Nanterre, 1990); Jean-Jacques Becker, *L’Europe dans la Grande Guerre*, pp. 125-151, 248-256; Jean-Jacques Becker, *La France en guerre: 1914-1918: la grande mutation* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe; [Paris]: [diff. Presses universitaires de France], 1988), pp. 87-108; Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *La première guerre mondiale en France* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2009), pp. 79-86; André Ducasse, Jacques Meyer, and Gabriel Perreux, *Vie et mort des français, 1914-1918: simple histoire de la Grande Guerre*, with the presentation of Maurice Genevoix ([Paris]: Hachette, 1962), p. 227; Gabriel Perreux, *La vie quotidienne des civils en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Hachette, 1966); Chantal Antier and Gérard Petitjean, *14-18, la vie quotidien: les coulisses de la guerre en images* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2008); and Richard Wall and Jay Winter, eds., *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

(munitions workers).¹¹¹ Women's agency in home front politics during World War I also belied the binary opposition of home and front. "The male warrior and passive female onlooker" segregation of the two sexes was challenged mainly by the important number of these munitions workers whose active participation in the war effort was an indispensable part of the war. Moreover, some women also played active roles as paramilitary forces, especially in the last years of the war.¹¹²

World War I transformed, to a large extent, women's roles in the belligerent societies and resulted in the questioning of the traditional gender roles.¹¹³ It is true that World War I was constructed as "men's war."¹¹⁴ The themes of male solidarity during the trench warfare, the myth of "fallen soldiers" and the depiction of war as "a school to teach manhood" were more dominant than the construction of women's agency in more passive roles such as nurses or prostitutes.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, for some stronger Western societies, the war provided opportunities for women to some extent by opening some fields of jobs to them, providing work opportunities because of labor scarcity, and thereby giving them more responsibility and autonomy. Women had to perform many duties, and jobs which only men had done before, while many

¹¹¹ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 101. For the importance of French women's wartime effort, see Christine Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française au 20^e siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 2001), p. 129. According to Bard, about 28,000 French women wanted to voluntarily work in army and industry; but the army was unwilling to accept them.

¹¹² Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley, L.A.: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 15-16.

¹¹³ Jean-Yves le Naour, "Le héros, la femme honnête et la putain: la Première Guerre mondiale et les mutations du genre," in *Le genre face aux mutations: masculin et féminin, du Moyen Âge à nos jours: [actes du colloque international tenu en septembre 2002 à l'Université Rennes 2 organisé par le Centre de recherche historique sur les sociétés et cultures de l'Ouest européen, UMR-CNRS 6040 CRHISCO]*, ed. Luc Capdevila, Sophie Cassagnes, Martine Cocard, Dominique Godineau, François Rouquet, and Jacqueline Sainclivier (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003), pp. 307-308.

¹¹⁴ Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000), p. 15.

¹¹⁵ For the myth of "fallen soldier," see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 7, 69. For the construction of World War I as a men's war which educated manhood, see George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 107-115.

men as soldiers on the front had to learn to do things regarded as women's work in peacetime, or suffered from combat-related physical or mental disability.¹¹⁶

The fact that women had to take care of their possessions and manage the household for long years, made the men who were far away from their families more anxious and worried about household affairs than ever.¹¹⁷ Indeed, their absence made their women and children more vulnerable to impoverishment, exploitation, bad treatment, sexual harassment, and violation of their rights. The void of men at home was to be partly filled with the welfare state.

The Social Impact of the War and the Welfare Measures for Women

From the late nineteenth century onwards, in major European states like Germany, France and Britain and in the United States of America many laws and measures were issued for the welfare of the working-class. The war forced the governments to abandon liberal economic policies and to adopt more interventionist policies and social welfare measures.¹¹⁸ Undoubtedly, some middle class women who were considered as the militant feminists of the nineteenth century had been very active in the development of the welfare state with their "maternalist policies."¹¹⁹ However,

¹¹⁶ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 133; Odile Roynette, "La construction du masculin de la fin du 19e siècle aux années 1930," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 75, Numéro spécial: Histoire des femmes, histoire des genres (Jul. – Sep., 2002), pp. 89-90; Sophie Delaporte, *Les gueules cassées: les blessés de la face de la Grande Guerre*, with the preface of Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau (Paris: Noësis, 1996); Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," *Signs* 8, No. 3, Women and Violence (Spring 1983), p. 448.

¹¹⁷ Luc Capdevila, "L'identité masculine et les fatigues de la guerre (1914-1945)," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 75, Numéro spécial: Histoire des femmes, histoire des genres (Jul. – Sep., 2002), pp. 101-102.

¹¹⁸ Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, "Women in the Era of the Interventionist State: Overview, 1890 to the Present," in *Connecting Spheres: European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*, eds. Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, 2nd ed. (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 229.

¹¹⁹ Gisela Bock, "Pauvreté féminine, droits des mères et états-providence," in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, ed. George Duby and Michelle Perrot, Vol. 5, *Le XXe Siècle*, ed. Françoise Thébaud (Paris:

the control of these elite women over lower-class women was not unlimited and they were not a unique dynamic behind the development of social welfare measures for women. In many cases, poor and low income women were also very active in demanding certain welfare rights according to their subjective needs and interests.¹²⁰

World War I accelerated the development of such welfare measures especially due to the demographic problems it unleashed. The number of philanthropic women's associations increased, because of not only the state's war efforts but also of the economic demands of the disadvantaged and poor women. Both the philanthropic women's organizations and the state started to take greater initiative in the welfare of poor women, particularly in terms of the food shortages, pensions to the soldiers' families, social assistances to the refugees or mothers in war years.¹²¹

The shortage of food during World War I was one of the most important reasons behind the state's control of food and welfare measures concerning food distribution. Indeed, most of women's demands, struggles and protests in the countries hit by food shortages were related to the food question. Surely, the societies of the belligerent countries did not share the food shortages equally. During the war, the municipality of Berlin had to provide food to 3.6 million people, the municipality of Paris to 4 million people, and the municipality of London to about 7.2 million

Perrin, 2002), pp. 516-517; Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Introduction: 'Mother Worlds'," in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Policies and the Origins of Welfare States*, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 29; and Yvonne Knibiehler, *Histoire des mères et de la maternité en Occident* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000), pp. 93-95.

¹²⁰ For the limited control of elite women on poor women, see Jane Lewis, "Women and Late-Nineteenth-Century Social Work," in *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*, ed. Carol Smart (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 78-79. For the selective adaptation of poor families of the bourgeois values that elite women imposed on them in the 19th century, see Catherine Hall, "Sweet Home," in *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, Vol. 4, *De la Révolution à la Grande Guerre*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), pp. 64-66.

¹²¹ For the French women's associations during World War I, see Ripa, *Les femmes, actrices de l'Histoire*, p. 99.

people. Although the number of people to feed was less in Berlin, people suffered the most due to the Allied blockade, which caused the development of a black market and inflation.¹²² There were food shortages in certain foods such as bread, butter, meat, bacon, tea and sugar in Britain as well.¹²³ Nevertheless, there was less difficulty in Britain in terms of providing food to the civilians.¹²⁴ While food prices also increased in London and Paris, the price differences were not as great as it was observed in Berlin.¹²⁵ Consequently, during the war about 700,000 German civilians died due to hunger.¹²⁶ In the later years of the war, the food deprivation grew so serious that in Berlin, some women were forced to exchange sex for food.¹²⁷

The shortages in food and basic consumption items diversely affected especially poor women and children. During the war, the housework of many women became more complicated in Germany because of these shortages.¹²⁸ For instance, many working women who waited in long food rationing lines after the long work hours had to return home in many cases without any bread to give to their hungry children.¹²⁹ The dual price system, which was devised to continue food distribution without eliminating the privileges of the rich and therefore created inequality in the distribution of food in cities like Berlin, was protested especially by poor women such as housewives and women workers.¹³⁰

¹²² Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, "Feeding the Cities," in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, ed. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 305-311.

¹²³ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 167.

¹²⁴ P. E. Dewey, "Nutrition and Living Standards in Wartime Britain," in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, p. 216.

¹²⁵ Bonzon and Davis, "Feeding the Cities," pp. 318-319.

¹²⁶ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 196.

¹²⁷ Bonzon and Davis, "Feeding the Cities," p. 338.

¹²⁸ Ute Daniel, "Women's Work in Industry and Family: Germany, 1914-1918," in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, pp. 275-276.

¹²⁹ Keith Allen, "Sharing Scarcity: Bread Rationing and the First World War in Berlin, 1914-1923," *Journal of Social History* 32, No. 2 (Winter 1998), p. 378.

¹³⁰ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 246. See also, Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 127.

Food shortages in items such as bread and milk caused rebellion among the civilians throughout the war. The first serious food rebellion in Berlin happened in October 1915.¹³¹ The protestors in the cities realized that their demonstrations forced the municipalities to provide much more food.¹³² The inequalities due to food distribution policies in Germany caused growing numbers of protests of mostly working-class women, and eventually played an important role in the Revolution of November 1918.¹³³ In Austria-Hungary as well, most of the wartime strikes were due to hunger and there were even crowds of Australian women and children who pillaged fields of potatoes in 1918.¹³⁴ Working-class women in France were also among the protesters and their food riots forced the French government to control the distribution of food.¹³⁵

Although they were demanded by women, too, rather than satisfying the masses, the welfare measures often created further inequalities and mistrust of the government among ordinary women. According to Belinda Davis, the German public detested the state's war propaganda and attacked the "soldier's wife," "mother of many children," and the "munitions workers' wife," who were backed up by the state. These women were seen as a common internal enemy.¹³⁶ Civilians were especially against the "dual price system." People protested the War Profiteering Office (*Kriegswucheramt*) in which the officials themselves were part of the hoarding process.¹³⁷ The government's public kitchens opened for the poor in Berlin and in other regions of Germany also caused dissatisfaction and aroused criticisms

¹³¹ Bonzon and Davis, "Feeding the Cities," pp. 323-336.

¹³² Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 172.

¹³³ Boxer and Quataert, "Women in the Era of the Interventionist State," p. 237.

¹³⁴ Reinhard J. Sieder, "Behind the Lines: Working-Class Family Life in Wartime Vienna," in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, pp. 125-126.

¹³⁵ Allen, "Sharing Scarcity," p. 374.

¹³⁶ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, pp. 24-34.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127.

among poor German women because of their inefficiency, which resulted in the closure of these facilities by August 1917.¹³⁸

Another welfare measure concerning war widows and those women who had sent their men to the front was pensions and separation allowances distributed by the state. According to a very rough estimate, the number of war widows was about 3 million and number of war orphans between 7 and 10 million in the belligerent countries.¹³⁹ Germany and France each had about 600,000 war widows, while in Britain their number exceeded 200,000.¹⁴⁰ In Australia more than 8,000 women were left without breadwinners after World War I.¹⁴¹ Since the war lasted for a very long period, all combatant governments devised allowance and pension programs for soldiers' families and war widows, though in different amounts and varied means of payment.¹⁴² The need was so acute especially in Germany that even in 1915, the number of families that received government assistance reached 4 million, that is to say, 11 million people.¹⁴³

The women who received such assistances were not passive receivers and were not contented with such programs. Nor did they accept these assistance programs as they were planned by the governments. They negotiated these measures of the governments. The allocation of pensions created important tensions among lower-class women recipients, because the distributions of these pensions were problematic. In Germany, for instance, because the pensions to widows were not calculated according to the economic situations of their men who had died in the war,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-154.

¹³⁹ Jay Winter, "Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War," in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 42.

¹⁴⁰ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 120. For France see also, Ripa, *Les femmes, actrices de l'Histoire*, p. 106.

¹⁴¹ Scates and Frances, *Women and the Great War*, p. 141.

¹⁴² Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), p. 22.

¹⁴³ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 178.

they produced important inequalities among widows.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, there was an important difference between the pensions that soldiers' wives and war widows received. Despite the wartime inflation and women's demands for inflation supplement in Germany, the pension allocated to war widows did not increase, whereas the allowances paid to living soldiers' families were raised twice during 1916.¹⁴⁵ The French government also discriminated among war widows in allocating pensions to them by calculating their allowances according to the ways in which their husbands had died. Consequently, those who died on battle were deemed more privileged than those who had died due to various other reasons.¹⁴⁶

Although these payments to women created a public outrage, as seen in Germany, where the conservative individuals criticized women's new "independence" from men in using these pensions, many women who received such pensions criticized the unequal practices inherent in these pension programs.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the pensions provided some autonomy or relief for only a limited number of women. German women in the countryside were able to survive with the government assistance, but those in the big cities could not.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, in France, the pensions that the widows received were quite low as compared to the money that their husbands had brought home before the war.¹⁴⁹ Efforts were made to close the gap between the payments made by the government and the money really needed by war widows and their families with philanthropic institutions, municipal administrations, and charitable organizations at the local level. A kind of "fictive kinship" was

¹⁴⁴ Karin Hausen, "The German Nation's Obligations to the Heroes' Widows of World War I," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 130.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁴⁶ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, pp. 156-157.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁹ Stéphanie Petit, "La pension de veuve de guerre de 14-18: une pension de fidélité?" in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, pp. 120-122.

invented to help the widows and children although the damage of the war was beyond repair.¹⁵⁰

What is more, one of the motives of the war governments for these pension programs was to take women's support for war mobilization by protecting the social order and morality on the home front and by encouraging women to cooperate with the government's war effort. Therefore, their payment was linked closely to women's moral behavior or their contribution to war efforts. For instance, the French state cut the pensions of those women who were seen drinking alcohol.¹⁵¹

In Austria-Hungary as well, the commissions that were given the task of distributing the pensions to soldiers' wives refused to support all women without small children in order to force these women to work in war industry.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, the pension's such sanction power over women was limited, because the pensions served first to boost the morale of the soldiers by making them feel that their families were safe in their absence. Thus, although those women who received pensions were not willing to work in the war industry in Germany, for instance, the government avoided cutting their pensions to prevent any demoralization among the soldiers. On the other hand, many German women who were not able to survive on such pensions had to work at jobs instead of receiving assistance from the state.¹⁵³

Despite their severe need for economic support, war widows did not constitute a passive group of women who were totally dependent on the pensions from the state. They had survival strategies such as leaving one job for another, selling household goods, getting married again, or moving to another house. In France about 37 percent of all war widows were remarried within ten years, up until

¹⁵⁰ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 46-50.

¹⁵¹ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 125.

¹⁵² Sieder, "Behind the Lines," pp. 117-119.

¹⁵³ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 51-54.

1927-1928.¹⁵⁴ Before the Second World War, the percentage of remarried war widows increased to 42 percent.¹⁵⁵ In Germany as well, one third of about 600,000 widows were remarried by 1924.¹⁵⁶ However, remarriage was more difficult for British widows as a survival strategy. Already in 1914 there were 1.3 million “excess” women in Britain who had little chance of getting married due to lack of men.¹⁵⁷

The wartime population movements, particularly migrations forced the war governments to take welfare measures. After Belgium was occupied by the Germans, about 1,400,000 Belgians fled to other countries such as Britain and France and about half million of these Belgian refugees had to stay abroad for the duration of the war.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, due to different campaigns on the Western front, about 3 million civilians had to leave their homes during the war.¹⁵⁹ Refugees of different geographies also fell victim to poverty, hunger or violence in many cases, but it was women who suffered the most from the rapes by soldiers or gangs, and extreme poverty and hunger.¹⁶⁰

Because women were the main victims of the war as poor refugees with their indigent children and without breadwinners, the war governments and especially the elite and middle-class women who were organized in associations dealt with the

¹⁵⁴ Peggy Bette, “Veuves et veuages de la première guerre mondiale Lyon (1914-1924),” *Vingtième Siècle Revue d’histoire*, No. 98 (Apr. – Jun., 2008), pp. 200-202. See also, Stéphanie Petit, *Les veuves de la Grande Guerre: d’éternelles endeuillées ?* (Paris: Éditions du Cygne, 2007), p. 154. Because in many cases the bodies of their dead husbands could not return home the widows of war martyrs had additional difficulties in mourning. See for instance, Stéphanie Petit, “Le deuil des veuves de la Grande Guerre: un deuil spécifique?,” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, No. 198, Dossier: Les femmes et la guerre (June, 2000), pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁵ Petit, “La pension de veuve de guerre de 14-18” p. 125.

¹⁵⁶ Hausen, “The German Nation’s Obligations to the Heroes’ Widows of World War I,” p. 128.

¹⁵⁷ Richard A. Soloway, “Eugenics and Pronatalism in Wartime Britain,” in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, p. 379.

¹⁵⁸ Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1928), pp. 64-65.

¹⁵⁹ Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, Fabrice Virgili, and Danièle Voldman, *Sexes, genre et guerres (France, 1914-1945)* (Paris: Éditions Payots & Rivages, 2010), p. 193.

¹⁶⁰ See for example, Carol Mann, *Femmes dans la guerre, 1914-1945: survivre au féminin devant ou durant deux conflits mondiaux* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2010), pp. 61-68.

problems of them. In addition to the governments, philanthropic women were very active in helping these women migrants. Along with Red Cross, much of the aid to the migrants came from women's voluntary organizations.¹⁶¹

War especially compelled the states to provide welfare measures for mothers due to demographic concerns. However, these forms of aid remained limited due to the war mobilization or national concerns, and created several inequalities. During the war, French women became acquainted with new welfare measures about motherhood and the percentage of those women who gave birth in maternity hospitals increased to at least 80 percent.¹⁶² Women were considered as main human resource for armament and war mobilization. They were expected to give birth to many more and robust children as future soldiers, and to produce arms in war industry. Despite the state's concern for women's fertility and motherhood, women were not provided with favorable working conditions except for the establishment of nursing rooms in the factories.¹⁶³ At the end of the war, even these nursing rooms, which were the only substantial facility provided for French women workers, were closed down.¹⁶⁴

The creation of welfare measures for helping mothers was supported and requested from the state by working-class women as well. After universal conscription was accepted in 1916 in Britain, concerns about demographic losses increased remarkably. Although they were quite costly, the government started investing in social assistance to mothers and in the protection of children. Especially

¹⁶¹ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 46.

¹⁶² Mindy Jane Roseman, "The Great War and Modern Motherhood: La Maternité and the Bombing of Paris," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 58.

¹⁶³ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 49-50. See also, Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 103-119.

¹⁶⁴ Yvonne Knibiehler, *Histoire des mères: du Moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1982), pp. 294-295.

women officials of the Women's Cooperative Guild were active in informing the government about the needs of lower income and poor mothers. Many women of working-class origin wrote letters to the Local Government Boards on their problems concerning pregnancy, giving birth and taking care of their children, and they requested help.¹⁶⁵

After the war, pro-natalist policies gained importance in many of the belligerent countries. France had a special importance in this regard. The decrease in birth rates in France during and after the war was not new, but had a long history going back to the nineteenth century. This negative trend in birth rates was exacerbated by the social impact of the war and women's negative approach to childbearing. This situation compelled the French government to start an intensive propaganda encouraging the childbearing and to introduce new forms of family assistance programs as incentives for childbirth.¹⁶⁶ The French politicians like Georges Clemenceau declared in 1919 that the government had to support families with many children. Regarding the French citizens as potential soldiers, he believed that they could not win any war without population growth.¹⁶⁷ In July 1920, a law prohibited the sale of contraceptives other than preservatives and the diffusion of information about contraception.¹⁶⁸ In 1923, it was decided that women seeking abortions were to be prosecuted.¹⁶⁹ French mothers with five, eight or ten children were honored with medallions and supported with premiums. Likewise, in Britain,

¹⁶⁵ Pat Thane and Corinne Belliard, "Genre et protection sociale: la protection maternelle et infantile en Grande-Bretagne, 1860-1918," *Genèses*, No. 6 (1991), pp. 91-92.

¹⁶⁶ For these measures, see Marie-Monique Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1990), pp. 39-68. However, the improvements in government aid were mostly for the duration of the war, see Anne Cova, *Maternité et droits des femmes en France: XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Anthropos, 1997), p. 184.

¹⁶⁷ Ripa, *Les femmes, actrices de l'Histoire*, p. 107.

¹⁶⁸ "Contraception," in *Les mots de l'Histoire des femmes*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁹ Boxer and Quataert, "Women in the Era of the Interventionist State," p. 243. See also, Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, "Avant-propos," in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, p. 13.

the Maternal and Child Welfare Act was passed in 1918 and in the United States of America, Sheppard-Towner Act, aiming at the population growth, was introduced in 1921 to support mothers.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Mothers' Day, which had begun to be celebrated in the United States from 1912 onwards, was internationally celebrated from 1920 onwards.¹⁷¹ However, almost no significant regulation was introduced to improve the conditions of working mothers and pregnant workers.¹⁷² The pro-natalist measures of the French government failed to persuade women to give birth.¹⁷³

In Europe, another important consequence of the war was a remarkable increase in the number of illegitimate children. Wartime poverty forced many women to engage in prostitution, lead sexually immoral lives, and resort to abortion more often than before. In France, illegitimate children constituted 8.4 percent of all births while this percentage rose to 14.2 percent in 1917.¹⁷⁴ Involuntary motherhood was also an important problem in Britain during the war years.¹⁷⁵ The percentage of illegitimate German children also increased from 10 percent of all newborns before World War I to 13 percent during the war.¹⁷⁶ In Germany, where hunger was a severe problem for civilians, many young children were left uncared by their working mothers without adequate food or heat. Those children who did not work in factories spent much of their time on the streets competing against adults for food.¹⁷⁷

The content and amount of the state's assistance to these disadvantaged women's children also changed according to the status of their fathers.¹⁷⁸ Especially, those women who had been raped and gave birth to illegitimate children suffered

¹⁷⁰ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 137.

¹⁷¹ Bock, *Avrupa Tarihinde Kadınlar*, p. 213.

¹⁷² Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 137.

¹⁷³ Bock, *Avrupa Tarihinde Kadınlar*, p. 213.

¹⁷⁴ Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, pp. 429-430.

¹⁷⁵ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁶ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 135.

¹⁷⁷ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 186.

¹⁷⁸ Judith Wishnia, "Natalisme et nationalisme pendant la première guerre mondiale," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 45 (Jan. – Mar., 1995), pp. 38-39.

some discriminatory practices and resorted to infanticide. During World War I, even some French doctors partially supported infanticide in cases in which the child was the result of a rape by German soldiers.¹⁷⁹ Surely, not all rape victims got rid of their babies. It is not possible to give an estimate of how many of the 410,000 children registered in 1919 in France were illegitimate or were the children of the enemy.¹⁸⁰

On the other hand, the children of war heroes were protected by the state. However, just like the widows who received different amounts of pensions due to the different causes of death of their soldier husbands, war orphans as well received different forms of aid from the state. For example, of the six million war orphans in France, only one million were accepted as *Pupilles de la Nation* (wards of the nation) because their fathers had died in battle, but not in hospital beds due to any illness or other reasons. Likewise, the French government totally undertook the education of only these one million orphans out of the total six million.¹⁸¹

In brief, the social and economic effects of the long war years hit especially women and children, whom the conscripted men had left behind. The war governments devised several social welfare measures to preserve the social order, morality, and productivity on the home front and to prevent any demoralization among the soldiers. These welfare measures were not flawless. Discriminatory and unequal principles and practices, patriarchal restrictions and sanctions created discontent among many of the ordinary women who criticized and protested such rules and practices. In addition, the poor and low income women excluded from welfare programs demanded their inclusion in these programs.

¹⁷⁹ Audoin-Rouzeau, *L'Enfant de l'ennemi*, pp. 165-166.

¹⁸⁰ Capdevila, *et al.*, *Sexes, genre et guerres*, p. 177.

¹⁸¹ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 149. For the different types of aid that orphans of different status received, see Olivier Faron, *Les enfants du deuil: orphelins et pupilles de la nation de la première guerre mondiale (1914-1941)* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2001), pp. 125-158.

Women, War and Work

Women's labor was very important for the mobilization of war, because millions of men were sent to the front. Especially the work of women in munitions factories had strategic importance for the continuation of the war and it was decisive in the war effort.¹⁸² Perhaps for this factor, women's employment in the war industry was accepted as a turning point in the work life of many European women, although many of these women had been already working before the war.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, a lot of women started working in new sectors to which they were accepted more easily to replace men during World War I. Surely, certain opportunities became available to women even in those sectors which had been seen peculiar to men. However, after the war, many of them were forced to leave their work to war veterans. Thus, the war conditions mostly offered women temporary job opportunities, which did not end the traditional gendered division of labor to any significant degree. Furthermore, the working conditions and terms during the war years, as before, were not favorable for women. Working life brought about new problems and suffering as well as temporary income and work experience.

Women's entry into work life with World War I was experienced most dramatically in Britain, where before the war, the number of female workers was far

¹⁸² Jane Gledhill, "The War and Women," in *Women Writers and the Great War*, writ. Dorothy Goldman, Jane Gledhill, and Judith Hattaway (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), p. 13.

¹⁸³ Sylvie Schweitzer, "Les enjeux du travail des femmes," *Vingtième Siècle Revue d'histoire*, No. 75, Numéro spécial: Histoire des femmes, histoire des genres (Jul. – Sep., 2002), p. 23; and Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 89. For the limitation concerning French women's work and education during the 19th century and before World War I, see Sylvie Schweitzer, *Les femmes ont toujours travaillé: une histoire de leurs métiers, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002), pp. 18-38. For the number of working women in different European countries before and after the war, see Anne-Marie Sohn, "Entre deux guerres: les rôles féminins en France et en Angleterre," in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, Vol. 5, *Le XXe siècle*, ed. Françoise Thébaud, pp. 170-174.

less than it was in France or Germany.¹⁸⁴ The rate of working women increased from 26 percent of all the employees to 36 percent.¹⁸⁵ The increase especially in munitions work was spectacular, from 82,589 in July 1914 to 1,587,300 by November 1918.¹⁸⁶ This increase in the number of women workers accelerated in the last year of the war. In Britain and the United States, there were two and a half times as many women workers in 1918 than in 1917.¹⁸⁷ In all of these countries, it was primarily munitions work that provided more jobs to working-class women than any other work.¹⁸⁸ Among the European belligerent countries, Germany had the lowest percentage of women munitions workers.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, the state had to spread propaganda for German women's entry into war factories with the foundation of new associations for this purpose.¹⁹⁰ The number of German women workers increased to 3.5 million by mid-1917 and to about six million by the end of the war. Eventually, German women constituted 50 percent of the labor force in the armament industry.¹⁹¹ In France, the percentage of women as workers increased from 14 percent in January 1916 to 25 percent in September 1917, in the armament and munitions factories and in public offices.¹⁹² By 1918, 420,000 French women were working in munitions factories.¹⁹³ However, in Australia, other than those women who replaced men in public offices and agricultural work, the war did not bring in any dramatic change in women's work life.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁴ Bock, *Avrupa Tarihinde Kadınlar*, p. 204.

¹⁸⁵ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁸⁶ Gledhill, "The War and Women," p. 15.

¹⁸⁷ Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918*, p. 190.

¹⁸⁸ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹⁰ Daniel, *The War from within*, pp. 77-79.

¹⁹¹ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, pp. 173-176.

¹⁹² Marcel Frois, *La santé et le travail des femmes pendant la guerre* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1926), p. 25. See also, "Munitionnettes," in *Les mots de l'Histoire des femmes*, p. 65.

¹⁹³ Michel Zancarini-Fournel, "Travailler pour la patrie?" in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, p. 35.

¹⁹⁴ Scates and Frances, *Women and Great War*, p. 38.

On the other hand, many existing jobs for women and girls in the service sector of the economy were lost or endangered.¹⁹⁵ Large numbers of women working as domestic help or dress-makers in Britain were dismissed in this period, since the upper classes cut back on the luxuries of pre-war life.¹⁹⁶ However, as the war progressed, many of these working-class women found themselves in jobs in which they were not traditionally accepted. For instance, in Britain, about 6000 women worked as tramway ticket sellers and conductors in 1917.¹⁹⁷ After the war, French women had new job opportunities in certain sectors in which they had never worked before the war such as, metallurgy, chemistry, electronics, and food industry and in public offices and administrative departments.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, comparatively more women worked in new white-collar jobs after World War I.

Finally, comparatively more women continued to work in several new sectors in the post-war period. This was to some extent a culmination of the industrial development and women's struggles in the nineteenth century. Before the war years, apart from civil rights that included the right to vote, women also had fought for equal access to education, the improvement of working conditions and the expansion of working opportunities.¹⁹⁹ However, labor shortage that stemmed from the Great War opened the doors of jobs that were closed to women. The war caused a shift in the women's fields of jobs from sectors such as domestics, textiles, tobacco, food processing, agriculture and mining to more male-dominated fields. For example, in

¹⁹⁵ Richard Wall, "English and German Families and the First World War, 1914-1918," in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, p. 93.

¹⁹⁶ Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907-1948* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 40-41.

¹⁹⁷ Mann, *Femmes dans la guerre*, p. 87.

¹⁹⁸ Catherine Omnès, *Ouvrières parisiennes: marches du travail et trajectoires professionnelles au 20e siècle* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1997), p. 155. Especially see Chapter 4 of this book.

¹⁹⁹ Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp, "Introduction: The Women's Movement and the First World War," in *The Women's Movement in Wartime: International Perspectives, 1914-19*, ed. Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 2-3.

the United States of America in 1870 while about 50 percent of all working women were domestics, in 1920 about 40 percent of this group started to be employed in public and private offices. In France, by 1906 women occupied 40 percent of all white collar jobs.²⁰⁰ French women had already started to work in the PTT from 1892 onwards.²⁰¹ The war reinforced the idea that upper and middle class women also had to have an education that could enable them to find jobs in the absence of their men.²⁰² During World War I, especially women from middle or upper classes found new opportunities to educate themselves and to work at various jobs. French women started to acquire education in commerce in 1915 and in many engineering departments in the following years.²⁰³

A very important change in women's work life during the war was their entry into the army although not in combat positions. In Britain, women mostly were accepted into army work in order to allow more men to go to the front.²⁰⁴ The Women's Land Army, which was founded in July 1917, employed 23,000 women before October 1919.²⁰⁵ During the war, about 40,000 women were accepted into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, which also was founded in 1917, and 8500 of them were sent abroad.²⁰⁶ At the end of the war, there were between 80,000 and 90,000 women who had served in the British army in the auxiliary services as clerks, store

²⁰⁰ Joan W. Scott, "La travailleuse," in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, Vol. 4, *Le XIXe siècle*, ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Paris: Perrin, 2002), p. 488.

²⁰¹ Susan Bachrach and Jean-Michel Galano, "La féminisation des PTT en France au tournant du siècle," *Le Mouvement social*, No. 140, *Métiers de Femmes* (Jul. – Sep., 1987), p. 86.

²⁰² Françoise Thébaud, "Work, Gender, and Identity in Peace and War: France, 1890-1930," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York; London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 414-415.

²⁰³ Françoise Battagliola, *Histoire du travail des femmes*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2008), p. 52.

²⁰⁴ Jenny Gould, "Women's Military Services in First World War Britain," in *Behind the Lines*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz, p. 114. See also, Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 56.

²⁰⁵ Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 54.

²⁰⁶ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 98.

keepers, cleaners, cooks, waitresses, mechanics, telephone operators and drivers.²⁰⁷ Most of these working class women were attracted by the salaries paid for these jobs, which were higher than what was paid for many traditional jobs.²⁰⁸ Likewise, more than 11,000 women enlisted in the American Navy in this period.²⁰⁹ Women were only accepted as soldiers in Russia, where Maria Leont'evna Bochkareva became the commander of the First Russian Women's Battalion of Death in World War I. From Spring 1917 to fall of that year, more than 5,000 Russian women volunteered to fill the ranks of fifteen all-female combat units.²¹⁰

Furthermore, women's army work increased their number in the medical professions.²¹¹ The French army employed 120,000 women,²¹² mostly as nurses in the army.²¹³ By 1918, of about 100,000 French nurses, 30,000 were paid by the army, whereas 63,000 were voluntary nurses serving for associations such as the Red Cross.²¹⁴ The educational opportunities of these women also varied according to their social status. Those women who belonged to the relatively lower income groups were able to get their education only in municipal or departmental schools without registration fees, while those nurses from upper-class could afford private courses or

²⁰⁷ Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p. 81.

²⁰⁸ Doron Lamm, "Emily Goes to War: Explaining the Recruitment to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in World War I," in *Borderlines*, ed. Billie Melman, p. 392.

²⁰⁹ Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War I: They Also Served* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1997), p. x.

²¹⁰ Laurie S. Stoff, *They Fought for the Motherland: Russia's Women Soldiers in World War I and the Revolution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006), pp. 53-89.

²¹¹ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 37-41.

²¹² Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, p. 255.

²¹³ For the experience of French nurses in war years, see Yvonne Knibiehler, Véronique Leroux-Hugon, Odile Dupont-Hess, and Yolande Tastayre, *Cornettes et blouses blanches: les infirmières dans la société française, 1880-1980* (Paris: Hachette, 1984), pp. 84-112. For their education during the war, see Évelyne Diebolt, *Les femmes dans l'action sanitaire, sociale et culturelle, 1901-2001: les associations face aux institutions*, with the preface of Michelle Perrot and Emile Poulat (Paris: Femmes et Associations, 2001), p. 310.

²¹⁴ Capdevila, Rouquet, Virgili, and Voldman, *Sexes, genre et guerres*, p. 69. See also, Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 84.

the nursing courses of the Red Cross. This last group was therefore preferred as more qualified nurses by the doctors.²¹⁵

The number of women factory workers also increased due to the war efforts of governments and Taylorism that divided the tasks into easy parts and made it possible to accept large numbers of women in factories.²¹⁶ For instance, in France, the number of women workers increased especially in metallurgy during the war years.²¹⁷ While only 5 percent of the metallurgy workers were women in 1913 they constituted 26 percent of the workers in 1917.²¹⁸ In the Seine region of France, women workers made up 30 percent of all workers in metallurgy by 1918.²¹⁹ Many middle-class women also found jobs in the factories as welfare supervisors of women workers, work inspectors, social workers and security guards to control women workers in countries like Britain, France, and Germany.²²⁰

Apart from the new job opportunities, one of the most important advantages the war offered women workers was to gain access to those sectors paying comparatively higher wages, such as munitions factories. Munitions work provided women workers some economic autonomy allowing them some freedom from the

²¹⁵ Yvonne Knibiehler, "Les anges blancs: naissance difficile d'une profession féminine," in *1914-1918*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, p. 50.

²¹⁶ Sylvie Zerner, "De la couture aux presses: l'emploi féminin entre les deux guerres," *Le Mouvement social*, No. 140, *Métiers de Femmes* (Jul. – Sep., 1987), p. 20.

²¹⁷ Jean-Paul Burdy, Mathilde Dubesset, and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, "Rôles, travaux et métiers de femmes dans une ville industrielle: Saint-Étienne, 1900-1950," *Le Mouvement social*, No. 140, *Métiers de Femmes* (Jul. – Sep., 1987), p. 28.

²¹⁸ Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, p. 200; and Zancarini-Fournel, "Travailler pour la patrie?" p. 39.

²¹⁹ Mathilde Dubesset, Françoise Thébaud, and Catherine Vincent, "Les munitionnettes de la Seine," in *1914-1918, L'autre front, cahier du "Mouvement Social"* No. 2 (Paris: Les Éditions ouvrières, 1977), p. 191.

²²⁰ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 35; Anne Summers, "Public Functions, Private Premises: Female Professional Identity and the Domestic Service Paradigm in Britain, c. 1850-1930," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York; London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 363-370. These women were also important to control the young women workers who could easily start prostitution due to low-wages. See for instance, Annie Fourcaut, ed., *Femmes à l'usine: ouvrières et surintendantes dans les entreprises françaises de l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1982), p. 131.

help of male relatives or husbands.²²¹ In this sector, women received roughly three times the wages they had earned before the war. About 400,000 domestic workers left their positions during World War I and started working in arms production for better wages.²²² In Britain, women gravitated to high salaries in government establishments and industries like metals, chemicals, textiles, and clothing, where their number reached 1,302,000 by July 1918.²²³ For that reason, employers of the “traditionally female” industries that paid lower wages lost most of their workers to the munitions factories during the war.²²⁴ In the United States of America as well, munitions factories rather than textile production attracted women who were in search of more money.²²⁵ In France, because the employers in other sectors feared that their workers might shift to munitions factories due to the higher wages in this sector, women workers in many other sectors as well continued to receive wages comparatively higher than they had before the war.²²⁶

However, despite the higher wages in these new sectors, women still received lower salaries compared to men, even in the munitions factories. In France, while women in the armaments factories earned up to 600 percent of what they had earned in traditionally female jobs like garment-making, they still earned less than their male counterparts.²²⁷ French women were accepted in the factories as second class

²²¹ Angela Woollacott, “Sisters and Brothers in Arms: Family, Class, and Gendering in World War I Britain,” in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 137.

²²² Davidoff, *Feminist Tarihyazımında Sınıf ve Cinsiyet*, p. 131; and Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 4, 116.

²²³ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 18-22.

²²⁴ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 61.

²²⁵ Carrie Brown, *Rosie’s Mom: Forgotten Women Workers of the First World War* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), p. 54.

²²⁶ Jean-Louis Robert, “Women and Work in France during the First World War,” in *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, eds. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 259; and Zancarini-Fournel, “Travailler pour la patrie?” pp. 44-45.

²²⁷ Boxer and Quataert, “Women in the Era of the Interventionist State,” p. 237.

workers with less education and lower wages than men.²²⁸ They earned about half of what men received for the same work. Even after the improvement of their wages by the state in 1917, women's wages still were lower than men's wages between 15 and 25 percent.²²⁹ In July 1918, while a French woman munitions worker earned 7.5 to 12 francs a day, a man doing the same job took home from 8.5 to 18 francs.²³⁰ British women workers also earned less than their male counterparts in terms of wages. The unions ignored this inequality, as long as men's wage rates were not in danger.²³¹ In Germany, even after wartime ameliorations, women's wages were about 47.7 percent of what men earned.²³² Like French women, German women workers as well did not receive a significant education on factory work.²³³ In Russia, women's wages were only between 30 to 50 percent of men's wages.²³⁴ Throughout the war women had to struggle to receive the same pay as men for the same work.²³⁵ Last but not least, given the high inflation rates, it is not difficult to say that these wages offered only a slight economic advantage for women.

In addition to low wages, many women suffered in dangerous, heavy and unsanitary working conditions and under extreme exploitation, which caused health problems, disability or even death.²³⁶ Women working in munitions factories were prone to hard work at night, explosions, and dangerous poisoning by TNT and other

²²⁸ Mary Lynn Stewart, *For Health and Beauty: Physical Culture for Frenchwomen, 1880s-1930s* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 173-176.

²²⁹ Battagliola, *Histoire du travail des femmes*, p. 51.

²³⁰ Dubesset, Thébaud, and Vincent, "Les munitionnettes de la Seine," p. 197.

²³¹ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 115-117. For women's lower wages in factory work than men in France and Britain during World War I, see Laura Lee Downs, "Salaires et valeur du travail: l'entrée des femmes dans les industries mécaniques sous le sceau de l'inégalité en France et en Grande-Bretagne (1914-1920)," *Travail, genre et sociétés*, No. 15 (2006), pp. 35-39; and see especially chapter 2 of Laura Lee Downs, *L'inégalité à la chaîne : la division sexuée du travail dans l'industrie métallurgique en France et en Angleterre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).

²³² Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 94.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

²³⁴ Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918*, pp. 190-191.

²³⁵ Michel, *Le féminisme*, p. 81.

²³⁶ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," pp. 114-115.

lethal chemicals.²³⁷ Despite such danger, British women in munitions factories were not allowed to move from one factory to another without certificates of permission.²³⁸ In France as well, women workers of the munitions factories were prone to dangers such as accidents, TNT poisoning, lung diseases, and serious skin burns.²³⁹ Furthermore, they suffered frequently from tuberculosis and venereal diseases. The rooms in which they slept at the factories were not sanitary and affected their health adversely.²⁴⁰ As for German women workers, the laws and regulations that were supposed to protect women and child workers did not effectively protect them during the war years.²⁴¹

Likewise, nurses constituted another group of women who worked in dangerous environments. About 10 percent of all French nurses who worked in the mobile operating rooms near the front died in military attacks.²⁴² Similarly, the Australian nurses on the Western front were exposed to considerable personal danger because in the medical stations in which they worked, which were situated within a few kilometers of the frontline, they were under the threat of bombing raids and gas attacks.²⁴³

Another problem was that society and the women's male colleagues resisted the newly acquired positions of women. Working women mostly suffered from moral and patriarchal expectations, various forms of harassment and rumors slandering and criticizing them. British women who worked in trams as conductors were harassed verbally and physically by men because of their inexperience.²⁴⁴

²³⁷ Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, p. 73; and Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 15.

²³⁸ Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War: The British Experience*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 53; and Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 80-81, 97.

²³⁹ Frois, *La santé et le travail*, pp. 82-111; and Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, pp. 56-57.

²⁴⁰ Frois, *La santé et le travail*, pp. 16-17, 28.

²⁴¹ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 62.

²⁴² Morin-Rotureau, "Avant-propos," p. 8.

²⁴³ Scates and Frances, *Women and the Great War*, p. 24.

²⁴⁴ Mary King Waddington, *My War Diary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), pp. 257-258.

Furthermore, rumors were spread about British women munitions workers who received relatively better wages for the duration of the war. Rumors had it that the women workers spent their money on luxuries like fur coats, silk dresses, jewelry and gramophones or for drinking excessively and eating delicacies.²⁴⁵ They were accused of potential drunkenness, extravagance, and sexual promiscuity.²⁴⁶ In France as well, the sexual promiscuity of women munitions workers was feared, because they had to live in the factories away from their families and very near to male workers.²⁴⁷

The employment of women in the army with the war also created hostilities against them. For instance, it was feared that the use of female technical staff in the United States army would “emasculate” warfare, and therefore, women only were accepted as civilian employees to the army.²⁴⁸ Likewise, British women were accepted in the army as civilians rather than being enlisted; but they were subject to the military laws and regulations.²⁴⁹ There were also many failed attempts by women of some of the belligerent countries to take part in the army. Hundreds of Australian women wrote to the military authorities volunteering to work in the army in any jobs, as ambulance drivers, cooks, hospital orderlies or office workers, but they were all rejected.²⁵⁰ Marguerite Durand, in her journal *La Fronde*, demanded the establishment of a women’s army auxiliary corps as well, but her demand did not resonate among the French decision-makers.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 125.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-10.

²⁴⁷ Frois, *La santé et le travail*, pp. 31-32.

²⁴⁸ Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 81-83.

²⁴⁹ Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p. 67.

²⁵⁰ Scates and Frances, *Women and the Great War*, pp. 44-45.

²⁵¹ Florence Rochefort, “Les féministes en guerre,” in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, p. 21.

Despite the urgent need, women also had difficulty entering the army as medical staff. For example, the British commanders refused a British woman doctor in 1914, arguing that they “did not want to be troubled with hysterical women.”²⁵² Even in this period when the war governments were in dire need of their service, American women doctors were not allowed to work as army staff, but they were hired as civilians. Consequently, many of them worked in Europe in the hospitals they founded under the name of American Women’s Hospitals.²⁵³ Although women had the right to work as Red Cross volunteers under the authority of the military medical service, in the first year of the war, they were not allowed to work in hospital service on the front. It was in 1915 when Red Cross nurses started working in front-line hospitals and their number reached up to 500,000.²⁵⁴

Once women started working for the army as nurses, they were at the same time eulogized as “ministering angels” and found suspicious.²⁵⁵ American nurses in the army worked in an especially hostile workplace environment, because they constituted a threat to the masculine culture of the United States army.²⁵⁶ They suffered “gender-based hostility” in the military. They were reminded that they were different and out of place in the army with various actions against them, ranging from “deliberate work sabotage” to “unwanted sexual attention” or “threats of assault.”²⁵⁷ They were the victims of rumors which alleged that they were spies of the enemy spreading German propaganda.²⁵⁸ Nurses faced racial discrimination as

²⁵² Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 313.

²⁵³ Gavin, *American Women in World War I*, pp. 157-158.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁵⁵ Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, p. 101.

²⁵⁶ Kimberly Jensen, “A Base Hospital Is Not a Coney Island Dance Hall: American Women Nurses, Hostile Work Environment, and Military Rank in the First World War,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, No. 2 (2005), p. 206.

²⁵⁷ Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 123.

²⁵⁸ Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service*, p. 115.

well. Some 1800 black nurses who had been certified by the Red Cross for military duty were not called up by the United States Army until the flu epidemic of 1918-1919 made their contributions inescapable.²⁵⁹

Even the most upper-class women members of the military personnel, the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurses of Britain, had important problems. They were seen as “a nuisance in war” and were poorly remunerated on the grounds that patriotism alone should be accepted as a reward for a “lady.”²⁶⁰ They received only the reimbursement of their out-of-pocket expenses.²⁶¹ As for French nurses who worked in great numbers in the army during World War I, they were subjected to some obstructive treatment. For instance, their nursing degree diplomas, which gave them some specific rights, were not granted until 1922.²⁶²

As a result of the fears that women could endanger the military culture, they were also prone to severe pressures from both society and the army in terms of their clothing and morality. Those women wearing military uniforms were not encouraged by the British public and were in some cases described in derogatory terms such as “aping men.”²⁶³ American Navy women wore no uniforms, when they started military work. They used civilian clothes with armbands according to their ranks. When they first used military uniforms, orders came from the authorities who were suspicious of women’s proper usage of their uniforms. Women were ordered to wear “no fur neckpieces, muffs, spats or other adornment.”²⁶⁴ British women working in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps were also victims of rumors about their promiscuity. Some of them were sent back home for misconduct as a result of these

²⁵⁹ Gavin, *American Women in World War I*, pp. 59-60.

²⁶⁰ Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, pp. 7-15.

²⁶¹ Summers, “Public Functions, Private Premises,” p. 365.

²⁶² Véronique Leroux-Hugon, “L’infirmière au début du XXe siècle: nouveau métier et tâches traditionnelles,” *Le Mouvement social*, No. 140, *Métiers de Femmes* (Jul. – Sep., 1987), p. 68.

²⁶³ Gledhill, “The War and Women,” p. 16.

²⁶⁴ Gavin, *American Women in World War I*, p. 4.

rumors.²⁶⁵ Many British middle and upper class women, who worked for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry as ambulance drivers during the war, frequently used their privileged social upbringing and Edwardian femininity, in other words, their aristocratic and moral status, in their discourses in order to protect themselves from similar rumors and to deal with the resistance of the authorities.²⁶⁶

Women were not passive in solving their work-related problems and took organized or individual actions against poor treatment. The most important feature of Western women's response to such negative conditions was to participate in labor and professional organizations. The percentage of women workers as union members and the strikes that women took part in or initiated increased during World War I.²⁶⁷ The number of British women trade union members raised from 437,000 in 1914 to 1,209,000 in 1918.²⁶⁸ In 1918, less than 12 percent of women munitions workers in France were union members compared to 25 percent of men. Nevertheless, even this low percentage was a progress compared to the statistics before the war.²⁶⁹ In France, there emerged feminist activists like Marguerite Durand, who demanded that a Women's Labor Bureau be opened officially and women's interests were defended, during and after the war.²⁷⁰

Despite women's attempts to gain new rights through union membership, usually they were not welcomed by male trade unionists. Male workers generally did

²⁶⁵ Lucy Noakes, "'A Disgrace to the Country They Belong to': The Sexualisation of Female Soldiers in First World War Britain," *Revue LISA/LISA e-journal* [Online] 6, No. 4 (2008), Online since 18 August 2009, consulted on 30 January 2012. URL: <http://lisa.revues.org/951>

²⁶⁶ Janet Lee, "'I Wish My Mother Could See Me Now': The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and Negotiation of Gender and Class Relations, 1907-1918," *Feminist Formations* 19, No. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 138-139.

²⁶⁷ For the wartime increase in union membership of French women and their wartime strikes, see Marie-Hélène Zylberberg-Hocquard, *Féminisme et syndicalisme en France* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1978), p. 201; and Jean-Louis Robert, *Les ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution: Paris 1914-1919* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1995), pp. 124-137.

²⁶⁸ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 40.

²⁶⁹ Dubesset, Thébaud, and Vincent, "Les munitionnettes de la Seine," p. 212.

²⁷⁰ Mary Lynn Stewart, *Women, Work, and the French State: Labour Protection and Social Patriarchy, 1879-1919* (Kingston; Montreal; London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 193.

not approve of the women workers who were content with low wages, and thereby, lowered wage levels and became a source of competition with male workers. Therefore, both in France and in Germany, male unionists wanted that women were paid the same wage with men for the same work not for egalitarian reasons, but to protect the rights of male workers who had to face the competition of women as cheap labor.²⁷¹ Fearing the competition of women workers, British unions attempted to reinforce the idea that women were essentially deficient as workers on the grounds that they had family responsibilities, were physically weaker, and lacked a tradition of work expertise.²⁷²

Despite the male workers' hostile or hesitant approach to the women's participation in labor movement, women took an active part in many wartime strikes. What is more, they themselves organized several strikes. In France, there were 17 strikes by women workers, as compared to 77 strikes by men in 1915 and 1916. In the spring of 1917, women textile workers who produced clothing for the army started a strike, because their wages had very low purchasing power against wartime inflation.²⁷³ Although women were underestimated as second-class members of unions, this was the first big strike of 1917, a year which was famous for strike waves in France.²⁷⁴

With these strikes in World War I, women workers felt for the first time that the state had become their employer. They realized the national importance of their

²⁷¹ Michel Zancarini-Fournel, "Femmes, genre et syndicalisme pendant la Grande Guerre," in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, pp. 107-108; and Daniel, *The War from within*, pp. 102-103.

²⁷² Deborah Thom, "Women and Work in Wartime Britain," in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, p. 300.

²⁷³ Zancarini-Fournel, "Femmes, genre et syndicalisme pendant la Grande Guerre," pp. 101-103.

²⁷⁴ Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, pp. 200-201. For the strikes of the women munitions workers in France which were considered as more dangerous, see Laura-Lee Downs, "Women's Strikes and the Politics of Popular Egalitarianism in France, 1916-18," in *Rethinking Labor History: Essays on Discourse and Class Analysis*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 128-129.

labor in war conditions.²⁷⁵ Therefore, they negotiated their work conditions with their states. In this regard, French women succeeded to reduce their work hours to an average of ten hours and were granted a “weekly rest” usually on Sunday or “the English week,” which was half day off on Saturday and all day off on Sunday as a result of their strikes in 1917.²⁷⁶

In the United States of America, where women were very well organized, the regulations for improving women workers’ conditions that had stagnated before the war in the Congress were passed more rapidly as a result of the war efforts. Thus, women workers in certain sectors, especially strategically important ones, obtained new work standards in their military contracts such as an eight hour work day, lunch and rest breaks, no night work except with special permission, no industrial home work, higher wages and equal payment with men in doing the same work, safe working conditions, and protection from chemicals.²⁷⁷ However, despite such regulations on paper, first, these conditions did not cover all women workers in all sectors; and second, the implementation of these rules and regulations was problematic, as stated above.

Apart from union membership or going on strike, women had everyday self-seeking strategies to improve their conditions or to minimize their losses as well. Many of these strategies involved motherhood. In order to avoid getting fired and living in destitution, many British women workers concealed their pregnancies.²⁷⁸ Likewise, despite the attempts of the trade unions to send women home in order to increase the wages of men, working-class women started to use contraception more

²⁷⁵ Antoine Prost, “Frontières et espaces du privé,” in *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, Vol. 5, *De la Première Guerre mondiale à nos jours*, ed. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), p. 45.

²⁷⁶ Robert, “Women and Work in France during the First World War,” p. 259.

²⁷⁷ Brown, *Rosie’s Mom*, pp. 118-120.

²⁷⁸ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 75.

effectively during World War I.²⁷⁹ Although the Austria-Hungary government forced women without small children to work in munitions factories by cutting their pensions and separation allowances, the German government, afraid of lowering the soldiers' morale, did not pursue the same policy. German women did not favor working outside, but preferred work they could do at home in order to take care of their children as single parents during the war years when housework was complicated. This choice of women forced the authorities to create new welfare policies to make factory work more attractive to women.²⁸⁰

Furthermore, absenteeism was very common among women workers who had family responsibilities. French women were absent from work 5 to 7 percent of their work days on average.²⁸¹ This was a kind of refusal to work in bad conditions or a self-defense in the face of the lack of sufficient social measures. Many women also resorted to criminal ways in the war years. In Germany, from 1913 to 1917 the anti-property crimes committed by women between 18 and 50 years old shockingly increased by 82.2 percent. In comparison, this increase was 57.4 percent for adolescents (male and female) between 15 and 18 years old, and 14.6 percent for men over 50 years old.²⁸² In addition, German women committed larceny, embezzlement, and fraud, received stolen goods, and falsified documents for their very survival. For example, whereas the total number of German women who were convicted for petty larceny was 19,803 in 1911, this number jumped to 37,735 in 1917. Women who received stolen goods increased from 2269 to 7734 between 1911

²⁷⁹ Martine Segalen, "La révolution industrielle: du prolétaire au bourgeois," in *Histoire de la famille*, Vol. 3, *Le choc des modernités*, ed. André Burguière, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Martine Segalen, and Françoise Zonabend (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994), pp. 512-513.

²⁸⁰ Daniel, "Women's Work in Industry and Family: Germany, 1914-1918," pp. 278-279; and Daniel, *The War from within*, pp. 85-88.

²⁸¹ Frois, *La santé et le travail*, p. 62.

²⁸² Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 162. Especially see Table 16 in this book which shows the female crimes in 1917 in comparison to the average female crime rates of the years 1911-1913, on page 200.

and 1917. Those women who resorted to the falsification of documents increased from 1102 in 1911 to 3337 in 1917.²⁸³

Many women workers tried to quit one munitions factory for another in order to get better pay. In order to make this harder, the British government devised a system of leaving certificates, which were supposed to be shown to the workplaces to which the workers applied for jobs.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, there were women munitions workers who refused to work with dangerous products like amatol, which is a compound containing TNT. These women were prosecuted at an industrial tribunal and fined 15 shillings.²⁸⁵ Despite such punishments, women munitions workers who wanted to avoid working with TNT often resorted to absenteeism or changed jobs.²⁸⁶

With the Armistice, the need for women in the workforce ended abruptly. Many women in public offices or in munitions factories were fired as soon as men returned home. In France, about 500,000 of 600,000 women workers in the war industry were dismissed once there was no need for them. Women's wages were again lowered. However, while women in administrative departments acquired a relatively more durable status as employees, those in industry suffered from dismissals.²⁸⁷ The number of French working women was nearly the same in the statistics of 1911 and 1921, despite the rapid increase during the war.²⁸⁸

In Britain, two-thirds of all women who had been employed during the war had to leave their jobs by 1920.²⁸⁹ Among those workers who were dismissed, 150,000 women were refused unemployment compensation on the grounds that they

²⁸³ Daniel, *The War from within*, p. 202.

²⁸⁴ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," p. 106.

²⁸⁵ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 134.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁸⁷ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, pp. 57-58.

²⁸⁸ Schweitzer, *Les femmes ont toujours travaillé*, p. 100.

²⁸⁹ Gledhill, "The War and Women," p. 17.

had not been employed before the war.²⁹⁰ Not only munitions workers but women working in several jobs ranging from tram conductors to typists were fired. Consequently, in 1921, the percentage of British women labor force became 2 percent lower than it had been in 1911.²⁹¹ Dismissed women were denied unemployment compensation if they refused to work in jobs offered to them, which were most frequently positions in domestic work that many of them had quit during the war years.²⁹² Nevertheless, even when they had to accept these positions, many women as domestic workers “felt a far greater capacity to resist exploitation than before,” because of the wartime experience that had provided them with more self-confidence to quit their jobs.²⁹³ Furthermore, women were not totally silent against these massive dismissals and many of them sent complaint letters which were published in the press of the time.²⁹⁴

In sum, during World War I in the industrialized belligerent countries women started working in new jobs conventionally known as men’s work and acquired some increases in their wages in especially the munitions factories compared to what was paid for traditionally feminine jobs like textiles and domestic work. Many middle or upper-class women also found jobs in these factories for the surveillance or welfare of women workers or in white-collar jobs in increasing numbers. Women also entered into army work with the war. Nevertheless, even those women who benefited from a new work experience or increased wages during World War I were still prone to bad work conditions, lower wages compared to men and patriarchal pressures. Women showed their discontent and resisted both of these in open strikes or in more covert ways. At the end of the war, many women had to leave their positions to men.

²⁹⁰ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 192.

²⁹¹ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 106.

²⁹² Summers, “Public Functions, Private Premises,” p. 370.

²⁹³ Thom, “Women and Work in Wartime Britain,” p. 317.

²⁹⁴ Battagliola, *Histoire du travail des femmes*, pp. 53-54.

Ordinary Women's Experience of and Response to War Mobilization

Whether they supported the war mobilization or not, women were at the center of the war propaganda during World War I. Women's vulnerable situation in the war was generally used for political purposes and for boosting the motivation of the soldiers.²⁹⁵ Wars were believed to be fought for the protection of "women and children" and therefore women became an indispensable part of the militarized imagery.²⁹⁶ For instance, the "rape and sexual mutilation of women" in Belgium and France by German soldiers was used as an important part of the British war propaganda.²⁹⁷ The stories of the raped women were told mostly by men and not by the women who had experienced it. These stories eventually served only to create a nationalist mythology for propaganda purposes.²⁹⁸ However, in reality women were not only under the threat of an external enemy, but also and especially under the threat of attacks by local men. Some American women took up arms during the war years in order to protect themselves and their families against the attacks in the absence of their recruited men.²⁹⁹

World War I also triggered nationalist and religious sentiments among the civilians. Especially women and children became the targets of the nationalist war propaganda. In Britain, France and Germany, the nationalist education of children became one of the priorities of politicians.³⁰⁰ In the United States of America,

²⁹⁵ Nicole Ann Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints, or Sacrificial Lambs? Women's Relationship to Combat and the Fortification of the Home Front in the Twentieth Century," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, p. 3.

²⁹⁶ Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, pp. 110-111.

²⁹⁷ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 43.

²⁹⁸ Ruth Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War," *Past & Present*, No. 141 (Nov., 1993), p. 172.

²⁹⁹ Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva*, pp. 41-42.

³⁰⁰ For this kind of nationalist education which taught children to hate the enemy, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La guerre des enfants, 1914-1918: essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1993), pp. 80-94.

popular nationalism due to the war was seen as a remedy to the problem of citizenship and nationalization of large numbers of migrants.³⁰¹ Women were also active in nationalist propaganda. Some American suffrage leaders took part in the efforts of Americanization of immigrant families as a contribution to the war effort by scrutinizing the mothering practices of immigrant women in order to reproduce patriotism and national values.³⁰² Likewise, French Catholic women became the targets of religious propaganda through prayer books or sculptures strengthening catholic sentiments against partly Protestant Germany. Many of them were biased with prayers which gave consent to the war. According to some accounts, women became more pious than they had been before World War I.³⁰³

Women were not simply passive objects or receivers of war propaganda. First, some women played active roles by supporting the propaganda. Others responded to it by passively or actively resisting it, or by remaining indifferent to it. Many of them were involved in writing books during the war years about the war more freely than men who were fighting on the front and suffering from shell shock.³⁰⁴ In Britain, where before 1916 men volunteered to enlist in the army rather than being universally conscripted, there were women propaganda writers like Mrs. Humphry Ward, who published *England's Effort* in 1916 and *Towards the Goal* in 1917 under government auspices.³⁰⁵ However, war propaganda was not always explicitly made; it can even be implicitly found in the romance novels of the time

³⁰¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 106-120.

³⁰² Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion during World War I* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 14-15.

³⁰³ Annette Becker, "Tortured and Exalted by War: French Catholic Women, 1914-1918," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, p. 50.

³⁰⁴ Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart," p. 448.

³⁰⁵ Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 65; and Helen Small, "Mrs. Humphry Ward and the First Casualty of War," in *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, ed. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 18-46.

written by women, which might have had a greater impact on ordinary people.³⁰⁶ In this regard, women were agents of war propaganda mostly by shaming men who had not enlisted in the army, with their patriotic words and actions. To force women to be active in war propaganda, posters with the images of patriotic women were also used.³⁰⁷ An advertisement which encouraged young women for this purpose even claimed that British men who had neglected their war duty to their King and their country could some day neglect them as husbands.³⁰⁸ In Britain and in the United States of America, nationalist women distributed white feathers to the men they saw without uniform on the street to shame them.³⁰⁹ Furthermore, stories of women's heroic actions helped to shame those men who did not fight on the front.³¹⁰ In Russia, the Battalion of Death composed of women soldiers under the commandship of Maria Botchkareva, was devised by her as a propaganda tool to shame men into fighting.³¹¹

However, the great part of the ordinary poor and low income women challenged certain aspects of the war mobilization. One of the main forms of this challenge was against the war governments' patriarchal family policies that sought to control women's sexual lives. The regulation of women's sexuality and prostitution was a crucial component of the war mobilization. Although the repression of prostitution can be traced back to earlier periods in Western countries, it was

³⁰⁶ Jane Potter, "'A Great Purifier': The Great War in Women's Romances and Memoirs, 1914-1918," in *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, ed. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate, pp. 85-106; and Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 111.

³⁰⁷ Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens*, p. 10.

³⁰⁸ Gledhill, "The War and Women," pp. 3-4.

³⁰⁹ Ian Beckett, *Home Front, 1914-1918: How Britain Survived the Great War* (Kew: The National Archives, 2006), p. 66; Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p. 44; Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 272; and Nicoletta F. Gullace, "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War," *The Journal of British Studies* 36, No. 2, Twentieth-Century British Studies (Apr., 1997), pp. 178-206.

³¹⁰ Women were so active in war efforts that other than unknown women war heroines French state gave medallions to about 10,000 women. For example, see Jean-Marc Binot, *Héroïnes de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), p. 18.

³¹¹ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 74.

especially from the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries onwards that states wanted to control women and girl prostitutes.³¹² The Contagious Diseases Act of 1864 in Britain was first of all thought of as prevention against the spread of venereal diseases to soldiers. Many women who temporarily prostituted themselves due to economic reasons were recorded, condemned and forced into lifelong prostitution as a result.³¹³ During World War I as well, regulation of women's sexuality and control of prostitution were very important for the belligerent states for the war mobilization and effort. Prostitution was either regulated or suppressed altogether.³¹⁴ Indeed, women's sexuality on the home front was significant in order to boost the morale of the soldiers who believed that they fought for their faithful wives or fiancés under the threat of "enemy" attacks.

However, financial problems made being loyal much more difficult for poor women. Despite the attempts of the governments during the war and the following years against it, prostitution was very common because of the social and economic problems that war engendered for low-income women deprived of their supporter and protector male relatives.³¹⁵ The interventionist policies of the state caused an increase in clandestine prostitution.³¹⁶ Although comparatively most of the middle and upper class women could mourn for years for their husbands or fiancés who had died in battlefield, lower class women who were afflicted by acute economic problems due to the absence or loss of their breadwinners had to resort either to

³¹² Michel Foucault writes about the history of this control of sexuality in the Western context. For example, see Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976-1984).

³¹³ Wells, *Kadın Gözüyle Batı Avrupa'da Fahişeliğin Tarihi*, pp. 66-75.

³¹⁴ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 69-77.

³¹⁵ For France, see Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre: les mœurs sexuelles des Français, 1914-1918* (Paris: Aubier, 2002), pp. 165-172; and Laures Adler, *Les maisons closes, 1830-1930* ([Paris]: Librairie Arthème Fayard / Pluriel, 2011), pp. 242-243.

³¹⁶ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 69-77.

prostitution or remarriage.³¹⁷ Aware of this, the German war government, for instance, increased the dose of moral pressures on the wives of conscripted soldiers in order to protect the morale of the soldiers. Nevertheless, in the face of such attentiveness of the state, the clandestine prostitution and moral problems among women proliferated during the war years. This was true not only in the cities, but also in the countryside where peasant women had sexual intercourse with prisoners of war.³¹⁸

Due to the importance of women's sexuality for mobilization, wartime regulations went beyond the protection of public health and became an issue of the discipline and morale of women on the home front.³¹⁹ The British government enacted the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA) in November 1914, which prohibited women from appearing on the streets between the hours of 19:00 and 08:00.³²⁰ Furthermore, after the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was introduced in 1917, the age of consent for women was raised from 16 to 18, penalties of imprisonment with hard labor were introduced for those women who deliberately spread venereal diseases and advertisements for abortion methods and alleged cures for disorders spread by sexual contact were criminalized. With Regulation 40D in March 1918, no woman suffering from venereal disease was allowed to have sexual intercourse with British soldiers. In this way, the regulation of women's sexuality went beyond prostitution and targeted both the prostitutes and "amateur" girls.³²¹ In Australia as well, the police arrested those girls who were found on the streets at late hours in the

³¹⁷ See for example Vera Brittain who mourned for ten years for her war martyr fiancé before getting married with another man, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Cinq deuils de guerre, 1914-1918* (Paris: Éditions Noësis, 2001), pp. 13-51.

³¹⁸ Daniel, *The War from within*, pp. 138-147.

³¹⁹ Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 155.

³²⁰ Susan R. Grayzel, "The Enemy within: The Problem of British Women's Sexuality during the First World War," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 72.

³²¹ Grayzel, "The Enemy within," pp. 80-83.

company of soldiers and sailors. They were charged with the crime of infecting soldiers with venereal diseases, although this sometimes proved not to be true.³²² In Germany, the measures against venereal diseases protected men while contraception was banned and women were forced to have medical examinations.³²³

The regulations unfairly criminalized women who were not involved with prostitution. For example, it was reported that some German secret agents had forced women to have sex with them by threatening to report them as unlicensed prostitutes. According to German law, any woman who was reported to have had sex with more than one man was labeled as a prostitute. As a result, many women and girls who were not prostitutes in reality were sent to military brothels.³²⁴ Some nationalist women volunteers themselves were agents of similar social control which often criminalized lower-class women. Nationalist and conservative middle-class women especially argued that they were “better equipped than men were to control women” in Britain.³²⁵ In the United States of America as well in those cities where the army camps were located, lower-class women who worked as prostitutes were strictly policed by middle-class women as “social workers” during World War I.³²⁶

Pacifist women came under similar surveillance, because they also constituted an important threat to war mobilization. The war elevated nationalist and patriotic feelings and “manhood,” while the war governments suppressed universal ideals such as feminism and socialism.³²⁷ For instance, with the war declaration of the United States government, all immigrants, labor leaders, and political radicals of

³²² Scates and Frances, *Women and the Great War*, pp. 128-129.

³²³ Caroline Osborne, “‘Pregnancy Is The Woman’s Active Service’: Pronatalism in Germany during the First World War,” in *The Upheaval of War*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter, p. 392.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 391-392; and Golstein, *War and Gender*, p. 344.

³²⁵ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 59-60.

³²⁶ Courtney Q. Shah, “‘Against Their Own Weakness’: Policing Sexuality and Women in San Antonio, Texas, during World War I,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, No. 3 (Sept., 2010), pp. 458-459.

³²⁷ Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens*, pp. 6-8.

all affiliations became suspect individuals.³²⁸ Among the pacifist women, especially women doctors or school teachers against military training in public schools, socialist women leaders who promoted an antimilitarist motherhood and immigrant working-class women were all criminalized and put under surveillance.³²⁹

American pacifist feminist Jane Addams, for example, who were to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, was increasingly isolated after 1917 because of her opposition to the war. She was labeled a traitor, communist, and anarchist after the war.³³⁰ French pacifist feminists such as the schoolteachers H el ene Brion, Marie Mayoux, and Lucie Colliard were put on trial and were imprisoned for similar reasons.³³¹ Many other countries prosecuted women for their pacifist activities, charging them with political crimes.³³²

Despite their political importance, pacifist women constituted only a small group. Whereas a minority of women pursued their rights through such pacifist activities, many others supported the war effort and nationalist cause, as stated above. In this respect, World War I challenged the idea that women supported peace universally.³³³ Many suffragists who believed that they could win their citizenship rights by supporting the war efforts of their government rejected the ideas of the

³²⁸ Frances H. Early, *A World without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse; New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 3.

³²⁹ Susan Zeiger, "The Schoolhouse vs. the Armory: U.S. Teachers and the Campaign Against Militarism in the Schools, 1914-1918," *Journal of Women's History* 15, No. 2 (Summer 2003), p. 152; Kathleen Kennedy, "Declaring War on War: Gender and the American Socialist Attack on Militarism, 1914-1918," *Journal of Women's History* 7, No. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 40; and Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens*, p. xv.

³³⁰ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, p. 324-325.

³³¹ Joanna Shearer, "The Creation of an Icon in Defence of H el ene Brion: Pacifists and Feminists in the French Minority Media," in *The Women's Movement in Wartime*, ed. Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp, p. 101; Zancarini-Fournel, "Femmes, genre et syndicalisme pendant la Grande Guerre," p. 110; "Pacifisme," in *Les mots de l'Histoire des femmes*, p. 75; Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 188; and Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 162.

³³² Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 88.

³³³ Joyce Berkman, "Feminism, War, and Peace Politics: The Case of World War I," in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), p. 141.

pacifists.³³⁴ Because of their difference of opinion, pacifist suffragists like Helena Swanwick and many leading figures had to resign from the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies on 15 April 1915.³³⁵ The same year Swanwick created the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom with American feminist Jane Addams.³³⁶ In this period, pacifist women organized important conferences in which many suffragists refused to participate. Shortly after the international conference organized by socialist women like Clara Zetkin in Berne on 25-27 March 1915 at which they declared war against the war,³³⁷ the International Council of Women organized the Women's Peace Congress at the Hague from 28 April to 1 May 1915.³³⁸ Instead of supporting these attempts, the same year British feminists who supported nationalism renamed their journal *The Suffragette*, the newspaper of the English Women's Social and Political Union, as *Britannia*.³³⁹ Likewise, war propagator Mrs. Humphry Ward celebrated the war as a means for women's emancipation, claiming that it created the "world of the new women," who had recently become women policemen, chauffeurs, and militant suffragists.³⁴⁰

Because of this lack of support from other feminist women and other reasons, pacifist women's attempts for peace failed.³⁴¹ Many pacifist women were unable to have an impact on some groups of lower-class women as well as those who had their

³³⁴ Joan Montgomery Byles, *War, Women, and Poetry, 1914-1945: British and German Writers and Activists* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 25-28; Enloe, *Maneuvers*, pp. 7-8; and Michèle Riot-Sarcey, *Histoire du féminisme* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte & Syros, 2002), pp. 71-72.

³³⁵ Lyn Bicker, "Public and Private Choices: Public and Private Voices," in *Women and World War I: The Written Response*, ed. Dorothy Goldman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 96.

³³⁶ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 8.

³³⁷ Alfred Rosmer, *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre: de l'Union Sacrée à Zimmerwald* (Paris: Librairie du travail, 1936), pp. 306-310. For socialist women's actions against the war like organizing conferences see also, Charles Sowerwine, *Les femmes et le socialisme: un siècle d'histoire*, with the preface of Madeleine Rebérioux (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1978), pp. 169-197.

³³⁸ Michel, *Le féminisme*, p. 81; and Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 80.

³³⁹ Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart," p. 447.

³⁴⁰ Dorothy Goldman, "The Dilemma of Subject," in *Women Writers and the Great War*, Dorothy Goldman, Jane Gledhill, and Judith Hattaway, p. 42.

³⁴¹ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," pp. 126-130.

subjective reasons to support the war mobilization. For instance, some pacifist women intellectuals like Marcelle Capy believed that women munitions workers could end the war by stopping arms production. However, this idea had no real impact on women munitions workers, for they could lose their jobs with the end of the war.³⁴² Munitions workers in Britain as well were not pacifists because these factories were important sources of income for their survival.³⁴³ Similarly, Russian radical feminist Alexandra Kollontai, who believed that World War I “was no more than an instrument of bourgeois oppression,” found herself criticizing the Women’s Battalion of Death founded by a semi-literate woman from lower-class origins, Maria Bochkareva, in May 1917.³⁴⁴

Partially as a result of women’s support of war mobilization, a long list of nations gave women their political rights either during or in the aftermath of the war.³⁴⁵ However, once women acquired their political rights, their earlier struggle for the right to vote was ignored. Instead, the idea that women’s political rights were given as recompense for their war efforts was promoted.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, women’s wartime service was only one factor among many other less mentioned ones which provided women with certain political rights.³⁴⁷ The discourse of wartime sacrifice

³⁴² Dubesset, Thébaud, and Vincent, “Les munitionnettes de la Seine,” p. 217.

³⁴³ Angela Woollacott, “Women Munitions Makers, War, and Citizenship,” in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York; London: New York University Press, 1998), p. 127.

³⁴⁴ Jana Howlett, “‘We’ll End in Hell, My Passionate Sisters’: Russian Women Poets and World War I,” in *Women and World War I: The Written Response*, ed. Dorothy Goldman (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), pp. 77-78.

³⁴⁵ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 102-106.

³⁴⁶ Michelle Perrot, “Sur le front des sexes: un combat douteux,” *Vingtième Siècle Revue d’histoire*, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), p. 75.

³⁴⁷ Véronique Molinari, *Le vote des femmes et la Première Guerre mondiale en Angleterre* (Paris: Éditions l’Harmattan, 1996), pp. 11-12. According to Gisela Bock, British women could attain their political rights easier than French women, because they made an alliance with the Labor Party. Bock, *Avrupa Tarihinde Kadınlar*, p. 176. According to Leora Auslander, French women had a specific role in the formation of French citizenship as they transferred French culture to their children at home and for that reason their participation into the political life was seen as a danger by the politicians. The same problem was not observed in Germany where citizenship was transferred with blood rather than

was rather a strategy of those governments that desperately needed popular support for male enlistment. For instance, during the war the governments in Canada and Belgium gave the right to vote to the mothers of soldiers before most other women.³⁴⁸

This discourse meant little after the war. Indeed, while both British and French women had worked for their countries, British women had the right to vote, but French women did not.³⁴⁹ War work helped British women to dismiss the previous arguments against women's citizenship rights.³⁵⁰ On the other hand, French women who had similar service were denied the same right.³⁵¹ Instead, French women had a suspension of their struggle for suffrage with World War I.³⁵² Furthermore, despite the previous expectations of the suffragists, the women of those countries who had acquired political rights soon realized that voting was not sufficient to achieve equality in other spheres of life. For instance, Russian women who obtained the right to vote earlier than many other European countries had to struggle for their civil and socio-economic rights long afterwards.³⁵³

Not only women's wartime services but their resistance to the war mobilization as well was equally significant in terms of politics. Especially those rebellions and strikes of lower-class women due to wartime poverty and shortages of

culture. Leora Auslander, "Le vote des femmes et l'imaginaire de la citoyenneté: l'état-nation en France et Allemagne," in *L'histoire sans les femmes est-elle possible?*, pp. 80-81.

³⁴⁸ Enloe, *Maneuvers*, pp. 247-248.

³⁴⁹ Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 223.

³⁵⁰ Angela K. Smith, *The Second Battlefield: Women, Modernism and the First World War* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 7.

³⁵¹ For French women's long struggle to attain their rights before World War I and long afterwards, see Michelle Perrot, "Préface," in *L'égalité en marche: Le féminisme sous la Troisième République*, writ. Laurence Klejman and Florence Rochefort (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques / Des femmes, 1989), pp. 13-19.

³⁵² Steven C. Hause, "More Minerva than Mars: The French Women's Rights Campaign and the First World War," in *Behind the Lines*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz, p. 100; and Françoise Thébaud, "Le féminisme à l'épreuve de la guerre," in *Entre émancipation et nationalisme: la presse féminine d'Europe, 1914-1945*, ed. Rita Thalmann ([Paris]: Éditions Deuxième Tierce, 1990), pp. 42-44.

³⁵³ Olga Shnyrova, "Feminism and Suffrage in Russia: Women, War and Revolution, 1914-1917," in *The Women's Movement in Wartime*, ed. Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp, p. 137.

food and basic consumption goods eventually paved the way for the revolutions in Russia and Germany.³⁵⁴ German women workers took active part in the Revolution of 9 November 1918.³⁵⁵ In Russia as well, women worker's strikes and poor women's riots contributed to the Bolshevik Revolution.³⁵⁶ Russian peasant women as a very impoverished group were also active in the rebellions. Unlike in other European belligerent countries, in Russia soldiers had a very long period of conscription, about fifteen years, even after the reform of 1874. By the end of 1916, the number of men who were on the front reached 14.6 million and about one-third of the peasant families were left without their men. In these conditions, many peasant women did not trust the war propaganda, but rebelled against the conscription of their husbands.³⁵⁷

French women workers and ordinary women also were active in strikes and anti-war demonstrations in 1917.³⁵⁸ Most of them were spontaneous and individual movements. One of their forms of resistance against the mobilization was to protest the conscriptions and to attempt to prevent the transportation of newly recruited men. During the war, many French women who did not want to allow their men to go to the front were prosecuted and sentenced to three months imprisonment.³⁵⁹ Especially towards the end of the war, from January 1918 to May 1918, French women workers tried to prevent conscriptions and some of them lay down on the railway lines to stop the trains which carried young soldiers.³⁶⁰ Women as wives, female pen friends, or prostitutes became the nightmare of the French army because they were able to

³⁵⁴ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp. 92-97; and Boxer and Quataert, "Women in the Era of the Interventionist State," pp. 237-238.

³⁵⁵ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 233.

³⁵⁶ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 94.

³⁵⁷ Barbara Alpern Engel, "Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I," *The Journal of Modern History* 69, No. 4 (Dec., 1997), pp. 708-709.

³⁵⁸ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 54.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

³⁶⁰ Zancarini-Fournel, "Femmes, genre et syndicalisme pendant la grande guerre," p. 109.

demoralize the soldiers.³⁶¹ Indeed, the desertions of soldiers during World War I were not only related to their lack of military discipline, but also to their reaction to the wartime inequalities and problems troubling their female relatives on the home front. Many of them, including the mutinies in the French army in 1917, stemmed to some extent from the problems of their families who had become impoverished with the war.³⁶²

Although very little has been written on their wartime experience, like soldiers, peasant women were another group that bore the burden of the war the most. Their resistance to the war mobilization was very important although they were more silent in appearance than urban women. The main reason for this was the fact that their resistance showed itself mostly in their everyday struggles for survival. The governments of both Britain and Germany expected peasant women to help the war mobilization by producing a lot more agricultural crops.³⁶³ In Italy and France, peasant women were exploited in agricultural work to varying degrees, according to the region in which they lived.³⁶⁴ They especially resisted the war time taxes through everyday stratagems.

The war time impoverishment and food shortages led French peasants to hide some of their wheat or animals from military tax collectors. By doing so, they aimed

³⁶¹ Jean-Yves Le Naour, "Épouses, marraines et prostituées: le repos du guerrier, entre service social et condamnation morale," in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, p. 65.

³⁶² André Loez, *14-18, les refus de la guerre: une histoire des mutins* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), pp. 559-560. For French soldiers as mutinies, see Nicolas Offenstadt, *Les fusillés de la Grande Guerre et la mémoire collective: 1914-1999* (Paris: Jacob, 1999), pp. 32-53; Guy Pedroncini, *Les mutineries de 1917*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996); Denis Rolland, *La grève des tranchées: les mutineries de 1917*, with the afterword of Nicolas Offenstadt (Paris: Imago, 2005); André Loez and Nicolas Mariot, eds., *Obéir, désobéir: les mutineries de 1917 en perspective*, with the introduction of André Loez and Nicolas Mariot (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2008). For the story of a French woman who took the revenge of her husband that she believed to be unfairly killed by a firing squad, see Audoin-Rouzeau, *Cinq deuils de guerre, 1914-1918*, pp. 143-209. In their own journals French soldiers also criticized the indifference of the civilians to their suffering on the front and especially the living standards of the war profiteers. See for instance, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *14-18, les combattants des tranchées: à travers leurs journaux* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986), pp. 125-137.

³⁶³ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 49.

³⁶⁴ Thébaud, "La Grande Guerre: le triomphe de la division sexuelle," pp. 112-113.

to minimize their losses or earn some extra money by selling these in the cities. Again, they might have earned more money to pay their debts by doing so. Indeed, many peasant women had difficulty in paying their debts due to the decreased agricultural production, although the government made use of war prisoners by forcing them to work their lands in order to solve this problem.³⁶⁵

Likewise, Italian peasant women and girls at very young ages had to work beyond their strength. Many of them had to steal food out of hunger. Furthermore, in the absence of their men, women had to deal with bureaucratic problems by themselves and they were more exposed to sexual and other forms of harassment of the government agents and other men. Finally, despite the moral and nationalist expectations, peasant women were willing to hide the deserters who helped them in their agricultural duties.³⁶⁶

In sum, the war government mobilized not only male human power for the battles on the front, but that of women as well. Another sort of battle occurred on home front between women and the state, and between low-income women and middle-class women who took part in the war efforts of the state. The government took several measures such as preventing prostitution, illegal remarriages and limiting women's sexual autonomy to keep soldiers morale high and to protect the population from venereal diseases. The nationalist war propaganda encouraged men and women to support conscription and to cooperate with the government. Women were not unresponsive to the war mobilization and propaganda. Women of belligerent countries supported the war mobilization or resisted it for their subjective reasons that varied according to their social and economic status. Some women

³⁶⁵ Antier, *Les femmes dans la Grande Guerre*, pp. 36-41; and Zancarini-Fournel, "Travailler pour la patrie?" pp. 36-37.

³⁶⁶ Anna Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War," in *Total War and Historical Change: Europe, 1914-1955*, ed. Arthur Marwick, Clive Emsley and Wendy Simpson (Buckingham; Philadelphia, Pa.: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 88-95.

supported the mobilization measures or took active parts in the mobilization and propaganda activities. Women most probably sought acceptance and position in public and economic life by cooperating with the state. On the other hand, especially those women who suffered from the war, especially lower class women in urban and rural settings passively or actively disapproved, criticized and resisted the war mobilization measures. Therefore, many women as prostitutes, feminists, socialists and pacifists became targets of attacks and the strict control of the state because of their negative impact on war mobilization and nationalist propaganda. The war revealed the heterogeneity of women's experience of war and of their approach to war mobilization. Most probably, as well as some women's active support of nationalist causes, many other women's non-cooperation and resistance, which challenged the mobilization measures, revealed the importance of women's consent and cooperation for successful implementation of state policies and played role in the recognition of their political rights.

Concluding Remarks

The Western women's experiences of the social impact of the war and wartime mobilization were not homogenous. Their experiences varied according to the social and economic positions and conditions in which they lived. Even in the strongest and most developed Western countries, the war did not bring automatic emancipation or liberty for women. Despite some opportunities such as the opening of new job fields to women beyond the pre-war traditional gendered division of labor, the war brought poverty, deprivation, hunger or malnourishment for the vast majority of women.

World War I further revealed the class and status difference between lower-class women and middle and upper-class women. Some middle and upper-class women acquired public acceptance and new economic, social and political positions through their propaganda activities or welfare work for poor soldiers' families and orphans. In addition, many middle and upper class women supported the war mobilization and nationalist propaganda, and criticized those women who were pacifists and discontent with the state policies. They legitimized their participation in public life through their support for the war effort of the governments.

Undoubtedly, the total war brought women some opportunities such as relatively better paid munitions work, new jobs and work experience. The wartime employment was a new experience for many women as well as a source of income. On the other hand, many lower class and poor women suffered from the adverse social and economic effects of the war. For a vast majority of women who had sent their men to the front, World War I brought an acute impoverishment together with bereavement. In the face of increasing poverty and social problems afflicting lower class women, the war governments had to increase welfare measures in terms of food distribution, separation allowances or pensions to soldiers' families, and aids to mothers and orphan children throughout the war due to war mobilization. However, welfare measures did not meet the needs and created further problems such as unequal, discriminatory, and exclusionary practices or introduced patriarchal requirements and control over women.

The conscriptions also did not entirely remove the patriarchal control over women, but the state and some elite and middle class women substituted for the men under arms. As a result of the military mobilizations, lower-class women as workers, peasants or soldiers' wives began to be under an increased surveillance of the state.

They were expected to keep the home fires burning, be loyal wives or fiancées, and boost the morale of the soldiers. Again, many women were expected to support the conscriptions and other war mobilization measures by cooperating with the state and making sacrifices.

However, many low-income and poor women were not only passive recipients of welfare measures. Nor did they remain passive in the face of the social and moral control over them and of mobilization measures imposing sacrifices on them. First, women negotiated the side effects and negative aspects of the welfare measures. They negotiated the terms, conditions and amounts of the welfare measures and criticized the discriminatory practices. They demanded much more and more effective social aid programs. Their growing complaints and demands compelled the governments to take more inclusive and efficient measures or to correct the malpractices. Second, women resisted the difficulties and problems in work life on the shopfloor and in daily life. Third, they did not remain fully under the patriarchal social control. They did not mourn after their soldier husbands, and they did not become totally dependent on the money they received from the state. They remarried, changed jobs, or moved to other places for survival. Women's everyday struggles also included committing crimes such as theft, clandestine prostitution, tax avoidance by hiding agricultural crops, or helping and even encouraging the desertions. Fourth, as the war dragged on and their poverty and sufferings became unbearable, many women showed their discontent in organized or spontaneous strikes, anti-war demonstrations, or bread riots.

All of these actions and struggles of women gradually contributed to the erosion of the legitimacy of the war governments. We know that their subjective support to anti-war counter-propaganda and opposition movements in some

countries, like Russia and Germany, played a role in the military defeats and revolutions which were influential in ending the war. I think that women's war experience, both their contribution to war mobilization and their resistance to it, created awareness about women's social, economic, and political importance. This awareness led many Western governments to recognize their suffrage rights at least during the war period and in the inter-war era.

CHAPTER THREE

THE OTTOMAN HOME FRONT: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I

The Ottoman society went through very important changes with the war years and in the following Armistice and National Struggle years. The war ended with the ruin of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Republican Turkey on 29 October 1923. For many men who were conscripted as late as 1922, World War I was only some part of their more than one decade of military service from 1911 to 1922, although it constituted the most difficult and bloodiest period. For their women and many other civilians on the home front, World War I meant poverty, hunger, death, the loss of their breadwinners or beloved ones, and upheaval in their lives far beyond any expectations.

In order to understand the background against which the ordinary Turkish women struggled, this chapter examines this unexpected impact of World War I and the following years of the Armistice and of the Turkey's Independence War on Ottoman society. It argues that during World War I, the lower-income, poor and disadvantaged civilians, particularly Muslim-Turkish women who had sent their men to the front, experienced important economic and social problems. This impact had much more powerful than the influence of the ideological mobilization and war propaganda that tried to raise nationalist sentiments. While their male relatives were fighting at the battleground, the struggle of the women with the high cost of living, poverty and hunger were not less severe than that of the men. In this respect, the first point this chapter emphasizes is the economic impact of the war on the home front. This is followed with an overall examination of the social and demographic

consequences of the military and civilian casualties. Finally, the impact of the ideological mobilization and war propaganda on the civilians, especially on women, is evaluated in order to see how the great number of women did not conform to state's mobilization attempts that sought the cooperation of women in the war effort.

Economic Impact of the War

One of the most immediate economic impacts of World War I on the Ottoman Empire was the high cost of living and soaring inflation rates for basic consumption goods. An important reason for this was the cessation of foreign trade because of the war, which interrupted the import and export of many goods. Commercial relations with other countries almost came to a halt. In addition, the Ottoman government cancelled the capitulations system based on low tariff rates and pursued a high tariff policy to support the national capital. This also, increasing the cost of imported items, limited the import of many goods Ottoman consumers or producers had long been consuming or using. The prices of Ottoman export goods also fell sharply within a few days after the eruption of the war.³⁶⁷ Before the war, most of the external trade and a large part of the internal trade of the Ottoman Empire had been done with sea transport. After the Allied powers blocked transport in the Mediterranean Sea, the only means of the Ottoman war effort and trade was land transport. Nevertheless, the Empire was not prepared to continue a long war and to carry out an efficient transportation of goods with its insufficient railway lines, poor roads and limited telegraph system.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 110.

³⁶⁸ Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," pp. 115-116.

The cessation of external trade and slowdown in internal trade resulted in a scarcity of food for İstanbul, which had relied on the flour imported from Romania, Russia and Marseille before World War I.³⁶⁹ Indeed, at the onset of the war, bringing wheat from Anatolia to İstanbul was 75 percent more costly than importing it from New York.³⁷⁰ According to Vedat Eldem, the decision makers had calculated that the Ottoman Empire had enough food supplies for a war which could last up to six months. However, because it had not been predicted that the war would continue for years and the trade roads would be blocked, the Empire had had great difficulty in supplying enough food items.³⁷¹ Demand of food also increased due to the growing need to provide food for a huge army. Other than the shortage of food, distribution of it among different social groups created further problems.³⁷²

At the beginning of the war, İstanbul, as the capital city dependent on imported food items, was especially vulnerable to food shortages. Therefore, the war governments had to first of all find a solution to the food problem of this city. Under the leadership of the Unionist leader Kara Kemal, several methods ranging from opening soup kitchens and food distributions were used to solve the food problem, but all measures generally proved to be insufficient in relieving the problem.³⁷³ In the first year of the war, only İstanbul suffered from food shortages while most other provinces were sufficiently supplied.³⁷⁴ Nevertheless, in the following years of the war the economic situation of the provinces got much worse.³⁷⁵ In most of the provinces food provisioning was less organized and inefficient than it was in the

³⁶⁹ Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyeye*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), p. 814.

³⁷⁰ Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi, 1908-2002*, 9th ed. (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2005), p. 28.

³⁷¹ Vedat Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," in *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri: Metinler, Tartışmalar, 10 Haziran 1973*, ed. Osman Okyar and H. Ünal Nalbantoğlu (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1975), p. 374.

³⁷² Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 121.

³⁷³ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 28.

³⁷⁴ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 128.

³⁷⁵ Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-18," p. 275.

capital city. Apart from the Arab regions such as northern Syria and Lebanon that were hit by severe food shortages, the most severe hunger and food shortages occurred in the provinces of eastern Anatolia. The main reason for this was that the main economic activity in this region was not agriculture but animal husbandry. In addition, this region was occupied by the Russian army during the war.³⁷⁶ Again, other parts of Anatolia suffered food scarcities.

Another economic impact of the war which caused shortages of food and of basic consumption goods was economic recession. Production in many sectors had stopped altogether, severing the ties between different sectors, which aggravated the problem.³⁷⁷ The producers had difficulty finding credits and many imported semi-finished and intermediate goods. This hit the industrial production. Furthermore, the drop in production rates was largely due to the conscription which decreased the industrial and agricultural workforce.³⁷⁸ Both conscription and the huge human loss in battles deprived the economy of the labor force vital for the Ottoman economy, which was based on labor-intensive production.

The decision-makers tried to solve the workforce problem just like in other combatant countries, with the employment of larger number of women. This created new opportunities, albeit with important restrictions and problems for women workers in the cities, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. Furthermore, because women were concentrated as a labor force in sectors like textile and food processing, which required quite low level of expertise and because they had low mobility in the labor market due to their family obligations, women had limited employment

³⁷⁶ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 377; and Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 124. In his memoirs Cemal Pasha argues that during his governorship in that region the deaths due to hunger in Lebanon and Beirut were largely because of the rebellion of Sherif Hussein and the Allied Powers who continued the blockade and did not allow the entry of food in these provinces. Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, p. 354.

³⁷⁷ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 4.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

options.³⁷⁹ Nevertheless, despite such efforts, the labor shortages in industry continued until the end of the war. For instance, coal production was down by 40 percent in 1916 and by 75 percent in 1918. The overall decline in industrial production was most probably between 30 and 50 percent.³⁸⁰

Agricultural production also dropped due to the war. The lack of mechanization in Ottoman agricultural production aggravated the problem. Especially the labor shortages due to the mobilization of men and the requisitions of agricultural means such as draught animals by the army caused a sharp decrease in agricultural production. The number of draught animals fell by more than one-half and that of sheep and goats by about 40 percent by 1918. Compared to the 1913-14 levels, the decline in production of wheat was close to 40 percent (Table 1), while the decline was more than 50 percent in exportable products such as tobacco, raisins, hazelnuts, olive oil, raw silk and cotton by 1918.³⁸¹

The government strived to raise the production levels by introducing an Agricultural Obligation Law (*Mükellefiyyet-i Zirâiyye Kanûnu*) in September 1916. This law forced civilians, especially peasants above the age of 14, and some associations and enterprises, to sow additional fields. Most of the peasants who were forced to work in agriculture at the home front were women. They became the primary victims of this law, which soon turned into a forced labor regime in the war conditions as will be discussed in Chapter Eight. Despite the efforts to boost agricultural production which also continued during the National Struggle years, the agricultural production levels improved significantly only after 1922.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ See for the same problem of German women, Ute Daniel, *The War From Within*, p. 25.

³⁸⁰ Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 119.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121. See also Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in World War I*, pp. 117-118.

³⁸² Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 379, 386.

Table 1. Wheat Production in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1918 (1913-1914 Being Taken as 100)

Years	Area under cultivation	Yield per unit of land	Total production
1913-1914	100	100	100
1915	93	86	80
1916	87	82	73
1917	79	80	64
1918	75	78	62

Source: Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," in *The Economics of World War I*, ed. Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 120. Note: Parts of eastern Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, and Arabia are not included in this table. The date is taken from Vedat Eldem, *Harp ve Mütakere Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), pp. 33-39, and is based on official statistics or official estimates.

The decrease in the supply of goods also was related to the producers' hesitation to make investment or to produce due to the war. Because the necessities of the army were primary for the decision makers, the civilians, including the producers, were forced to make sacrifices. However, aware of small profit margins, forced requisitions, or lack of marketing opportunities, the great part of small and middle producers passively resisted to the needs of war mobilization. Consequently, the peasants did not sow their fields, the industrialists slowed down production, and the merchants preferred to hoard goods. In these conditions, the supply did not meet the demand and the basic goods could not be found on the market. The standard of living of the civilians, most of them low-income women, further declined due to the shortage of goods and the purchase or seizure of the existing goods by the state and the army.³⁸³

The wartime shortages and other economic problems forced the Ottoman state to intervene much more into the economy. According to Zafer Toprak, during World War I, the state for the first time integrated with the economy, which led to

³⁸³ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 3-14.

the development of the idea of a “National Economy” (*Millî İktisat*).³⁸⁴ This national economy, which was supported also by the intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Alexander Helphand (Parvus), and Moiz Cohen (Munis Tekinalp), was dominant in the war years against the liberal economy paradigm.³⁸⁵

In parallel to both the economic nationalism and wartime necessities, the Ottoman government took nationalist and interventionist economic measures such as abolishing the capitulations, raising the customs duties, and introducing new laws in favor of Turkish entrepreneurs. By doing so, the government aimed to boost both the production increase and the development of a Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie.³⁸⁶ The Language Law (*Dil Kanunu*), enacted on 24 March 1916, made Turkish the only language of commerce in the Ottoman Empire. The Strike Law (*Ta'til-i Eşgâl Kanûnu*), which was a reaction to the increasing strikes of the Second Constitutional period and which abolished the labor unions and the right to go on strike, was strictly observed in this period to create favorable conditions for Turkish industrialists against workers. The Law for Encouraging Industry (*Teşvik-i Sanâyi Kanûnu*) was revised on 27 March 1915 to increase the number of Turkish employees and laborers in factories, provided certain privileges to the national investors and supported the national companies.³⁸⁷

Furthermore, national banks such as the National Credit Bank (*İtibâr-ı Millî Bankası*), founded during the war in 1917, and the Agricultural Bank (*Zirâat Bankası*) also provided credits to rich Muslim-Turkish merchants and peasants and

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³⁸⁵ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp. 26-27.

³⁸⁶ See Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de "Millî İktisat" (1908-1918)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), pp. 18-21.

³⁸⁷ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 112-116; Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp. 30-31; and Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 12-13.

helped the accumulation of national capital.³⁸⁸ Nevertheless, despite getting richer, the new national bourgeoisie did not improve the wages and working conditions of the workers and preferred to take advantage of these wartime conditions to exploit women and children's cheaper labor as much as possible. The national bourgeoisie developed in this period to some extent, but this was at the cost of women's and children's standards of living and the exploitation of their bodies, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

These national economy attempts and the food shortages in especially the capital city revived the internal trade. Flour, which had been imported cheaper from other countries before World War I, was brought from Anatolia during the war years. Consequently, the trade of food and cereals from Anatolia, which was mostly done by using the limited railways facilities provided by the government for the Unionist merchants, became the most profitable business affair in the Ottoman Empire in those years.³⁸⁹ Although most of the peasantry had to suffer due to conscriptions and heavy wartime taxes, a small part of the peasants, most of them affiliated with the Committee of Union and Progress or from western Anatolia where capitalist agriculture was most developed, benefited from this wartime trade in agricultural products. Despite the drop in agricultural production, they succeeded in acquiring huge sums of money due to wartime price inflation. In that sense, the war provided some Anatolian Muslim peasants and merchants with an opportunity to acquire remarkable wealth.³⁹⁰ However, because of the shortage of coal and the priority of the army in the use of railways, the number of wagons which were allotted to

³⁸⁸ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 61-66.

³⁸⁹ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp. 28-29.

³⁹⁰ Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks," p. 281; Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp. 36-37; Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, Vol. 2, p. 818; and Nail Moralı, *Mütareke'de İzmir: Önceleri ve Sonraları*, ed. Erkan Serçe (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayını, 2002), pp. 44-45, 47.

merchants for business was quite limited. Many of those who were able to make fortunes by acquiring the privilege to hire a wagon were acquaintances of the Unionist elite and some of them were not even merchants. Therefore, there emerged a “wagon trade” (*vagon ticareti*), which did not always cause an accumulation of capital that could create a national entrepreneurial class, but mostly helped the war profiteers.³⁹¹

War profiteering could not be eliminated during the war years despite the problems it created such as hunger and shortages and the related death and health problems of the poor people in cities and in the countryside.³⁹² The state’s attempts to prevent profiteering with the foundation of the Prevention of Profiteering Commission (*Men-i İhtikâr Komisyonu*) ended with new corruption cases and it was mocked by the populace, who called the institution the Source of Profiteering Commission (*Menba’-i İhtikâr Komisyonu*).³⁹³

Consequently, the war and the state economic policies led to the deterioration of the distribution of income and created further economic inequalities among the social groups in Ottoman society. The national economy policies accompanied by corruption, the wagon trade and profiteering gave rise to a new social group known as war profiteers (*harb zenginleri*). Most of them used the money they acquired for luxury goods and for entertaining themselves in the capital city. Their extravagant entertainment, which mostly took place in Beyoğlu were depicted in the memoirs of contemporary observers in contrast to the severe poverty of masses, who were mostly

³⁹¹ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 27, 37; Ahmad, “War and Society under the Young Turks,” p. 271; Alpay Kabacalı, ed., *Talât Paşa’nın Anıları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2000), pp. 40-41; and Morali, *Mütareke’de İzmir*, p. 79.

³⁹² Ziya Şakir, *1914-1918 Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?* (İstanbul: Muallim Fuat Gücüyener Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1944), pp. 239-252; Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *İhtikâr: İhtikârın Sebepleri ve Önlenmesi Hakkında Tarihî ve Sosyolojik Bir Deneme* (İstanbul: İŞ Türkiye Felsefî, Harbî ve İçtimai Araştırmalar Merkezi Kitapları, 1942), pp. 9-11; and Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. 3, *1914-1918 Genel Savaşı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1967), pp. 518-519.

³⁹³ Fahri Belen, *XX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1973), p. 346.

war widows and orphans.³⁹⁴ The lavish attitudes of this new wealthy minority such as consuming automobiles, European furniture, using telephones, and gambling at horse races were viewed as an insult by the poor.³⁹⁵ The public opinion about them was extremely negative as the following stanza published in the humoristic journal *Karagöz* (Black Eye / Name of a Turkish Shadow Play) on 31 March 1918 reveals:

They completely picked and stole
They named it national trade
They trimmed the country as if trimming paper
Go on and make merchants from a thousand more vagabonds.³⁹⁶

The shortage of goods as a result of low production rates and war profiteering caused serious inflation in the Ottoman Empire in the war years.³⁹⁷ The wartime inflation was aggravated by the state's attempts to finance the war through printing increasingly much more money (Table 2).³⁹⁸

The price increases of certain products in İstanbul were incredible: one oke of sugar increased from 3 piasters to 250 piasters, milk increased from 2 piasters to 45, butter from 20 to 400, soap from 7 to 140, petroleum from 1.5 to 160, and firewood from 45 to 540 piasters (Table 3).³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ See for instance, Münim Mustafa, *Cepheden Cepheye: 914-918 İhtiyat Zabiti Bulunduğum Sırada Cihan Harbinde Kanal, Çanakkale ve Kafkas Cephelerine Ait Hatıralarım*, Vol. 1 (İstanbul: Ege Basımevi, 1940), p. 160; and Halide Nusret Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romani*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000), pp. 87-88.

³⁹⁵ François Georgeon, "Au bord du rire et des larmes," in *Istanbul, 1914-1923: Capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires*, ed. Stéphane Yerasimos (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1992), p. 84.

³⁹⁶ "Enine boyuna çalıp çırptular
Adına dediler millî ticaret
Kağıt kırpar gibi yurdu kırptular
Git artık bin kopuk daha tüccar et."

"Bu da Macera," *Karagöz*, No. 1156 (Mar. 31, 1918), p. 3. Quoted in Ali Şükrü Çoruk, *Mizah Penceresinden Millî Mücadele: Ya İstiklâl Ya Ölüm* (İstanbul: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2008), pp. 1-2.

³⁹⁷ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 7-8.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁹⁹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 147-148.

Table 2. Rise in the Cost of Living after January 1917 (July 1914 Being Taken as 100)

Years Months	1917	1918	1919	1920
January	405 %	1645 %	2130 %	1440 %
February	475	1640	2200	1355
March	565	1700	1680	1350
April	580	1860	1305	1390
May	605	1730	1215	1380
June	670	1850	1225	1365
July	790	1905	1170	1420
August	800	1920	1170	1440
September	975	1860	1240	1430
October	1255	1485	1135	1430
November	1480	1675	1170	1435
December	1465	2205	1260	1440

Source: Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 151.

Table 3. Prices of Basic Consumption Goods in İstanbul, 1914-1918 in Piasters

Dates Items	July, 1914	January, 1917	September, 1917	January, 1918	September, 1918
Sugar	3.00	62.00	150.00	140.00	250.00
Coffee	12.00	160.00	450.00	1000.00	600.00
Rice	3.00	35.00	90.00	95.00	90.00
Macaroni	3.00	42.00	90.00	110.00	95.00
Potatoes	1.00	8.00	20.00	36.00	27.00
Beans	4.00	19.00	55.00	65.00	65.00
Onions	0.50	6.00	11.00	16.00	16.00
Olive Oil	8.00	45.00	140.00	200.00	180.00
Salt	1.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	5.50
Milk	2.00	9.00	19.00	40.00	45.00
Cheese	12.00	55.00	130.00	250.00	280.00
Mutton	7.00	28.00	65.00	130.00	120.00
Butter	20.00	100.00	210.00	260.00	400.00
Eggs	0.50	1.50	2.50	7.25	4.25
Soap	7.00	32.00	75.00	140.00	140.00
Petroleum	1.50	50.00	110.00	125.00	160.00
Charcoal	0.50	2.75	5.50	10.00	13.00
Wood	45.00	150.00	320.00	380.00	540.00

Source: Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), pp. 147-148.

Due to the black-marketing, which could not be controlled by the state, there was a significant difference between the prices determined officially by the government and those on the free market (Table 4). This price difference increased in the later years of the war. In some items, it reached up a ratio of 1 to 16.⁴⁰⁰ For example, whereas the official price of bread was 2.50 piasters, its price in the free market was 34 piasters in 1917. Again, whereas the official price of meat was between 20 and 35 piasters, it was sold at the price of 200 piasters in free market.⁴⁰¹

Table 4. Market Prices (MP) and Officially Determined Prices (ODP) of Some Goods in İstanbul, 1914-1919

Food Items Years	Bread		Sugar		Beans		Mutton	
	MP	ODP	MP	ODP	MP	ODP	MP	ODP
1914	1.25	-	3.00	-	4.00	-	7.00	-
1915	1.65	-	7.50	-	7.00	-	8.50	-
1916	9.50	1.60	30.00	-	15.00	-	16.00	-
1917	18.00	2.50	112.00	20.00	40.00	10.00	35.00	30.00
1918	34.00	2.50	195.00	30.00	65.00	15.00	125.00	50.00
1919	13.00	-	46.00	-	35.00	-	70.00	-

Source: Vedat Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," in *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri: Metinler, Tartışmalar, 10 Haziran 1973*, ed. Osman Okyar and H. Ünal Nalbantoğlu (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1975), p. 384.

Note: Calculated in yearly average and in piaster per *kıyye* (1.282 kilograms).

The purchasing power of the ordinary people plummeted as a result of this wartime black-marketing and inflation in the Ottoman Empire more than it was observed in most of the European countries in the war years (Table 5). Korkut Boratav states that real wages dropped about 33 percent in the period between 1914 and 1920.⁴⁰² The situation was worse in 1918. According to Şevket Pamuk, if the real wages of 1914

⁴⁰⁰ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 384.

⁴⁰¹ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 162.

⁴⁰² Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 35.

were accepted as 1, they fell to 0.28 in 1918, which meant a 72 percent loss.⁴⁰³ This decline in purchasing power mostly hit women and children on the home front in the absence of their breadwinner male relatives. They suffered from malnourishment. Together with the unemployment or employment without any social security under uncontrolled conditions, the high cost of living forced many low-income and poor women to sell their bodies.

Table 5. Cost of Living Index in Turkey and European Countries in World War I

Years \ Countries	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
Turkey	100	130	212	846	1823	1424
Britain	100	123	139	175	203	221
France	100	118	135	159	206	259
Germany	100	125	164	245	293	401
Austria	100	158	337	672	1163	2492
Bulgaria	100	133	-	-	1367	-
Denmark	100	114	132	153	175	210
Spain	100	109	116	127	155	175
Sweden	100	115	139	166	225	261
Italy	100	109	136	195	268	273
Holland	100	117	128	137	165	177
Norway	100	115	138	172	242	258
Finland	100	100	133	244	633	922
Greece	100	120	160	160	380	340

Source: Zafer Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye’de Devletçilik, 1914-1918* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003), pp. 154-155.

Note: The data for Turkey is collected from the cost of living index for İstanbul prepared by the Public Debt Administration (*Düyük-ı Umûmiyye*) and the data for the European countries are from B.R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 743-744 and calculated again by choosing 1914 as the beginning year.

Wartime economic problems also harmed the solidarity among the people and the people’s trust in the state. For instance, civil servants, who had lost their previous social and economic status in the war years and who were not able to make ends

⁴⁰³ Şevket Pamuk, ed., *İstanbul ve Diğer Kentlerde 500 Yıllık Fiyatlar ve Ücretler, 1469-1998 / 500 Years of Prices and Wages in İstanbul and Other Cities* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2000), p. 84.

meet with their salaries due to the high inflation rates, resorted to bribery and corruption more than ever. This caused the loss of the people's confidence in them and accordingly in the government.⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, the salaries of civil servants abruptly declined 50 percent in the first year of the war and were raised nominally only two times throughout the war and not above 10-20 percent per time. Their purchasing power dropped from 60 to 80 percent during the war due to inflation.⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore, their salaries were in many cases half paid or not paid for several months, which forced them to live in debt. Consequently, many civil servants wanted to leave their positions to involve in trade or to work in other jobs.⁴⁰⁶ Others who accepted bribes or illegally seized wartime taxes and soldiers' families' pensions became some of the worst enemies of disadvantaged women, will be discussed in Chapter Five and Eight. It should be mentioned that undoubtedly, the women and children of these low-income state officials, especially of those who were not involved in corruption, also suffered from the deterioration of their economic status.

Printing money, taking on debt, and taxing the populace were the main tools of the Ottoman government to finance the war. These policies, devaluing Ottoman money, discouraging the producers, and increasing the interest rates, the inflation levels and the general costs of production, adversely affected the population. The taxes directly or indirectly bore down hardest especially upon the poor and low-income people. Although the war profiteers who acquired remarkable wealth during World War I were not sufficiently taxed, the wartime taxes of the peasants were

⁴⁰⁴ Fındıkođlu, *İhtikâr*, p. 18.

⁴⁰⁵ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 395; Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 153; and Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 36.

⁴⁰⁶ For an example to one of these wartime civil servants see İ. Hakkı Sunata, *İstanbul'da İşgal Yılları*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), pp. 110-111, 118-119, 130-133.

multiplied because of the additional taxes and requisitions for the provisioning of the army.⁴⁰⁷

Despite these taxes, foreign aid had an important part in financing the Ottoman war efforts. About 260 million Ottoman liras of the 400 million Ottoman liras cost of the World War I were covered with the foreign aids coming from Germany and Austria-Hungary, which was 65 percent of the total cost.⁴⁰⁸ During the National Struggle, the percentage of the taxes taken from the people in financing the war increased much more. Only 13 million Ottoman liras of its 147 million Ottoman liras cost was financed by Russian aid.⁴⁰⁹ This meant an additional economic sacrifice for Anatolian peasants, most of them poor women, during the National Struggle years.

In sum, although World War I was seen as an opportunity by policy-makers and the Unionists to create a national economy and a national bourgeoisie, it brought important economic hardship to large groups of people in the Ottoman Empire. The low-income and poor people faced several difficulties ranging from shortages of basic consumption goods, the high cost of living, and undernourishment to severe problems such as epidemics, hunger, and death due to malnutrition. Especially the poor soldiers' families in the cities were victims of the high cost of living while women as peasants were expected to overwork in agricultural production in the absence of their men. Although the number of women employed in place of men comparatively increased, their wages were too low to meet even their most basic needs. The civil servants as well were impoverished due to their irregular and low wages and many of them started accepting bribes, which caused additional difficulties for the people. The mobilization of economic sources for the army

⁴⁰⁷ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 395.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

through requisitions and taxes, and the economic policies designed to create a national bourgeoisie, which turned into a source of war-profiteering, further deteriorated the living conditions of the civilians, most of them war widows and orphans.

Consequences of the Wartime Casualties

Because of the continuous warfare that started even before World War I and lasted more than a decade, Ottoman society underwent a tremendous demographic transformation and social disintegration. But it was the World War I that had the worst demographic impact on the Empire. The conscription of a much greater number of men for long years, and the loss of many of them brought about severe poverty for their women and children. Furthermore, during these long war years not only the Ottoman soldiers but also the civilians lost their lives due to war-related reasons such as enemy attacks on occupied districts, migrations, deportations, epidemics, state of destitution, hunger and cold. Although the majority of the people living in various regions of the Ottoman Empire became victims to these problems, low-income Muslim-Turkish women who had sent their male relatives to the front and remained deprived of their support constituted the largest group that was vulnerable to these adverse effects of the war.

Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire entered the war on 2 November 1914, for many Ottoman soldiers this was a continuation of the warfare they had been engaged in from 1911 onwards, a time period during which they had had to fight in Turco-Italian War of 1911-12 in Tripoli, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the

Albanian and Yemen rebellions.⁴¹⁰ During the four years of World War I, the Ottoman soldiers fought across a very large geography in the Dardanelles, eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Galicia, Macedonia and Romania.⁴¹¹ The Ottoman army, despite its obvious weaknesses, fought against about 1.5 million British soldiers and several hundred thousand soldiers of the other combatant nations during long war years.⁴¹² The first phase of the World War I for the Ottoman Turkey continued until the signing of the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918 between the Empire and the Allied powers. Article 7 of this armistice gave the right to the Allied powers to occupy any strategic land in case it was required for their security.⁴¹³ Consequently, İstanbul was occupied by the Allied powers in two stages: on 13 November 1918 as a *de facto* occupation and on 16 March 1920 as a *de jure* occupation.⁴¹⁴ Occupation of the capital city was followed by the occupation of many other parts of the Ottoman Empire, in Anatolia by the British, French and Italian troops under the same pretense. Nevertheless, especially the occupation of İzmir by Greek troops on 15 May 1919 fueled the National Struggle (*Milli Mücadele*) known also as the Turkish War of Independence (*Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*). Although the Ottoman government representatives signed the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920, it was never ratified by the Ottoman parliament in İstanbul because the British forces had abolished the parliament during the

⁴¹⁰ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, Vol. 3, *İttihat ve Terakki Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi (Genişletilmiş Baskı)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), p. 613.

⁴¹¹ For example, see Alptekin Müderrisoğlu, *Yoksulların Zaferi: Fotoğraflarla Kurtuluş Savaşı’nın Maddi ve Mali Kaynakları* (Eskişehir: ETAM A.Ş. Matbaa Tesisleri, [1994], p. 31; A.L. Macfie, *The End of Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923* (London; New York: Longman, 1998), p. 129; Salih Polatkan, *Doküman ve Fotoğraflarla 1. ve 2. Dünya Savaşları Özeti* (İstanbul: Eko Matbaası, 1972), p. 42; and Michael Carver, *The National Army Museum Book of the Turkish Front, 1914-1918: The Campaigns at Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine* (London: Pan Books, 2004), p. 4.

⁴¹² Edward J. Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I: A Comparative Study* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 156-166.

⁴¹³ Orhan Çekiç, *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete*, Vol. 1, *Mondros’tan İstanbul’a* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2007), p. 278.

⁴¹⁴ Zafer Toprak, “Mütareke Döneminde İstanbul,” in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6 (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1993), p. 19.

occupation of the city on 18 March 1918. This treaty was annulled as a result of the Turkish War of Independence, which took place in Anatolia. World War I only ended for the Ottoman Empire with the signing of the Peace Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923.⁴¹⁵

The percentage of casualties was very high in the Ottoman army in World War I. Ottoman Empire conscripted more than 2,850,000 men, mostly Muslim and Turkish, throughout World War I years.⁴¹⁶ When the gendarme and navy forces are included, this number reached 2,873,000.⁴¹⁷ According to the Ottoman Ministry of War records, before the Armistice of Mudros was signed, 400,000 Ottoman soldiers had been wounded, 240,000 had died due to diseases, 35,000 had lost their lives due to war related wounds, 50,000 had died on the battlefield. 1,560,000 had been out of the war because of diseases, desertions, captivity, or missing in action. Therefore, before the Armistice, the casualties of the Ottoman army had reached 2,285,000.⁴¹⁸ The real number of those soldiers who died on the battlefield was most likely much higher than what had been labeled by the Ottoman authorities officially as war martyrs. According to recent studies, the total number of soldiers who died due to war related causes or who were missing in action was 771,844 (Table 6).⁴¹⁹ The number of war prisoners was also about 200,000.⁴²⁰ The greater part of these war prisoners were held captive by Britain and were not released until 1920-1921.⁴²¹ German generals who served as advisers and military commanders in the Ottoman

⁴¹⁵ For the political developments which ended the Ottoman Empire, see A. L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire* (London and New York: Longman, 1998).

⁴¹⁶ Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 111; Polatkan, *Doküman ve Fotoğraflarla 1. ve 2. Dünya Savaşları Özeti*, p. 71; and Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, Vol. 3, p. 628.

⁴¹⁷ Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 211.

⁴¹⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1827, Dos. 9, Fih. 1-24. Quoted in Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ölmedim: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Esirleri* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), pp. 47-48.

⁴¹⁹ Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 211.

⁴²⁰ Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ölmedim*, p. 50.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

army also reported that there was an enormous number of deserters. General Otto Liman von Sanders wrote on 13 December 1917 that about 300,000 soldiers had deserted the army.⁴²² On 4 November 1918, General Hans von Seeckt reported that this number had reached to 450,000.⁴²³ When the war ended there were at least 500,000 deserters.⁴²⁴ Because of these casualties and desertions the total number of Ottoman soldiers in the Ottoman army never exceeded 800,000.⁴²⁵

Table 6. Ottoman Military Casualties in World War I

Category	Number	Remarks
Number of men mobilized	2,873,000	includes gendarme and navy
Combat dead	243,598	includes those who died of wounds
Missing in action	61,487	
Died of diseases	466,759	
Seriously wounded	303,150	permanent loss
Total wounded	763,753	includes the seriously wounded plus all others
Prisoner of war	145,104	does not include 1918 returnees from Russia
Estimated deserters	500,000	based on [Ahmed Emin] Yalman
Total dead or missing	771,844	

Source: Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 211.

Disadvantaged Muslim-Turkish women constituted the largest group of sufferers of these conscriptions and military casualties on the home front. Although all male subjects in the Ottoman Empire were called-up, the primary human source for the Ottoman army was poor Anatolian peasants. The core of the Ottoman population, at least throughout the remnants of the Ottoman land, especially in Anatolia and Thrace, was Muslim and mostly Turkish peasants. They constituted the main human source of the Ottoman army. They also were the backbone of the agricultural sector

⁴²² Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Türkiye’de Bulunan Alman Generallerin Raporları* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1966), p. 21.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴²⁴ Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 211.

⁴²⁵ Pamuk, “The Ottoman Economy in World War I,” p. 117.

at the same time.⁴²⁶ The Ministry of War, suspicious of the Greek and Armenian people, preferred to charge them with manual labor, and therefore sent them to the labor battalions. Non-Muslim notables and well-to-do men preferred to pay money in order to be exempt from military service. The exemption money was decided unequally by the state as well for the non-Muslims as 30 Ottoman gold liras and for Muslims 50 Ottoman gold liras. Furthermore, the consulates helped non-Muslim Ottoman men get out of military service. Ottoman Greeks used the opportunity of becoming Greek citizens to evade conscription while Ottoman Jews who had no connection with a nation state of their own became United States citizens.⁴²⁷ As Erik J. Zürcher writes, the conscription could not be used as an instrument of Ottoman nation-building because of this system of exemptions during World War I.⁴²⁸

This conscription system, targeting the exploitation of the Muslim and Turkish population, especially the low-income and poor segments of it, made Muslim-Turkish women the largest group that was deprived of their breadwinner male relatives. Although wartime incidents like deportation caused great pains for non-Muslim women, too, the largest group severely hit by the wartime conscriptions was Muslim-Turkish women. Due to the war casualties, many Turkish women were widowed at early ages. Together with the impoverishment and loss of their fathers, there appeared a huge group of war orphans. Their number increased so dramatically that poor and alone street children began to appear in Turkish literature for the first time.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Beşikçi, *Between Voluntarism and Resistance*, p. 24; Cengiz Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007), pp. 41-42; and Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 79-80.

⁴²⁷ Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları*, pp. 35-42.

⁴²⁸ Erik J. Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925*, ed. Erik J. Zürcher (London; New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1999), p. 91.

⁴²⁹ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 193.

Civilian casualties due to war were also very high in the Ottoman Empire. Different sources estimate the population of the Ottoman Empire before World War I as between 20 and 23 million.⁴³⁰ It was most probably about 23 million, and 17 million of them within the today's borders of Turkey, more than 3 million in Syria and Palestine including today's Lebanon and Jordan, and about 2.5 million in Iraq.⁴³¹ Among these people, the number of Muslims was 15,044,846 according to the 1914 census.⁴³² Despite the important percentage of military casualties, the death toll of the Ottoman civilian population was much higher than that of the Ottoman army during the war due to armed conflict, disease and malnutrition.⁴³³ About four out of five Ottoman citizens who died in war were civilians.⁴³⁴

A significant reason behind the death of civilians was migrations and deportations due to armed conflict and other reasons. During World War I, an important percentage of Armenians in eastern Anatolia who were deported by the government died on the road or at their destinations.⁴³⁵ Those Muslim people who had to migrate due to the Russian occupation of the eastern provinces were also among the civilian victims of the war. For instance, the İstanbul newspaper *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* (Portrayal of Opinions) reported on 11 May 1919 that out of the officially registered 1,604,031 Muslim refugees, 43.7 percent of them, which constituted 701,166 people, had died from hunger, disease, or massacre.⁴³⁶ Most of these refugees had migrated first to neighboring provinces, and later on, they were sent by

⁴³⁰ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 79.

⁴³¹ Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 112.

⁴³² Cem Behar, ed., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ve Türkiye'nin Nüfusu, 1500-1927 / The Population of The Ottoman Empire and Turkey (With a Summary in English)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1996), p. 46.

⁴³³ For the diseases which affected the civilians, see Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, pp. 94-105.

⁴³⁴ James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 77.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ "Müslüman Muhacirler," *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, 11 May 1919, p. 2. Quoted in Standford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, Vol. 2, Triumph and Tragedy November 1914-July 1916* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2008), p. 993.

the state to provinces in central and western Anatolia and to Mosul and Aleppo.⁴³⁷

Between 1912 and 1922 at least 1 million Muslim Turkish people of eastern Anatolia died.⁴³⁸

The migrations continued during the Armistice Period, especially in western Anatolia after the Greek troops started occupying this region. Many Turkish people threatened by the occupation forces had to migrate to İstanbul and different provinces in Anatolia.⁴³⁹ In 1921, the number of Turkish refugees from İzmir was estimated at 300,000.⁴⁴⁰ The same year Turkish refugees who had already arrived in İstanbul from the Balkans and İzmir were counted as 65,000. This number was 70,000 in 1922. In the same period, Muslim Turkish refugees who came to İstanbul from other parts of Anatolia were estimated as 400,000.⁴⁴¹

In sum, the military casualties, almost all of whom were low-income Muslim and Turkish soldiers because of the system of exemptions in conscriptions for non-Muslims and wealthy Muslim Turkish individuals, left many low-income Turkish women without their male relatives who were their only breadwinners or beloved ones. Furthermore, wartime migrations and deportations jeopardized the lives of both non-Muslim and Muslim civilians of the Ottoman Empire. Given the fact that the women, children and elderly constituted the great majority of the civilians in this period, especially these incidents brought great suffering to them. Most of them had to live in misery during the war years and long afterwards. Shortages, hunger,

⁴³⁷ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Tragedisi*, pp. 40-41. See also, Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele'de Türk Mültecileri*, pp. 48-66.

⁴³⁸ Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele'de Türk Mültecileri*, pp. 110-111. Justin McCarthy argues that in the provinces in which the war was primarily fought which were Van, Bitlis and Erzurum at least 40 percent of the Muslims perished at the end of the war. McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 230.

⁴³⁹ For these regions, see Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele'de Türk Mültecileri*, pp. 202-211.

⁴⁴⁰ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 77.

⁴⁴¹ Véra Dumesnil, *İşgal İstanbul'u / Le Bosphore Tant Aimé*, trans. Emre Öktem (İstanbul: İstanbul Kitaplığı Yayınları, 1993), p. 12; Criss, *İstanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 29; Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, p. 206; and Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 78.

poverty, homelessness, malnutrition or death of their children, unemployment or employment in excessively bad and exploitative conditions, corruption and bad treatment by civil servants and security forces, sexual harassment and violence by other males, be they Turkish civilian males and soldiers or occupant forces, lack of an effective social security or pension system when their soldier relatives died on the front were only some of the problems they faced. Furthermore, as stated before, peasant women had to pay multiple taxes to finance the cost of the war. In addition, poor women were forced to work in agriculture or at other jobs for war the mobilization. All of these problems forced disadvantaged Ottoman women, especially Turkish women who were left with no protection and who constituted the largest group in Ottoman society, to wage an important war of survival on the home front. Many women negotiated mobilization measures, taxes and the state propaganda, petitioned the government, used the nationalist-Islamist discourse against the government to legitimize their demands and complaints, raised their voices, contested the rules and decrees, and struggled with the corrupt and cruel officials and Ottoman soldiers. As a last resort, in order to support their families or to survive, they sometimes engaged in illicit cohabitation or worked as individual prostitutes clandestinely.

Therefore, during World War I and the following Armistice years, many women, especially in the capital city and some other cities, tried to earn their living through prostitution⁴⁴² or theft.⁴⁴³ Their situation was so bad that using it as a weapon of counter propaganda, the Allied powers had tried to discourage Turkish soldiers and urged them to desert the army with proclamations which alarmed them about the

⁴⁴² Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 355-367; and Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 253-274.

⁴⁴³ For instance Ahmed Emin writes about a gang of thieves made up of only women in World War I years. See Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 246-247.

hunger, death or moral degeneration of their women and children both in İstanbul and in the countryside.⁴⁴⁴

War Mobilization, Propaganda and Ordinary Women

The most dominant ideology of the war years was a kind of mixture of Islamic, Ottoman and Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire which was used extensively for war mobilization.⁴⁴⁵ Especially, after the Balkan Wars and during World War I, Turkish nationalism, which previously mostly had appeared in the cultural domain attained a political importance and concurrently the Committee of Union and Progress started embracing the ideal of Turanism (*Turancılık*).⁴⁴⁶ This ideology also had an important impact in war propaganda for the entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I.⁴⁴⁷ The political leaders of the time supported pan-Turkism for its wartime advantages and, among them Enver Pasha seeing its crucial role as an expansionist policy worked for its adoption as a state policy.⁴⁴⁸ The pan-Turkist ideology of the war years, which was also used as an instrument for war

⁴⁴⁴ Sadık Sarısamam, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Cephelelerinde Beyannamelerle Psikolojik Harp* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1999), pp. 80-81.

⁴⁴⁵ Turkish nationalism had a long history before World War I but it was among many other ideologies in competition with each other. For the most well-known comparison of Ottomanism, Islamism and Nationalism in favor of nationalist ideology, see Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1998). For the ideological diversity in Young Turks before the Second Constitutional period, see Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri, 1895-1908*, 13rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006). The Balkan Wars which had took place just before World War I especially stimulated nationalist feelings among many Ottoman intellectuals and ended to a large extent the impact of Ottomanism, the dominant political ideology of the previous years. For example, see Erol Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914-1918): Propagandadan Millî Kimlik İnşasına* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2004), pp. 115-126.

⁴⁴⁶ Turanism is a political movement for the union of all Turanian people which includes not only all Turkic peoples but also all peoples speaking Turanian languages. For example, see Füsün Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 72.

⁴⁴⁷ Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı*, p. 136.

⁴⁴⁸ Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, 2nd ed. (London: Hurst & Company, 1995), p. 51.

propaganda, had many Islamic elements⁴⁴⁹ and it tried to mobilize Muslim-Turkish masses against Russia and other Christian “enemy” forces.⁴⁵⁰ It had an impact in the declaration of Holy War (*cihâd*) by the Shaykh al-Islam, who demanded the assistance of all Muslims for the Ottoman Empire’s war efforts against “infidels” and especially the help of those Muslims living in the Crimea, Kazan, Turkestan, Bukhara, Khiva, India, China, Afghanistan, Persia, Africa and other countries.⁴⁵¹ Furthermore, as stated before, the Ottoman war governments supported a nationalist ideology, seeing it as a chance for the creation of a new Turkish bourgeoisie and a national economy, both of which were seen as important goals for attaining the economic independence of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵² However, as Hasan Kayalı writes,

⁴⁴⁹ According to Ahmed Emin [Yalman], a contemporary intellectual and journalist, despite their obvious differences in accepting Western attitude, science, laws and manner of life both nationalists who favored the ideal of *Turan* and Islamists desired “a potential expansion at the expense of those Powers which threatened the very existence of” the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 64-65. Among them the Turkist intellectual Ziya Gökalp saw nationality as culture while the pan-Turkist intellectuals who had mostly emigrated from Russia like Yusuf Akçura, Ahmed Agayev (later Ağaoglu) and Halim Sabit made more emphasis on Turkish race. For example, see Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), p. 345. Ziya Gökalp, however, first of all wanted to merge Islam and Turkish nationalism in a modern way for reforming Turkish culture. For example, see Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Toker Yayınları, 1997), p. 43.

⁴⁵⁰ Landau, *Pan-Turkism*, p. 49.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁵² National economy was first supported by one of the leading Marxian socialists of the era pen named “Parvus” (Alexander Helphand) who argued that the Ottoman Empire could attain its economic independence only with the abolition of capitulations which he saw as a tool of imperialism and in order to end the impact of imperialism it should have a bourgeois democratic regime rather than a socialist one. For example, see Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, pp. 335-337, 423-427. Indeed, as François Georgeon puts it, even the populist ideology of the nationalists called *Halka Doğru* (Towards the Populace) which was most popular after 1913 was first of all an attempt to create a Turkish bourgeoisie through education and propaganda rather than replacing capitalism with socialism. François Georgeon, “Osmanlı Devletinde Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Yükselişi (1908-1914),” in *Osmanlı-Türk Modernleşmesi (1900-1930)* writ. François Georgeon, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), pp. 34-35. Criticizing the usage of war as a means to create a Turkish bourgeoisie, a contemporary Turkish woman artist, Naciye Neyyal, stated in her memoirs that she heard from her Unionist acquaintances that they longed for the outbreak of a war and that she observed that they wanted its continuation for their own economic benefits despite the wartime impoverishment, hunger and death of larger masses. Fatma Rezan Hürmen, ed., *Ressam Naciye Neyyal’in Mutlakiyet, Meşrutiyet ve Cumhuriyet Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2000), pp. 349-350.

a supra-national ideology of Islamism outweighed an ethnic Turkish nationalism during the period.⁴⁵³

Despite the enthusiasm it created among many Turkish intellectuals and the supporters of the Committee of Union and Progress, the nationalist war propaganda and declaration of Holy War did not exert a powerful effect on the larger masses of poor people, who mostly lived in the countryside and who had to bear most of the economic and social burden of the war.⁴⁵⁴ Among these people, lower-class Turkish women constituted the main group who were deprived of the economic support of their husbands and sons due to the unequal system of conscriptions. Peasant women's workforce in agriculture was largely demanded by the Ottoman government. This largely turned into forced labor after the introduction of the Agricultural Obligation Law in 1916. Peasant women also suffered requisitions and wartime taxes, which dropped their agricultural production and caused their hunger. Finally, disadvantaged women in both the cities and countryside who were forced into thievery or prostitution out of wartime poverty became the targets of laws against venereal diseases and moral surveillance during the war. The welfare measures and pensions for women as well were first of all thought to reduce the number of desertions of soldiers, who could be anxious about the situation of their women and children.

Due to severe wartime poverty and hunger, war propaganda had nearly no influence on the masses and particularly on lower-income women living in the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, elite women, most of whom were wives and daughters of the Unionists and of the high-bureaucracy, accepted the wartime

⁴⁵³ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (California: University of California Press, 1997).

⁴⁵⁴ Beşikçi, "Between Voluntarism and Resistance," p. 113. For the real impact of the Holy War demonstrations see also, Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Company, 1928), p. 35.

hegemonic discourse and contributed in a more organized way to the war efforts.⁴⁵⁵ By becoming members of nationalist organizations such as Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) and the National Defense Society (*Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*), in which nationalist ideas were propagated to the middle-class Turks, these women acquired new positions and experience in public life.⁴⁵⁶ Elite women also founded women's organizations to support the war efforts,⁴⁵⁷ and they worked to help the army and war widows and orphans in societies such as the Women's Section of the Red Crescent Society (*Osmânlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadınlar Hey'et-i Merkeziyesi*), the Society for Aid to Needy Soldiers' Families (*Muhtaç Asker Ailelerine Muâvenet Cemiyeti*), and the Ottoman Women's Committee for National Defense (*Müdâfaa-i Milliye Osmânlı Hanımlar Hey'eti*).⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, these women contributed to the Ottoman Empire's internal borrowing to finance the war⁴⁵⁹ and they supported the development of the national economy, which was burdensome for the ordinary women.⁴⁶⁰

In brief, Ottoman war propaganda, which had many religious and some partial nationalist elements, was successful on only a small group of people. Among women, especially middle-class and elite women had the opportunity to benefit to some extent from the attempts of the Unionist government to reshape the family as the "National Family" (*Millî Aile*) by giving women certain limited rights and

⁴⁵⁵ Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks," p. 274.

⁴⁵⁶ Üstel, *Türk Ocakları*, pp. 65-69. See also, Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib*, p. 133.

⁴⁵⁷ For these organizations most of which were founded throughout the Second Constitutional period, see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, Vol. 1, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi, 1908-1918 (Genişletilmiş Baskı)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 1998), pp. 503-509.

⁴⁵⁸ Toprak, "The Family, Feminism and the State during the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918," p. 447.

⁴⁵⁹ François Georgeon, "Harp Maliyesi ve Milli İktisat: 1918 Osmanlı İç İstikrazı," in *Osmanlı-Türk Modernleşmesi*, writ. François Georgeon, pp. 164-165. Even before World War I, especially the elite women had made important monetary contributions to the Ottoman Navy League (*Osmanlı Donanma Cemiyeti*) for buying warships to the Ottoman Navy in 1912. For example, see Mehmet Beşikçi, "The Organized Mobilization of Popular Sentiments: The Ottoman Navy League, 1909-1919," (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1999, p. 28.

⁴⁶⁰ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 25.

positions and by supporting the nuclear family and monogamy through the Family Law (*Hukûk-ı Aile Karârnamesi*).⁴⁶¹ Undoubtedly, the Ottoman government's main motivation for these attempts was partly to control women's lives, especially sexual lives, in order to keep the soldiers' morale high and to preserve the moral and social life on the home front. Nevertheless, the vast majority of ordinary women who had to fight for their very survival throughout long war years had a very different agenda. They did not obey such mobilization attempts of the government automatically. Despite this they did not hesitate to use the dominant discourse of the state as a strategy for demanding their social and economic rights during the war.

Concluding Remarks

Ottoman society underwent a social and economic upheaval due to the economic hardships, casualties and war mobilization during World War I. The war economy deteriorated the standards of living of the population. Middle-income people lost the comfort of their pre-war lifestyles; and low-income and poor people became poorer. Widespread scarcities and extraordinary economic policies, combined with the decreasing purchasing power of many ordinary people due to low wages and increasing inflation rates shattered Ottoman society and its traditional structure based on solidarity and modesty by creating huge income disparities. The war polarized the social groups of an immense number of poor people, on the one hand, and a minority of newly emerging affluent class. The extraordinary wartime policies, high taxes and mobilization measures, together with the corruption of the Ottoman officialdom, created mistrust in the government officers and alienated the majority from the state.

⁴⁶¹ See for example, Toprak, "The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk Period," pp. 444-448.

Most of the civilians suffered poverty or death due to war related economic hardship, epidemics, migrations and deportations or armed attacks in occupied regions. The fact that civilian casualties were far more than the military ones points out how the home front was adversely affected by the war, and the impact of the Ottoman government's burdensome war measures or lack of effective social policy measures.

In these conditions, undoubtedly, the war propaganda and mobilization efforts of the state influenced both many lower and middle class women. However, the middle-class women especially welcomed the propaganda and mobilization attempts of the government more enthusiastically than their low-income fellows did. Elite and some middle-class Turkish women benefited from the wartime discourse and the measures of the state to some extent by acquiring new social roles and positions in public life with their patriotic philanthropic, cultural and political activities in associations or public offices.

However, for larger groups of ordinary women, who had lost their male family members supporting them and impoverished, the war conditions, as this study will show in following chapters, meant only a catastrophe. Therefore, many poor women responded negatively to the war effort of the government. They were not politically-committed anti-war pacifists generally; but they mostly opposed to specific government policies and practices that affected their lives adversely. Instead of the priorities of the state and middle classes, they thought and acted according to their individual and urgent needs for survival.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN IN THE FACE OF HUNGER, SHORTAGES, AND INSUFFICIENT FOOD RELIEF MEASURES

During World War I new laws, regulations and institutions were introduced to Ottoman society, most of which were planned to alleviate the social and economic problems that the war created or worsened. Because they were among the first sufferers of these problems, the major target group of the wartime welfare measures was lower-class women. As they were the worst-influenced from the economic problems, impoverished women had to bargain for even the slightest improvement in their lives for survival. Therefore, lower-class women played an important role in the shaping of wartime welfare policies by constantly demanding, negotiating or resisting these measures.

The welfare policies gave the political elite the legitimacy they needed in both peace and wartime. Moreover, wartime welfare had great political and military importance. They were not only conceptualized by the elites to provide some social security to the impoverished segments of society in return for public acclaim or political legitimacy. Apart from that, the welfare policies were needed to create a stronger home front and to support the war mobilization. In order to sustain the home front, the political authorities had to maintain a certain level of social stability by helping poor segments of the society, especially lower-class women.

Wartime welfare policies addressed an important number of problems of lower-class women. Women generally received help in terms of food, money, housing and child welfare. Nevertheless, these welfare policies were neither unproblematic nor inclusive of all women. Even those women who were under the

protection of the state and the welfare institutions had to deal with important problems that the non-effective welfare system created. Furthermore, in many cases the welfare policies were misused by certain recipients or corrupt officers. Finally, as the welfare policies were first conceived to help the war mobilization, they lacked comprehensiveness. Frequently, women who were not the families of the soldiers currently fighting on the battlefield received little or no help. Therefore, those women who remained outside the wartime welfare system looked for more inclusive laws and regulations and they struggled to receive further economic aid from the welfare institutions.

This chapter focuses on lower-class women's experience of wartime welfare measures against hunger and shortages. The scarcity of foodstuffs and basic goods was one of the worst problems of the home front and meant hunger or cold for the poor. Among thousands of civilians who died during World War I out of hunger and cold weather, lower class women and their children constituted the greatest number. The mortal threat of hunger and cold forced many lower-class women to be active in demanding further rights in terms of the food and basic goods which were distributed to them. They mostly became the victims of such diverse effects of the war in both urban and rural settings. However, poor women's efforts for survival gave results in certain cases. Throughout the war, the Ottoman authorities felt the necessity to overcome the chaos that the impoverishment of these women caused in order to continue their war efforts.

Rather than representing these women as passive recipients of the welfare policies, this part examines lower-class women's agency as negotiators in the creation of new policies or the modification of already existing ones. This does not mean that low-income women were able to manipulate all the welfare policies

regarding them. Women had no improvement in many cases or changed very few of their negative conditions in many others. Nevertheless, they persistently tried to enlarge their socio-economic rights during World War I by influencing the civil servants or political authorities rather than remaining silent. In doing so, they used both formal methods, such as petitioning or sending telegrams in which they frequently used discursive strategies, and informal methods, including self-dramatization, crying, complaining or participating in rebellious acts. Lower-class women, using these “weapons of the weak,” became important agents in the creation of new laws and regulations in favor of them.

Wartime Hunger and Shortages

As was discussed in the previous chapter, wartime economic developments were the main reason behind the hunger and shortages. With the war, the external trade of the Ottoman Empire came to a standstill. Numerous basic imported items disappeared in the markets, which then negatively influenced the production of many goods using such items. The military conscription, too, adversely affected the production in industrial and agricultural items, the latter being one of the main causes of food scarcity in the Empire. Starting from the first days of war mobilization, an important number of peasants and farmers in Anatolia had to leave their agricultural work for military service. Therefore, a great deal of fertile land remained fallow during the war although women and children in countryside worked extensively in the fields. The confiscation of draft animals for military purposes further decreased agricultural productivity. All transportation means including these animals, which had already been scarce, were assigned to the army. Obstructing the mobility of goods and labor

throughout Anatolia and Rumelia, this situation also augmented the problem of hunger and shortages in many basic foodstuffs and industrial goods.⁴⁶²

The Geography of Hunger and Shortages

Shortage of food and basic consumption goods hit the capital city and provinces in various degrees and for different reasons. During the war foodstuffs such as sugar, wheat, rice, flour and meat were traded on the black market nearly everywhere in the Ottoman Empire. The prices of these basic goods soared, especially in İstanbul which had always imported its food, unlike certain Anatolian cities like İzmir, a port city that had become the main port of the Empire from the eighteenth century onwards.⁴⁶³ Even in the capital city, the hunger problem among the poor was related not only to the lack of food, but also to its sale on the black-market. According to an American contemporary observer, Hester Donaldson Jenkins, who worked as a teacher at the American College for Girls, İstanbul never totally became a hunger city because one could buy everything, if one had the money, at very high prices. These prices, however, were beyond the means of hundreds of thousands of poor inhabitants of the city.⁴⁶⁴ In other words, food scarcity and hunger stemmed from not only the decline in trade and production, but also unequal distribution.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 118-126.

⁴⁶³ For such comparison of both cities in terms of foreign trade see Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, 1600-1914, ed. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 727.

⁴⁶⁴ Hester Donaldson Jenkins, *Robert Kolej'in Kızları: Misyonerlik, Feminizm, Yabancı Okullar* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2008), p. 223. See also, Harry Stuermer, *Two War Years in Constantinople: Sketches of German and Young Turkish Ethics and Politics*, trans. from German E. Allen and the author (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), pp. 116-118.

⁴⁶⁵ For the importance of unequal distribution of sources among different classes in such problems see Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Hunger first and foremost endangered the lives of poor women and children in every province of the Ottoman Empire during the war.⁴⁶⁶ Some parts of the Empire, however, were overwhelmed much more by hunger. Other than the capital city and many coast cities which were dependent on imported food,⁴⁶⁷ those regions occupied by the foreign forces, like the province of Trabzon, those regions hit hard by migrations and deportation, like eastern Anatolia and Black Sea regions, and those regions where agriculture of cereals, especially of wheat and barley, was not possible, were hit worst. It is possible to see the geography of food question and hunger from the people's telegrams complaining of hunger. Most of these telegrams came from Black Sea region, which lacked wheat agriculture and was threatened by the Russian army,⁴⁶⁸ from the isolated parts of the Empire which had to import their food such as Marmara Island,⁴⁶⁹ and from the eastern parts of the Anatolia such as Bitlis where migration due to wartime clashes were frequent.⁴⁷⁰ By the time that the armistice was signed, official reports sent from provinces to the central government stated that the Anatolian people were in a miserable state, and that especially in those regions which had been liberated recently from the occupant forces, peasants were reduced to eating grass and herbs in order to survive.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁶ Elizabeth Dodge Huntington Clarke, *The Joy of Service: Memoirs of Elizabeth Dodge Huntington Clarke* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1979), p. 141.

⁴⁶⁷ For the example of Alanya, see Süleyman Beyoğlu, "İstiklâlin Bedeli," *Tarih ve Medeniyet*, No. 46 (Jan., 1998), pp. 46-48.

⁴⁶⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 18/20, 29 Şevvâl 1334 [29 August 1916]. See also, Ayhan Yüksel, *Giresun Tarihi Yazıları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2002), pp. 109-125; and Muzaffer Lermioğlu, *Akçaabat – Akçaabat Tarihi ve Birinci Genel Savaş – Hicret Hâtıraları* (İstanbul: Kardeşler Basımevi, 1949), pp. 263-264.

⁴⁶⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 21/28, 6 Zilhicce 1334 [4 October 1916].

⁴⁷⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR, 571/53, 13 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1333 [13 November 1917]. See also, Güliz Beşe Erginsoy, *Dedem Hüseyin Atf Beşe: Bir Cemiyet-i Osmaniye Askerinin Savaş Hatıratı ve Bir Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Vatandaşının Yaşam Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 2004), p. 79, 235.

⁴⁷¹ Cevat Dursunoğlu, *Millî Mücadale'de Erzurum*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Erzurum Kitaplığı, 1998), p. 15. See also, Pelin Böke, *İzmir 1919-1922: Tanıklıklar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2006), p. 75.

Map 2. Regions That Were Sent Wheat and Barley According to the Bylaw of 4 September 1916



Note: The data is taken for this map from *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâh-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 297.

However, in no region was hunger as bitter as it was in Mesopotamia.⁴⁷² The embargo of the Allied powers, just as in the capital city, played an important role in the food shortages in this part of the Empire.⁴⁷³ In the occupied regions, hunger turned into famine.⁴⁷⁴ What is worse, severe hunger crises forced some people to resort to even cannibalism. According to a German source, during the winter of 1917-1918, for example, a Muslim couple was found guilty of stealing and killing children, the flesh of which they sold in this region.⁴⁷⁵ Similarly in Mosul, where the price of bread had increased to three liras, 10-12 people were executed for selling children's flesh as sheep or lamb meat and serving it in restaurants.⁴⁷⁶

Although not at the level of hunger, the shortage of food became a problem even in Anatolian wheat centers like Konya. In other words, whereas the port cities or those provinces that lacked wheat and barley agriculture suffered decrease in the exportation of cereals, Anatolian provinces, like Ankara and Konya, were also affected adversely by exportation of their cereals. In addition, because of the relatively high production of cereals as compared to other cities and the lower prices of food, Konya, for instance, had to accept thousands of refugees sent there by the Ottoman government. By the end of the war, the city had more migrants than its infrastructure could support and its wheat stocks could feed. On 14 April 1918, the Konya governor demanded that the Ministry of Internal Affairs send the families of the civil servants and army officers in Damascus, a city of hunger during the war, to a city other than Konya. He claimed that in case that these families were settled in

⁴⁷² Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 19-30. For hunger in Beirut, see Halide Edib Adivar, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1963), pp. 230-231.

⁴⁷³ Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar: İttihat ve Terakki, I. Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, ed. Alpay Kabacalı (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), pp. 349-356.

⁴⁷⁴ See for example, Mohammad Gholi Majd, *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia, 1917-1919* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto; Oxford: University Press of America, 2003), pp. 5-8.

⁴⁷⁵ Helmut Becker, *Askulap Zwischen Reichsadler und Halbmond* (Herzogenrath: Verlag Murken-Altrogge, 1990), p. 316. Quoted in Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 162.

⁴⁷⁶ İlhan Selçuk, *Yüzbaşı Selahattin'in Romanı*, Vol. 1 (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1975), p. 342. Quoted in Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 162.

Konya, the food problem of the city would increase and therefore would acquire much more importance. Furthermore, housing would be difficult to arrange for these people because the city was already overcrowded.⁴⁷⁷ As the example of Konya shows, the lack of food due to the export problem and low production rates in agriculture, and poor distribution of food were equally important problems that led to hunger and malnutrition of the low-income people in not only in İstanbul, but also in Anatolian provinces.

War Profiteering and Scarcity of Food

One of the main social reasons behind the food distribution problem was the war profiteers.⁴⁷⁸ The Ottoman state was unable to control the development of black marketeering although many consumption items were rationed. Great fortunes were made from black marketeering most frequently by people affiliated with or protected by the Committee of Union and Progress.⁴⁷⁹ They used their connections with the Committee to attain rights to buy provisions for the army and public institutions. While they earned fortunes with such contracts and used their money for their ostentatious entertainments, honest civil servants and lower-class people lived in destitution.⁴⁸⁰ Among these, especially poor women and children who lacked the economic support of their husbands and fathers suffered from this social problem as they constituted the neediest group. The economic conditions in the cities were so desperate that many people became ill from malnutrition or starved, while some

⁴⁷⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/3, 2/19, 6 Receb 1336 [17 April 1918].

⁴⁷⁸ Fındıkoğlu, *İhtikâr*, pp. 9-11; Nüzhet Sabit, *İaşe'de Kırkbeş Gün*, ed. Cüneyd Okay (İstanbul: [n. p.], 2006), p. 2; and Berber, *Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak*, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁷⁹ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi, 1908-2002*, p. 37.

⁴⁸⁰ Paul Dumont and François Georgeon, *Bir İmparatorluğun Ölümü, 1908-1923*, trans. Server Tanilli (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet, 1997), pp. 114-115.

German and Turkish officials manipulated the market and got rich.⁴⁸¹ Politicians as well had no difficulty in getting food, and they lived a life of luxury.⁴⁸²

Among all the wartime shortages by which lower-class women were overwhelmed, the shortage of bread hit them hardest. Since bread was the only food that they could afford, lack of it meant hunger for them. Furthermore, other basic food items disappeared from the market. Although the bread and some other food items were rationed soon after the war began, the food problem of the masses did not end during the war. According to Selma Ekrem, during the war, most people lived on cracked wheat (*bulgur*) or only bread because other food was too expensive.⁴⁸³ Olga Mağaryan Aslangül, who was a small child during the Armistice years, recalled her mother worked as a tailor while her father was conscripted to the army and she could not even find bread. Her elders ate cracked wheat instead and when they could not find this food either, they boiled oleaster (*iğde*).⁴⁸⁴ In another case, Saibe Fırçacı, born in Erzurum and a child during the war years, remembered that people even went mad due to hunger. They ate grass like cows because they could find nothing to eat, let alone bread.⁴⁸⁵

Mitat Enç writes that the bakeries in Gaziantep closed one after another and those who were still in the business sold pita bread, which looked horrible. It was said that the price of two loaves of this wartime bread, the color of which was an unappetizing black, was equal to the price of two carryalls of flour before the war.

⁴⁸¹ Lynn A. Scipio, *My Thirty Years in Turkey* (Rindge; New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Publisher, Inc., 1955), p. 143.

⁴⁸² Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 240-241.

⁴⁸³ Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New*, p. 103. See also, Esat K. Ertur, *Tamu Yelleri: Emekli Yarıç Hüseyin Kâmil Ertur'un Anıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), p. 124.

⁴⁸⁴ Mine Göğüş-Tan, Özlem Şahin, Mustafa Sever, Aksu Bora, *Cumhuriyet'te Çocuklar* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2007), p. 287.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 403. See also, Sabri Özer, *Toprağın Sancısı* (İstanbul: Logos Yayınları, 2008), pp. 24-25.

People shouldered each other and struggled to obtain this bread each day even at high prices, although they thought that even animals would refuse to eat it.⁴⁸⁶

Wartime bread was not only tasteless, but also unhealthy. Hester Donaldson Jenkins writes that in wartime İstanbul it was very difficult to find bread. The loaves that could be found were filled with anything but the flour, which caused serious health problems.⁴⁸⁷ Bread that was rationed was also of low quality and it was difficult to obtain even it. Halide Nusret Zorlutuna wrote as well in her memoirs that people longed for the end of the war, because they had to wait for hours in line of complaining people in front of bakeries to buy a piece of rationed bread. This bread often caused stomach problems for it was black and contained stones and soil. She explained that this rationed bread was eaten for such a long time that at the end of the war children had forgotten the taste of real bread.⁴⁸⁸ Mediha Esenel, who was a small child during the war years, remembered that her elders often talked about bread in those years, saying that it was not edible and that there were broom seeds (*süpürge otu tohumları*) in the corn bread.⁴⁸⁹ Another contemporary observer wrote that after the bread had turned black, people said that it contained even chestnut shells.⁴⁹⁰

In order to make use of this inedible bread, women had to invent new methods of serving it. In her memoirs, Mediha Esenel recalled that her elders prepared the bread to make it digestible in a manner which was called *papara*. To make it soft and more palatable they fried the bread in little pieces and dropped it into hot water with oil and tomato paste.⁴⁹¹ Some families tried to replace the bread with alternative foods as well. Selma Ekrem wrote that as the time went by, she

⁴⁸⁶ Mitat Enç, *Selâmlık Sohbetleri* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2007), p. 42.

⁴⁸⁷ Jenkins, *Robert Kolej'in Kızları*, p. 222.

⁴⁸⁸ Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romanı*, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁸⁹ Mediha Esenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap: 1940'lı Yıllarda Anadolu Köylerinde Araştırmalar ve Yaşadığım Çevreden İzlenimler* (İstanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık, 1999), p. 17.

⁴⁹⁰ Selma Ekrem, *Unveiled: The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* (Piscataway, N. J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), p. 259.

⁴⁹¹ Esenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap*, p. 17.

missed the earlier versions of black rationed bread because the new ones were a kind of yellow flat loaf called “bobota” made out of corn husks mixed with broom seeds. Finding this bread impossible to eat, her family instead had started eating potatoes, which were very expensive at that time.⁴⁹²

After the bread and other food stuffs were rationed, their poor quality and diminished quantity had created problems. Selma Ekrem wrote about how they suffered from a slow starvation due to the insufficient supply measures of the government:

A policeman came to our house and counted all the people and looked at our birth certificates. Then we were given a piece of paper and told that henceforth bread and supplies would be measured out by the government. One had to go to a small building in our village and get the measured supplies and these were so reduced that we were faced with the possibility of starving in slow measures.⁴⁹³

Lower-class women could afford to buy only this rationed bread. Because it was also scarce, it was not sold to the public, and therefore, low-income women and their children frequently suffered from hunger. Consequently, to buy a loaf of bread, poor women often had to fight for it in front of the bakeries whether they had a bread certificate or not.

İrfan Orga wrote of how his impoverished mother, who had been affluent and comfortable before the war, had been insulted in a bakery by a poor woman who wanted to take her bread. His mother, Şevkiye, after trying to buy bread from several bakeries in vain had finally found an open bakery and had joined the queue. Just as she had paid her money and had taken her bread, the woman beside her had snatched it and said that she had paid for it first. Their dispute had soon turned into a fight in which the other woman had kicked Şevkiye and pulled her veil, shouting that “only

⁴⁹² Ekrem, *Unveiled*, p. 260.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

the rich wore veils” and that because she was wearing one, Şevkiye “had no right to queue for bread when the poor needed it more.” The woman had also called her a prostitute and tried to tear her skirt just as she had had her veil. Şevkiye had been able to get her bread back only after two men had interfered. Fighting with a poor woman caused her to feel deeply insulted, because before the war she had not needed to fight for her bread as she had been rich and protected by her husband. Since her veil had been torn she had had to run home because people shouted at her in the streets, most likely confusing her with “a bad woman” who “had been fighting with another bad woman.”⁴⁹⁴

The bread question was so intense and widespread for women that Yaşar Nezihe,⁴⁹⁵ who was a poor woman and a poet, wrote about the tragedy of war for the populace in 1919 in her poem “*Ekmek Kömür İhtiyacı*” (Necessity of Bread and Coal), published in the magazine *Nâzikter* (Kid-glove). She described the problems the scarcity of certificate bread created for poor women like her in the following words:

Bread is not given for two days in the neighborhood
It is not easy to suffer from this hunger night and day
Poor people have been hungry for the last four and a half years
The food question had not been solved; what the hell is this!
...
Household furniture are sold always for a bread
I wonder what people have done to deserve suffering this torment
Nobody has left a mattress or quilt of which to sleep
What a pity! Scores of people have not found dry bread to be full
...
If the public bread does not appear, things take a turn for the worse
Hungry children hit the pavement crying
That day sodden and soggy loaves of bread are sold for fifteen [piasters]

⁴⁹⁴ Irfan Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), p. 154.

⁴⁹⁵ For more information about Yaşar Nezihe (1880-1971), see Güldane Çolak and Lâle Uçan, *II. Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Basında Kadın Öncüler* (İstanbul: Heyamola Yayınları, 2008), pp. 59-60; Bedihan Tamsöz, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Kadın Şairler Antolojisi* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Yayınları, 1994), pp. 104-109; and İlknur Tatar Kırılmış, “İlk Sosyalist Kadın Şair, Yaşar Nezihe Bükülmez mi?” *Turkish Studies, International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* 4, No. 8 (Fall 2009), pp. 1856-1865.

If you have no money as well you sleep hungry with your orphan children.⁴⁹⁶

Shortages of food items other than bread also adversely influenced women and children. For example, the scarcity of milk constituted an important problem for newborn babies and their mothers. Milk was so scarce that not only poor but also lower-middle class women could not find it. During the war Sabiha and Zekeriya [Sertel], who had a newborn daughter, suffered a lot due to the food shortages in the capital city. They could find no milk, flour or sugar for their baby, and consequently, they had to watch her suffer from hunger.⁴⁹⁷ Meat was also beyond the reach of people other than the rich.⁴⁹⁸

The impact of the food shortages lasted for a very long time in many parts of the Empire. A small child at that time, Mediha Esenel later remembered that she had been able to eat white bread and cube-sugar only after the National Struggle had ended, and the occupation forces had left İstanbul in 1923. This was followed by a rice dish which until that time she had never eaten since it had been very expensive during the war and the Armistice years.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ “Mahallede iki gündür verilmiyor ekme
Kolay değil gece gündüz bu açlığı çekmek
Zavallı milletin aç karnı dört buçuk senedir
İşe meselesi hal olunmuyor bu nedir

...

Satıldı evlerin eşyası hep bir ekme için
Ne yaptı millet aceb bu azabı çekmek için
Kimsede kalmadı yatmak için yatak yorgan
Doyunca bulmadı bir çokları yazık kuru nân

...

Mahalle ekmeği çıkmazsa iş fenalaşıyor
Çoluk çocuk dökülüp yollara aç ağlaşıyor
O gün hamur çamur ekmekler on beşe satılır
Paran da yoksa yetim yavrularla aç yatılır.”

Yaşar Nezihe, “Ekmek Kömür İhtiyacı,” *Nâzikter*, No. 2 (10 Şubat 1335 [10 February 1919]), p. 1.

⁴⁹⁷ Refik Erduran, *Sabiha* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004), p. 41.

⁴⁹⁸ For İstanbul, see Caleb Frank Gates, *Not to Me Only* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 219.

⁴⁹⁹ Esenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap*, p. 20.



Fig. 1 A caricature which criticizes the high prices which made most of the food items beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Source: *Diken*, No. 1 (30 Teşrin-i Evvel 1918 [30 October 1918]), p. 5.

Food shortages made the lives of nearly all segments of society difficult although some suffered less. Because of the high inflation and black-market even the middle or upper-class women had to reconsider their kitchen expenditures and dispense with many foodstuffs. Sugar was one of the first food items that became a luxury.⁵⁰⁰ The Empire had not been producing its own sugar and fully depended on trade with Italy and Austria-Hungary. Whereas a kilogram of sugar was sold around 3 piasters in July 1914, at the end of the war, its price soared about 250 piasters.⁵⁰¹ The profiteering of sugar was so widespread that the sugar price in black market was

⁵⁰⁰ Selma Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 103.

⁵⁰¹ Georgeon, "Au bord du rire et des larmes," p. 81.

even mentioned as 300 piasters in a satiric poem published during the Armistice period in the humor magazine *Karagöz* (Black Eye) with the following words:

We have grown tired of this robbery
We are swamped with profiteering!
For quite a long time we have bought it at three hundred [piasters]
The sugar, which had been cheap before.⁵⁰²

Because sugar was so expensive, those who could afford it used it sparingly or totally replaced it with dried grapes and molasses. In Gaziantep, where desserts prepared with thick syrup are famous, sweet pastries called *kadayıf* were cooked using molasses rather than sugar during the war.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, Selma Ekrem wrote in her memoirs how they gradually gave up drinking tea with sugar in İstanbul:

Our tea, which was no tea at all, we began to drink with one lump of sugar. Mother adopted the Tartar habit of putting a lump in her mouth and stretching it for one cup. Finally, we children took to pouring Turkish molasses into our tea and this gave it a peculiar taste that we did not enjoy.⁵⁰⁴

There were also a great mass of poor people who could not find any tea to drink either. Saibe Fırçacı recalls that in wartime Erzurum, they drank their tea with grapes in their mouths and even this tea was not real. Because they could not find tea due to the shortages, they burned the roots of the rose hips (*kuşburnu*), put these in the teapot instead of real tea, and drank them.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² “Şu soygunculuktan artık bunaldık
İhtikâr içinde boğulduk kaldık!
Epeyce bir zaman üç yüzden aldık
Eskiden ucuz olan şekeri”

Satiric epic which was published on 3, 4 and 5 July [year unknown] in *Karagöz*. Quoted in İhsan İlgar, comp., *Mütareke’de Yerli ve Yabancı Basın* ([İstanbul]: Kervan Yayınları, 1973), p. 101.

⁵⁰³ Enç, *Selâmlık Sohbetleri*, p. 42.

⁵⁰⁴ Ekrem, *Unveiled*, p. 260.

⁵⁰⁵ Göğüş-Tan, *et al.*, *Cumhuriyet’te Çocuklular*, p. 403.

Shortage of Other Basic Consumption Goods

People suffered from shortages of goods other than foods. Finding enough wood and coal in the capital city was an important problem. Because the problem grew worse in the first years of the war, the authorities tried a range of solutions, from cutting wood in the Beykoz forests⁵⁰⁶ to bringing coal from İzmit and the regions nearby in the summer of 1916.⁵⁰⁷ The problem worsened as the war progressed and as late as 1920, the İstanbul municipality still had problems finding enough coal and wood for the city's inhabitants.⁵⁰⁸

In the capital city, people died from the cold due to the lack of coal and wood at reachable prices. When the cost of firewood increased, people started to cut down trees belonging to the state without permissions, both for their own needs and for war profiteering.⁵⁰⁹ This was considered an important loss for the Ottoman treasury in certain cases. For example, on 10 April 1916, the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the populace in Hüdavendigâr (Bursa) province had cut even the young mulberry trees which had been planted for the development of sericulture in that region.⁵¹⁰

The shortage of basic consumption goods complicated women's wartime housework as well. It was not possible to find enough fuel to light the lamps. The lack of gas and water was especially acute in İstanbul.⁵¹¹ Similar problems were observed in the provinces. For example, in 1916, when Russian armies occupied Trabzon province, the refugees who fled to Samsun (Canik) and lived in the houses

⁵⁰⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89/9, 1/67, 1 Ramazân 1334 [2 July 1916].

⁵⁰⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89/10, 1/18, 22 Şevvâl 1334 [22 August 1916].

⁵⁰⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19/14, 1/55, 3 Rebülevvel 1339 [15 December 1920].

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 9 Cemâziyelâhir 1334 [13 April 1916].

⁵¹¹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 155.

without gas or other means of lighting. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's mother, Şakire, lived in such a house when they came to the city.⁵¹² Nurife, who had to wait for her husband during both the war in Yemen and World War I, learned how to use a lampion (*idâre lambası*), which used only one gas can for eight years. Before her husband returned from Yemen, she had used the gas only when she performed prayers or had visitors. Otherwise, she had done all of her housework in the morning and had sat in dark all night, until her husband arrived as war veteran at the end of World War I.⁵¹³

The shortages of fuel, coal and firewood compelled women to seek for alternative lighting and heating methods. Mitat Enç writes in his memoirs how the decrease in the means of lighting in Gaziantep created new burdens for the women of his family. First, the gas oil sold by street hawkers disappeared. Consequently, big lamps were replaced with lampions. The fuel for these lampions as well ran out soon and they were replaced with lamps using olive oil. Lighting these lamps was much more difficult when matches also disappeared from the market. Instead of matchsticks, they started to ignite hemp chips (*kenevir çöpü*) using the fire from never extinguished braziers. Finally, his grandmother decided to create her own lighting instruments at home during the kitchen's idle time. She melted sulfur in a frying pan to make homemade matchsticks out of hemp chips and she organized other members of the family to make candles using cotton smeared with grease as candle wicks.⁵¹⁴ Coal shortages was such a problem of housewives that there were

⁵¹² Ömer Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2000), pp. 16-17.

⁵¹³ Metin Tekin, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları: Sarıkamış'tan Sibiry'a*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2007), p. 172.

⁵¹⁴ Enç, *Selâmlık Sohbetleri*, p. 41.

even recipes in women's periodicals such as *Türk Kadını* (Turkish Woman) for creating coal out of used papers.⁵¹⁵

The scarcity of clothing was another of the most frequent problems of women. During the war women had to mend the stockings incessantly because they became too expensive to buy new ones. In her memoirs, Selma Ekrem wrote that clothing and stockings became luxuries due to the war. As a result people wore stockings "so patched that they looked like crazy quilts."⁵¹⁶ In İstanbul finding good stockings was so impossible that her mother sat all afternoon darning her family's stockings. The ones they could find in the market "became full of holes in one wearing," and as a result, her mother had to sit "for hours trying to close holes as big as eggs." Because these stockings were darned repeatedly, the repaired parts started to hurt her feet.⁵¹⁷

Many poor women were unable to wear shoes of any kind; instead they wore slippers with soles of rope.⁵¹⁸ Middle-class families also wore such slippers at home to save their shoes.⁵¹⁹ Selma Ekrem recalled that having no shoes of her own she started to wear those of her grandfather. One of her schoolmates at the American College for Girls made fun of her because the shoes were too big for her. Ekrem wrote that she found these shoes better than the slippers that her mother offered her as an alternative.⁵²⁰ Ahmet İsvan also wrote about how his mother and aunt shared one pair of shoe during the war years. Therefore, when one wore them to go to a meeting, the other had to stay at home.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁵ Sevîm Türkân, "İdâre-i Beytiyye: Kömür," *Türk Kadını*, No. 13 (28 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1334 [28 November 1918]), pp. 201-202.

⁵¹⁶ Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New*, p. 104.

⁵¹⁷ Ekrem, *Unveiled*, p. 264.

⁵¹⁸ Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New*, p. 103.

⁵¹⁹ See Ekrem, *Unveiled*, p. 266.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ Ahmet İsvan, *Köprüler, Gelip Geçmeye: Tarımda Bir Modernleşme Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), pp. 18-19.

There were also many women in the provinces who could find no shoes at all and had to walk barefoot. For instance, poor women in Trabzon petitioned the government about the high prices of shoes. Claiming that a pair of rawhide sandal was sold for 70 piasters, women complained of finding nothing to protect their bare feet.⁵²² The high prices of shoes became the subject of black humor. In the humor magazine *Karagöz*, the high price of a boot was criticized in a satiric poem, as follows:

[Price of] a boot increased to twenty five liras
It is so strong that it does not last a few months
While the buyer pleads, the seller is stubborn
It is rightful to [tell] the dealer, stick it up your ass!⁵²³

Finding no fabric for sewing, women used their old clothes or home textiles such as tablecloths or bed linens to make clothing for their growing children. Halide Nusret Zorlutuna wrote in her memoirs that before the Armistice period mothers had to produce their own clothing such as underpants and shirts using the bed linens and upper sheets at home.⁵²⁴ Selma Ekrem remembered that her mother had cut up her beautiful linen sheets to make underwear for her children.⁵²⁵ She described how her mother's home textiles and trousseau were reduced because of the wartime clothing shortages with the following words:

Then there was the question of clothing. Prices had become prohibitive for our budget. Mother opened the big trunks that were always stored at grandfather's when we traveled. The old brocaded robes with long trains were taken out of their moth balls and deft fingers fashioned them into dresses for us children. One by one these relics of an old and happier age were sacrificed.

⁵²² BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/11, 3/1, 18 Rebülevvel 1336 [1 January 1918].

⁵²³ "Yirmi beş liraya çıktı bir fotin
Bir kaç ay dayanmaz o kadar metin
Alan yalvarırken satanı çetin
Bayiin başına çalınsa yeri!"

Satiric epic which was published on 3, 4 and 5 July [year unknown] in *Karagöz*. Quoted in Ilgar, *Mütareke'de Yerli ve Yabancı Basın*, p. 103.

⁵²⁴ Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romani*, p. 97.

⁵²⁵ Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New*, p. 103.

Mother was reduced to her wedding gown, we did not want to touch it, but this, too, fell in the clutches of the scissors.

Once day I came upon some beautiful Irish linen sheets and tablecloths. One could make summer dresses out of them. Mother agreed with a sigh, they were her prize possessions. But the merciless war took them too. Anyhow we were not using tablecloths any longer, soap was too expensive. Mother had installed an oilcloth on the dining-room table.⁵²⁶

Another method to solve the clothing problem came from the Ottoman Empire's ally, Germany. Having the same problem on the home front, the Germans created alternative clothes made without fabric. They brought paper dresses to İstanbul shops during the war. Because paper dresses were expensive, people could only look at them from far. Frightened by the idea that the Germans really wore paper clothes, people clung to their old clothes and prayed to see the end of the war.⁵²⁷ The high clothing prices were mocked in *Karagöz* in one caricature in which the main character of the magazine, *Karagöz*, sold dresses made out of newspaper and claimed that these could protect the body from the winter cold.⁵²⁸

Since the Ottoman Empire was dependent on the export of many of the textiles and textile manufacturing tools, the clothing problem was worsened. Cut off from the world markets the Ottoman textile production came to an end. According to contemporary observers, before the war the Ottomans had bought everything from European countries "from needles to machinery."⁵²⁹ Even the needles and yarns disappeared from the markets during the war. The scarcity of these items increased the women's housework burden, because it was not possible to repair their old clothes or sew buttons.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁶ Ekrem, *Unveiled*, pp. 263-264.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁵²⁸ Georgeon, "Au bord du rire et des larmes," p. 82.

⁵²⁹ See Ekrem, *Turkey: Old and New*, pp. 103-104.

⁵³⁰ See Enç, *Selâmlık Sohbetleri*, pp. 41-42.



Fig. 2 A caricature that criticizes the shortage of clothing. *Karagöz* as the host of the house refuses to accept women who want to see a young woman inside the house for organizing an arranged marriage. He tells them that it has been decided not to marry her off since the government no longer gives ration cards for fabric to future brides and pregnant women.

Source: *Karagöz*, No. 1070 (29 Haziran 1334 [29 June 1918]), p. 4.

As stated above, the problem of hunger and shortages directly influenced women of all classes, but most deeply the poor ones by causing death and health problems among them and their children. They even frequently fought in front of the bakeries for a piece of bread. These women walked with bare feet while other women made due with old shoes. Furthermore, the war increased the class differences and created an angry public in which lower-class women were important actors. This influenced the nature of the welfare measures, because women demanded further economic aid and negotiated the existing welfare policies throughout the war years and those of the Armistice that followed.

Welfare Measures against Hunger and Shortages

The welfare measures introduced by the state and institutions evolved throughout World War I and in the first years of the Armistice period for political, economic and social reasons. One of the most important results of the war was a deteriorating economy, which influenced the civilians negatively as the mobilization continued. The Ottoman government and the army were unprepared for the social and economic effects of this total war. Therefore, they introduced many of the welfare measures not according to a plan from the beginning of the war, but in response to the rising needs and especially to the pressure which came from the civilians, most of whom were lower-class women.

Attempts to Find a Solution to the Food Problem through Different Institutions

Finding a solution to the food problem was one of the first concerns of the Ottoman elite, especially for the capital city, although food shortages negatively affected people all around the Empire.⁵³¹ Some European countries and America were the most important flour providers to İstanbul. Since trade was cut with these Western countries due to the war, the limited number of transportation means was put into service of certain Muslim merchants and rich farmers, who started to produce for the national market and to market their products at high prices.⁵³²

The government was unable to distribute food in wartime conditions in an orderly fashion. This task was undertaken by different institutions throughout the

⁵³¹ For the measures taken for İstanbul during World War I and the Armistice years, see Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyye*, Vol. 2, pp. 811-837; and Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 37-72.

⁵³² Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi, 1908-2002*, pp. 28-29.

war. This was both due to the physical difficulties such as a lack of sufficient transportation means and due to the fact that war profiteering was seen as a rapid way of creating a national bourgeoisie.⁵³³ At the beginning of the war, the Indispensable Goods Commission (*Havâic-i Zarûriyye Komisyonu*) was founded under the chairmanship of the Minister of Internal Affairs.⁵³⁴ From October 1914 onwards, another institution, the Special Trade Delegation (*Hey'et-i Mahsûsa-i Ticâriyye*) took up the purchase and sale of basic goods and food for the capital city for one year.⁵³⁵ From October 1915 to February 1916, this duty was delegated to the first “national” company of the Ottoman Empire founded by Kemal Bey, the Anatolian National Products Ottoman Corporation (*Anadolu Millî Mahsulât Osmânî Anonim Şirketi*).⁵³⁶ On 14 September 1916, a bylaw was enacted for the foundation of the Export Committee (*İhrâcat Hey'eti*), which had the duty to supervise the external trade.⁵³⁷ These commissions, committees and national companies were first of all considered for assuring a certain level of food supply rather than the distribution of food to the populace.

The distribution of the provisions initially was thought of as the duty of the police department. Food distribution was a very difficult task because of the angry and hungry mobs at the distribution points. The problems in the distribution and administration of food ration cards, the delays in the milling of wheat and its distribution created especially furious crowds in front of the bakeries, which frequently came to blows and whom the police failed to calm down. After it was understood that even the police forces were unable to control these crowds, the

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵³⁴ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 128-129.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129-130.

⁵³⁷ “Dersaadette Bir İhracat Heyeti Teşkili Hakkında Layihai Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), pp. 611-617.

Committee of Union and Progress created bread distribution points in each district of İstanbul until the beginning of March 1916.⁵³⁸

Both in the capital city and the provinces, the main actors in food distribution were the municipalities and the Ministry of War. One replaced the other more than once throughout the war. The idea of making the Municipal Administration (*Şehremaneti*) responsible for provisioning came first in February 1916 from the mayor of İstanbul (*Şehremini*), İsmail Canbolat, who also managed to acquire the necessary subvention from the Sublime Porte (*Babıâli*).⁵³⁹ On 5 March 1916, however, a law was enacted for making the Ministry of War responsible for food distribution which enabled the Ottoman Army to take 500,000 Ottoman liras as advance payment for providing food to the populace in the name of the municipalities.⁵⁴⁰ Because the army had difficulty distributing food to the populace within a few weeks the same amount of money was allotted to the Municipal Administration of İstanbul with a provisional law on 23 March 1916.⁵⁴¹

On 10 April 1916, a similar law gave permission to the provincial municipalities to receive up to 100,000 Ottoman liras as advance payment from the Ministry of Finance for a period of one year for providing bread to the needy populations in their province. Between 10 April and 31 December 1916, a total of 44,500 Ottoman liras were received by provincial municipalities among which Aydın province was the leader by taking 20,000 Ottoman liras. This province was followed by Samsun (10,000), Hüdavendigâr (5,000), İzmit (4,000), and Bolu-Bartın (500, two

⁵³⁸ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 133-134.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁵⁴⁰ "Cihet-i Askeriyyece Belediyeler Namına Yemeklik Tedarik Olunmak Üzere Hazinece Harbiye Nezareti'ne 500,000 Liralık Avans İtası Hakkında Kanun," 21 Şubat 1331 / 30 Rebiülâhır 1334 [5 March 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 459-460.

⁵⁴¹ "Hazine-i Maliyyece Şehremaneti'ne 500,000 Lira Avans İtası Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 10 Mart 1332 / 18 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [23 March 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 769.

times), all of which evidently had important numbers of needy people.⁵⁴² The following year, up to 100,000 Ottoman liras were allotted as advance payment to the provincial municipalities for providing bread to the people with a law dated 19 February 1917.⁵⁴³

The duties of the municipalities both in the capital city and the provinces were not limited to providing rationed bread to the civilians. On 1 May 1916, a provisional law gave more rights and responsibilities to the municipalities for finding solutions to the shortage of food by deciding the maximum fixed prices. The municipalities also acquired with this provisional law the right to use the factories, workshops or bakeries in return for money and the right to punish both the black marketeers and those civilians who attempted to cheat the authorities by buying more food. For instance, Article 5 gave permission to the municipalities to punish civilians who acquired their ration cards without due process of law while Article 6 stated that the heads of the family who deceitfully increased the number of the members of his or her family, civilians who had given wrong answers to the questions asked by the municipality and the families who had not informed the death of a family member within three days would all be punished.⁵⁴⁴ Other than this provisional law another one specified for the prevention of war profiteering was going to be introduced on 24 May 1917.⁵⁴⁵

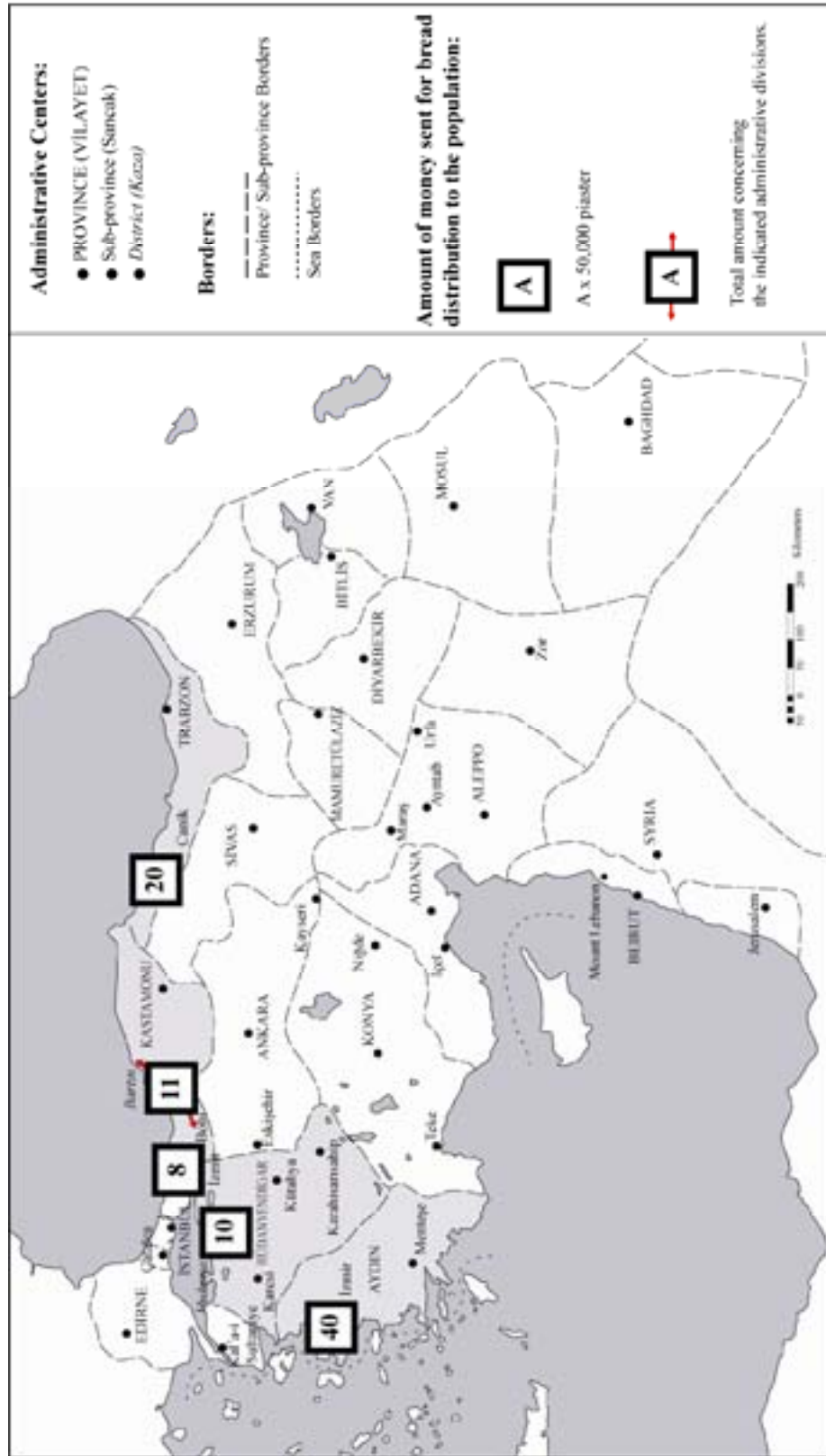
⁵⁴² “Ekmeklik Tedariki İçin Maliye Nezaretince Taşra Belediyelerine Yüz Bin Liraya Kadar Avans İtası Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 284-285.

⁵⁴³ “Ekmeklik Tedarikiçün Maliye Nezareti’nce Taşra Belediyelerine 100,000 Liraya Kadar Avans İtası Hakkında Kanun,” 6 Şubat 1332 / 26 Rebîülâhır 1335 [19 February 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 170-171.

⁵⁴⁴ “Mevaddı Gıdaiyye ve Havayici Sairenin Sureti Furuht ve Tevziine Mütedair Kararı Muvakkat ile Bunun Birinci Maddesine Müzeyyel Diğer Kararı Muvakkat Hakkında Layihai Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 681-685.

⁵⁴⁵ “İhtikârın Men’i Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat,” 24 Mayıs 1333 / 2 Şa’bân 1335 [24 May 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 687-689.

Map 3. Municipalities that Received Financial Aid from the Ottoman Government to Distribute Bread to the Poor from 10 April 1916 to 31 December 1916



Note: The data is taken for this map from *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 284.

On 7 August 1916, the municipalities acquired further rights with the enactment of a provisional law which gave them permission to use the transportation means in return for money for the transport of food and basic consumption goods such as firewood and coal. In addition, the municipal administration had the right to use factories and workshops for the production of food and other needs of the people and to rent or buy depots, storehouses and shops to preserve the goods it bought in return for a fee.⁵⁴⁶ These rights of the municipalities were legalized later with the introduction of a law on 5 April 1917.⁵⁴⁷

Despite all these new rights and advance payments the municipalities were not able to deal with the distribution of food and other goods effectively. This forced the Sublime Porte to create a food distribution network in all parts of the Empire, taking the German provisioning organization as a model. With the provisional law dated 23 July 1916, the Central Food Supply Committee (*Merkez İaşe Hey'eti*) and the Provincial Food Supply Committees (*Taşra İaşe Hey'etleri*) were founded.⁵⁴⁸ According to Article 1 of this provisional law, the Ottoman territories were divided into regions among which the delivery of food was prohibited for the provisioning of the army and the needy populace.⁵⁴⁹ The regulation of the Food Supply Committees, which was enacted on 11 September 1916, limited the food distribution regions to three.⁵⁵⁰ Initially 3,000,000 Ottoman liras were allocated as a fund to the Food Supply Committees. About eight months later, this was increased to 3,500,000

⁵⁴⁶ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 140.

⁵⁴⁷ "Mevad-ı Gıdaiyye ve Hevaic-i Sairenin Suret-i Furuhat ve Tevzi'i Hakkında Kanun," 5 Nisan 1333 / 13 Cemâziyelâhîr 1335 [5 April 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 632-634.

⁵⁴⁸ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 139.

⁵⁴⁹ "İaşe Kanûn-ı Muvakkatı," 10 Temmuz 1332 / 22 Ramazân 1334 [23 July 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 1230-1231.

⁵⁵⁰ "22 Ramazân 1334 Tarihli İaşe Kanun-ı Muvakkat'ının Suver-i Tatbikiyyesi Hakkında Nizamname," 29 Ağustos 1332 / 13 Zilka'de 1334 [11 September 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 1275-1281.

liras⁵⁵¹ and the regions to receive food distribution were increased to five with the enactment of another regulation on 12 April 1917.⁵⁵²

Although the Food Supply Committees were provided with extended rights and an important budget, the problem of food shortages did not come to an end. The problem was related largely to the lack of transportation means. Consequently, the Food Supply Committees were canceled and the food distribution was undertaken once again by the army, which possessed most of the transportation vehicles.⁵⁵³ Therefore, with a bylaw the Directorate General of Food Supply (*Îaşe Umûm Müdürlüğü*) was created on 18 August 1917.⁵⁵⁴ This directorate was attached to the Ministry of War.

On 4 April 1918, the rights and responsibilities of the Directorate General of Food Supply were extended with the enactment of a new law.⁵⁵⁵ This law created the Assembly of Food Supply (*Îaşe Meclisi*), which was entrusted with the task of controlling the acts of the Directorate General of Food Supply; to protect the poor peasants by ensuring that they had been left with enough seed, food and fodder; to prevent black market of the foodstuff; to decide on the amount and manner of food distribution; to investigate that the wagons were fairly distributed among the merchants; to make sure that the transportation means were used in the maximum manner for trade; and to receive the complaints of the people about the food supply,

⁵⁵¹ “Îaşe Kanunu Lâyihası,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İctima Senesi: 3, pp. 587-594.

⁵⁵² “Ordu-yu Hümayun İle Ahalinin İaşesini Temin Zımında Neşr Edilen 10 Temmuz 1332 Tarihli Kanun-ı Muvakkatın Suver-i Tatbikiyyesi Hakkında 29 Ağustos 1332 Tarihli Nizamname Makamına Kaim Olmak Üzere Tanzim Olunan Nizamname,” 12 Nisan 1333 / 20 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [12 April 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 646-648.

⁵⁵³ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 143.

⁵⁵⁴ “Îaşe-i Umumiyye Kararnamesi,” 18 Ağustos 1333 / 29 Şevvâl 1335 [18 August 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 708-710.

⁵⁵⁵ “Îaşe-i Umumiyye Kanunu,” 4 Nisan 1334 / 22 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [4 April 1918], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 10, pp. 427-431.

examine these and make decisions about them.⁵⁵⁶ The Assembly of Food Supply, however, did not have enough time to accomplish these tasks because within a few months, on 30 July 1918, the Ministry of Food (*İâşe Nezâreti*) was founded, which was made responsible for all of the tasks that the above-mentioned institutions had been.⁵⁵⁷

Almost all the institutions established during the war were found guilty of war profiteering to some extent and lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the public.⁵⁵⁸ Because war was seen as an ideal opportunity for the creation a national bourgeoisie, the authorization to buy food from Anatolia for the capital city and elsewhere was given to merchants closely related to the Committee of Union and Progress. Most of these authorizations were misused. Fortunes were made out of food trade which was called “wagon trade” those days, because the train wagons carrying food from Anatolia played a big role in such trade.⁵⁵⁹

Those laws which protected the poorest were designed only as the war progressed and as the number of protestors increased. As mentioned above, one of the worst problems of the people was the lack of enough food to survive. Unlike the middle class or richer families who could somewhat afford to eat potatoes or other foodstuffs, eating something other than bread or cracked wheat obviously was not the option of thousands of low income and poor women in the capital city and in the provinces whose budgets did not allowed them to buy even the rationed bread. Therefore, considering that the rich could buy items like rice, potatoes and meat that could replace bread, the authorities finally thought of distributing more bread to the

⁵⁵⁶ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 147-148.

⁵⁵⁷ “İâşe Nezareti Hakkında Kararname,” 30 Temmuz 1334 / 21 Şevvâl 1336 [30 July 1918], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 10, pp. 558-563.

⁵⁵⁸ Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, Vol. 3, *1914-1918 Genel Savaşı*, pp. 539-543.

⁵⁵⁹ Kabacalı, ed., *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 39-41; Moralı, *Mütareke'de İzmir*, pp. 79-80; and Ziya Şakir, *1914-1918 Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, pp. 296-299.

poor in the summer of 1917. Those who worked in hard labor could take between 250 to 750 grams more bread. Furthermore, the poor were allotted more rationed gas, taking into account that they had much more difficulty buying it and needed it more compared to rich families who used electricity at home.⁵⁶⁰

Soup Kitchens, Clothing Aid and Other Forms of Aid for the Poor

The widespread hunger and food shortages compelled the authorities and the welfare institutions to distribute food and to establish public soup kitchens in some places where the food question became extremely serious. Other than the municipalities and the army, semi-official welfare associations such as the Red Crescent Society (*Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*) and the National Defense Society (*Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*) distributed food for free or at low prices. To help the poor especially in the capital city and certain parts of the Anatolia, the number of soup kitchens increased. Kemal the Black (*Kara Kemal*), who was the Minister of Food later in the war and whose misuse of his authority brought him into disrepute in the eyes of the public, founded 25 soup kitchens during the war.⁵⁶¹ Furthermore, the İzmir Branch of the Society of National Defense opened soup kitchens in the second week of 1917. These soup kitchens initially distributed food to 18,000 poor people. This number reached 30,000 by March 1917. The Beşiktaş Branch of the Society of National Defense, taking these soup kitchens as a model, also opened a soup kitchen on 22 April 1917, with a ceremony in which Enver Pasha participated.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Ahmed Emin, “İaşe işlerinin tanzimi,” *Sabâh* (30 Ağustos 1333 [30 August 1917]), p. 1. Quoted in Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 145.

⁵⁶¹ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 188.

⁵⁶² Nâzım H. Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991), pp. 89-90.

The Red Crescent Society also founded many public soup kitchens in İstanbul. According to Ahmed Emin, the number of these free kitchens reached 22.⁵⁶³ During the war, they reached the capacity to feed about 35,000 people each day. The districts in which these soup kitchens were located were those in which the poor population of the city lived such as Topkapı, Üsküdar, Eyüpsultan, Kasımpaşa, Kumkapı, Fatih, Cibali, Alipaşa, and Kartal.

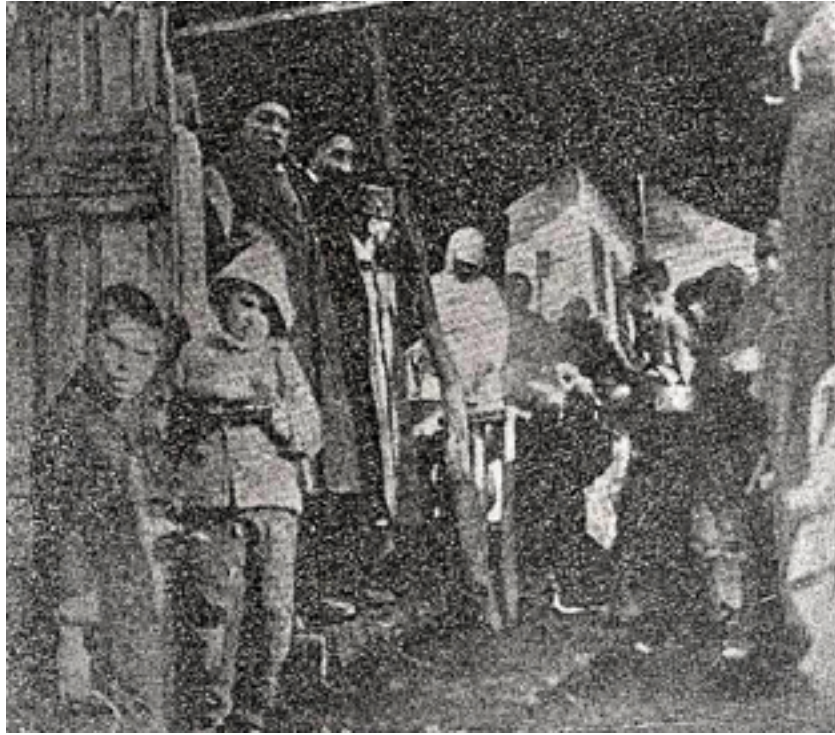


Fig. 3 A woman cook in a white uniform distributes food to the poor in a Red Crescent soup kitchen in İstanbul.

Source: A. Süheyl Ünver, *Birinci Cihan Harbindeki Hilâl-i Ahmer Aşhaneleri* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, 1964), p. 20.

As stated above, the hunger hit not only İstanbul, but the Anatolian countryside, especially northeastern Anatolia. Accordingly, the Society opened two soup kitchens in Samsun and Trabzon, two important centers in the Black Sea region which received Muslim refugees who escaped from the Russian attacks after 1916 and

⁵⁶³ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 257.

perished in great numbers due to hunger and epidemics. 3,500 people were fed each day in Samsun and 1,000 in Trabzon. Even after the Armistice was signed in 1919, the soup kitchen in Trabzon and six others in Topkapı, Üsküdar, Eyüpsultan, Kasımpaşa, Fatih and Alipaşa in İstanbul remained open, which shows that the poverty of people living in these districts persisted as a legacy of the war.⁵⁶⁴ There were also temporary soup kitchens opened by the Society for fire victims in İstanbul.⁵⁶⁵

Poor people also received food from the soup kitchen of the Topkapı Society for Assistance to the Poors (*Topkapı Fukaraperver Müessesesi-i Hayriyesi*), from which they could obtain free medicine provided by the Red Crescent Society. Those who went to the soup kitchens opened by the Ministry of Food, such as the one in the Ahmediye quarter of Üsküdar, had to pay 40 to 60 *paras* for one unit of food (*bir kap yemek*). Those who went to the soup kitchens of the Red Crescent Society, however, were given food free, but they had to receive first of all certificates for it. These certificates ranged from a certificate for one person to a certificate to the maximum number of six people for one family. All of the certificates had different colors according to the number of people who would benefit from food. Lower-class people who came to the soup kitchens had to take their food from the cooks who wore dresses and caps with the same color as their certificates in order to ensure discipline.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ TKA, 153/13, 4 Kasım 1919 [Nov. 4, 1919, document in French]. See also, *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid Hilâl-i Ahmer Meclis-i Umumisi Heyet-i Muhteremesine Takdim Edilen 1330-1334 Senelerine Aid Merkez-i Umumi Raporu* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Orhaniye, 1335 [1919]), pp. 38-41.

⁵⁶⁵ Nil Sarı and Zuhâl Özyaydın, *I. Dünya Savaşında Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Sağlık ve Sosyal Yardıma Katkıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), p. 167.

⁵⁶⁶ A. Süheyl Ünver, *Birinci Cihan Harbindeki Hilâl-i Ahmer Aşhaneleri* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, 1964), pp. 5-7.



Fig. 4 Poor women waiting in front of a Red Crescent soup kitchen that was set up in the building of the Topkapı Society for Assistance to the Poor (*Topkapı Fukaraperver Müessesesi-i Hayriyesi*) in İstanbul.

Source: Nil Sarı and Zuhâl Özeydın, *I. Dünya Savaşında Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Sağlık ve Sosyal Yardıma Katkıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), p. 56.

The food distributed in the Red Crescent soup kitchens, like those founded in Germany,⁵⁶⁷ was low in proteins and its nutritional value was quite low. The list of the food given in return for special cards in five poor districts of İstanbul, which were Topkapı, Üsküdar, Eyüp, Kasımpaşa and Fatih, during November and December 1917 contained almost no meat. The most frequent food served was soup, which was prepared in most of the cases with boiled and pounded wheat, with semolina or with flour. In November no meat was served in the soup kitchens of Üsküdar and Eyüp. When meat was given, it was served only three days in Topkapı and once in Kasımpaşa as wheat soup with meat (*etli bulgur çorbası*) and once in Fatih in the form of a rice dish of anchovy (*hamsi pilavı*). In December, either no

⁵⁶⁷ See Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 143.

meat was served in the soup kitchens of Üsküdar, Eyüp and Fatih, but it was served only four times in Topkapı and Kasımpaşa as soup and rich dish of anchovy.⁵⁶⁸

Impoverished women often had to appeal to the district headmen and the board of aldermen, if they needed welfare services provided by either the government or associations such as the Red Crescent. This role of the local authorities was extremely important in the distribution of ration cards for bread and food. The district headmen wrote to the authorities about the financial situation of the woman petitioner, the number of her dependents and helped to confirm her address. In many cases they guided the welfare providers and made lists of poor women and children in their district to help them.⁵⁶⁹ For example, in April and May 1917, the headman and the board of alderman of the Kasımpaşa district of İstanbul wrote to the Red Crescent a lists of the names, addresses, and the number of the family members of the poor people in their district together with an explanation of how these people supported themselves.⁵⁷⁰ Similar lists were prepared in other poor districts of İstanbul as those of the headmen, members of the boards of aldermen and imams of the Kağıthane district confirm.⁵⁷¹ These lists which were demanded by the Society provided the necessary information and the legal basis for welfare services. The wives, mothers or sisters of those dead soldiers who had been regarded by the state as martyr were especially feed and assisted by the Red Crescent during the war years.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ TKA, 68/20, Teşrîn-i Sâni – Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 [November – December 1917].

⁵⁶⁹ A list prepared for the Red Crescent Society authorities in 1917 contains names of 25 women, their addresses including their quarter, street and house number, the number of the members of their families and whether or not they received any salary. TKA, 68/36, 25 Mayıs 1333 [25 May 1917].

⁵⁷⁰ TKA, 68/22, Nisan-Mayıs 1333 [April-May 1917].

⁵⁷¹ TKA, 68/23, 1333 [1917].

⁵⁷² See for example, *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umumisi Tarafından 1339 Senesi Hilâl-i Ahmer Meclis-i Umumisine Takdim Edilen (1335-1338) Dört Senelik Devre Ait Rapor* ([İstanbul]: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1339 [1923]), pp. 141-142.

The government accepted foreign aid to relieve the hunger of the poor Ottoman war veterans, their women and children. One of the most important items for this aid was milk. On 11 April 1921, the Aid Committee to Disabled Soldiers (*Ma'lûlîn-i Askeriyye Yardım Hey'eti*) informed the Red Crescent Society about the assistance of the American Red Cross to disabled Ottoman soldiers and their families. One thousand kilos of milk was stated as the first item on a list including cacao, food suitable for making soup, kitchen equipment and clothing for women, men and children.⁵⁷³ The American aid in terms of flour and condensed milk especially lowered the price of bread and milk by 30 to 50 percent. In those relief stores that opened in the districts of Topkapı, Pera, Aksaray, Mahmutpaşa, Rumelihisarı, and Üsküdar as well as food items such as bread, beans, milk, flour, rice and sugar other goods such as blankets, candles and cloth were provided for the poor.⁵⁷⁴

In addition, coal and firewood were among the items distributed to the poor women and people through welfare associations such as the Red Crescent and the local governments. On 6 March 1918, the Inspectorate General of the Red Crescent Society received an official letter which ordered that those poor and helpless people who had been entitled to take food in the soup kitchens of the Society be given coal in the amount of four kilos for each person for the month of March. This was an official decision of the Central Office of the Society in its meeting on 5 March 1918.⁵⁷⁵

Because poor women were very vulnerable to the clothing shortages both for sanitary and moral reasons, the wartime clothing aids were first of all thought for them. Especially these women and the refugees throughout the Empire lacked the

⁵⁷³ TKA, 93/92, 11 Nisan 1337 [11 April 1921].

⁵⁷⁴ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 35.

⁵⁷⁵ TKA, 68/69, 6 Mart 1334 [6 March 1918].

clothing necessary for them to survive during the winter. The Red Crescent Society other than feeding the orphans and widows in its Sivas hospital also provided them with clothing.⁵⁷⁶ It distributed 8200 flannel undershirts, shirts and underpants and 570 pairs of woolen socks to the needy people in some districts of central and south Anatolia such as Konya, Karaman, Ereğli, Ulukışla, Bor, Niğde, Pozantı, Belemelik (village in Pozantı in Adana), Kelebek (village in Karaisalı in Adana) and Namrun.⁵⁷⁷ During the Armistice year the Society reported that it distributed clothing and shoes to more than 2000 Turkish refugees in İstanbul while the Directorate for the Settlement of Emigrants and Tribes (*İskân-ı Aşâir ve Muhâcirîn Müdürlüğü*) distributed 80 tons of clothing partly in İstanbul and partly in Anatolia.⁵⁷⁸

Furthermore, the German ambassador in İstanbul, after visiting the Red Crescent soup kitchens in the city, remarked that the poor women and people who came to these public soup kitchens to take their food lacked proper clothing to protect them from the cold and bad weather in winter. He wrote on 27 November 1917 in an official letter to the Red Crescent headquarter that after consulting with some well-to-do ladies with whom he was acquainted, he had decided to ask the Society for some fabric and equipment, old or new, to sew clothing for the poor. The German ambassador emphasized that the clothing aid would be given to the neediest women and children in the first place.⁵⁷⁹ Similarly, because the clothing problem was also felt in the provinces, on 3 September 1921, the İstanbul governor gave permission to the Red Crescent Society to collect clothing from the people of the city to help the poor in Anatolia before the winter arrived.⁵⁸⁰ Besides, there were attempts

⁵⁷⁶ *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid*, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁷ *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umumisi Tarafından*, p. 72.

⁵⁷⁸ Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, p. 213.

⁵⁷⁹ TKA, 101/227, 27 Kasım 1917 [27 November 1917, document in French].

⁵⁸⁰ TKA, 93/116, 3 Eylül 1337 [3 September 1921].

by the state to produce war shoes at the price of 150 piasters at the Beykoz factory for the civilians.⁵⁸¹

Especially refugee women suffered from the lack of clothing and nakedness.⁵⁸² Clothing problem was so serious that some women were even deprived of clothing such as underwear. For instance, Ankaralı Saide Hanım, whose husband had died in the battlefield, and who had been kept as a prisoner of war for four years in Mecca by the English army, after coming to İstanbul through Egypt with other prisoners of the war demanded first of all free clothing from the Ministry of War. On 4 March 1919, the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women was informed about her situation as a poor war widow and yet the Society declined the request, claiming that they were not able to help her. Eventually, on 6 March 1919 the Red Crescent Society provided two sets of shirts and underpants for Saide and her two daughters.⁵⁸³

In sum, the institutions which were established to provide food and other basic goods to the capital city and to the provinces evolved throughout the war, each with problems of its own. Unfortunately, the authorizations for trade were generally misused and the number of war profiteers increased at the expense of the poor. The laws and regulations that could relieve the burden of the poor came very late. The welfare institutions like the soup kitchens to which mostly poor women resorted were also insufficient in terms of the food they served and of number of recipients covered by these institutions. Therefore, low-income women had to fight against these problems.

⁵⁸¹ Önder Küçükerman, *Geleneksel Türk Dericilik Sanayii ve Beykoz Fabrikası: Boğaziçi'nde Başlatılan Sanayi* (Ankara: Sümerbank, 1988), p. 148.

⁵⁸² See for example, Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *Milli Mücadele Anılarım* (İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 1983), p. 21.

⁵⁸³ TKA, 70/32, 4 Mart 1335 [4 March 1919].

Lower-Class Women's Negotiation of the Measures against Hunger and Shortages

Throughout World War I and the following years, the main concern of lower-class women was to avoid dying from hunger. In order to receive economic aid or increase the allocations they received from the Ottoman government and other welfare institutions, which were mainly the army, the municipalities and other organizations such as the Red Crescent, poor women resorted to a variety of legal or illegal actions. In many cases women used their legal rights by writing petitions or sending telegrams to the authorities to demand more food. When these attempts did not work, many of them did not hesitate to cheat the authorities or participate in food riots. This was an active process of negotiation in which the poor and ignorant women were more than passive victims of their bad destiny.

As stated before, the food problems on the home front were related to both difficulties in the distribution of food and wartime profiteering. In addition, in the countryside, a bad harvest due to labor scarcity, unfavorable weather conditions and the high wartime taxes demanded from peasants caused women's hunger and consequently their requests for help from the state. Particularly, high wartime taxes and compulsory purchases of cereals by the government at quite low prices, which left an insufficient amount of seed and food to peasant women created important problems both for these women and for Ottoman society since the lack of enough seed in their hands diminished the following year's harvest and worsened food shortages. All of these issues found a place in lower-class women's requests for help from the state and in their protests.

Women's Complaints about the Distribution of Food

Most of the complaints from lower-class women were about the poor distribution of food. The rationing system did not work smoothly in many regions. For instance, women living in the Hüdavendigâr region complained as late as 1917 about the distribution of food with ration cards. Signing their telegrams sent on 6 March 1917 from Mudanya to the Ministry of Internal Affairs as “on behalf of all soldier’s families” Hamdiye, Nakiye, Düriye and Zümürd presented themselves in connection with the soldiers on the battlefield. These women complained that although the food distribution with ration cards had started in Mudanya one year before they had only been able to benefit from this system for 40 days. They mentioned that the local authorities had not taken their applications seriously and therefore they had had to send a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs out of hunger.⁵⁸⁴

Lower-class women also complained about the discrimination and favoritism of the warehouse officials (*ambar memûru*) when they requested food. On 14 November 1917, Elif, Ayşe, Şerife, Fatma and Elif from Arabsun sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and stated that they had suffered from the high-handed manner of the officials in their district for the past two years. They wrote that although they all had been dying from hunger as landless soldier’s poor families the government officials had given provisions only to a few women to whom they took a liking. These women also stated that because these officials had so much decision-making power that they had used it to satisfy their own needs to the detriment of the poor women. They wrote that they had no hope of getting any help from the local government officials and therefore they demanded action from the state to end their

⁵⁸⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 29/2, 14 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [8 March 1917].

hunger. Taking this telegram seriously, on 28 November 1917, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the Niğde governor to launch an investigation to learn whether the complaints of these women about the officials were well-grounded.⁵⁸⁵

Lower-class women also protested when the provisions allotted to their districts were sent to other regions. For instance, on 8 April 1918, a telegram of 14 Muslim women from Boğazlıyan arrived to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Representing themselves as soldier's needy families who were left with no sustenance after their husbands and sons had been recruited; these women criticized the local authorities for deciding that the provisions allotted to their district had been more than sufficient amount. Therefore, an important part of such provisions had been sent to Ma'den district. Women protested the delivery of 200,000 kilograms of provisions from Boğazlıyan to another district, claiming that this could cause their misfortune and death out of hunger. They demanded that the government prevent this situation and eventually to protect their lives and honor. Consequently, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Ankara governor about the situation of these women and demanded the necessary actions be taken.⁵⁸⁶

Comparisons of their deteriorating situation with that of other women, especially with the state officials' wives, were made by the lower-class women both in everyday life, as seen in their fights in front of the bread distribution points, and in official correspondence. Poor women, whether they were soldiers' families without a breadwinner or needy women who had no male relatives in the Ottoman army, were worse off than the state officials' and army officers' families, although none of these groups were totally immune from the diverse economic effects of the war. This was used as a bargaining tool by women who wanted to receive social assistance or

⁵⁸⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 42/71, 13 Safer 1336 [28 November 1917].

⁵⁸⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/11, 3/44, 28 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [10 April 1918].

increase the welfare benefits and social assistances they received. For example, on 1 October 1918, a telegram was sent from Yozgat to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by a group of poor women who called themselves “soldiers’ wives” named Şükriye, Refika, Ayşe, Saliha, Âdile, Suadiyye, Mûnise, Cennet and Nâzik. These women complained that while their sons and husbands were fighting for “religion and fatherland” and some of them had died as martyrs, they had had to sell their household goods in order to get a piece of food. They protested the fact that all officials’ families, who were well off compared to them from the beginning of the war, were additionally given rationed food while they suffered, watching their children cry out of hunger and living in ruined places. Their request from the government for the protection of their rights as well was taken seriously and the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to the Ankara governor to take the necessary actions to meet these women’s needs.⁵⁸⁷

On the other hand, many of the civil servant’s families, too, were in very bad financial straits although they were slightly better off than the poorer women who were not in soldiers’ families and received no pension at all. The civil servants’ women whose husbands had been recruited as soldiers were also among the group that requested food from the state. For instance, Saliha Hanım and her friends who were all wives of civil servants conscripted into the army demanded provisions from the state with petitions dated 27 January 1918, writing that they were in a miserable situation due to the war.⁵⁸⁸

Since a small amount of aid could have great importance in wartime conditions, even some minor assistance to wives of civil servants or army officers drew the reactions of other more disadvantaged women. Some poor women criticized

⁵⁸⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/4, 2/72, 27 Zilhicce 1336 [3 October 1918].

⁵⁸⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/16, 10/12, 28 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [11 March 1918].

the aid to wives of civil servants and claimed that they were in need of the government's aid much more than civil servants' families. Although some complaints about the privileged situation of the civil servants' women were proved to be groundless, even these untrue comparisons showed how poor women were in a desperate situation and strived to get further help. For example, women as soldiers' families without a breadwinner, Fatma and her friends sent a complaint telegram from Bayramiç stating that they had received no sugar while women of all kinds of civil servants had received it from the distribution points. The district governor, however, refuted this claim responding that only sick women and nursing mothers had received an extra amount of sugar while all other people had been given 50 *dirhems* (about 88.59 grams).⁵⁸⁹ Obviously this was a very small amount, but even this amount created envy.

Problems with the distribution of food were so terrible that even men wrote about the hunger of women and children on behalf of them. On 2 May 1918, Hüseyin and his friends sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in which they explained that in their district, Develi, poor peasants and soldiers' children were dying from hunger because the provisions which had been decided to be allotted to them by the state were not given to them.⁵⁹⁰ A few months later, another telegram which had been sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that the situation got worse in the same district. Abdullah son of Yusuf Efendi from Ürgüb wrote to the authorities that although their town, Develi, had a lot of cereals in its warehouses, their district governor only allowed the civil servants and the gendarmeries to use these cereals while the poor remained hungry. He declared that up until that time, about 500 women and children as unsupported families of soldiers and martyrs had

⁵⁸⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 45/25, 20 Rebülevvel 1336 [2 February 1918].

⁵⁹⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/3, 2/30, 26 Receb 1336 [7 May 1918].

died out of hunger. According to Abdullah, many other women and children could only eat grass and herbs and were about to die so they had to be assisted immediately.⁵⁹¹



Fig. 5 A group of women and children who were members of soldiers' families and among those 4,000 people who daily received food from the Ottoman army in Kavala and Drama, two districts of Salonica which were not Ottoman territories during World War I.

Source: *Harb Mecmûası*, no. 22 (Zilhicce 1335 / Teşrîn-i Evvel 1333 [October 1917]), p. 349.

The inequality in food distribution was sometimes created by wartime laws and regulations. While many other lower-class women could only resort to the municipalities and institutions such the Red Crescent, the soldiers' families without a breadwinner or war prisoners' and martyr soldiers' families could demand food from the army at very low prices during the war. For a woman with children and without any support and income, finding bread at unchanging and lower prices was already an important benefit in wartime conditions. This was a privilege that only institutions such as the army could provide for soldiers' women since nearly all the transportation means were assigned to the army. Those women who had the right to

⁵⁹¹ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20/4, 2/2, 5 Şevvâl 1336 [14 July 1918].

buy bread from specific points were family members of the army officers and of the soldiers who had already fought at the battlefield, prisoners of war, and the dead soldiers who were regarded as martyrs.

The distribution of food among these groups was not equal either. The families of the army officers already in service were in a more favorable position. The officers were sent their families' coal and durable foods, which also was an important advantage for women living in the big cities where the prices skyrocketed. These provisions were bought from the army warehouse in return for some part of the salary of the officer. Taking special permissions from the army was important in this practice, since black marketeering was very common among the civil servants and army officers. For instance, in the spring of 1915, even when the prices of basic goods were not yet at astronomic levels, army officials who had sent provisions from the army warehouses to their families in return for half of their wages were found guilty by the Ministry of War. When it was discovered that army officers' families in Muğla had received provisions without any permission the responsible bureaucrats in the Recruitment Office of the district were ordered to stop this practice.⁵⁹²

Most of these waged army officers, whose families benefited from this assistance, came out of the educated and middle class groups who lived in the cities and the capital. Especially during the winter of 1917-1918, when the prices of basic goods were highest in İstanbul, these officers used Haliç steamship number 5 from Bandırma to İstanbul to send the provisions. On 4 December 1917, the 5th Range Quartermaster (*Beşinci Menzil Levâzım Reisi*) wrote from Bandırma to the General Staff Third Branch Office that the following provisions for the families of the army officers living in İstanbul had been sent by this steamship: broad beans (4 carryalls),

⁵⁹² BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 89/, 1/46, 9 Receb 1333 [23 May 1915].

chickpeas (3 carryalls), onions (15 carryalls), salt (5 carryalls), soap (6 carryalls), and whole grain (5 carryalls).⁵⁹³

On 27 January 1918, the 5th Army Commandership demanded another delivery with Haliç steamship number 5 to distribute provisions to the families of its army officers living in İstanbul and the army officers' and some martyrs' families living in Tekfurdağı. The provisions which were compiled from the army warehouse and were sent to Âsaf Efendi, the dispatcher in İstanbul, were the following:

chickpeas (6 sacks), beans (6 sacks), soap (5 sacks), onions (1000 kilograms), molasses (1 barrel), macaroni (3 sacks), sugar (3 sacks), table salt (1 barrel), wheat for flour (2 sacks), gas (5 cans), and olive oil (2 barrels).⁵⁹⁴

On 4 February 1918, too, the 5th Range Quartermaster, Colonel Osman, informed the 5th Army General Staff Third Branch Office about a shipment of soap (8 sacks), vinegar (1 barrel), olive oil (3 barrels), wheat flour (5 sacks), cracked wheat (5 sacks), chickpeas (3 sacks), beans (3 sacks), macaroni (3 sacks), table salt (5 sacks), figs (20 containers), plain butter (20 containers), and onions (1000 kilograms) to the capital city.⁵⁹⁵ Two weeks later, on 19 February 1918, he also asked whether the steamship could send 1000 loaves of bread to the army officers' families in İstanbul under the control of an officer.⁵⁹⁶

In addition to these collective shipments, the steamship was also used for individual deliveries sending food to a single family. Army officers who wanted to use this means acquired again special permission. For example, on 9 December 1917, a certificate was given to an assistant provost officer (*inzibât zâbit muâvini*) to send

⁵⁹³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 23, and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 23-1, 4 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 [4 December 1917].

⁵⁹⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 93, and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 93-1, 27 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1334 [27 January 1918].

⁵⁹⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 117, 4 Şubat 1334 [4 February 1918].

⁵⁹⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 162, 19 Şubat 1334 [19 February 1918].

200 kilograms of coal to his family in İstanbul,⁵⁹⁷ and on 11 December, to a second lieutenant (*mülâzım-ı sâni*) shipping 150 kilograms of coal for the same purpose.⁵⁹⁸ On 19 February 1918, the steamship was also charged with delivering a crate full of provisions to the judge advocate (*ordu adli müşâviri*) Behzad Bey's family living in İstanbul.⁵⁹⁹

Relieving the army officers' families to some degree of the burden of the wartime high cost of living, food scarcity, and black market, in general, this practice remained nearly only as an aid to a special and privileged group of officers' families, although many women strived to benefit from similar kinds of assistance. Knowing that the army officers' families were in a better situation, those soldiers' families who had important financial problems argued that having only the right to buy cheaper bread did not help them. An official letter which had been sent to the Army on 24 February 1917, indicated that especially the families of the prisoners of war and the war martyrs who received very low pensions from the state had important difficulty because they also paid rent and suffered from wartime inflation. It was stated that these families demanded more than low-priced bread.⁶⁰⁰

Indeed, as a very disadvantaged group compared to the families of the army officers in service, who, although irregularly, could receive both money and provisions from these salaried soldiers, women of the prisoners of war and of the dead soldiers depended much more on the benevolence of the Ottoman Army. These poorer women often pressured the officials in the recruitment offices who were in a much more direct relation with them. They both created pressure and a sentiment of affection or sense of responsibility on such officials, constantly demanding new

⁵⁹⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 28, 9 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 [9 December 1917].

⁵⁹⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 29, 11 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 [11 December 1917].

⁵⁹⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3482, Dos. 20, Fih. 158, 19 Şubat 1334 [19 February 1918].

⁶⁰⁰ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-1, 11 Şubat 1332 [24 February 1917].

allowances. They often wrote petitions and formed moaning and crying crowds in front of their offices. For instance, on 19 March 1917, a telegram which was sent by the Samsun recruiting office informed the army authorities about these women's problems. Under the pressure of women's demands, an officer of this recruiting office requested that the army allot money and provisions in addition to bread to the families of the prisoners of war and of the dead army officers.⁶⁰¹ Consequently, on 26 March 1917, the 3rd Army Quartermaster was asked officially whether these families were going to be given provisions other than bread.⁶⁰²

The widows of war martyrs in desperate conditions sent telegrams to the authorities demanding provisions other than bread. For instance, Kadriye sent a telegram to the Ministry of War in the name of the families of martyr soldiers in Yozgat. She wrote that since they could not buy enough provisions, they were in a desperate situation and she demanded that they also be given provisions and other stuff just like the army officers' families received. The Ministry of War, however, declined this request. In other regions, too, the poor wives of war martyrs tried to pressure the local authorities in order to get assistance similar to that the officers' wives received. In the face of women's demands, the Sivas governor transmitted such demands to the central authorities. However, on 31 August 1919, he was informed that the families of war martyrs were endowed with no right to obtain cheaper food from the army.⁶⁰³

Other groups of women, too, especially the poor wives of civil servants and soldiers demanded similar economic rights from the army. On 13 April 1918, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat Pasha, wrote to the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, about such a demand he had received in an official document from the Hüdavendigâr

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-12, 26 Mart 1333 [26 March 1917].

⁶⁰³ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20/6, 2/79, 4 Zilhicce 1337 [31 August 1919].

province. Informing the government about the miserable situation of the civil servants' and soldier's families without a breadwinner, he ordered that provisions be sold to these groups at low prices special for army officers and officials.⁶⁰⁴

Women's Resistance to the Discrimination in the Provision of Food Aid

Other than the unequal distribution of bread and provisions among the families of soldiers of different ranks and status, women also resisted the discrimination against the families of the war dead of the Balkan Wars. This discrimination had important political and military reasons, since the government wanted to support first of all the families of the existing soldiers to enhance the war efforts. Nevertheless, as families of men who had served and died in the Balkan Wars, many lower-class women found this practice neither legitimate nor reasonable. In a petition written to the Army Central Command of all fronts on 1 June 1917, Vesîle, the wife of a deceased soldier and a refugee from Erzincan, wrote that before she had been allowed to buy bread from the special points but lately they stopped giving her bread, explaining that she was the family of a soldier who had died in the Balkan Wars. Vesîle emphasized that other than buying bread from these points she had no option to provide bread for her six family members, who were left destitute in one corner, in just one room of a house.⁶⁰⁵ She asked to be relieved from this misery by the army authorities. As is understood from the notes made on her petition on 12 June by the 3rd Army Commander Representative, Vesîle's request was accepted and the army staff was ordered to help Vesîle's family.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁴ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20/16, 10/14, 2 Receb 1336 [13 April 1918].

⁶⁰⁵ "... altı nüfus ile bir hane köşesinde perişan bir haldeyiz."

⁶⁰⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 3-7, 1 Haziran 1333 [1 June 1917].

Despite this consequence, Vesîle's initial refusal to buy bread, although not found legitimate later on by the higher ranking officers who reconsidered her petition, was a result of the army's need to limit its social assistance to soldiers' families. The reluctance to provide help in the first place showed also how the army wanted to turn down the requests of many women like Vesîle. Nevertheless, under the pressure of unbearable wartime inflation and black marketeering, lower-class women both objected to discrimination in terms of rank or time of military service and they insisted on receiving cheaper bread from the army selling points in order to survive. In summer 1919, the families of war dead and prisoner of war were obliged to write a petition to the Ottoman government demanding that the bread that was distributed to them from special points not be cut.⁶⁰⁷

Moreover, the widows of the war dead, creating an additional burden on them, were not welcomed by the local governments either. For example, when the army wanted to pass on the duty of food distribution to the food supply commissions, a cipher telegram was sent from the Diyarbakır governorship to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 27 March 1918. The lieutenant governor of Diyarbakır argued that the local administration in Diyarbakır already had difficulty distributing food to the civil servants, refugees, institutions and needy populace and therefore the civil authorities were not able to allocate additional food for the families of the war dead. He instead requested from the government that the provisioning of the widows of the war dead and orphans be undertaken by the army.⁶⁰⁸ Indeed, the municipalities were in a very difficult financial situation during the war and they frequently demanded

⁶⁰⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/6, 2/72, 29 Zilka'de 1337 [26 August 1919].

⁶⁰⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20/11, 3/37, 18 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [31 March 1918].

extra money from the government to provide food to the needy city inhabitants.⁶⁰⁹

Most of the bread that the Bursa municipality distributed to the poor refugees was poor breads confiscated from the bakeries that produced bread which did not conform to the rules.⁶¹⁰

Because they were angry at the discrimination they faced, lower-class women as members of the families of lower ranking soldiers, war dead, prisoners of war or as families of soldiers without a breadwinner also fought with more privileged women at the bread distribution points. The bread distributed by the army in return for a reasonable price also attracted the women of the higher-ranking army officers. This created additional problems for the women of lower ranking officers. An official letter sent to the army authorities by the Range 2nd District Inspector (*Menzil 2. Mıntıka Müfettişi*) in Sivas on 20/21 March 1917, stated that because bread had been distributed to the families according to the rank of the army officers, the distributions had been done in an unequal manner. While two or three member families of the captains or majors had taken two or three loaves of bread, seven to eight member families of lieutenants had received one unit of bread. As a result of this inequality, clashes among women at the distribution points had occurred and it had been impossible to continue the distribution of lower-price bread. Consequently, the army had decided to give one unit of bread to each four member family during the month of March and was able to save four hundred units of bread. Furthermore, the inspector complained that the wives of the army officers in Sivas province, some of whom had their own farms, “out of greed” (*tam’an*) and using their higher ranks, continued to buy the low-priced bread provided by the army. Therefore, the inspector

⁶⁰⁹ See for example, for Aydın and Edirne provinces, BOA, DH.İ.UM, 98/4, 1/28, 14 Safer 1335 [10 December 1916]; and for Edirne province, BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 40/69, 10 Muharrem 1336 [26, October 1917].

⁶¹⁰ Raif Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet’ten Cumhuriyet’e Bursa (1876-1926)* (İstanbul: Avrasya Etnografya Yayınları, 2006), p. 215.

demanded that the army authorities decide and inform him about whether the bread was going to be distributed according to rank or according to the number of family members, and whether the army was going to continue selling lower-price bread to the local families who after an investigation were found to be able to feed themselves.⁶¹¹

The situation of such better off army officers' families was reconsidered after a series of correspondences. The 3rd Army Quartermaster received on 29 March 1917 an official letter demanding a response on how the army officers' families in Sivas were going to be treated in terms of the distribution of bread.⁶¹² Finally, on 16 April 1917, it was reported to the 9th and 10th Army Corps Recruitment Offices and 15th Division Recruitment Office in Kayseri that many families of the army officers had requested bread and provisions, but the army had not been able to accept all of the demands. Consequently, among the family members of all of the generals, senior officers, officers, officials and army staff only the wives, children, widow mothers, grandmothers and sisters who were orphaned or widowed and had nobody to provide them food were decided to be the legal recipients of bread. Among this group, it was decided that families who lived in their hometowns and who were found capable of feeding themselves, because they had enough provisions and a shepherd for their animals would receive nothing from the army warehouse of their district. Before 3 May 1917, a copy of the registry of all suitable families, the name of the army officer, and the number of their members indicated was demanded.⁶¹³

Another reason which terminated the right of poor women to receive cheap or free food from the army was the desertion of their soldier husbands or sons.

⁶¹¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-10, 20/21 Mart 1333 [20/21 March 1917].

⁶¹² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-13, 29 Mart 1333 [29 March 1917].

⁶¹³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-15, and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 15, Fih. 2-16, 16 Nisan 1333 [16 April 1917].

According to an official document, the families of deserters were not accepted as legitimate recipients of the food assistance provided by the army. Since feeding these women and their children was mainly a burden on the tax paying peasants of the districts in which they arrived as exiles, it is possible to argue that among the protestors were even poor taxpaying peasant women. These women undertook much more work in wartime conditions, because the number of the male labor force in agriculture had dropped as a result of the conscriptions. Therefore, the deserters' families were accepted by these women as unused potential that might have helped them and at the same time was a millstone around their neck. On 31 July 1918, the Ministry of War Public Security Branch (*Harbiye Nezâret-i Celîlesi Asâyîş Şubesi*) wrote an official letter to the 5th Army Commandership reporting that many peasants had written to their branch with different signatures complaining about the feeding of these families by the army. The peasants had suggested instead that deserters' families be employed in their fields to help with the harvest. They also claimed that if they could profit from these exile families' labor, the problem of feeding the exiled women and children would be alleviated.⁶¹⁴

In addition to unequal distribution of food, war profiteering as well was among the worst enemies of lower-class women. Because of the black market and since they received their pensions in paper money, women as soldiers' families without a breadwinner had difficulty to buy food in wartime conditions. During World War I, lower-class women protested this situation and demanded help from the Ottoman government. For example, on 12 February 1916, Münire and her friends sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs from Tarsus writing that as they received their martyrs' and veterans' pensions in banknotes they could not buy food

⁶¹⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2303, Dos. 78, Fih. 19, 4 Ağustos 1334 [4 August 1918].

from the local shopkeepers. Women complained about this situation by writing that they would die out of hunger with the paper money in their hands. They mentioned in their telegram as well that the wheat had increased to a very high price and therefore they could not find any bread anymore. Emphasizing that everybody in their region was in a similar situation and their children cried out of hunger, Münire and her friends demanded from the state that the black-marketing of the local shopkeepers be ended and that they be given provisions.⁶¹⁵

As it was mentioned before, drought was another important reason behind peasant women's request for food from the state. Probably because they needed a stronger position for getting help women generally emphasized their status as soldiers' families without a breadwinner for demanding food or other things from the state. A telegram was sent from Beypazarı on 18 November 1916 for complaining of hunger due to the drought. It was signed by Hatice "on behalf of all soldiers' wives" and her friends who also signed their telegram referring their connection with a soldier as "soldier's wife" Zihniyye, "soldier's son" Nuri and "martyrs' daughter" Ümmühan. They also started their telegram by reminding the authorities that their husbands and fathers had left them to the protection of the state to do their military service. Due to the drought that year the price of the grain had escalated and as a result they had gone hungry. They argued as well that the local government which had previously announced that it would provide seed and provisions to the needy peasants had decided to annul it and sent the provisions, which were collected before as the tithe tax, outside their district by train. Worse, as "alone and powerless" women and peasants, they were forced to work in the cargo-carrying of these provisions until the train station. The telegram senders requested instead that the seed

⁶¹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 15/51, 7 Rebiülâhır 1334 [12 February 1916].

and provisions be given to them, that they be saved from dying due to hunger and that they be released from cargo-carrying work.⁶¹⁶

Similarly, peasant women from two different villages of Yozgat, one with 130 houses and the other 60, sent two different collective telegrams to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 3 and 4 September 1917, both of which claimed that their harvests had been destroyed due to simoom wind (*sam yeli*) that year and they were left with no provisions. Women therefore requested that the state provide them with enough food to survive. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in return, decided to send a notice on to the local authorities, the governor of Ankara, on 15 September 1917, warning him to take care of these villages.⁶¹⁷

Women's Attempts to Deceive the Authorities for More Food

Some of the food aid recipients tried to increase the food they could take by deceiving the welfare providers. Because all segments of Ottoman society suffered more or less from hunger and shortages it was a great problem to decide the neediest group to provide welfare services to, especially for charitable organizations such as the Red Crescent.

As a result, in finding the poorest families who deserved social assistance the district headmen's intermediary role between women and state or other semi-official institutions gained importance. This made them indispensable for especially poor women who received no pensions due to their soldier husbands or sons. Because these women were most vulnerable in wartime conditions, they were extremely dependent on the headmen's opinion about them. This situation, which made women

⁶¹⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 24/35, 26 Muharrem 1335 [22 November 1916].

⁶¹⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 38/88, 1 Zilhicce 1335 [18 September 1917].

more reliant, increased the power and influence of the district or village headmen on women. In order to receive help from the municipalities or welfare institutions such as the Red Crescent, women had to prove that they were in need. This was only done with certificates (*ilmühaber*) prepared and signed by the district headman and the board of alderman. For example, for receiving help, Sıdıka Hanım, living in a poor district in İstanbul, gave a certificate to the Red Crescent on 14 January 1921 to prove that her house had burnt in fire and that she lived in need in the house of Ali Efendi with her three children, just like thousands of women who were forced to write petitions to such welfare institutions during the war.⁶¹⁸

Furthermore, because there were many cases of deceit in order to obtain more certificates as a result of widespread poverty, in case they lost their ration cards for bread or other social rights, lower-class women had to apply first to the headman. A note of the municipal local officer (*belediye mevki'i memuru*), which was written to the soup kitchen director Ferruh Bey on 31 May 1917, wanted a new ration card for the rationed food of Fatma Hanım, a request which was not returned by the authorities.⁶¹⁹ Another woman, Ayşe Hanım, a refugee with a baby, asked that the *imam* of the quarter help her to take back her lost cards used to take food from Red Crescent soup kitchens. In an official letter written to the Red Crescent on 8 June 1917, the *imam* stated that Ayşe had not been able to obtain new cards after she had lost hers ten days ago, and she had been deprived of food for over a week, although she had gone to the soup kitchen everyday with her crying child and had requested that she be given new or old cards to allow her to obtain food again.⁶²⁰

Women lost their right to have rationed food if they left their district for a few weeks to visit relatives in another city or for other reasons, because the authorities

⁶¹⁸ TKA, 13/11, 14 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1337 [14 January 1921].

⁶¹⁹ TKA, 68/37, 31 Mayıs 1333 [31 May 1917].

⁶²⁰ TKA, 68/45, 8 Haziran 1333 [8 June 1917].

tried to prevent those women from acquiring ration cards from two different districts at the same time. As victims of this precaution, women often referred to the headmen of their districts to write petitions for them to regain their rights. For example, Emine Hanım, who had a family of four, demanded her ration card, which had been annulled after she had gone to Bursa. The headman of her quarter demanded on 11 January 1918 that she be given food from the Red Crescent soup kitchens again since she had returned from Bursa and since she was in a miserable state. Only after the necessary investigations was Emine given a new ration card number for food.⁶²¹

These investigations were common since women often cheated the authorities for the rationed food distributed by the soup kitchens. On 9 January 1918, Doctor Celaleddin [Sami] wrote to the Kasımpaşa soup kitchen administration that the poor did not respect the rules and regulations of the soup kitchens; they tried to take more food than they were allotted and they cheated for it. He declared that from then on those who did not respect the internal discipline and those who cheated the authorities were to be deprived of their ration cards and they were never to be given new ones. Additionally, he demanded a list of the names of the cheaters.⁶²² Because cheating the food distributors was very frequent among the civilians during World War I, the authorities also felt the need to introduce laws against it. As it was mentioned before the provisional law dated 1 May 1916, gave the municipalities to punish those who had tried to cheat the municipality or had rebelled against the officers at food distribution points with Articles 5, 6 and 7.⁶²³

⁶²¹ TKA, 68/63, 11 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1334 [11 January 1918].

⁶²² TKA, 68/61, 9 Kânûn-ı Sâni 133[4] [9 January 1918, date is indicated as 1333 and 1918].

⁶²³ See "Mevaddı Gıdaiyye ve Havayıcı Sairenin Sureti Furuht ve Tevziine Mütedair Kararı Muvakkat ile Bunun Birinci Maddesine Müzeyyel Diğer Kararı Muvakkat Hakkında Layihai Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 681-685.

Women's Open Protests and Food Riots

Women's attempts to obtain more food during the war also took the form of open protests and open conflicts. Motivated by hunger, other than simply sending telegrams, women also threatened the authorities that they would come to İstanbul. Their arrival was a real threat for the already crowded and hungry capital city. On 28 December 1916, Hatice and 17 other women signed a telegram from Armudlu together with the members of the board of alderman of this district. Claiming that they represented more than 200 houses in Armudlu, these women informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that because their demands for food had not been taken seriously by the authorities they had decided to travel to the capital city by ferry. Because this was quite probably an alarming telegram for the Ottoman bureaucrats, actions against it were quickly taken. The governor of Bursa and the Ministry of Internal Affairs decided to provide more provisions to the Gemlik region within a few days.⁶²⁴

Lower-class women also participated in bread riots. The *New York Times* reported on 12 March 1915 that the riots in İstanbul were frequent since the city inhabitants were starving. It added that many places were guarded in the city against looting.⁶²⁵ On 13 May 1915 the same newspaper reported that in the anti-war riots in the capital city many people had been killed or injured and mobs that numbered in the thousands had pillaged the principal shops and hotels including the Pera Palace Hotel.⁶²⁶ Just a few months later, on 11 October 1915, the *New York Times* reported

⁶²⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 26/50, 8 Rebutlevvel 1335 [2 January 1917].

⁶²⁵ "Turks' Many Miseries: Government Members Fear to Show Themselves – No Work; Little Food," *New York Times* (12 March 1915). The news in the *New York Times* might have been part of American war propaganda but they also might have been censored by the Ottoman war governments.

⁶²⁶ "Anti-German Riots in Constantinople: Many German Officers Have Been Injured by the Infuriated Populace," *New York Times* (13 May 1915).

another riot in the capital city due to the high cost of living. The new building of the Italian Embassy had been wrecked and looted by a mob. Four thousand Muslim women had assembled in front of the Sublime Porte and had held an anti-war demonstration due to which they had been arrested and dispersed by the army force and the police. It was also reported that the populace regularly looted the bakers' shops and consequently the police had started to guard these shops.⁶²⁷ The newspaper also reported on 21 December 1915 that Turkish women had had protest demonstrations against the high prices which had all been dispersed by the army.⁶²⁸

On 7 March 1916 the *New York Times* claimed that the entire Ottoman Empire had been suffering from a lack of sufficient food to some extent for the last two months.⁶²⁹ Just one day later, on 8 March 1916 the newspaper reported that "riotous housewives" had organized demonstrations in İstanbul against the exorbitant prices and the shipping of food to Germany with trains on the Berlin-Constantinople Line. The women's demonstration gave results since the exportation of meat to Germany was prohibited by the authorities and a railroad car which contained preserved meats bound for Berlin had been stopped at Edirne and the meat had been sold to the public at reasonable prices.⁶³⁰ On 7 February 1917, the newspaper stated that despite the hunger which had resulted in the death of dozens of people each day, violent riots did not occur in İstanbul only as a result of the strict rule of the German police in the city.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ "Riots in Constantinople: Italian Embassy Wrecked – Famine-Stricken Mobs Seize Bread," *New York Times* (11 October 1915).

⁶²⁸ "Food Prices Pinch Turks: Disturbances Follow the Shipment of Supplies to Germany," *New York Times* (21 December 1915).

⁶²⁹ "Turkey's Defense Broken: Is Short of Food, Great Quantities Having Been Sold to Germans," *New York Times* (7 March 1916).

⁶³⁰ "Turks Stop Meat Exports: Riotous Housewives Force the Prohibition of Shipments to Germany," *New York Times* (8 March 1916).

⁶³¹ "Famine Threatens to Engulf Turkey," *New York Times* (7 February 1917).

Riots and looting by poor women also occurred in the provinces. On 18 March 1916, the Aydın governor informed the Ottoman government about the riot of soldiers' families in İzmir. Women had attacked a bakery to loot bread and they had attempted to batter the fiscal director of their district. These women as soldier's families and many state officials had not taken their pensions or salaries for the last three months. The governor informed the authorities that similar events could take place in different districts of his province due to the financial troubles of these families, who were in general made up of lower class women and children, and he demanded money from the government to prevent further riots. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance immediately sent 40,000 Ottoman liras to Aydın province.⁶³²

Because of hunger lower-class women also participated in rebellions such as plundering the food supplies warehouse (*iâşe ambarı*) of their district. Such rebellions occurred particularly towards the end of the war, when impoverished women had no more strength to stand the diverse effects of hunger. Although hunger was a problem of all civilians poor women, especially those in soldier's families, played an important role in the rebellions both symbolically and by taking active part in the clashes.

For instance, an incident in Teke shows the role of women in a rebellion of poor peasants including soldier's wives which was interpreted differently by the elite and the public. On 3 April 1918, the board of alderman of Teke village of the Bilecik district sent a telegram to inform the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the governor of their sub-district had come to their village to collect the provisions by force with 15 gendarmes and attacked the people. The board of alderman stated that afterwards the gendarmes had taken five shots at women who were members of soldier's families

⁶³² BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 4/1, 33, 20 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [25 March 1916].

due to which a woman had died and some others had been confined to bed out of fear. Writing that their written complaints to the authorities in Bilecik had gone unanswered, they demanded justice from the government.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in return, demanded the Hüdavendigâr governor launch an investigation into this telegram. On 1 May 1918, the Hüdavendigâr governor replied to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and belied the complaint of the board of alderman of Teke village, according to the report of the Ertuğrul governor. This report informed the authorities that in reality the inhabitants of Teke village had opened the food supplies warehouse illegally and parceled out the provisions among themselves. Women had attacked the officials with rods, had battered corporal gendarme Mustafa and had tried to prevent his entry into the village by usurping his horse. When the gendarmes had finally arrived they had seen no men because all of the male peasants had hidden themselves. The report also refuted the other report that a woman had died during these incidents and that another had been near death bed due to fear, arguing that this was a lie that had been invented by the board of alderman of Teke village.⁶³³

Other food rebellions took place in the Hüdavendigâr province in summer 1919. On 31 July 1919, the Ministry of Finance warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the looting of the harvest that was taken as tithe tax and provisions in Karacabey district which the financial office of Hüdavendigâr province had reported on 15 July 1919. First, the inhabitants of six villages of this district had plundered the warehouses and they had served out the provisions which were taken as the tithe tax of the year 1334 [1918] among them. Fifteen days later five other neighborhood villages had rebelled the same way. The boards of alderman of all these villages had

⁶³³ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20/11, 3/48, 25 Receb 1336 [6 May 1918].

not interfered to stop the looters although they had been present during the incidents. The Ministry of Finance requested that both the looters and the boards of alderman be exiled after a severe interrogation in order to prevent the repetition of “this inconvenient incident” (*şu münasebetsiz hadisenin*) in the future. The Ministry of Internal Affairs in return ordered the Hüdavendigâr governor to execute this punishment on 3 August 1919.⁶³⁴

The participation of women in these rebellions in Karacabey district was not particularly mentioned in the official correspondence. Nevertheless, looking at the previous example, it is reasonable to think that their active role in the forefront was important and necessary for protecting other male looters against the gendarmeries and in the distribution of plundered food among the people.

Concluding Remarks

In brief, the most devastating impact of the war was the scarcity of food and consequent malnutrition and hunger. Many people suffered from shortages of food and basic consumption goods during the war, but the primary group of civilians who died of hunger were poor women and their children. The government rationed bread in order to limit its consumption and to ensure that everybody did have access to it. However, the rationing system did not solve the food problems the poor women faced. Many of them had to wait for hours and fight in front of the bakeries to buy the limited and unhealthy rationed bread. Other than hunger, women also had to endure the lack of clothing and shoes. Poor women often wore only slippers or walked barefoot outside. Furthermore, women’s housework burden increased due to

⁶³⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 55/30, 8 Zilka’de 1337 [5 August 1919].

the shortages, because they had to find new strategies to produce alternatives to basic consumption goods such as clothing, coal and fuel.

To find a solution to the food problem and shortages in basic consumption goods, the Ottoman state and welfare organizations such as the Red Crescent Society created many institutions. Nevertheless, many of the committees and national companies who were authorized to buy and sell food and goods were instruments to create a Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie, most of whom soon became war profiteers. The profiteering and black marketeering of these newly rich played an important role in scarcities and high cost of living which resulted in hunger among many poor civilians, most of whom poor women and children. Furthermore, the welfare institutions and policies often discriminated among poor women according to the positions of their husbands and sons in the army or in state organizations. As a result, many lower-class women became victims of unequal practices and laws. The food and other basic items they were able to receive from the government institutions and other semi-official or civil organizations frequently arrived too late or irregularly.

Lower-class women were, however, not passive in the process of receiving food aid provided by the state and other related organizations. First, they frequently voiced their criticisms of inequalities, wrongdoings, insufficiencies, and exclusionary practices which occurred during the distribution of food aids. They frequently struggled to increase their allocations and to receive even the aid to which they were not entitled. Despite their illiteracy, women fought for their food by using both discursive strategies, as seen in their petitions and telegrams and physical force and intimidation tactics, as seen in their demonstrations and bread riots. Women had to fight a similar battle for economic salvation for the wartime pensions and military pay allotments, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN'S NEGOTIATION OF THE STATE'S MONETARY ASSISTANCE FOR SOLDIERS' FAMILIES

As the previous chapter shows, during World War I, disadvantaged Ottoman women were intensely in need of the aid provided by the state and welfare institutions because of the high inflation and black marketing in food and basic consumption goods. Left without the financial support of the male breadwinners of their family, many women and children were especially living in poverty. Unlike the industrialized combatant countries of the Great War, Ottoman women, especially living in the countryside of the empire, had little chance to work outside in factories or workshops. In such conditions pensions and military pay allotments provided by the state and special funds had greater importance for particularly lower-class women who had no jobs or nobody to get support from.

From the viewpoint of the state, however, these pensions were both a financial burden and at the same time a necessity for supporting war mobilization. Because the number of women and children who were dependents of a soldier were in great numbers, the state, having a weak war economy and an inefficient system of money transfer, had important problems and budget limits to provide the money for these groups. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Ministry of War needed these financial assistances for unsupported families of soldiers, war martyrs, and veterans in order not to discourage the soldiers from the war effort and to decrease the huge number of deserters.

Furthermore, both the military and civil authorities faced the women's active demands and complaints for more effective financial assistance. Despite the fact that their economic rights were ensured by laws, women experienced the pension system

very problematically. Even when they were entitled to receive pensions the inefficient Ottoman bureaucracy, the weak war economy and the sometimes corrupt civil servants caused delays. Many women were not given their full pensions and they had to wait for months to receive the following pension.

Even when they received money because of the high food prices, pension recipients could suffer from hunger and they demanded increases of their pensions. Moreover, there were many women who were in great need of this money and who were not entitled to receive it due to the exclusionary principles and rules in the laws and regulations.

Therefore, women had to struggle to obtain these financial supports. Many of them wrote petitions or sent these via telegraphs to the relevant civil and military authorities. Well aware of the military and political importance of supporting the war effort through monetary assistance to the families of soldiers, war dead and veterans, women often demanded these pensions using a discourse of patriotism and of the sacrifice of their men in their petitions and telegrams to the government. They frequently applied to the local authorities to demand these pensions and make their complaints heard by seeking the redress of their grievances. Those women who were not considered as pension recipients, but who were in great need of this money struggled to obtain it using both legal and illegal means. In doing so, they compelled the authorities to reconsider and make more efficient pension programs by increasing the number of pension recipients, taking extra measures, reconsidering the exclusionary rules, and rectifying the wrongdoings and malpractices of the state officials. Therefore, the number of pension recipients increased as the war progressed, even though the system for supporting soldiers' families continued to remain inefficient and pension amounts did not increase.

The Problem of Dependent Women and Children

Women and children in Ottoman society were always dependent to a great extent on the men in their families. Therefore, the war mobilization deprived women and their children of their main source of income. With the advent of the war this became increasingly a problem for the state as well. Disadvantaged women were the main victims of the war economy and mobilization together with their children. Because they had few options for finding a job in this economy, especially in the cities, they were very dependent to the money provided by the state and welfare funds. This problem was observed not only in the cities, but also in rural areas. Peasant women also had important difficulty in surviving due to low agricultural production, the conscription of men, and heavy agricultural taxes.

The main reason that these pensions became important was the increasing number of dependents as a result of the unprecedented conscription of some three million men throughout the war.⁶³⁵ This meant that the enormous number of women and children who were left without the support of their breadwinners with the war went impoverished dramatically. Furthermore, the number of soldiers' families dependent on the state increased unexpectedly, because at the beginning of the war none of the combatant countries including the Ottoman Empire was able to estimate that the war was going to last for so long. Consequently, in parallel with the spectacular increase in the number of helpless soldiers' families and these people's unending demands, the Empire had to renew its state budget to help them as the war progressed. The share of their pensions for the financial year [1916-1917] 1332

⁶³⁵ Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 149.

which was initially thought as 100,000,000 piasters, increased with new orders and laws many times during that year and reached 600,000,000 piasters.⁶³⁶

The number of dependents increased to such an extent that in [1917-1918] 1333 approximately 1,500,000 people, almost all of whom were women and their children, received pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner.⁶³⁷ Together with the refugees for whom the Ottoman state had to provide financial support, these pensions and military pay allotments created an important burden not only for the state budget, but also for the state bureaucracy which had to undertake distribution of these monetary assistances. As a result of the weak financial system of the Empire and the wartime budget deficit, lower-class women who were entitled to money had difficulty receiving it. The pensions and military pay allotments were often paid with delays,⁶³⁸ and in some places they were half paid.⁶³⁹

For instance, a report dated 7 March 1916 and sent by an inspector of the Ministry of Internal Affairs named Raşid Bey, clearly stated that most of the women had received half of their pensions in Eğridir, a district of Konya. He stated that most of the soldiers' families were in bad financial condition because their pensions had been paid in half. According to the information he had received from the fiscal directorate, only 59,804 piasters of the total allocated amount of 96,004 piaster of these pensions had been paid in the financial year [1914-1915] 1330. And, until

⁶³⁶ "1332 Maliye Bütçesinin Kırkıncı Muınleri Taht-ı Silaha Alınan Ailelere Muavenet-i Nakdiyye Faslına İkiyüz Milyon Kuruş İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 224.

⁶³⁷ "1333 Senesi Maliye Bütçesinin Kırkıncı Muınleri Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Ailelere Muâvenet-i Nakdiyye Faslına '100 000 000' Kuruş İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 279-280.

⁶³⁸ See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-1/56, 28 Ramazân 1334 [29 July 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-56, 13 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [24 February 1918]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-27, 23 Zilka'de 1337 [20 August 1919]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-39, 3 Rebiülâhır 1338 [26 December 1919]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-56 [4 March 1920]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-27/14-8, 10 Receb 1339 [20 March 1921]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-28/14-50, 19 Zilka'de 1339 [25 July 1921].

⁶³⁹ See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-30, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [11 March 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-43, 12 Şevvâl 1334 [12 August 1916].

March 1916 only 241,440 piasters of 598,400 piasters of pensions, which was only 40 percent, was paid the following financial year. In sum, women did not receive a total of 393,156 piasters of their pensions in these two years. Raşid Bey protested this practice in his report arguing that it was against the laws and regulations to pay only half of the pensions and that they had to be fully paid, even if extra money was sent from another district.⁶⁴⁰

Due to these delays and underpayments many families of poor soldiers and war dead suffered from hunger. Furthermore, even when they received their pensions the money distributed by the state did not help to cover even their need of bread for a month due to the wartime inflation. For example, on 13 September 1916, Aydın governor Rahmi Bey warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner could only buy 24 days worth of bread and for the rest of the month these families were doomed to hunger.⁶⁴¹ Because the Ottoman state had no money to increase the pensions, the bureaucrats even thought of distributing food instead of giving money to the poor women and children.⁶⁴²

The Ottoman state also tried to decrease the number of pension recipients by eliminating them according to their income⁶⁴³ or the food they could provide for themselves.⁶⁴⁴ This spurred the reactions of many disadvantaged women who were worse off than what was assumed by the bureaucracy. Many women perceived these practices to be discrimination against them.⁶⁴⁵ During the war the civil servants, inspectors and governors of both the capital and the provinces wrote continuously to

⁶⁴⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-30, 6 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [11 March 1916].

⁶⁴¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 98-4/1-28, 14 Safer 1335 [10 December 1916].

⁶⁴² See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM, 98-4/1-49, 7 Safer 1336 [22 November 1917]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-2/2-17, 2 Rebîülâhır 1336 [15 January 1918]; BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 46/36, 28 Rebîülâhır 1336 [10 February 1918].

⁶⁴³ See for example DH.İ.UM.EK, 8/15, 10 Receb 1333 [24 May 1915].

⁶⁴⁴ See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 28/15, 26 Rebîülâhır 1335 [19 February 1917].

⁶⁴⁵ See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-23, 5 Rebîülâhır 1334 [10 February 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 18/11, 4 Şevvâl 1334 [4 August 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 30/101, 22 Cemâziyelâhır 1335 [15 April 1917].

the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the crying women they saw everyday in front of their offices who demanded pensions or wanted an increase in its amount or who suffered on the streets due to poverty and hunger.⁶⁴⁶

In time, poor or low-income women who had lost their breadwinners and who were deprived of their pensions due to the bad management of the Ottoman financial bureaucracy constituted an important social problem. Many institutions were founded to employ these underprivileged women and children and to find a solution to their dependency, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. The most well known of these institutions was the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (*Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyyesi*), which was officially founded under the protection of Naciye Sultan on 14 August 1916.⁶⁴⁷ Nevertheless, these institutions were inefficient in employing the mass of poor women, who were unemployed not only due to personal reasons, but mostly due to the restrictions of the Ottoman economy.

In addition to the financial restrictions, the corruption of certain civil servants and notables who were entrusted with the task of the determination and distribution of such pensions also aggravated the problem of the disadvantaged and unsupported women. They frequently took advantage of women's urgent needs of such pensions. There were complaints about rude behavior, verbal and physical violence, embezzlement or sexual assaults of the civil servants and notables such as the district governors, district revenue officers or directors of recruiting offices directed against soldiers' families without a breadwinner. Some of these denunciations were

⁶⁴⁶ See for example BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-27, 23 Zilka'de 1337 [20 August 1919]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-56, 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1338 [4 March 1920]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-27/14-8, 10 Receb 1339 [20 March 1921].

⁶⁴⁷ *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslâmiyyesi, 1333 Senesi Raporu* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsân ve Şürekâsı Matbûât Osmânlı Şirketi, 1334 [1918]), p. 4. Quoted in Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 51.

investigated seriously by the Ottoman government, who were well aware of the adverse affects of such cases on the war effort of the state.⁶⁴⁸

Indeed, many soldiers who heard about the miserable situation of their families were tempted to desert the army. The delayed payments of their families' pensions was recognized as an important reason behind their desertions by the Ottoman government. Consequently, in 1916, the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, demanded from the Ministry of Internal Affairs that all civil servants who delayed the payments of the pensions intentionally were to be severely punished on the grounds that they had encouraged the desertions.⁶⁴⁹

In sum, the pensions provided for soldiers' families during World War I were a welfare policy which was thought as a solution to both a social and military problem. Lower-class women were at the center of this social and military problem, because their satisfaction or the alleviation of their problems, at least, of hunger, was one of the important prerequisites of the war mobilization and of keeping the soldiers' morale high. The problem of dependent women and children therefore gained political and military importance especially with the rising voice of women due to the bad management of the pensions system and the desertion of an increasing number of soldiers. The government had to issue many laws and regulations and amend them several times according to the government's needs and the demands of poor and low-income women. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the laws and

⁶⁴⁸ See for example BOA, DH.ŞFR, 40/153, 10 Cemâziyelâhir 1332 [6 May 1914]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 83-2/1-13, 21 Cemâziyelâhir 1333 [6 May 1915]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-31, 8 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [13 March 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-33, 14 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [19 March 1916]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 79/15, 27 Receb 1333 [10 June 1915]; BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 7/70, 12 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [28 March 1915]; BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 27/70, 30 Receb 1333 [13 June 1915]; BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 27/72, 18 Şa'bân 1333 [1 July 1915]; BOA, DH.HMŞ, 2/2-15, 17 Zilka'de 1335 [4 September 1917]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 78-1/16, 26 Receb 1333 [9 June 1915]; BOA, DH.İ.UM, 79/69, 16 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [21 March 1916].

⁶⁴⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/51, 9 Muharrem 1335 [5 November 1916].

regulations concerning the pensions and military pay allotments and their evolution throughout the war in order to see the impact of the home front to the battlefield.

Laws and Regulations on Monetary Assistance for Soldiers' Families

The welfare policies that were used to give support to disadvantaged families of the soldiers were not a novelty when World War I began. From the late nineteenth century on, they had come to be applied to the needy families of the soldiers in order to help them in a variety of situations. However, these forms of assistance gained more importance with the Balkan Wars and especially World War I. Monetary assistance such as the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner (*muinsiz asker âileleri maaşı*), pensions or military pay allotments given to the families of the prisoners of war and lower-ranking officials' families without a breadwinner called the ordered payment (*sipariş maaşı*), the pensions which were paid to the unsupported families of the lost soldiers, the pensions which were paid to the families of the war dead and disabled war veterans called the family pension (*âile maaşı*), and the money provided by the Commission to Help the Families of the Martyr Doctors (*Şehit Etibba Âileleri Muâvenet Komisyonu*) were the most well-known of the forms of financial aid provided for soldiers' and army officers' families during World War I.

The pension paid to the families' of soldiers without a breadwinner was the most important of all these pensions during World War I.⁶⁵⁰ First, it supported the largest group of underprivileged women and children as soldiers' families. Second, it directly contributed to the war effort of the Ottoman state because it was thought to

⁶⁵⁰ See Nicole A. N. M. van Os, "Taking Care of Soldiers' Families: The Ottoman State and the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı*," in Erik J. Zürcher ed., *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 95-110.

help the families of the soldiers who were alive and to keep the soldiers' morale high. The first attempts to legalize this pension were made with the Balkan Wars. A provisional law about this pension was passed by the government on 5 December 1912.⁶⁵¹

During the Balkan Wars the number of those soldiers' families who benefited from it increased, because this pension included not only the families of soldiers enlisted in the reserve troops (*muinsiz efrad-ı redife ve mustahfaza*), but also the families of the reservists in the standing army (*muinsiz efrad-ı ihtiyatiye*), and the families of regulars and reservists who after being enlisted had become the only breadwinner of their family.⁶⁵² The government created a special fund for this pension which initially had 10,000,000 piasters in the financial year 1329 [1913-1914].⁶⁵³ However, an additional 5,000,000 piasters was added to this amount with the growing demand by needy women throughout the Balkan Wars for this pension to help the soldiers' families without a breadwinner.⁶⁵⁴

According to the law about this allowance, those soldiers' families who were labeled as without a breadwinner were to receive for each member 30 piasters a month starting from the first day of the month [14 October 1912] *Teşrîn-i Evvel 1328*

⁶⁵¹ "Hal-i Harb Münasebetiyle Taht-ı Silâha Celb Olunan Muinsiz Efrad-ı Redife ve Müstahfazanın Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaş Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 22 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1328 / 25 Zilhicce 1330 [5 December 1912], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 5, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁵² "Hal-i Harb Münasebetiyle Taht-ı Silâha Celb Olunan Muinsiz Efrad-ı Redife ve Müstahfaza Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaşa Müteditir 25 Zilhicce 1330 Tarihli Kanun-ı Muvakkata Müzeyyel Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 20 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1328 / 24 Safer 1331 [3 February 1913], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 5, p. 53. Quoted in Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "Taking Care of Soldiers' Families," p. 97.

⁶⁵³ "Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Muinsiz Efrad Ailelerine Muhassas Maaşat İçin 1329 Maliye Bütçesine Tahsisat-ı Fevkalâde Olarak 10.000.000 Kuruşun Sarfı Hakkında Kanun-u Muvakkat," 21 Mayıs 1329 / 27 Cemâziyelâhir 1331 [3 June 1913], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 5, p. 510. See also "Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Muinsiz Efrad Ailelerine Tahsis-i Maaşat İçin 1329 Maliye Bütçesine Tahsisat-ı Fevkalade Olarak 10,000,000 Kuruşun Sarfı Hakkında Kanun," 17 Mayıs 1332 / 27 Receb 1334 [30 May 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 1181.

⁶⁵⁴ "Muinsiz Efrad Aileleri İçin 1329 Maliye Bütçesine Zamimen 5,000,000 Kuruşun Sarfı Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 27 Şubat 1329 / 14 Rebîülâhır 1332 [12 March 1914], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, p. 300. See also "Muinsiz Efrad Aileleri İçin 1329 Maliye Bütçesine Zamimeten 5,000,000 Kuruşun Sarfı Hakkında Kanun," *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 1085.

until the month following the demobilization of their breadwinner.⁶⁵⁵ The main condition in order to be eligible for this pension was full deprivation of a certain yearly income that could help and feed the family. Those women who were eligible to benefit from this pension were to receive their money from boards of aldermen of their quarters or villages. The money allocated as pension was distributed by fiscal collectors to the recipients in the presence of a member of board of alderman of quarters or villages in return for a receipt.⁶⁵⁶ This law remained in force with a few modifications after the Balkan Wars throughout World War I.⁶⁵⁷

The pension for the poor families of soldiers gained further importance with World War I with the conscription of millions of soldiers for a period of nearly five years. This had an impact on first of all the amount of money allocated to the fund for it. Because keeping such a great number of soldiers under arms for four destructive war years was not expected by the Ottoman government, it had to revise its budget by adding additional money to this fund and introducing new laws for it. Although the fiscal budget of the year 1331 [1915-1916] had only 200,000,000 piasters initially for this pension, the government had to increase this amount in half by adding 100,000,000 piasters more due to the increasing need of money for those poor wives, mothers and children left behind by soldiers.⁶⁵⁸ In the fiscal year of 1332

⁶⁵⁵ “Hal-i Harb Mûnasebetiyle Taht-ı Silâha Celb Olunan Muinsiz Efrad-ı Redife ve Müstahfaza Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaş Hakkında Kanun,” 26 Haziran 1330 / 15 Şa’bân 1332 [9 July 1914], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, p. 859. See also “Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *Meclis-i Mebusan, Sene: 1330, Kanun Lâyihaları*, Vol. 1 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 13.

⁶⁵⁶ See “[1]306, 1307, 1308, [1]309 Tevellüdü Muinsiz Efradın Bir Sene Müddetle Taht-ı Silaha Alınması ve Ailelerine Maaş İtası Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat,” 18 Şubat 1329 / 5 Rebûlâhır 1332 [3 March 1914], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, pp. 239-240.

⁶⁵⁷ See “Hal-i Harb Mûnasebetiyle Taht-ı Silâha Celb Olunan Muinsiz Efrad-ı Redife ve Müstahfaza Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaş Hakkında Kanun,” 26 Haziran 1330 / 15 Şa’bân 1332 [9 July 1914], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, p. 859; and “Hal-i Harb Mûnasebetiyle Taht-ı Silâha Celb Olunan Muinsiz Efrad-ı Redife ve Müstahfaza Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaşa Mütedair 25 Zilhicce 1330 Tarihli Kanun-ı Muvakkata Müzeyyel Kanun,” 3 Ağustos 1330 / 24 Ramazân 1332 [16 August 1914], *ibid.*, p. 1214.

⁶⁵⁸ “1331 Senesi Maliye Bütçesine, Muinsiz Efrad Ailelerine Muavenet-i Nakdiyye Faslına Yüz Milyon Kuruş Tahsisat İlavesine Dair Kanun Layihası,” *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi*

[1916-1917] too, 100,000,000 piasters were allocated to this pension. In the same year, an additional 200,000,000 piasters were added to this amount with a new law.⁶⁵⁹ Furthermore, during the same year with two orders of the sultan (*irâde-i seniyye*) an additional 300,000,000 piasters were allotted to the government budget for this allowance.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, by the financial year 1332 [1916-1917] the amount of the pensions reached to 600,000,000 piasters. The same amount of money was allocated the following year 1333 [1917-1918] as well.⁶⁶¹

Other than those poor soldiers who had left their families without the financial assistance of a male breadwinner, the families of the army officers as well needed money when their husbands, sons or brothers were away fighting. These families received nothing from the state as additional pensions, but they demanded that some part of the salary of the army officers be directly transferred by the state to them. Most of them were also low-income women just like the private soldiers' families, and took the money garnered from the salaries of their sons, husbands, fathers or brothers from the army recruiting offices of their district. This practice of military pay allotments, called *sipariş maaşı*, continued even after World War I and was used during the National Struggle.⁶⁶²

Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 62.

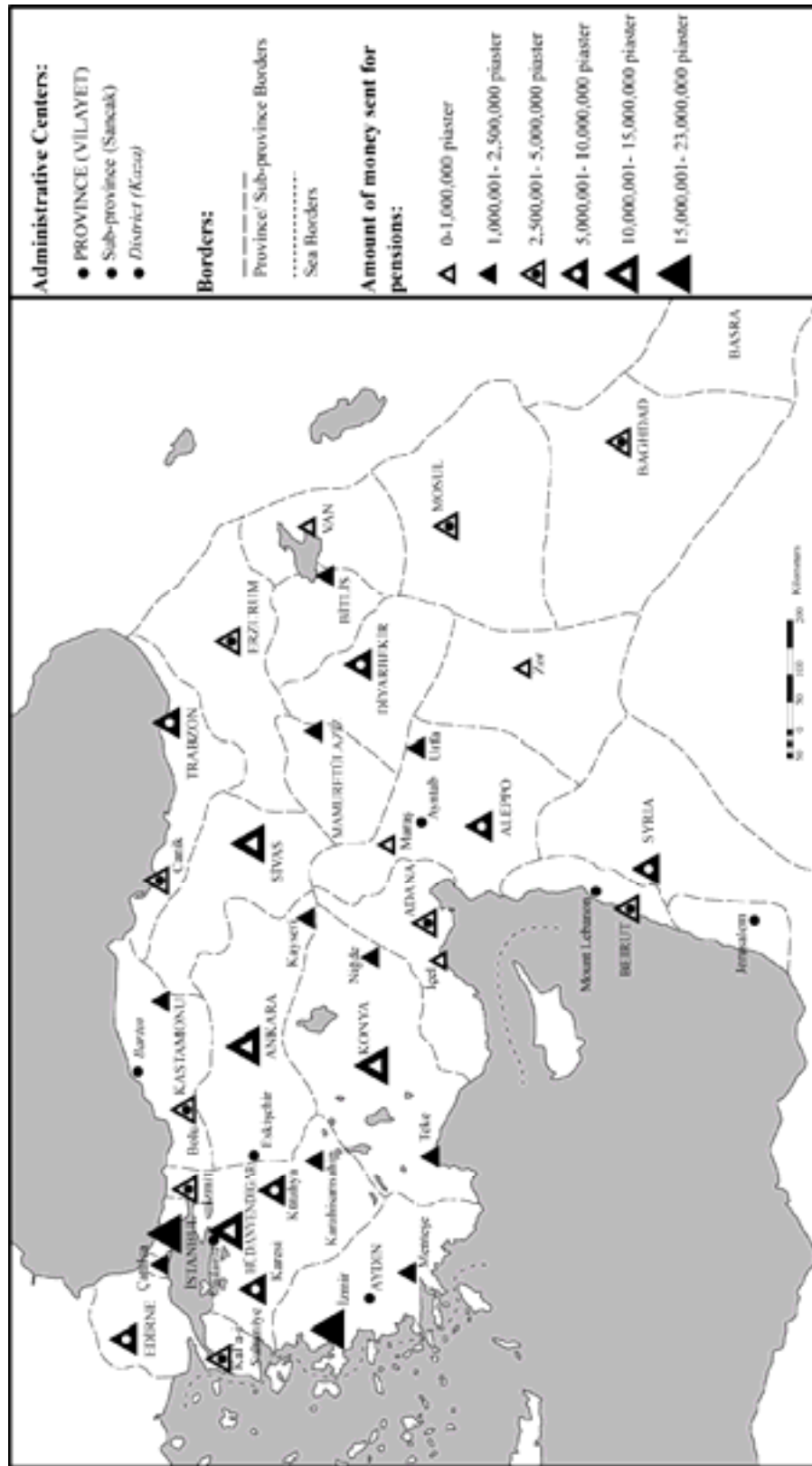
⁶⁵⁹ "Muinleri Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Ailelere Muavenet İçin 1332 Maliye Bütçesine 200,000,000 Kuruş İlavesi Hakkında İrade-i Seniyye," 14 Temmuz 1332 / 27 Ramazân 1334 [27 July 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 1237. See also "1332 Maliye Bütçesinin Kırkinci Muinleri Taht-ı Silaha Alınan Ailelere Muavenet-i Nakdiyye Faslına İkiyüz Milyon Kuruş İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyih-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 224.

⁶⁶⁰ This 300,000,000 piaster was demanded by two orders of the sultan when the parliament was closed on 23 May 1916 and on 27 July 1916. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁶⁶¹ "1333 Senesi Maliye Bütçesinin Kırkinci Muinleri Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Ailelere Muâvenet-i Nakdiyye Faslına '100 000 000' Kuruş İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyih-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, p. 279-280.

⁶⁶² "Cephede Bulunan Zabitanın Ailelerine Verilecek Nısıf Maaş Hakkında Nizamname," 24 Temmuz 1337 [24 July 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: Milliyet Matbaası, 1929), p. 129.

Map 4. Distribution of the Pensions of Soldiers' Families without a Breadwinner to Different Regions of the Ottoman Empire between March – October 1915



Note: The data is taken for this map from *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâh-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 62.

Table 7. Distribution of the Pension of Soldiers' Families without a Breadwinner to Different Regions of the Ottoman Empire between March – October 1915

Province / Sub-province	Money Sent in Piaster
İstanbul	20,860,520
Aydın	22,969,440
Adana	4,443,480
Ankara	10,081,621
Edirne	9,449,129
Erzurum	4,872,200
Bitlis	1,248,560
Baghdad	4,662,160
Beirut	3,868,360
Aleppo	5,436,440
Hejaz	25,000
Hüdavendigâr	10,400,000
Diyarbakir	5,004,800
Syria	7,159,244
Sivas	13,622,500
Trabzon	7,891,980
Kastamonu	2,442,040
Konya	10,422,974
Mamuretülaziz	1,874,120
Mosul	3,490,000
Van	880,110
Yemen	48,000
İzmit	3,211,640
Urfa	1,180,960
Bolu	4,160,920
Teke	2,002,680
Canik	4,650,000
Çatalca	1,261,540
Zor	483,380
'Asir [in Saudi Arabia]	570
Karahisarısahip	1,800,000
Jerusalem	2,874,480
Kayseri	1,850,000
İçel	800,000
Karesi	7,570,967
Kal'a-i Sultaniye	4,915,960
Kütahya	6,679,225
Maraş	480,000
Menteşe	2,222,176
Niğde	2,000,000
Total	199,301,206

Note: The data is taken for this table from *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), p. 62.

The financial situations of those women whose husbands or male relatives were prisoners of war or had been lost on the battlefield were also defined by laws. In case that an Ottoman soldier with rank was taken captured, he received nothing other than the food provided by the foreign army that held him captive. The families of these captive soldiers, most of whom were also low-income and poor women and children, received one-third (*sülüs*) of their salaries. According to the law on this pension, which also included the families of the prisoners of the Tripoli War and the Balkan Wars, only the family members who were entitled to take pensions according to the Military Retirement and Resignation Law (*Askeri Tekâüd ve İstifa Kanûnu*) such as wives, children and mothers, and unmarried dependant sisters could receive money from the state.⁶⁶³

The situation of the families of those soldiers who were missing in action was more complicated, because these soldiers were not legally registered as dead or alive. In the case that the military bureaucracy was convinced that a soldier had been lost, the families of the army officers from higher ranks to the warrant officers and military employees received one-third of his salary. If the new assistance was lower than the military pay allotment which was ordered before the additional money was cut and if it was below the military pay allotment it was increased to one-third of the salary. The families of the lost petty officers, officer candidates, and privates whose families could only take the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner received only 100 piasters. In case that their previous pensions were above this amount, the surplus was cut.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ “Dûçar-ı Esâret Olan Mensubin-i Askeriyye ve Ailelerine Verilecek Maaşat Hakkında Kanun,” 7 Mart 1332 / 15 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [20 March 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 734.

⁶⁶⁴ “Esna-yı Muhaberede Gaybûbet Edenlerin Ailelerine Verilecek Maaş Hakkında – 8 Şa’bân 1327 Tarihli Askeri Tekâüd ve İstifâ Kanununun 35 ve 36 ncı Maddelerine Müzeyyel – Kanun,” 12 Mart 1332 / 20 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [25 March 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 858-859.

The law about the pensions of the families of lost soldiers also determined which pension was assigned to these families if the soldier was discovered to be a martyr (*şehit*). Although martyrdom (*şehitlik*) was in origin defined as dying for the religious faith of Islam, the Ottoman state redefined it for war purposes and any Ottoman soldier who died for the country on the battlefield was accepted as a martyr without looking at his religion. The pension assigned to the martyrs' families was a titled family pension (*âile maaşı*) and regulated under the Articles 35 and 36 of the Military Retirement and Resignation Law. The military pay allotment or pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner could be above the family pension assigned to the martyr soldiers' families. In this case, the additional amount of money was cut later on during the payments of the family pension.⁶⁶⁵ Nevertheless, because the family pension was only one-fourth of the soldier's salary rather than the one-third that was assigned during the period that the soldier was assumed as lost, families could have difficulty in paying the additional money they received in this period back to the state.⁶⁶⁶

The situation of the needy families of these soldiers who died during their military services was worst and most complicated in terms of receiving pension. First, when these dead soldiers were deemed martyrs, the money assigned to them as family pension was very little. Moreover, its purchasing power quickly decreased with increasing prices and widespread black marketeering. For instance, the family pension assigned generally to the widows, orphans and parents of martyr private soldiers and lower ranking officers or officer candidates did not exceed 100 piasters.

⁶⁶⁵ "Esna-yı Muharebede Gaybubet Eden Erkân, Ümera, Zabitan ve Zabıtvakili ve Namzetleriyle Küçük Zabıt ve Efradın ve Bil-cümle Memurin-i Mensibin-i Askeriyyenin Ailelerine Verilecek Maaşata Dair Kanun Lâyihası," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâiyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, p. 131.

⁶⁶⁶ See "Taht-ı Silâha Alınıp Esna-yı Harpte Gayıp Olan Me'mur'in-i Mülkiyye ve İlmiyye Ailelerine Tahsis Olunacak Maaşât Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâiyih-i Kanuniyye*, No: 428-501, Vol. 2 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993), pp. 365-369.

Because these soldiers constituted the majority of the martyrs, the insufficient amount of the family pension did not alleviate impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of women and children.

Second, the laws that determined whether a soldier was accepted as a war martyr or not caused unjust discrimination among the soldiers' families. Families of soldiers who had died on the battlefield or in hospitals due to war-related wounds and families of those soldiers who had died from other reasons such as diseases during their military service, were treated differently. The former group took higher amounts of money while the latter took less or no money at all. This was evident in Articles 35 and 36 of the Military Retirement and Resignation Law which determined the family pensions of soldiers of different ranks. According to Article 35, the families of the higher ranking officers took 75 percent of the first-degree disability pension if the soldier died a martyr on the battlefield, or died because of an accident during official duty that was not his own fault, or died in a hospital during surgical intervention due to war related wounds. This amount fell to 65 percent of the first-degree disability pension if the soldier died due to epidemics. According to Article 36, which regulated the family pensions of lower-ranking soldiers, the death of a soldier due to epidemics did not entitle his family to receive a pension. The families of the privates and military academy students took only one-third of the first-degree disability pension if the soldier died on the battlefield or in a hospital due to war-related wounds or if he died due to war-related accidents.⁶⁶⁷ The families of the martyr volunteer soldiers received only half of the money assigned for his rank,

⁶⁶⁷ "Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifa Kanununun 35 ve 36 ncı Maddelerine Müzeyyel Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 63-65.

“a benevolence” of the government accepted later on by adding new clauses to the Military Retirement and Resignation Law.⁶⁶⁸

Furthermore, only certain epidemics were considered proper causes for martyrdom. These epidemics were cholera, plague, and typhus according to Article 39 of the Military Retirement and Resignation Law. For a long time, until 1916, even these epidemics were not accepted as a legitimate reason for the martyrdom of lower ranking soldiers.⁶⁶⁹ Their number increased with an amendment to Article 39, because of the demands of dead soldiers’ wives and mothers, as will be examined below. Eventually, four new diseases, dysentery (*dizanteri*), typhoid fever (*kara humma*), relapsing fever (*humma-i racia*) and contagious cerebritis (*sari iltihab-ı sehaya*), were also accepted as a legitimate reason for martyrdom. With a law dated 13 July 1916, families of the lower-ranking officers as well started to receive one-third of the first-degree disability pension when their husbands or male relatives in the army died due to these epidemics.⁶⁷⁰

In the meantime, an increasing number of women suffered from poverty due to such discriminative practices. Even during the National Struggle period, the question of which soldier was to be considered as a martyr or not remained an important problem. Most likely due to the people’s pressure on the government, the Ankara government had to issue a decree in 1921 saying that in those cases in which

⁶⁶⁸ “Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifa Kanununun Yirmi Sekizinci Maddesi Makamına Kaim Olacak Madde İle Otuz Beşinci ve Otuz Altıncı Maddelerine Tezyil Edilecek Fıkara Hakkında Layiha-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

⁶⁶⁹ See the decision of Fiscal Equilibrium Council on November 15, 1917 “Muvazene-i Maliye Encümeni Mazbatası,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Sanesi: 4, p. 96.

⁶⁷⁰ “Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifa Kanununun Otuzuncu Maddesine Zeyl Edilen Ahkâm ile Otuzdokuzuncu Maddesinin Tadilini Havi Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye ve Otuzdokuzuncu Maddesinin Tadilini Mutazammın Kararnamesi Tevhiden Kavanin-i Maliyye, Askerî ve Muvazene-i Maliyye Encümenleri Mazbataları,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye No.: 428-501*, Vol. 2, pp. 16-20.

the martyrdom status of the dead soldiers was not recognized by the government, the wives or female relatives of the dead soldiers could appeal to the sharia courts.⁶⁷¹

As an organized group, army doctors, who mostly died due to epidemics, created their own fund to protect their families from poverty after martyrdom. The Commission to Help the Families of the Martyr Doctors was founded for this reason during World War I. As an official letter sent on 28 November 1916, from the Office of the Supreme Military Command shows, the Commission was first thought as a provident fund to which the martyr doctors' families in need could apply for help. The necessary funds for the Commission was to be collected from the doctors all around the Ottoman Empire and was to be given to the commission directorate made up of the Director of the Medical Faculty, the Director-General of Medical Services (*Sıhhiye Müdür-i Umûmîsi*) and the Medical Field Inspector-General (*Sahra Sıhhiye Müfettiş-i Umûmîsi*). The allocations were to be distributed to the families with the necessary conditions determined by the accountancy of the Directorate-General of Medical Services.⁶⁷²

Although this decision was announced with a circular letter on 18 December 1916, only five days later its execution was suspended.⁶⁷³ On 17 March 1917, however, the Directorate-General of Medical Services Registry informed the Medical Field Inspector-General that the money was to be collected and distributed by the Red Crescent Society and 1 percent of all doctors' wages were going to be garnered for this purpose from March 1917 onwards.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷¹ "Meydan-ı Muhaberede Vukuu Şahadetleri Gayrı Malum Olan Efradın Sureti Vefatlarının Mahkeme-i Şer'iyede Hükme Raptedilmek Suretiyle Efradı Ailelerine Maaş Tahsisi Hakkında Kararname," 24 Mayıs 1337 [24 May 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, p. 68.

⁶⁷² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2476, Dos. 368, Fih. 1-1, 15 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1332 [28 November 1916].

⁶⁷³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2476, Dos. 368, Fih. 1-7, 10 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1332 [23 December 1916].

⁶⁷⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2476, Dos. 368, Fih. 1-9, 6 Mart 1333 [6 March 1917].

Unlike the army doctors or lower ranking soldiers who died due to epidemics, only the families of those soldiers whose military service on the battlefield was found remarkable by higher ranking officers were entitled to receive a premium. This premium was determined by a provisional law on 3 August 1915, as five Ottoman liras for one time only.⁶⁷⁵ Equal to 500 piasters, which corresponded to only five months of a family's pension, this money was not an important relief for the families of the martyred private soldiers. For paying this premium, the Ottoman government had to assign an additional 500,000 piasters to its 1331 [1915-1916] budget with a law introduced on 14 March 1916.⁶⁷⁶ This clearly stated that the number of the families receiving this premium could not exceed 1000, which was a very low percentage of the total war martyrs. These lower ranking soldiers were described as the petty officers, corporals and privates of the land forces and navy forces who were among the poorest groups in the Ottoman army.⁶⁷⁷

In addition, those ranked soldiers who died as martyrs just before they were promoted to a higher rank were both honored and rewarded with honorary promotions to higher ranks with an article added to the Military Retirement and Resignation Law on 26 July 1915. The families of these soldiers could receive the family pension of a higher rank.⁶⁷⁸ Later, the Ottoman Fiscal Equilibrium Council of

⁶⁷⁵ See "Meydan-ı Harbde Şehiden Vefat Eden Cünûd-ı Cenâb-ı Mülûkâneden Hidemât-ı Fevkaladeleri Meşhûd Olanların Ailelerine Verilecek İkramiye Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 21 Temmuz 1331 / 21 Ramazân 1333 [3 August 1915], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 7, p. 684; and "Meydan-ı Harbde Şehiden Vefat Eden Cünûd-ı Cenâb-ı Mülûkâneden Hidemât-ı Fevkaladeleri Meşhûd Olanların Ailelerine Verilecek İkramiye Hakkında Kanun," 9 Şubat 1331 / 18 Rebûlâhır 1334 [22 February 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 403.

⁶⁷⁶ "Şühedâ Ailelerine Verilecek Mükâfât-ı Nakdiye Karşılığı Olarak 1331 Mâliye Bütçesine 500,000 Kuruşun İlâvesi Hakkında Kânun," 1 Mart 1332 / 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [14 March 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 699.

⁶⁷⁷ "Meydan-ı Harbde Şehiden Vefat Eden Berrî ve Bahrî Küçük Zabitan ve Onbaşılarla Neferattan Hidemât-ı Fevkaladeleri Meşhûd Olanların Ailelerine Verilecek Mükafât-ı Nakdiyye Karşılığı Olarak Sene-i Haliyye Maliye Bütçesine Beş Yüz Bin Kuruşun Zammı Hakkında Layiha-i Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, p. 306.

⁶⁷⁸ "Kabl-et-terfi Şehit Olanlar Hakkında 8 Şa'bân 1327 Tarihli Askeri Tekâüd ve İsti'fâ Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 12 Temmuz 1331 / 13 Ramazân 1333 [25 July 1915], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i

the parliament attempted to decrease the number of posthumous promotions by demanding in Autumn 1915 that only the families of those soldiers whose promotions had been notified to superior commandership could receive it.⁶⁷⁹

Other than this contingent possibility to receive more money from the state, which influenced only the families of higher ranking officers such as generals, senior officers and lower ranked officers going down from major to lieutenant, the families of private soldiers received no raise throughout World War I in both the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and the martyr soldiers' families pension called officially the family pension. Only after the armistice was signed, on 13 August 1919, was a bylaw which ensured an additional payment called "cost of bread" (*ekmek bedeli*) passed so as to decrease the food crisis wartime widows and orphans faced.⁶⁸⁰

In sum, the laws and regulations about the pensions and military pay allotments which concerned an important number of low-income and poor women and children whose husbands, brothers, sons or fathers were conscripted or died during military service were neither egalitarian nor unproblematic. This was mainly because the Ottoman bureaucrats had difficulty in paying all of the families in need due to budget restraints and because these pensions were especially thought of for supporting the war effort of the Ottoman state. Soldiers' wives or mothers, most of them from the poorest segments of Ottoman society, fought against these two

Sânî, Vol. 7, p. 679. See also, "Kabl-et-terfi Şehit Olanlar Hakkında 8 Şa'bân 1327 Tarihli Askeri Tekaüd ve İsti'fâ Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn," 22 Mart 1333 / 28 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [22 March 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sânî, Vol. 9, pp. 306-307. This law was later on accepted suitable for the families of the navy force soldiers as well. "Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifâ Kanununa Müzeyyel 13 Ramazân 1333 Tarihli Kanun-ı Muvakkatın Cihet-i Bahriyeye de Teşmili Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat," 5 Eylül 1332 / 20 Zilka'de 1334 [18 September 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sânî, Vol. 8, p. 1293. See also BOA, MV 212/15, 26 Receb 1336 [7 May 1918].

⁶⁷⁹ "Askeri Tekaüt ve İstifâ Kanununa Zeyl Kanun Lâyihası," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 137-138.

⁶⁸⁰ "İlmiyye Bütçesinin Müstahikkîn-i İlmiyye Tertibinden Maaş Alan Ricâl İle Eytam ve Eramile Verilecek Ekmek Bedeli Hakkında Kararname," 13 Ağustos 1335 / 16 Zilka'de 1337 [13 August 1919], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sânî, Vol. 11, p. 342.

dimensions of the pensions in order to survive the subsistence war that occurred on the home front and to increase their economic rights. Criticizing the discriminatory and exclusionary practices of the pension systems, demanding their rights, struggling against the abuses, malpractices and wrongdoings in the implementation of such pension systems, they sought more protective and effective social welfare through such pension systems, as will be addressed below.

Lower-Class Women's Negotiation of the Monetary Assistances for Soldiers' Families

During World War I, many poor Muslim Turkish women as soldiers' families struggled to receive pensions or military pay allotments or to increase the amounts of allowances. Although they often failed to increase the amount of money they received, they were not passive victims of the war. Their active involvement against the inequalities of the welfare policies forced the authorities to conceive more egalitarian and effective laws. In many cases, they were able to receive government assistance or transcend the barriers of the bureaucratic red tape and malfunctioning.

In this part, women's problems with and their negotiations about the pensions and military pay allotments provided to soldiers' needy families will be examined in detail. The pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner assigned to the families of the poorest and largest group of Ottoman soldiers, the military pay allotments sent to the needy families of army officers ranging from the lowest to the highest ranks, the pensions and pay allotments provided to the families of the prisoner of war or soldiers missing in action, the family pensions given to the

families of martyr soldiers and the aid fund for martyr doctors' families will be studied.

Pension for the Soldiers's Families without a Breadwinner

As stated before, needy women who received pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner constituted the greatest group of pension receivers. Their number reached to about 1,500,000 by 1917. Because of their huge number and of the weakness of the administrative infrastructure, even those women who were legally allotted this pension had many problems. They frequently suffered from not receiving their pensions or receiving the pensions in long delays. Some of them were given less money than required. Some women's pensions were cut for legal or illegal reasons. Some were able to get their pension for a few months of the year, and some received only half of their pensions. Even when they received their whole pensions, women had difficulty surviving with the money they received and they frequently demanded pension raises. Moreover, many women were not entitled as pension receivers. In the face of all these problems, women did not remain voiceless bystanders, but tried to overcome these problems. They complained about the legal or unlawful cuts, delays, low amount of the pension, and struggled to receive money from the state fighting against discriminatory and exclusionary practices. Although not all of their demands or complaints were taken seriously by the state, disadvantaged women were able to bend the rules in many areas.

Indeed, the problems of pension receiving women were numerous. First, many of them resisted the fact that the pensions they were entitled to were never given to them. In many cases the problem was due to the red tape of the Ottoman

bureaucracy. For example, on 23 March 1915, Ayşe and Cevahir, sent a telegram to the Ministry of War from Orhaneli, a district of Hüdavendigâr and informed the authorities that they had never been able to collect their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, because their record book was not kept properly by the local state officials. Their attempts to change this situation by applying to the district revenue officer (*mal müdürü*) and the district governor (*kaymakam*) had been inconclusive. As a result they had gone hungry and had lived a life of great misery on the streets for the last eight months. These two women's demands for help were taken seriously and an investigation was started in their district.⁶⁸¹

The problem of red tape went hand in hand with the bad treatment by the Ottoman civil servants of the women who sought help. For instance, a telegram sent from the Şevketiye village of Andırın, a town of Maraş, by Fatma and her friend informed the government that they had been treated badly by civil servants. To legitimize their position, they started their telegram with patriotic words, declaring that they were “the families of soldiers who spilled their blood for the sake of the protection of the fatherland.” After this partly true and partly rhetorical introduction, the women complained that their pension certificates had been rejected unlawfully by the bureaucrats angrily.⁶⁸²

Similarly, seven women living in İznik named Halime, Ümmühan, Ayşe, Emine Dudu, Fıtnat, Emine and Şerife sent a telegram to both the İzmit governorship and the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanding their unpaid pensions on 15 November 1917. They complained about the rude behavior of the district governor toward them when they had asked him why their pensions had not been distributed.

⁶⁸¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-2/4-27, 15 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [31 March 1915].

⁶⁸² BOA, DH.İ.UM, 7-1/23, 24 Rebûlelevvel 1334 [30 January 1916].

They argued that their husbands had been in the army for the last three years and that many women like them had great difficulties receiving their pensions.

Although they had applied to the İznik district governor who was also the chairman of the İznik Commission for Soldiers Families without a Breadwinner (*İznik Muinsizler Komisyonu*), he had not taken their demands into consideration. He had shirked his duty by driving them out with offensive words and using violence against them. The women protested this treatment, again employing a patriotic discourse and claiming that while their husbands had been sacrificing their lives for the protection of the fatherland, they had not deserved this poverty and such bad treatment by the state officials. They also demanded that their pensions be regularly paid.

Upon the complaints of these women, the Ministry of Internal Affairs started an investigation. Against these accusations, the district governor first answered that these women were very probably rich enough and therefore they had not been given pensions. However, at the end of the investigations, it was understood that the problem stemmed from the disorganization of the record book in which the names of pension receivers were written. Only after the women were identified did they begin receiving their pensions again.⁶⁸³

There were also women who individually petitioned the government to receive their legally assigned pensions without long delays since they were victims of the bureaucratic red tape. One of them was named Mürüvvet, a refugee from Salonica. She wrote from Adapazarı in the Spring of 1918 that although she and her three children had been allocated 120 piasters per month, the Adapazarı fiscal directorate had not given their pension for a whole year. In addition, she had not been

⁶⁸³ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 44/56, 13 Rebûlevvel 1336 [27 December 1917].

able to receive eight months of pensions for the period in which she had had to go to İstanbul for health-related reasons. Consequent to her demand, she was taken seriously by the central government, which sent an official order to redress the problem of Mürüvvet.⁶⁸⁴

Lack of money in the district treasury of some districts as well caused important problems in the payment of pensions. A telegram sent by Hatice in the name of the newly arrived refugees as soldiers' disadvantaged families on 6 January 1916, from Bandırma, alerted the government to problems in the payment of pensions. She wrote that although they were entitled legally, they had never received their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner. Their attempts to demand their allowances by going several times to the local government office in the district center from their villages during the previous week had given no results, and consequently, they had gone hungry. Considering the problem in Bandırma as a serious one, the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanded from the Ministry of Finance that the bureaucratic paperwork be accelerated, and asked whether the problem of late payments was due to lack of money in the district treasury. This question indicates that shortage of money was a problem for the local administrations as well as bureaucratic red tape.⁶⁸⁵

An important number of women among the group of pension recipients complained that they had received their pensions after months of delay. For instance, on 25 September 1916, a telegram was sent from Uzunköprü, a district in Edirne, by a woman named Seher in the name of all poor families of the conscripted refugees to inform the Ministry of War that they had been unable to receive their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for the previous three months. What is

⁶⁸⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-58, 6 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [19 March 1918].

⁶⁸⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-18, 16 Rebülevvel 1334 [22 January 1916].

worse, Seher continued, when they had tried to get help from the district revenue officer, he had treated them badly.⁶⁸⁶

Similarly, on 16 June 1917, Makbule sent a telegram from Fethiye in the name of all of the deprived families of soldiers in her district to the governor of Menteşe to notify him that they had not been able to receive their pensions for the previous five months. In order to persuade the authorities to take action, she had found it necessary to write that in addition to their husbands, brothers and sons that they had already sent to battle, the women were ready to send their remaining children and even go themselves to the battlefield for the sake of their respectful government. However, she did not hesitate to write that they had to demand that their pensions were paid regularly and that they be rescued from their misery. Makbule was successful in her attempt. A few months later, on 31 December 1917, the Menteşe governor informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the pensions had been paid on time for the previous months.⁶⁸⁷

Women also had difficulties receiving their full pensions. They also complained that they could take their pensions only for a few months of the year. For example, on 19 May 1918, in the name of 250 houses of soldiers' families, Emine and Meryem sent a telegram to the government from Haçın, a district of Adana province, complaining that they had only been able to receive their pensions for three months of a year and they had gone hungry as a result. They demanded the full payment of the amount allocated to them.⁶⁸⁸

There were also complaint telegrams from poor women who had not been able to obtain their full pensions. One of these, which was sent from Kirmasti, a district of Hüdavendigâr, by Fatma and was taken into consideration by the Ministry

⁶⁸⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 21/23, 5 Zilhicce 1334 [3 October 1916].

⁶⁸⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 45/64, 25 Rebülevvel 1336 [8 January 1918].

⁶⁸⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-60, 13 Şa'bân 1336 [24 May 1918].

of War and was directed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 7 December 1915. These women claimed that they suffered from the black-marketeering in foodstuffs and the high cost of living, and although the laws determined that each member of the family should receive one pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, two people in the same family had only been able to obtain one. Investigations were made by the governor of Hüdavendigâr. At the end of the investigations, the governorship stated that according to the information provided by the Kirmasti district governor, only four of the signatures on the telegram had been verified, while three of them remained unidentified. In addition, the district governor claimed that everyone had received their pensions, although he did not refute explicitly that these women had faced problems in payments.⁶⁸⁹

Women's petitions, complaint telegrams, and protesting actions were effective, especially at the local level. In order to receive more money from the state, the governors of the provinces and district governors frequently wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that they had problems in the payment of pensions. On 23 March 1916, the İzmit governorship alerted the government that the cash they had received from the treasury had not helped to even pay half of the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and therefore these pensions had not been paid regularly. According to the governorship, this situation had led to women complaining and filing applications from all around İzmit. In order to solve this problem, the governorship demanded that each month 8000 Ottoman liras be paid on a regular basis to its district treasury.⁶⁹⁰ On 29 July 1916, the Kayseri governorship also informed the government that although they had requested 15,000 Ottoman liras from the state treasury, they had received 3000 Ottoman liras, due to which they had

⁶⁸⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-43, 12 Şevvâl 1334 [12 August 1916].

⁶⁹⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-34, 24 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [29 March 1916].

not been able to pay the pensions of the soldiers' deprived families for the previous five months.⁶⁹¹

In certain provinces where soldiers' families without a breadwinner were found in greater numbers, the local governments did not pay their pensions regularly even if they received sufficient money for this purpose from the government. Aydın province was the most important of these. On 15 November 1916, the Ministry of Finance informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the 30,000 Ottoman liras which they had sent to Aydın province for the payment of accumulated pensions allocated to soldiers' families without a breadwinner in Alaşehir had not been spent for this purpose. Furthermore, the financial office of this district informed the Ministry of Finance that the unpaid pensions had reached a great sum. Consequently, the government tried to ensure that this money would be spent first of all to the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, with a notification sent on 14 November 1916.⁶⁹²

Money demands were made frequently during 1917 as well. On 2 April 1917, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat Pasha, wrote to the Minister of Finance, Cavid Bey, that he had been informed by the İçel governorship that the soldiers' poor families wept in front of the government buildings because they had not received their pensions for the previous four months. He consequently demanded that a sufficient amount of money immediately be sent to the İçel governorship.⁶⁹³ In another case, on 3 April 1917, the Konya governor sent a cipher telegram to alert the government that the refugees and needy families of soldiers in Akşehir lived miserably, because the money allocated for their pensions had not been given to them. The main reason for this was that the district treasury of Akşehir had almost no

⁶⁹¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-1/56, 28 Ramazân 1334 [29 July 1916].

⁶⁹² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 81/8, 23 Muharrem 1335 [19 November 1916].

⁶⁹³ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 30/100, 22 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [15 April 1917].

cash. Adding that not only Akşehir but all of the other districts of the province were in the same situation, the Konya governor requested a sufficient amount of money to regularly pay these disadvantaged women's pensions.⁶⁹⁴ Similarly, on 23 June 1917, the governor of Karesi, a subdivision of Hüdavendigâr province, informed the government that although the financial situation of his district was reported each month, the Ministry of Finance had not sent enough money to prevent the financial crisis in which they found themselves. As a result, the pensions assigned to the soldiers' families without a breadwinner had not been paid for the previous two months in Bandırma. Arguing that it was not right to permit the suffering of women whose husbands were soldiers and whose subsistence depended on the assistance of the government, he requested money from the Ministry of Finance.⁶⁹⁵

The problem of unpaid pensions and women's protests against this situation continued during the last year of the war. For instance, on 7 February 1918, the Eskişehir governorship informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that many women as the mothers or wives of soldiers complained to them about unpaid pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and the poverty they endured as a result of it. The official letter also informed the government that there were women who had not received their pensions for several months. Emphasizing that they could not understand the reason behind such a long delay of the payment of pensions even after the correspondence with the accountancy of the subdivision, the Eskişehir governor also said that due to this problem they continuously received complaints and applications from poor women. He demanded that the government take the necessary financial measures in order to end this problem. Informed with this letter from the Eskişehir governor, on 24 February 1918, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat

⁶⁹⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 31/11, 25 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [18 April 1917].

⁶⁹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 35/17, 5 Ramazân 1335 [25 June 1917].

Pasha, demanded that Minister of Finance Cavid Bey find a solution to this problem of soldiers' poor families, admitting that the continuous demands and complaints of the soldiers' needy female relatives and wives had forced the Eskişehir governor to write such a letter.⁶⁹⁶

Furthermore, although they seemed sufficient on the paper, the laws about the payment of pensions created important problems in practice. The mismanagement of the economy and the wartime budget deficit were the primary reasons behind the bad and incomplete distribution of pensions. However, the laws were equally problematic in certain cases because they ignored the economic situation of the Empire. For instance, the law about the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner stated that before the soldiers' poor families who had no breadwinner could legally receive their pensions, the municipal administration and in those regions having no municipality the boards of aldermen were obliged to feed and help them. Nevertheless, because the municipalities did not have enough income to feed these people and because the boards of alderman had no legal source of income for this purpose, this statement was unrealistic.⁶⁹⁷ As a result, poor women had to wait for months without any pension or money.

The İstanbul governorship objected to this practice as early as 5 November 1914. In an official letter sent from the İstanbul governorship to the Ministry of Internal Affairs it was stated that it was not possible to feed soldiers' indigent families by municipalities or by the boards of aldermen in the capital city. It was argued that the municipalities had no special funds, and furthermore, the boards of aldermen of the villages or quarters did not have the money to feed these families of an average of 50 soldiers which with a common estimate could leave behind at least

⁶⁹⁶ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 4-3/9-56, 13 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [24 February 1918].

⁶⁹⁷ See "Meclis-i Mebusan 1330 İçtima-ı Fevkalâdesi: Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan, Sene: 1330, Kanun Lâyihaları*, Vol. 1, p. 597.

100 dependents. The official letter showed that even by 5 November 1914, which was a very early date in World War I, 9692 families had applied to receive pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner from different districts of İstanbul. Out of this number, the application of 8971 families was accepted, 338 were rejected, and 383 families still waited the end of the bureaucratic procedures (Table 8).⁶⁹⁸ As these numbers increased in later years, this law was to be even more unrealistic.

Table 8. Number of the Applicants for the Pension of Soldiers' Families without a Breadwinner in İstanbul by 5 November 1914.

Region	Applicants	Accepted	Rejected	Pending
Central province	4106	3861	245	-
Beyoğlu subdivision	3482	3131	93	258
Üsküdar central subdivision	1050	1050	-	-
Makriköy district	342	320	-	22
Adalar district	116	[113] ⁶⁹⁹	-	3
Kartal district	120	114	-	6
Beykoz district	260	186	-	74
Şile district	143	143	-	-
Geğbüze [Gebze] district	73	53	-	20
Total	9692	[8971]	338	383

Source: BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-2/4-25, 4 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [20 March 1915].

Note: Prepared by using the above-mentioned document.

The attempts to help families by local governments before the pensions were allotted remained inconclusive because it was beyond their means to feed such a great number of women and children. For example, on 21 February 1915, the Ministry of War alerted the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the bad situation of poor women and children who were soldiers' families in Mucur, a district of Ankara province. The Recruiting Office in Mucur informed the army authorities about the misery of soldiers' families who had not yet received any pensions. Because of the lack of money, the local people had attempted to help these women and children by

⁶⁹⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-2/4-25, 4 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [20 March 1915].

⁶⁹⁹ The number is given as 133 in the official document although added to the number of pending three other applications the sum of total applicants makes 136, rather than 116 which was the number of total applicants previously stated in the document.

collecting wheat for them. Nevertheless, this effort had given no results and the soldiers' poor families had been living in terrible conditions.⁷⁰⁰

An official letter sent from the Edirne governorship on 27 February 1915 also informed the government that soldiers' families had great difficulty before their pensions were dispersed. It was written that there were more than 27,000 soldiers' families deprived of their breadwinners in Edirne province. It was reported from certain districts that these families lived in deplorable misery and desolation because their pensions were not paid regularly. The Edirne governorship tried to help them by distributing money in some cases and corn in others.⁷⁰¹ Although the problem was solved temporarily, in doing so, the Edirne governorship had greater difficulty in feeding the increasing number of poor women and children in the following years.⁷⁰²

The Ottoman government decided to decrease the number of pension recipients by distributing food rather than cash towards the end of 1917, as a result of the budget deficits, the prolongation of the war, the growing hunger and high prices and subsequent increase in the number of pension recipients. Again, when women demanded a wage raise due to the decrease in the purchasing power of their pensions, the government tried to compensate for this decrease by distributing basic foodstuffs to them. This was mostly applied to the families of the conscripted refugees during the severe winter of 1917-1918. Refugee women played an important role in guiding the decision makers to take the necessary actions with their petitions and complaint telegrams. For instance, in the name of all soldiers' families, a woman named Fatma sent a telegram on 23 December 1917 to the Ottoman parliament from Edirne province. She wrote that as refugee women they needed a raise in their daily wages.

⁷⁰⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-2/4-25, 4 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [20 March 1915].

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰² See BOA, DH.İ.UM, 98/4, 1/28, 14 Safer 1335 [10 December 1916]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 40/69, 10 Muharrem 1336 [26 October 1917].

The Ministry of Finance, however, instead of accepting this demand, decided to distribute food to them claiming that it was not possible at that time to increase the amount of money allocated to the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner fund, which had already reached 5,000,000 Ottoman liras.⁷⁰³

Similarly, a refugee woman from Muş named Niksar requested parliament on 12 January 1918 that the daily wages allocated to the refugees be raised or to replace this money altogether with bread or cereals.⁷⁰⁴ The decision of the government was to take the second action as also proposed by Niksar. With the notification of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 11 November 1917, all provincial governments were ordered to provide food for refugee women and children who were soldiers' families rather than paying them daily wages. As a result of the official correspondences between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Finance in January 1918, it was decided that the adults would be daily allotted 400 grams of flour (*dakik*) or 440 grams of wheat or 600 grams of bread, while children under the age of 10 would be allotted 300 grams of flour or 330 grams of wheat or 450 grams of bread. In return, all the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner of the refugees would be cut from the beginning of January 1918 onwards.⁷⁰⁵

Indeed, the amount of the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, which was stated as only 30 piasters for each person, constituted the most difficult problem of poor women. Although it was very difficult for the Ottoman treasury to pay even this amount, women demanded that their pensions be increased. For example, on 24 December 1916, the Konya governorship reported to the government that many women who were the poor dependants of soldiers had

⁷⁰³ "Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid'a Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstid'aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No: 428-501, Vol. 2, p. 320.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁷⁰⁵ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20-2/2-17, 2 Rebülâhır 1336 [15 January 1918].

petitioned the local government and complained that 30 piasters as a pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner was not enough. Consequently, probably in view of widespread dissatisfaction with the low pension level, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had to request that the Ministry of Finance increase the amount of this pension with an official letter on 7 January 1917.⁷⁰⁶

The provincial governors in reality were forced to warn the government about the insufficiency of these pensions by many complaints coming from disadvantaged women especially during the later years of the war in which the prices of basic goods and foodstuffs reached their peak levels. As a result of this pressure, a draft bill was prepared to increase the amount of the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and submitted to the Sublime Porte. Waiting for the law to enter into force, the Sivas governorship, just like the Konya governorship, demanded an urgent raise in the pensions of soldiers' poor families with a telegram sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 8 February 1917. In this telegram it was emphasized that the Konya governorship had continuously received demands for an increase in this pension from its districts and sub-districts. Then, the governorship demanded that the legal actions for this pension raise should be taken immediately.⁷⁰⁷

On 29 March 1917 the governor of Trabzon sent a cipher telegram to the government to request an increase in the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner level claiming that due to wartime high prices it had become inadequate.⁷⁰⁸ Again, on 25 June 1917 lieutenant governor of Sivas wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the soldiers' families, without any economic support, had complained to them in their petitions that their monthly pension of 30 piasters

⁷⁰⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-47, 13 Rebîulevvel 1335 [7 January 1917]. In the official document which is the draft of the official letter sent to the Ministry of Finance from the Ministry of Internal Affairs the part explaining the petition of Hatice and other women is crossed off.

⁷⁰⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-48, 19 Rebîülâhır 1335 [12 February 1917].

⁷⁰⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 30/90, 21 Cemâziyelâhır 1335 [14 April 1917].

did not even enable them to buy bread for two days. Likewise, it was written from the Ma'muretü'lazîz province to the central government on 29 August 1917 that indigent women of the soldiers wrote petitions to the local administrators and complained that they could only buy bread for five days with the 30 piasters they received.⁷⁰⁹

Despite the warnings of local governments and the legal attempts to increase this pension, the Ministry of Finance did not increase it throughout the war. Even before these efforts, the Ministry of Finance admitted on 19 February 1916 that because the total sum of money allotted to this pension had reached 400,000,000 piasters for a year, it was not possible for the state treasury to increase the pension levels.⁷¹⁰ As was stated before, this total sum further reached 600,000,000 piasters in [1916-1917] 1332 and [1917-1918] 1333. Knowing this, the Trabzon governor, while demanding an increase in this pension on 29 March 1917, acknowledged that although it was possible to change Article 49 of the Military Obligation Law which limited this pension to 30 piasters, this change required the allocation of an important sum of money as a serious burden to the state treasury.⁷¹¹

Therefore, the government, in the grip of restrictions of the war economy, was constantly searching for new methods to decrease the number of dependents. For this aim, the government began to stop payments to women who had additional income, regardless of small or big. In response, those women who were not accepted as suitable to receiving pensions or whose pensions were cut back found these practices discriminative and resisted to them, because many of them were poor. For example, Fatma petitioned the İstanbul governorship from İçerenköy because her

⁷⁰⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-52, 30 Zilka'de 1335 [17 September 1917].

⁷¹⁰ Quoted in the official letter from Minister of Internal Affairs to the Grand Vizier dated 26 Temmuz 1333 [26 July 1917]. *Ibid.*

⁷¹¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 30/90, 21 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [14 April 1917].

pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner from her son had been cut from September 1916 onwards, on the grounds that she received an additional pension of 38 piasters because of her dead husband. She argued that in spite of this additional pension of about 40 piasters from her dead husband, without the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, she lived in misery. Although receiving more than one pension was not accepted according to the accounting laws, the authorities took her petition seriously, because the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner was assigned to those families whose yearly income was already not enough. The Üsküdar governorship supported her claim that an additional 40 to 50 piasters income was not a good reason for cutting the 30 piasters pension since even 80 piasters was not enough as a monthly income for one person. Furthermore, it was argued that the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner should not be considered as a second pension as it was temporary, and therefore, all of those soldiers' families like Fatma who took an additional but small amount of money should not suffer from a pension cut.⁷¹²

The need for decreasing the number of pension recipients was so urgent that although the Islamic laws only held the father responsible for the subsistence of his children, the Ministry of Internal Affairs thought of giving financially well off mothers this responsibility with a notification on 24 May 1915. The decision was not probably put into action, as there was no sign on the notification document that it was sent to the provinces. Nevertheless, it was clear that the state needed to cut the expenses of dependents as far as possible to the detriment of women and against the principles of the Islamic family law.⁷¹³

⁷¹² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 31/48, 3 Receb 1335 [25 April 1917].

⁷¹³ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 8/15, 10 Receb 1333 [24 May 1915].

Women with some land also suffered from discrimination because the recruiting offices considered them rich. Nevertheless, in wartime conditions these women either had difficulty cultivating their lands for various reasons such as absence of labor force, shortage of seeds or agricultural items, and burdensome agricultural taxes and requisitions.⁷¹⁴ Concerning the situation experienced in Yozgat, for instance, an official letter sent from the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 10 August 1916, explained how such women also suffered poverty. The Ministry of War reported that according to the inspection reports sent to them, it was understood that in Yozgat certain poor wives and mothers of soldiers with land lived in misery because the Yozgat Recruiting Office did not allot the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner to them. These lands, which were not more than one or two fields, were not sufficient since the women did not have the necessary agricultural instruments or seed. As a result of this correspondence, the Ankara governor was warned about the situation of such soldiers' needy families, and it was called on to take the necessary actions to help them immediately.⁷¹⁵

Likewise, there were women whose pensions were cut because they had some grain. The Ministry of War felt the necessity to inform the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the fragile situation the women living in İzmit in an official letter on 14 February 1917. The Ministry of War argued that although certain soldiers' families' pensions had been cut because they had a few bushels (*kile*)⁷¹⁶ of wheat or corn with which to feed themselves, these women needed cash money for other basic necessities. Therefore, the Ministry demanded that they continued to receive

⁷¹⁴ The peasant women's experience with the war mobilization and state's agricultural policies will be examined in Chapter Eight.

⁷¹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 18/11, 4 Şevvâl 1334 [4 August 1916].

⁷¹⁶ A bushel (*kile*) is 36,5 kilograms.

pensions. Consequently, the Ministry of Internal Affairs charged the İzmit governor with this task on 19 February 1917.⁷¹⁷

Furthermore, there were women who could not receive money from the state and yet who were not supported by their legally obligated breadwinners. Therefore, the laws about these supporters, called *muin* (helper), were discussed a lot. The first problem was about the legitimacy of the breadwinner. Article 50 of the Military Obligation Law determined the *muin* as the father of a dependent woman or child if he lived in the same district; their son, brother, grandfather or father in law if they lived in the same village or quarter; and all other breadwinners if they lived at the same house. On 15 August 1917, after important discussions about the application of this law, it was stated with a notification from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to all provinces that when these breadwinners moved to another district, village, quarter or house according to their respective relation with the dependents their legal status as *muin* ended and the families they had previously helped had the right to demand pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner.⁷¹⁸

A second limitation other than the place of residence to being accepted as *muin* was related to the citizenship of the breadwinner. The male relatives of a soldier's family without a breadwinner who were citizens of another country such as fathers or brothers were not legally accepted as *muin*, although there were demands for it from non-Muslim soldiers' families living especially in the Beyoğlu district of İstanbul. Nevertheless, in an official letter sent from Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat Pasha, to the İstanbul governor Bedri Bey on 31 October 1916, this restriction was accepted not only for the non-Muslim subjects, called *zimmi*, but for the Muslim

⁷¹⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 28/15, 26 Rebûlâhır 1335 [19 February 1917].

⁷¹⁸ See BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 37/29, 26 Şevvâl 1335 [15 August 1917]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 38/3, 10 Zilka'de 1335 [28 August 1917].

subjects as well regardless of whether their foreign bread winners lived in the Empire or not.⁷¹⁹

There were also important discussions about the application of Articles 50, 51 and 53 of the Military Obligation Law (*Mükellefiyet-i Askeriyye Kanûnu*) in terms of the financial and physical ability of the breadwinner to be legally accepted as *muin*. The correspondence between the government and the Adana and Konya governors in 1915 revealed that this issue became an important problem of soldiers' families who were unable to receive help from their legally accepted breadwinners, due to financial problems of their so-called breadwinners. Although Article 51 stated that the main criterion to be accepted as a *muin* for a people was to be able both physically and financially, there were certain exceptions that made the selection of the *muin* a complex issue. For instance, according to the laws, if the breadwinner was going to look after his daughter or his son under the age of adolescence, physical ability alone was a sufficient condition. After many correspondences, it was decided and declared by the government that the breadwinner had to be financially able for any additional person. Furthermore, with the decision taken by the Council of State on 21 April 1915, even if the breadwinner was a rich person, this additional person who could receive help from the *muin* was limited to one in Article 53 of the Military Obligation Law.⁷²⁰

This complexity of the law and the conditions of being accepted as with *muin* or without *muin* created a controversy among the women and the government. Women frequently negotiated such terms and conditions during the war. Lower-class women as the main victims of this difficult issue were the first supporters of those interpretations of the Military Obligation Law, from which they benefitted. Many

⁷¹⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/22, 4 Muharrem 1335 [31 October 1916].

⁷²⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-2, 12 Şevvâl 1333 [23 August 1915].

poor women, who knew that they could not receive pension as a result of these legally alleged *muins* who in reality were not capable of feeding them, rejected this situation. A woman named Hatice, for example, protested the fact that the pension assigned to her and her children because of her soldier husband had been cut on the grounds that her father was healthy and rich. She argued that, on the contrary, her father was poor and disabled. She also added that they had to receive their pension because the laws permitted a breadwinner to feed only one additional person other than his own family which could be her, but not her children. The Ottoman bureaucracy took Hatice's demand seriously and decided to investigate the health and financial situation of her father.⁷²¹ Indeed, an official correspondence between the Ministry of War and Ministry of Internal Affairs on 16 December 1916 revealed that there were many legally accepted breadwinners who in fact did not help their legally accepted dependants. Consequently, many unsupported women proceeded legally against these breadwinners who, against Article 50 of the Military Obligation Law that defined them as *muin*, did not feed them or protect them.⁷²²

A final problem was about the death of the legally assigned *muin*, a fact that immediately changed the financial status of the soldiers' families. According to Article 49 of the Military Obligation Law, the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner started from the date that the soldier arrived in the recruiting office and only if the legal application was made by soldiers' families in time. Many women did not receive their pensions, because they were not aware of this requirement and they did not apply for the pension in due time.⁷²³ These requirements also created problems for many women, especially for those who after their breadwinner had died had nobody to take care of them other than their male relatives, who had already

⁷²¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-23, 5 Rebûlâhır 1334 [10 February 1916].

⁷²² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 25/67, 24 Safer 1335 [20 December 1916].

⁷²³ See BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 28/100, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [3 March 1917].

been recruited as soldiers. These women had difficulty because they did not apply for the pension at the right time, which was the time of conscription. Many women in such unfortunate position had to struggle to obtain their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner.

On 27 August 1917 the İstanbul governorship warned the government about women who applied for the pensions in vain due to the fact that these applications were not accepted after the soldier was recruited. Similarly, on 23 September 1917, it was stated that many women had lost their husbands due to several diseases, and therefore, they requested pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for their soldier brothers or uncles. Because the government hesitated to assign such pensions, these women suffered from severe poverty. Upon this unjust situation, on 29 September 1917, the Ministry of War wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and said that although the Military Obligation Law determined pension receivers as those who had been supported by the soldier before recruitment, there was no restriction in this law for women to demand this pension after the recruitment of their only remaining breadwinner, if they had lost their previous breadwinners after the recruitment of this subsequent breadwinner. Consequently, the Council of State considered the issue seriously and felt the necessity to prepare the Draft Law of the Pensions of Soldiers' Families without a Breadwinner (*Muinsiz Aile Maaşatı Kanûnu Layihası*).⁷²⁴

Another obstacle that made things difficult for many women was that the government wanted to eliminate fake applications. As a result, in some cases women had difficulty receiving their pensions, if their marriage with the recruited soldier was found not legal. In one of these cases in Hüdavendigâr, the application

⁷²⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 39/84, 23 Zilhicce 1335 [10 October 1917].

requesting a pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for soldier Hüseyin's wife on 30 March 1916 was rejected by the recruiting office officials. In the report from the provincial government to the central government, which dated 26 June 1916, it was stated that the local recruiting office hesitated to allot pension to Hüseyin's wife, since it was stated in the certificate provided by the village headman that despite their marriage contract, Hüseyin and his wife were not yet accepted as united in matrimony in the period for which the pension was requested.⁷²⁵

Some women actually tried to cheat the authorities by providing false documents. A telegram sent from İnebolu, a district of Kastamonu, to the government by a woman named Şerife on behalf of all of the unsupported families of İnebolu on 6 April 1916 urged an investigation which resulted in finding her guilty. Şerife had complained that despite the high cost of living they endured, the pensions of many women had been cut, and therefore their children suffered from hunger. Nevertheless, after the investigations made by Kastamonu governorship, the governor informed the government on 30 October 1916 that some soldiers' families, who were rich enough to not be eligible for the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, had created false documents with the help of the headmen and the boards of alderman. The Kastamonu governor wrote on 4 December 1916 that after this fraud had been discovered, these women lost their pensions and legal proceedings had been started for the headmen and the boards of alderman.⁷²⁶

Certainly, the headmen or government officers could misuse their power to use pensions both to the detriment of state and sometimes soldiers' poor families. There were many denunciation letters sent by the public and poor women warning the government against such illegal actions. For instance, a soldier named Mehmet,

⁷²⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 17/2, 1 Ramazân 1334 [2 July 1916].

⁷²⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-3/4-46, 16 Safer 1335 [12 December 1916].

son of Süleyman, from a village of Keçiborlu, a district of Konya province, complained in his petition to the government that although he applied for the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for his wife and his two sons under the age of adolescence, the village headmen and board of alderman had not allotted them pensions and had not given a legitimate reason.⁷²⁷

Some women blamed the tax collectors who cut their pensions by misusing their authority. For example, on 4 March 1917, many peasant women from Kayalar village of Adapazarı sent a telegram to the government complaining that their pensions had been cut unlawfully by the village tax collector. After the investigations, it was understood that the pensions of these women had been cut, because they had harvested enough crop. Moreover, during the investigations, alleging their illiteracy, these women stated that they had not denounced the tax collector and had had no information about this part of the telegram. They argued that the denunciation part had been added to their telegram without their knowledge by a soldier passing by from Düzce to whom they had dictated the telegram. Although the women denied their role in this accusation against the tax collector, probably due to their fear of him, they argued that they needed to receive the pension. However, as a result of the investigations, the tax collector Hafız Hüseyin Efendi's unequal treatment in allocation of women's pensions was discovered; he was removed to another department; and the women's pensions were resumed.⁷²⁸

Women from the Karacadağ sub-district of Edirne, however, wrote without hesitation the name of the civil servant who had cheated them of their right to receive pension. In their collective petitions to the government, which dated 31 March 1917, Ümmühan, wife of a soldier named Mustafa, and eleven other women who were

⁷²⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 17/54, 23 Ramazân 1334 [24 July 1916].

⁷²⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 107/82, 6 Receb 1335 [28 April 1917].

wives of other soldiers criticized the former sub-district governor, İbrahim Efendi. They declared that he had abused his authority by cheating them and then he had cut their pensions. Emphasizing that they lived in hunger at the Balkan frontiers as refugees, these women wanted the government to give them pensions at least until the harvest season. Petitions such as this prompted the highest state authorities to take measures, and consequently, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat Pasha, requested that the Minister of Finance Cavid Bey take care of them.⁷²⁹

Finally, in another telegram sent to the government by a group of women from Kırşehir, women clearly accused the civil servants of depriving them of their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner as their unique source of living. In this denunciation telegram, dated 22 March 1919, Zahide, wife of the martyr Vehbi; Fatma, wife of the martyr Ali; and Ümmoş, wife of the prisoner of war Mustafa, argued that their pensions had been cut against the law. What is more, women complained that the local state officials had not given them the food assigned to them, although the warehouse of their district was full of cereals. These women requested the government investigate the civil servants to understand the reason behind the withholding of their pensions and food. Consequently, on 29 March 1919, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the Ankara governor to start the investigation.⁷³⁰

In sum, a considerable part of disadvantaged Ottoman Muslim women as receivers of the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner were very active in the process of the implementation of the pension system. They not only complained about the problems through their petitions and telegrams, but also

⁷²⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 30/101, 22 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [15 April 1917].

⁷³⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-66, 26 Cemâziyelâhir 1337 [29 March 1919]. I could not find a document regarding the investigations in the archive; however, former examples allow us to draw a preliminary conclusion that the government investigated the issue.

influenced the authorities with their demands. Their complaints and demands had an impact on the decision makers to take action for these women's benefit in many cases, by increasing the number of pension recipients despite budget restraints and by rectifying the wrongdoings of local civil servants.

Military Pay Allotments

As was stated before, during World War I, army officers had the right to send some part of their salaries to families. This part of the salary that was cut from the officer's salary and given to his family was called *sipariş maaşı* (military pay allotment). Although they lived in better conditions compared to many of the privates' families who only received the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, the women of a large number of lower ranking army officers, too, had important financial difficulty when they had no other male protectors left behind. Therefore, these women often applied to the army to demand this pay allotment. If they were rejected or their payments were suspended, they insisted on obtaining the money by writing petitions in which they used significant discursive strategies to persuade the army authorities.

The military pay allotments first of all helped women living far from their army officer husbands or male relatives. These payments were much higher than those of the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and they provided relatively better social security. This practice, however, required excellent organization of the army's finances, which was lacking in the Ottoman army. As the petitions written by the women applicants show, the army recruiting offices sometimes failed to meet the demands of the officers' deprived families because of

financial restraints. However, the poor wives of the officers strived to cope with the administrative disruptions and malfunctioning and to benefit from these pay allotments.

On 27 March 1915, Nezîre, the wife of second lieutenant Ahmet Efendi serving in the 6th Army Corps in Aleppo, for instance, wrote from Urfa to the Aleppo Army Corps Command that she had problems in receiving her military pay allotment. She claimed that because her husband “who displayed jihad for the salvation of the fatherland” (*selâmet-i vatan uğruna arz-ı cihâd eden*) had left her alone and she was incapable of putting bread on the table. She stated that she had never received her 260 piasters pay allotment although her husband had ordered it five months earlier. She stated that she was tired of applying to the Urfa and Harran recruiting offices and Ayntab [Gaziantep] Division without reaping the benefits. Nezîre demanded that the army authorities quickly pay her the accumulated allotment in order “to end her poverty which had reached to the utmost degree” (*son dereceye gelmiş olan sefâletime nihâyet verilmek üzere*) and “for sacred jihad, for respecting the laws and in the name of justice” (*cihâd-ı mukaddes, hürmet-i kanûna, adâlet nâmına olsun*).⁷³¹

Because the military pay allotment was not a pension provided by the state but some percentage of the army officer’s salary, the amount of money allotted to the family varied according to the officer’s rank and salary. For example, while Nezîre, as the wife of a second lieutenant, had difficulty receiving her 260 piaster allotment in Urfa, a captain serving at the same Army Corps could order 513 piasters to his family living in Nişantaşı, a wealthy district of İstanbul at about the same dates.⁷³² Likewise, Zekiye in Aleppo, whose husband worked in a lower rank position in the

⁷³¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-4, 14 Mart 1331 [27 March 1915].

⁷³² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-24, 16 Nisan 1331 [29 April 1915].

5th Army, had not received any pay allotment for the previous four months by 21 March 1915.⁷³³ Furthermore, in terms of the organization of the payments, those families who received money from the army branches in the capital city were in a more advantageous position. Unlike Nezihe and Zekiye, who had to wait for several months, Captain Kamil's family received the pay allotment within two weeks after it was ordered.⁷³⁴ That is, the wives of all officers did by no means equally benefit from this practice. Low-ranked officers' families, and sometimes even middle-ranked officers' families as well, faced important problems in its implementation, which caused discontent among them and led them to struggle against these problems.

The archive documents reveal that women who had difficulty receiving their pay allotments sent collective petitions to the authorities. On 6 June 1915, ten women from Urfa wrote such a petition to the Aleppo Army Corps Command. Four of them signed the petition as the family members of a lieutenant, three of them as the family members of a captain, one of them as a family member of an army doctor and two others as the family members of a gunsmith. For legitimizing their position as the recipients of pay allotments these women used a patriotic discourse with the following words:

Our husbands today by using their chests as shields to the bullets of the intruding enemy are present at the defense of Çanakkale [Dardanelles] on the point of bravely laying down their lives for the salvation of the fatherland and they attack on the battle field as baby lions by leaving those alone and stranger like us to the mercy and compassion of the nation. By ordering pay allotments from their salaries that are always at the expense of the blood they shed as they perform the sacred duty entrusted to them with clear conscience.⁷³⁵

⁷³³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-56, 8 Mart 1332 [21 March 1915].

⁷³⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-25, 30 Nisan 1331 [13 May 1915].

⁷³⁵ "Zevçlerimiz elyevm sine-i sadrlarını tecavüz eden düşmanın mermiyatına siper edip kahramancasına vatanın selâmeti uğrunda feda-yı can etmek üzere Çanakkale müdafaasında bulunurlar ve bizim gibi bîkes ve garibüddiyâr olanları milletın merhamet ve şefkatine terk edip meydan-ı cephede arslan yavruları gibi atılmışlardır her ü kez ü kan pahası olan maaşâtlarından sipariş tahsis edip müsterih-ül-bâl olarak vezâif-i mukaddese-i mevûalarını ifâ etmektedirler." ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-58, 24 Mayıs 1331 [6 June 1915].

By making comparisons with other relatively privileged officers' women who received similar pay allotments and arguing that families like theirs in the capital city and all other Anatolian provinces received their pay allotments on time, they pointed out the unequal treatment.⁷³⁶ They complained to the Aleppo Army Corps Command that they had received no money starting from March 1331 [14 March 1915]⁷³⁷ and because of this, they lived in poverty. Claiming that it was unfair to accept this situation, the women called on the authorities to immediately redress their problems.⁷³⁸ The army staff in Aleppo evaluated the women's petition seriously. Four days later, the 6th Army Corps in Aleppo wrote to the Urfa Recruiting Office about the situation of these women and asked why the army officers' families in Urfa had not been paid, although 500 Ottoman liras as military pay allotments had been transferred to the Urfa Recruiting Office. Consequently, the army chiefs in the 6th Army requested both a report about the reasons behind the suspension of payments and the acceleration of payments of March and April 1331 [14 March – 13 May 1915].⁷³⁹

Because of organizational problems in certain regions, some payments were cancelled.⁷⁴⁰ For example, the 6th Army Corps Command decided to cut the pay allotments of some families on 23 August 1915. In a circular sent to Ayntab [Gaziantep], Adana and Aleppo, the army authorities announced that the existing money in their possession did not exceed 500,000 piasters, which would not meet the demands of all. The army authorities explicitly wrote that their attempts to pay all families had failed and that they had received many complaints because of this.

⁷³⁶ This month of the julian calendar corresponds to the dates between 14 April 1915 and 13 May 1915.

⁷³⁷ This month of the julian calendar starts with the date 14 March 1915.

⁷³⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-58, 24 Mayıs 1331 [6 June 1915].

⁷³⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-64, 28 Mayıs 1331 [10 June 1915].

⁷⁴⁰ See ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-68, 2 Haziran 1331 [15 June 1915]; and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-169, 19 Teşrîn-i Evvel 1331 [1 November 1915].

Therefore, they had decided to cancel the pay allotments ordered to those families living within the same region with the 6th Army Corps on the grounds that these women were able to receive help from their soldier husbands nearby. Consequently, the 24th Division in Ayntab, 16th Division in Adana, and 26th Division in Aleppo were ordered to cancel the pay allotments of such families.⁷⁴¹

Despite these financial constraints, desperate and poor women who were not entitled to it also demanded the military pay allotment. For example, Hatice, the wife of the army veterinarian Hakkı Efendi, who had been dismissed from the army in Yemen and then once again recruited to the army in World War I, wrote to the 6th Army Corps Command on 25 May 1915 that she was in need of a piece of bread and that she lived in destitution with her six children (*nânpâreye muhtaç altı evladımla aç biilaç bir halde bulunuyorum*). She asked a favor from the army to be given a regular payment as a military pay allotment.⁷⁴² After the investigations it was understood that veterinarian Hakkı Efendi had been dismissed from his army position in the Hudeyde district of Yemen and had gone to Mecca. Therefore, the state did not accept Hatice's request. However, Hatice stood firm in her demand and wrote another petition to the army authorities and the governor of the province where the 6th Army was deployed. She further informed the army authorities that her husband had been working for the army, because soon after his dismissal he had been recruited again with the mobilization. After further investigations, consequently, the Aleppo governor requested that the army authorities assign a payment for her on 24 June 1915.⁷⁴³

Briefly, even the military pay allotments sent to army officers' families after it was automatically cut from their salaries was a contested issue for the poorer

⁷⁴¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-159, 10 Ağustos 1331 [23 August 1915].

⁷⁴² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-40, 12 Mayıs 1331 [25 May 1915].

⁷⁴³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 4087, Dos. 21, Fih. 1-42, 11 Haziran 1331 [24 June 1915].

families of army officers. Due to the financial and organizational problems of the army, most of these payments created problems especially in the provinces far from the capital. Therefore, in order to pay those women who were worse off since they lived far from their army officer breadwinners, the payments of those families living nearby were sometimes suspended. The wives of lower ranking officers also suffered from late payments and struggled to require their allowances sooner. Moreover, some women attempted to receive pay allotments as favors, as the example of Hatice showed.

Pensions for the Indigent Families of Prisoners of War and
of Soldiers Missing in Action

Women of captive or missing in action soldiers also had the right to receive pensions or military pay allotments from the state. However, they had greater difficulty in receiving money because it was difficult to learn the situation of their husbands or male relatives. For example, a woman named Sıdıka, the wife of a soldier named Ahmed, son of Raif, was able to demand the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for her husband who had been taken prisoner only after she learned via his letter that he was alive. Ahmed had been recruited during the Balkan Wars. By 11 March 1919, when Sıdıka submitted her petition, he had been a soldier for the previous five years. Living in Eskişehir, Sıdıka had first petitioned the 16th Division of the army to demand pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner on 26 September 1918, received no answer, and consequently, she had had to petition the Eskişehir governor more than six months later, living in misery in the meantime with her sons named Necdet, who was eight years old; and Sırrı, who was five years old.

After her petition was sent to the Ministry of War and from there to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, on 8 April 1919 it was decided that she would only be granted a pension, if her husband was really alive.⁷⁴⁴

As seen in the example of Sıdıka, it was very difficult to convince the authorities to grant a pension especially for those women whose husbands and male relatives had been lost in action without any news thereafter. In addition to the emotional distress they suffered, for economic reasons, these women had to learn whether their husbands or male relatives were dead, alive or prisoner of war to ascertain whether they were actually war widows or not. If the husband might still be alive but there was no information about him, his wife received no help from the state. Moreover, even when the women suffered from hunger, they could not legally marry with another man to support them without confirmation of the situation of their husbands.⁷⁴⁵

Women generally received information about the prisoner of war and lost soldiers with the assistance of the Red Crescent Society. For example, on 25 January 1917, the Society answered the petition of a woman named Fatma in which she had asked whether her husband Ziver was dead or alive. The Society answered that Ziver had been lost on 4 April 1915 at the Dardanelles front and he quite possibly had become a prisoner of war. They searched for him by getting in touch with the international Red Cross Society.⁷⁴⁶ Only during 1916, the İzmir Center of the Ottoman Red Crescent helped about 300 families in İzmir learn about the health and living conditions of their male relatives kept as prisoners of war.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁴ See BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-67, 2 Receb 1337 [3 April 1919]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 50/42, 16 Receb 1337 [17 April 1919].

⁷⁴⁵ For women's legal problems to remarry before proving the martyrdom of their husbands see Chapter Eight.

⁷⁴⁶ TKA, 665/316, 12 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1332 [25 January 1917].

⁷⁴⁷ TKA, 27/292.3, 1332 [1916].

Even after the Armistice had been signed, there were many women who could receive no information about their husbands or sons. Faced with important economic difficulties, these women demanded that the state provide information about them and, more importantly, to provide them with pensions if they had died. For example, as understood from an official letter of the Aydın governorship sent to the government on 7 June 1919, a woman named Hatice had requested information about her soldier son Mehmed Şükrü in a petition in which she had also requested a pension, if he was dead.⁷⁴⁸

Women whose pensions were cut by the state on the grounds that there was no information about their soldier husbands or sons were also among the claimants and petition writers. On 26 October 1920, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Ministry of Finance about the petition of Fatma, living in the Şile district of İstanbul. Fatma complained that her pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner had been cut, because her soldier son Bekir had gone missing in action on the Dardanelles and no information had been obtained afterwards. Arguing that Bekir's four dependents, including her, had lived in misery since her pension had been cut, she requested a family pension like all of the other martyrs' families received.⁷⁴⁹

Furthermore, many women went personally to government buildings to complain about the termination of their pensions due to lack of information about their husbands, sons, fathers or brothers. On 5 February 1919, the İstanbul governor requested that the government continue the payment of pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner to the families of prisoners of war, although it had been ordered with a notification that these pensions be cut by December 1918. It was

⁷⁴⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 53/91, 20 Ramazân 1337 [19 June 1919].

⁷⁴⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-14/1-32, 12 Safer 1339 [26 October 1920].

reported that women who had heard this decision in Üsküdar district had protested the government by going to the office of the Üsküdar governor. In his report to the İstanbul governorship, he said that he recognized that those women whose pensions had been cut had cogent reasons to complain, stating that they were families of the soldiers who had fought for the protection and for the future of the fatherland on various fronts.⁷⁵⁰

A few months later, on 17 June 1919, another official letter came from İzmit governor Ahmet Aznavur to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the families of those soldiers who had been lost without any information about their martyrdom or captivity. The letter stated that after their pensions had been cut due to the lack of information about their men, many women bitterly complained that they lived in hunger, because neither had their husbands or sons arrived nor had they received their pensions. The letter also warned that these women protested the government and stated that it was unjust to deprive helpless women who were mourning their husbands and sons of their bread and butter under the pretext of having received no information about their men. The government officials in İzmit could not calm down these women who crowded the government offices with their requests for help. The governorship argued that even if a small amount of the lost soldiers could be accepted as deserters, most of them were martyrs or prisoners of war. Therefore, according to the governorship of İzmit, the government had to take the necessary measures to redress the grievances of these unfortunate and poor women.⁷⁵¹

Under the pressure of such demands, the government sought legal remedies which could enable such families to receive their pensions from the end of the war mobilization until the signing of a peace treaty. The Ministry of War informed the

⁷⁵⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/9-68, 4 Zilka'de 1337 [1 August 1919].

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Ministry of Internal Affairs on 13 July 1919 that they had requested this from the Council of State with two official letters on 4 May and 29 May 1919 to which the Council of State had given no response. Consequently, on 19 July 1919, the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well requested that Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha urge the Council of State to decide quickly on this issue.⁷⁵²

In conclusion, women whose husbands and male relatives had been captured by the foreign armies or lost in battle had difficulties both psychologically and economically. They had to struggle with the bureaucracy to continue receiving their pensions. This struggle gave results in some cases, but as the pending laws about their situation show, many women who were unable to get any information about their lost husbands, sons or fathers suffered from this ambiguity of their status for a long time.

Family Pensions of the Martyr Soldiers and the Commission to Help the Families of Martyrd Army Physicians

Apart from their emotional breakdown, lower-class women suffered deplorable economic losses, when their only breadwinners died on battlefield. Lack of effective social measures protecting them aggravated the problems of these women. First, they had difficulty receiving their pensions both due to the bureaucratic red tape and due to budget restraints. In many cases they had to wait for a long time before receiving their first pensions. For example, the family of a poor private named Nedret, who had died on the battlefield in the Spring of 1916 had received their pension more than

⁷⁵² *Ibid.* I could not find any law issued for this purpose in *Düstûr* from May 1919 onwards.

three years later following his death, after the payment had been approved on 7 August 1919.⁷⁵³

Because the martyr soldiers' families' pension was paid in arrears, the poor women frequently complained to the government. On 29 October 1916, Ayşe and six other women sent a telegram from Alaşehir, a district of Aydın, to the government complaining that although all of them had fathers, husbands or brothers who had died for the fatherland on battlefield, from May 1332 [14 May 1916]⁷⁵⁴ onwards, they had not received their pensions on the grounds that the government budget had restrictions. However, the petitioner women criticized this official pretext questioning how the pensions of the civil servants were regularly paid.⁷⁵⁵ Taking such complaints seriously, the government sent a notification to all the government officials working for the allotment and distribution of family pensions on 7 November 1916 by which it ordered them to ensure that the widows and orphans did not have to wait long to receive their pensions.⁷⁵⁶

After the mobilization ended, most of the complaint telegrams from the provinces were about delays in the payment of the pensions of the martyr soldier's families. On 18 August 1919, the Kayseri governor warned the government that because their pensions had not been paid, many widows of martyrs came each day to the government office and cried. Referring also to the unpaid pensions of the gendarme and police, which he claimed to be dangerous for the public order in his district, the governor demanded the surplus of the tithe tax revenues to continue the

⁷⁵³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-2, 7 Ağustos 1335 [7 August 1919].

⁷⁵⁴ It is a month of the Julian calendar which starts with 14 May of the year 1916 in Gregorian calendar.

⁷⁵⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/19, 4 Muharrem 1335 [31 October 1916].

⁷⁵⁶ See BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/52, 9 Muharrem 1335 [5 November 1916]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/73, 11 Muharrem 1335 [7 November 1916].

payments.⁷⁵⁷ Likewise, on 28 December 1919, the government was reported that the pensions of the widows and orphans of martyrs in Antalya had not been paid in time and that women complained about this.⁷⁵⁸

The payment of the pensions became more difficult after the occupation of the capital city and Anatolia by the Allied powers and the Greek troops, which decreased the possibility of sending money to the provinces. On 27 February 1920, sending a telegram to the government from Bursa, the Hüdavendigâr governor stated that since the pensions of neither the gendarme and police nor the widows and orphans had been paid, they were in great difficulty. Claiming that the women and children made applications demanding their pensions, he wanted 100,000 Ottoman liras to make all these payments.⁷⁵⁹ Similarly, on 27 October 1920, the İzmir governorship reported to the government that after the occupation, the widows and orphans of martyrs had not received their pensions for the last three to four months as a result of which they suffered from poverty and some of them lived on the streets.⁷⁶⁰ Consequently, the government transferred 8000 Ottoman liras to the İzmir governorship with the intent of continuing the payments to the war widows and orphans through the National Prestige Bank (*İtibâr-ı Millî Bankası*) on 9 February 1921. Nevertheless, as the official correspondence in July 1921 shows, many war widows and orphans living in sub-districts of İzmir did not receive their pensions, because the money was first distributed to the center of İzmir.⁷⁶¹

Second, the pensions of the martyr soldier's families were not sufficient due to wartime inflation, not exceeding 100 piasters for the families of the low-ranking soldiers. As the example of the family of private Necdet shows, when this pension

⁷⁵⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-27, 23 Zilka'de 1337 [20 August 1919].

⁷⁵⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1, 1-39, 3 Rebiülâhır 1338 [26 December 1919].

⁷⁵⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-1/1-56, 13 Cemâziyelâhır 1338 [4 March 1920].

⁷⁶⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-27/14-8, 10 Receb 1339 [20 March 1921].

⁷⁶¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-28/14-50, 14 Zilka'de 1339 [25 July 1921].

was divided between Necdet's four dependents, his mother Fatma, his wife Kezban, his daughter Hatice and his son Mustafa, each person received 25 piasters per month.⁷⁶² Therefore, for families with more than three members, this pension was smaller than even the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner of 30 piasters to each person.

In cases the number of family members was seven to eight, the pension was negligible, after it was distributed among them. The seven-member family of private Ahmed, who died on the battlefield on 29 August 1917, received only 99 piasters 30 *paras* (one fortieth of a piaster) per month and each person took only 14 piasters 10 *paras* as was approved by the Trabzon financial office on 16 October 1920.⁷⁶³ In Aksaray, each member of the family of eight of the infantry man private Hasan, who had died due to fever (*humma*) on 25 August 1916, were allotted only 12 piasters and 20 *paras* by the Niğde financial office on 29 July 1919.⁷⁶⁴ As this amount was very little, especially in the cities, women had to look for additional sources of income. İrfan Orga, in his memoirs, *The Portrait of a Turkish Family* (1950), wrote that when he was a child, his mother gave the martyrs' pension of his husband, who had died at the front, to him as pocket money because it was negligible. Nevertheless, after he was sexually harrassed by a man on the queue for pension payment, he never tried to take the pension again.⁷⁶⁵

Many women petitioned the Ottoman parliament to raise their family pension. For example, Emine from Üsküdar petitioned the Ottoman parliament for an increase

⁷⁶² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-2, 7 Ağustos 1335 [7, August 1919].

⁷⁶³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-24, 30 Teşrin-i Sâni 1336 [30 November 1920].

⁷⁶⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-15, 29 Temmuz 1335 [29 July 1919].

⁷⁶⁵ Orga, *The Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 150-151.

in the pension she received for her husband on 10 March 1917.⁷⁶⁶ Fatima was another woman, who petitioned the parliament to demand increase in the martyr pension she received for her husband İbrahim Zihni, who had died at the Dardanelles on 22 December 1917.⁷⁶⁷ Nafia from Beylerbeyi also petitioned the parliament to request a rise in the pension she took for her martyr son on 31 January 1917.⁷⁶⁸ Similarly, Emine Nevber also asked for a rise in the pension she received for her husband in her petition, which was dated 12 March 1918.⁷⁶⁹ Many other women petitioned the Ottoman government and parliament for increases to their family pensions for their martyr husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers. However, these petitions were often rejected on the grounds that such an increase was impossible according to the existing laws.

The families of the army officers who died at war as well demanded a pension increase, although they took gradually more money. For example, the wife of Lieutenant Recep Efendi and his three daughters, who each received 50 piasters asked for a rise on 27 February 1917. The Ministry of War turned down their request, claiming that they already received six piasters more than they should in additional support.⁷⁷⁰ As the petition of Neyyire Hanım, dated 23 January 1918 shows, among

⁷⁶⁶ “Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 862.

⁷⁶⁷ “Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, p. 336.

⁷⁶⁸ “Meclis-i Mebusân İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid’a Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstid’aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, p. 324.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁷⁷⁰ “Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 861.

the petition writers who demanded pension increases were even the widows of the high-ranking army officers such as lieutenant generals.⁷⁷¹

Another way to increase the pensions by a small amount was to request a posthumous promotion, which was allowed by law as a reward for exceptional military service. Even those women whose husbands or sons did not meet the conditions applied for such promotions. For example, Naciye Hanım, whose husband Captain Hasan Fehmi had died in battle on 19 May 1915, requested the promotion of her husband to the rank of Major. After investigations, the Ministry of War rejected this demand with an official letter dated 29 March 1916 stating that there was no indication in the records of Captain Hasan Fehmi of extraordinary military service.⁷⁷² Similarly, Hediye Hanım from the Aksaray district of İstanbul wrote a petition on 28 October 1917 requesting the promotion of her deceased husband, Captain Hamdi Efendi. She was also turned down by the Ministry of War for the same reason.⁷⁷³

Petitioning the government in order to receive bigger pensions, women requested the promotion of their sons or husbands, still alive and on duty. Their main reason for such demand was the martyrdom of other male relatives. For instance, Emine, who lived in the Sirkeci district of İstanbul, on 24 February 1917 requested the promotion of his son, Lieutenant Ahmet Rıfkı, who was serving at the rank of Captain, declaring that her two other sons had died as martyrs for the protection of

⁷⁷¹ “Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid’a Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstid’aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, p. 336.

⁷⁷² “Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 165.

⁷⁷³ “Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid’a Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstid’aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, p. 328.

fatherland. Her request was rejected because there was no existing law for such a promotion.⁷⁷⁴

As a result of the pressure of such requests, women's right to receive pensions was further enlarged with new legal regulations. For example, on 4 September 1920, a cabinet decision was passed for the benefit of the widows and orphans of soldiers who had died before being promoted to the rank of senior captain (*kıdemli yüzbaşı*). With this new regulation, Article 4 of the provisional law dated 11 May 1914, which prohibited the allotment of pension to these families, was annulled on the request of the Ministry of War on 28 August 1920.⁷⁷⁵

Only the families of high ranking army officers received greater amounts of additional pension from a fund called the "National Service" (*Hidemât-ı Vataniyye*), which was given in case that the soldiers' service in war was remarkable. The widows of state officials could receive this pension as well in case their husbands' former work was considered excellent. For example, a cabinet decree allocated an additional 750 piasters from this fund to both the wife and son of former Eskişehir governor Hilmi Bey, who had been murdered in the war, while on duty, increasing the retirement pension they received of 1500 piaster. When this money was added to the 1100 piasters they already received, the sum of money they received from the state per month reached 2600 piasters.⁷⁷⁶

However, many women who were in extreme need requested this additional pension allocated from the National Service fund without regarding the obligation of extraordinary service for the country and the state. For example, Zeynep Hanım,

⁷⁷⁴ "Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir," *ibid.*, p. 852.

⁷⁷⁵ BOA, MV, 220/52, 19 Zilhicce 1338 [Sept. 3, 1920]. See for the previous law that has been annulled later with this law, "8 Şa'bân 1327 Tarihli Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifa Kanûnu'nun Bazı Mevâddının Muaddel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 28 Nisan 1330 / 15 Cemâziyelâhir 1332 [May 11, 1914], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, pp. 642-644.

⁷⁷⁶ BOA, MV, 254/94, 14 Şa'bân 1338 [3 May 1920].

living in the Saraçhane district of İstanbul, petitioned the Ottoman parliament on 27 November 1917 asking for a pension from the National Service fund due to the former services of her deceased father to the state. This request was turned down on the grounds that it was not legal to grant it.⁷⁷⁷

Third, when women requested the pension, they frequently suffered discrimination and exclusion due to some strict criteria that were determined to limit the number of recipients. As stated before, lower ranking soldiers who had died due to epidemics or other diseases in hospitals rather than being killed on the battlefield were not considered martyrs for a very long time. Accordingly, their families received no pensions. For example, Seniyye from the Makriköy [Bakırköy] district of İstanbul, whose husband gendarme lieutenant Hasan had died on 5 November 1915, was unable to receive a pension from the state because the army argued that Hasan had died a natural death.⁷⁷⁸ Likewise, Zeynep, the wife of the deceased Captain Zeki Efendi, was unable to receive a family pension despite her petition, dated 12 December 1917 because the Ministry of War decided after investigations that his death had been due to natural causes.⁷⁷⁹

This regulation made an important number of women suffer from severe poverty. Their effort to obtain pensions for their husbands, sons, and fathers however gradually gave results as the result of writing petitions or fighting at the doors of the state officials. Laws and regulations on payments to the families of dead soldiers were transformed as the war continued. Because the families of those soldiers who

⁷⁷⁷ “Meclis-i Mebusana İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, p. 153.

⁷⁷⁸ “Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 169.

⁷⁷⁹ “Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid’a Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstid’aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, p. 318.

died due to war-related diseases in the hospitals rather than falling martyr on the battlefield pressured the government to receive a martyr pensions, in the end, the government had to modify the legal regulations excluding these women with a law dated 13 July 1916,⁷⁸⁰ and an amendment to Article 36 of the Military Retirement and Resignation Law. For instance, the family of private Mustafa, who died due to swamp-fever (*hummâ-yi merzagiye*) in Damascus Central Hospital on 28 December 1915 finally managed to receive a pension on 13 January 1918 as a result of the modified Article 36, which was about the pensions given to lower ranking soldiers' families.⁷⁸¹

Furthermore, pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner assigned to soldiers' poor families were terminated after the death of the soldier due to epidemics. This created widespread discontent among the women in this situation. Many poor women complained to the local governments about this termination and wanted their pensions restored. For instance, on 20 February 1915, the Trabzon governor Cemal Azmi asked the Ottoman government by wire whether the local government had to continue paying pensions to the families of those soldiers who had died due to natural causes. The Ministry of War replied on 28 February 1915 that it was natural to cut the pensions starting from the date that the soldier had died.⁷⁸² Aleppo governor Bekir Sami asked the same question by wire to the government on 4 September 1915 to which the Ministry of War answered on 10 September 1915

⁷⁸⁰ See "Askeri Tekaüd ve İstifa Kanununun Otuzuncu Maddesine Zeyl Edilen Ahkâm ile Otuzdokuzuncu Maddesinin Tadilini Havi Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye ve Otuzdokuzuncu Maddesinin Tadilini Mutazammın Karamamesi Tevhiden Kavanin-i Maliyye, Askerî ve Muvazene-i Maliyye Encümenleri Mazbataları," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye No.: 428-501*, Vol. 2, pp. 16-20.

⁷⁸¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2218, Dos. 74, Fih. 2, 13 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1334 [13 January 1918].

⁷⁸² BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88-2/4-18, 15 Rebûlâhr 1333 [2 March 1915].

that there was no law to allot pensions to the families of those soldiers who had died in hospitals.⁷⁸³

Although the Ministry of War regularly rejected their demands in the first years of the war, the provincial governors became more insistent in requesting pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner for the poor families of soldiers who had died of diseases in the later years of the war. For example, in a cipher telegram sent by the Sivas governor on 13 October 1916 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was stated that because their pensions had been cut after the death of their soldiers, widows and orphans lived in poverty which aggravated their sorrow and mourning. Claiming that these families were in a really deplorable situation and that the municipalities were not able to feed them as they were in great numbers, the governor wrote that it was demanded from many districts of his province that at least half the amount of these families' pensions continued to be paid until the end of mobilization. Consequently, the Ministry accepted to pay the retirement pensions of the martyr soldiers to their families immediately, but rejected the payment to the families of those soldiers who had died of natural causes.⁷⁸⁴

Discrimination was also made between the members of the martyr soldier's families. Generally the wives of the deceased soldiers were given equal the amount of money as the soldiers' parents or children. Nevertheless, in polygamous marriages, they were able to receive half of the money the other family members got, the wife's share being divided equally between the wives. For instance, the two wives of infantry man private Abdullah, Hatice and Hürre, after their husband had died on 29 September 1916 due to suffocation (*su-i enfiyyeden*), each received 16 piasters and 20 *paras*, while the father and son of Abdullah each received 33 piasters

⁷⁸³ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 89-3/1-30, 3 Zilka'de 1333 [12 September 1915].

⁷⁸⁴ BOA, DH.İ.U.M.EK, 22/8, 18 Zilhicce 1334 [16 October 1916].

and 20 *paras* as it had been decided by the Kayseri accounting office on 3 September 1919.⁷⁸⁵ Likewise, Emine and Ayşe, wives of the soldier Veli, who had died on 26 December 1916, received the same amount of money while his mother and son each received more than both of their share due to the decision of the İçel accounting office on 11 August 1918.⁷⁸⁶ This unequal division shows that in cases of polygamous marriage, the wives of the martyr soldiers were considered by the state institutions not equal family members. Probably the state saw these women as suitable for further marriages that would support them economically.

Being married to a man under 60 years old and without any disability as well caused the loss of the right to receive pensions even for the closest female relatives of the martyr soldiers like mothers. For example, Fatma Nigâr Hanım, whose son died in the Dardanelles War, was not allotted the martyr pension despite her petition of 15 January 1917 because she had a husband under the age of 60 and without disability.⁷⁸⁷ The poor sisters of the martyr soldiers were worse off because they received no pensions if they had husbands. Moreover, the age or disability of the husband for them was not taken into consideration. However, such women, especially in need, also demanded family pension. For instance, Kâmile from Bursa, who on 9 February 1918 explained in a petition that she was the sister of a martyr lieutenant who had no other heirs, was unable to receive a pension despite her poverty.⁷⁸⁸

Finally, discrimination was sometimes related to the occupation of the martyr. For instance, women of martyr army doctors who had relatively less chance to ask

⁷⁸⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-30, 3 Eylül 1335 [3 September 1919].

⁷⁸⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2203, Dos. 27, Fih. 3-4, 11 Ağustos 1334 [11 August 1918].

⁷⁸⁷ “Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid’a Encümenince Mukarrerât İttihaz Edilen İstid’aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, pp. 319-320.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

for premiums from the state were in a relatively bad situation. After its foundation under the direction of the Red Crescent Society, the Commission to Help the Families of the Martyr Army Physicians received many petitions from poor wives and female relatives of doctors who had died during their military service. On 5 November 1917 and on 25 December 1917, Fahriye, wife of the martyr Major Doctor Hilmi, wrote two petitions to the Commission from Kozyatağı, İstanbul. After complaining that she was left unprotected with her children and had extraordinary difficulties in finding food in wartime, she demanded from the authorities to help her financially to cover their basic needs.⁷⁸⁹

Although the Commission was devised to help the poor families of martyr doctors, the families of those who had fallen martyr before World War I received no help. The main reason for this was that the Commission was established to help the army medical staff, who died from 1914 onwards. Creating discrimination between families of the martyr doctors who had died at different times, the aid provided by the Commission was first of all thought of as a means for supporting the war effort of the state. For instance, Hayriye, who lived in Cerrahpaşa with her orphan children, wrote on 2 September 1917 to the Commission for help because her husband Doctor Mehmed had died during his military service. Her request was declined because Doctor Mehmed had died in 1321 [1905] and because she had been allotted a pension of 314 piasters by the government.⁷⁹⁰ In another instance, the wife of

⁷⁸⁹ TKA, 12/318.1, 5 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1333 [5 November 1917], and TKA, 12/318, 25 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 [25 December 1917]. Wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of non-Muslim communities also wrote for financial relief. For example the mother of deceased Doctor Dimitriyadis Efendi asked for help on 23 August 1917 citing that she lived miserably with her two daughters and one son. See TKA, 12/306, 23 Ağustos 1333 [23 August 1917].

⁷⁹⁰ TKA, 12/309, 2 Eylül 1333 [2 September 1917].

Captain Doctor Hasan Seyfettin, who had died in 1914 before the outbreak of the war also demanded money from the Commission on 19 September 1917, but in vain.⁷⁹¹

The families of the army doctors who had died as martyrs during the Balkan Wars were rejected as well. For example, a petition dated 1 September 1917 and submitted by the sister of Doctor Nafiz Tahir, an army doctor who had been killed by Bulgarians during his Red Crescent work in Drama, was rejected.⁷⁹² In another example, the wife of Doctor Mehmet Akif, who had died during the Balkan Wars, similarly wrote to the Commission on 20 October 1917, but received nothing and had to rely on a very small amount of pension allotted by the state.⁷⁹³

Some women asking for help from the Commission and the Red Crescent received no money, but they were given some remunerated jobs instead of pensions. This was especially true for young women who had a certain education level. Sabiha, sister of Nafiz Tahir Efendi, a Red Crescent doctor who had been killed by Bulgarians during his work in Salonica, wrote on 1 March 1917 to the vice president of the Red Crescent Society that since her brothers' death she had lost her only financial protector and had started to live in squalor. Therefore, she demanded that the Society "give a helping hand" to her as "a miserable young lady." Eventually she was appointed to a position as an officer in the Commission of Prisoners of War (*Üsera Komisyonu*) of the Society.⁷⁹⁴

Families of the army pharmacists as well were excluded from the pension funds of the Commission. Emine Hanım, mother of Hikmet Efendi, pharmacist of Kuleli Hospital, was one of these who received no help despite her applications.⁷⁹⁵ As a result of such discrimination, the pharmacists working as army personnel

⁷⁹¹ TKA, 12/313, 19 Eylül 1333 [19 September 1917].

⁷⁹² TKA, 12/307, 1 Eylül 1333 [1 September 1917].

⁷⁹³ TKA, 12/314, 20 Teşrin-i Evvel 1333 [20 October 1917].

⁷⁹⁴ TKA, 67/2, 1 Mart 1333 [1 March 1917].

⁷⁹⁵ TKA, 12/308, 1 Eylül 1333 [1 September 1917].

decided to cut off the support that they gave to the Commission. On 27 August 1918, the pharmacists working in the Dardanelles Fortified Area Command (*Bahr-i Sefid Boğazi Mevki' Müstahkem Kumandanlığı*) wrote that they had decided to stop paying 1 percent of their salaries to the Commission. Arguing that they neither had heard nor had read in the army newspaper (*Cerîde-i Askeriye*) that any deceased pharmacists' family had received money from the Commission, they stated that if the Red Crescent Society established another assistance fund which would help their families, they would continue paying 1 percent of their salaries regularly to the Society.⁷⁹⁶

After the mobilization ended, the Commission's importance for the war effort of the Ottoman state diminished. However, for women who had recently lost their husbands and male relatives as breadwinners, it had still a vital importance. On 17 August 1919, the Medical Chairman of the Ottoman Army, Doctor İbrahim Pasha, informed the Red Crescent that the Commission had only some 1800 Ottoman liras to distribute to the widows of the martyr army doctors.⁷⁹⁷ In this fragile period as well, the widows of the Ottoman army doctors continued to resort to the Commission. For instance, the wife of the martyr Major Dr. Hüseyin Şâdî, who had died on 13 April 1917, wrote to the Commission on 28 July 1919 that after the death of her husband she had also lost her house due to the Karagümrük fire. Writing that she had been left homeless with her three children, she requested monetary aid to improve her conditions.⁷⁹⁸ Similarly, the petitions of two widows of the Ottoman Army doctors, one Muslim and another non-Muslim, were accepted at the same time by the Commission on 9 September 1919, each family receiving 10 liras.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2476, Dos. 368, Fih. 1-27, 27 Ağustos 1334 [27 August 1918].

⁷⁹⁷ TKA, 67/7, 17 Ağustos 1335 [17 August 1919].

⁷⁹⁸ TKA, 67/9.4, 28 Temmuz 1335 [28 July 1919].

⁷⁹⁹ TKA, 67/9, 9 Eylül 1335 [9 September 1919], and TKA, 67/9.1, 16 Eylül 1335 [16 September 1919].

Briefly, as experienced in the implementation of the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner or military pay allotments, the pension of martyr's families as well were paid irregularly or after long delays. Furthermore, the money allotted for lower ranking soldiers' families provided no support as it was very little, especially for those women living in the cities hit by high prices. Finally, because the pensions and premiums assigned to the families of martyr soldiers or martyr army officers were thought first of all as a reward for military service rather than aid to widows and orphans, many women and children were unable to receive help after their breadwinners had died in war. However, negotiating the state's perception of these pensions as a means of war mobilization, women resisted all these problems, exclusions, and discriminative practices throughout the war period. They sometimes went to the state offices to seek remedies for their problems by directly asking for help from the state officials by crying or complaining. They frequently sought their rights through petitioning the government agencies. They used discursive strategies by employing the patriarchal and patriotic official discourse and words to convince the authorities or to call them to fulfill their commitments of protecting the nation. This struggle gave results in certain areas, and in time, more women were able to receive money from the state with the amendment of laws and acceptance of epidemics as a reason for the martyrdom of lower-ranking soldiers.

Concluding Remarks

The social group most vulnerable to the adverse social impact of the war on the Ottoman home front was poor or low-income women whose spouses, fathers, only sons or brothers left home for military service, lost in combat, or died in battle. The

Ottoman state, which had been involved in successive wars for years on various fronts both in the west and the east had already begun to provide monetary assistances to the poor families of soldiers and of dead soldiers regarded as martyrs from the late nineteenth century onwards. The main drive for this aid to the soldiers' families was to keep the soldiers' morale high, to prevent large scale desertions, and to prevent social problems on the home front. Although the government devised such assistance for its own war effort and the legitimacy of the state on the home front, the social assistance was of great importance to poor and low-income women especially in times of social and economic catastrophe like World War I. However, women faced several problems, difficulties and exclusionary problems in getting these pensions. Therefore, they actively responded to the implementation of the monetary assistance programs. In other words, the implementation of the pensions and military pay allotment for soldiers' families became a negotiation terrain between the Ottoman government and women.

As the archive documents show, Ottoman women were not simply passive receivers of the measures for providing pensions or military pay allotments, but active participants in the shaping of the laws and regulations about these monetary assistance programs. Although women's efforts did not always give results in increasing the amount of their pensions, poor women were quite effective in forcing the local governments to demand further financial help from the central government. The official documents often refer to a huge number of petitions and telegrams sent to local administrators and central authorities by the people, a considerable part of whom were women, for demanding new and increased pensions or complaining about delayed, half-paid or unpaid pensions. Women constituted the most crowded group on the home front that rebelled spontaneously against the local authorities,

protested the government or raided barns, when their pensions were not paid. Such events alarmed the authorities about further demoralization and desertions in the army provoked by the news about such events and misery of their families.

Indeed, the official correspondence between the provincial authorities and the central government show that although women did not frequently participate in open riots, they were able to influence the decision makers. Although they used a patriotic discourse showing themselves devoted to the fatherland, they did not become subservient to the state. Quite the contrary, they mostly appropriated the patriotic discourse for their subjective goals. Although women failed to raise the pensions they received, they compelled the politicians and bureaucrats to seriously consider it. Despite the limits of the state budget due to the huge military expenditures, the government had to accept in many cases certain concessions by increasing the number of women as pension receivers.

CHAPTER SIX

CRISIS OF MOTHERHOOD: HOUSING AND CHILD QUESTIONS

Ottoman women as mothers suffered an important crisis during World War I due to some negative conditions related to the war, which continued to have their impact long afterwards the war years. Continuous warfare between 1911 and 1922 in the Ottoman Empire resulted in important difficulties for women on the home front. As discussed before, hunger and poverty were two of the greatest problems of women as mothers. In addition to these, problems about housing, refugees, epidemics, and accordingly, care of children as well constituted impediments to motherhood during the war. Many women suffered the loss of their homes due to the migration, attacks on their house, widespread fires and difficulties in paying their rent. Homelessness made them and their children more vulnerable to the hazardous effects of bad weather, epidemics, and physical or sexual attacks. Many women had to fight to find accommodation. Moreover, in some cases the social impact of the war forced them to abandon their children. Countless women lost their children during the wartime chaos. The increase of orphaned, homeless, and poor children was the main indicator of the crisis of motherhood.

Demographic problems forced the state and many other institutions to create new laws and take new measures to protect indigent women as mothers, and children as women's primary dependants. The great part of the measures devised to end the housing problem, to help the refugees and to take care of the orphans and poor children were all developed in this period. The protection of children became the most vital among all these measures as the unprotected and undisciplined children were a big potential of crime and a lost workforce in the eyes of the Ottoman rulers.

Poor women, aware of these social aid measures, tried to get help from the state and welfare institutions. However, the laws and measures for protecting them and their children often discriminated among them due to both financial limits and ideological reasons. Just like the measures taken against hunger or shortages or measures for providing monetary assistance to women, the measures for the protection of mothers and their children were primarily thought to support the war effort. Furthermore, in many cases they fell short of meeting the demands of poor and single mothers who needed assistance, most of whom were lower-class women. As a result, these women had to struggle to get help from the state by overcoming discrimination, inefficient bureaucracy, and budget restraints.

This chapter examines the wartime crisis of motherhood as a problem of disadvantaged Muslim-Turkish women living in the Ottoman Empire during World War I.⁸⁰⁰ It particularly explores the housing and childcare problems of these poor women, as a part of the crisis of motherhood and womanhood in general. It starts with the evaluation of the reasons behind the crisis of motherhood and its dimensions in order to understand the scope of it. Then, it discusses wartime development of laws and institutions which were aimed to alleviate the housing problems and to protect children. Here this discussion shows how the Ottoman state and welfare institutions tried to solve the problems concerning homeless, poor and orphaned children by giving priority to the war mobilization. Finally, women's negotiation of the measures about home and children and their own strategies to deal with the problems of housing and childcare are examined in detail. This last part of the chapter especially points out the women's subjective approach to motherhood and

⁸⁰⁰ Undoubtedly, non-Muslim ordinary women of Armenian, Greek and Jewish communities also suffered from these problems. However, as stated before, their experience and sufferings are beyond this study because of the complexity associated with the analysis of peculiarities of different communities and because of time and place constraints, besides linguistic limitations of the present writer.

their wartime agency as poor mothers who fought for survival rather than obeying roles and expectations imposed on them by the patriarchal culture, society and state policies.

Reasons behind the Crisis of Motherhood

During World War I, poor mothers lost their ability to support their children due to many reasons. The war first of all damaged the function of home as a place for the protection of women and children. The conscription of men was the main reason making mothers single parents. Because an enormous number of male breadwinners were under arms, many women were left without the money to support their families. As seen in Chapter Five, women often had difficulty getting information from their fathers, sons or husbands, and therefore, they were unable to receive any monetary assistance from the state. Even when they received monetary aid, women had great difficulty paying their rent due to wartime inflation and black-marketeering which increased the prices of basic consumption goods as well as rent. Furthermore, the fires, bombardments, and enemy attacks were important reasons of the loss of their homes. Such developments made women homeless and unsupported on the street, which turned motherhood into an important burden. Finally, women died due to epidemics or other disasters and left behind tens of thousands of orphans, who created an important social problem on the home front.

During World War I and the Armistice period, in parallel to the increasing cost of living, the drastic increase in the rents both in the capital and in the provinces left many women and children homeless. According to Ahmed Emin, compared to the cost of living in July 1914, the cost of living in İstanbul increased to about 300

percent in 1916 and up to 2205 percent by December 1918. It did not fall under 1440 percent even by December 1920. Accordingly, the rents also rose about 200 to 300 percent a year during the same period. Sometimes, rents for apartment houses doubled within a few months. Because everything including the rents was paid in cash in the capital city while they were paid in gold and silver in the provinces, the prices seemed to have changed less in the provinces, related to the depreciation of the paper money compared to metal currency. Nevertheless, even in these conditions, the prices in the provinces rose 50 percent in the second year of the war, 100 percent in the third year and 200 percent in the fourth.⁸⁰¹ The rents were significantly affected by this upward trend of prices of basic consumption goods. Especially during the Armistice period with the arrival of White Russian refugees, rents reached a peak in İstanbul, and therefore, in 1920 a league was formed to fight profiteering landowners.⁸⁰²

This development adversely influenced all segments of Ottoman society, but particularly poor widows and refugee women had difficulty in finding economical housing and paying their rents. A survey made by American researchers in the capital city in 1920 shows that Turkish widows lived in three different kinds of accommodations. The first was mosques, which were crowded with the poor and refugees; *imârets* (public soup-kitchens and poor houses) and *medreses* (religious high schools); and private homes. The mosques offered no private rooms while the rent-free rooms of the *imârets* and *medreses* had one or more families in one room. The private home of widows, mostly were rented but not owned by the widows. In addition, they were overpopulated. They almost always consisted of only one room in which in average 3.9 people lived in a hundred cases chosen at random. Among

⁸⁰¹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 150-151.

⁸⁰² Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 28.

this hundred families living in 104 rooms the highest number in one room was ten while the lowest was three. Other than being overcrowded, the rents of the rooms were quite expensive. The average rent per month of these rooms was 2.90 Ottoman liras (290 piasters) which was already about three times the 100 piasters monthly pension of war martyr's families. Furthermore, the homes of widows were often insecure. In the middle of Nişantaşı, one of the richest districts of İstanbul, there was one whole settlement constructed of gasoline tins and old boards which even had no door but narrow openings where poor destitute women and children lived. Despite the precariousness of the dwellings, the municipality could not throw out widows from such homes, because if such buildings were banned many women would have to live on the street.⁸⁰³

Furthermore, women had difficulty in finding houses not only due to high rents, but also due to fires which largely stemmed from the lack of public order in the wartime. These fires occurred especially in the crowded and poor Muslim districts of the capital city, such as Fatih, Üsküdar, Eyüp, Hasköy, and Kasımpaşa because the houses were built of wood and were very close to each other.⁸⁰⁴ The number of the burned houses in the capital towards the end of the war in 1918 reached 8480. In the biggest fire, which occurred in the Fatih district of İstanbul on 31 May 1918, 7500 houses were burned.⁸⁰⁵ These fires left tens of thousands of people, mostly women and children, homeless. İsmail Hakkı Sunata described in his memoirs how these quarters of the city from Kocamustafapaşa to Samatya had been burned during this fire. He said that the burned districts would not be miserable no longer if they were

⁸⁰³ Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 290-292, 312.

⁸⁰⁴ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 155-157.

⁸⁰⁵ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, Vol. 3, pp. 1237-1238.

bombed by the enemy from the air, writing that they looked more horrible and desolate than a cemetery.⁸⁰⁶



Fig. 6 Women and children who live in a mosque in İstanbul.

Source: Clarence Richard Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day or the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 210.

Many women had to live in mosques and poorhouses or take refuge with relatives as a result of these fires.⁸⁰⁷ In its 1919 report, the Red Crescent Society said that it had determined up to 1731 families with 6423 members as victims of these fires who have lived in 206 places such as mosques, medresés, public baths or Islamic monasteries, while more than 6000 other victims lived in private homes, cottages or shops. The report stated that there were many other victims of fires who could not be

⁸⁰⁶ Sunata, *İstanbul'da İşgal Yılları*, p. 11.

⁸⁰⁷ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 27.

determined because they lived in desolate places about which even the municipality or police forces had no information.⁸⁰⁸

Although the economic constraints of World War I decreased the number of multi-generational families who lived together in the big residences called *konak* (mansion) in the capital city,⁸⁰⁹ many families in return had to live together due to the wartime fires and poverty. Hüseyin Kâmil Ertur recalled that especially after the big fires in the capital which had burnt most of the city, his house was crowded with women and children who were refugees, fire victims or soldiers' families.⁸¹⁰ In his memoirs, İsmail Hakkı Sunata writes as well that when he was demobilized and returned home to İstanbul he saw that his family was living with two other families in one house due to economic restraints. The other family was that of a woman called Advıye. The rest of his extended family lived no better. His younger aunt had lost her house to the Vefa fire and started living in a *medrese* where she had died. Her daughter and son had lost their lives in the same place. His elderly aunt had lost her husband and they did not know where she lived. His another aunt had gone crazy and died and her four daughters were taken by her older sister.⁸¹¹

Bombing and enemy attacks aggravated the problem of housing as well. During World War I enemy planes bombarded the capital city from the direction of the Dardanelles day and night. Certain crowded districts were special targets and in these places people died and buildings were destroyed or burnt. For instance, in one attack at the district of Mahmutpaşa a bomb which fell near *Küçük Cami* (Little Mosque) caused the death of several people.⁸¹² Bombing also caused damages in

⁸⁰⁸ *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁰⁹ Alan Duben, *Kent, Aile, Tarih*, trans. by Leyla Şimşek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 151.

⁸¹⁰ Ertur, *Tamu Yelleri*, p. 125.

⁸¹¹ İ. Hakkı Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anılarım* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), pp. 604-605.

⁸¹² Ertur, *Tamu Yelleri*, p. 125.

Anatolia in regions under enemy fire, such as the Black Sea coast which was frequently bombarded by Russian war ships.⁸¹³ The bombings which destroyed homes, left many people, especially women and children, homeless.

Immigration and Poverty as Catalysts of the Crisis of Motherhood

The largest group, who suffered from homelessness the most, was migrant mothers and their children. Since refugee men were conscripted to the army, settling down was especially a problem of refugee women, in particular mothers, their children and elderly refugees.⁸¹⁴ Because of the continuous warfare, refugee mothers could not find homes for a very long time, even after the Armistice was signed. Refugees of the Hüdavendigâr province were only one example. Of more than 400,000 Muslim people who had fled from the Balkan provinces during the Balkan Wars, one of the largest groups arrived in Bursa.⁸¹⁵ After the eruption of World War I within a very short time these refugees were left without a proper place to live. Many of them had to wait for a place in which to settle for more than ten years, until the population exchange in 1924.⁸¹⁶

The situation of refugee mothers was no better in the capital city. A contemporary observer, Véra Dumesnil, wrote that during the Armistice period thousands of Anatolian refugees, especially women and children who had fled from the Greek invasion, had arrived in the capital city and lived homeless in the narrow

⁸¹³ See for example, BOA, DH.İ.UM, 21-1/58, 17 Şa'bân 1336 [28 May 1918]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM, 21-2/90, 2 Rebûlâhır 1339 [14 December 1920].

⁸¹⁴ Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele'de Türk Mültecileri*, p. 66.

⁸¹⁵ According to the Ottoman Ministry of Internal Affairs statistics the total number of Muslim refugees from the Balkans between 1912 and 1920 was 413,922. Those who were settled in Hüdavendigâr province were 20,853. McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 161.

⁸¹⁶ Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 215.

streets and in the Davutpaşa barracks, which accepted an important number of women with children or children who had lost their mothers.⁸¹⁷

The situation of refugee women was worst in the East. By December 1918, in the eastern provinces, many Muslim refugees with no house to live in suffered from the cold and from the frequent attacks of wolves in winter.⁸¹⁸



Fig. 7 A refugee mother on the road with her baby right after the Balkan Wars, which on the eve of World War I.

Source: Güney Dinç, *Mehmed Nail Bey'in Derlediği Kartpostallarla Balkan Savaşı (1912-1913)* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), p. 121.

Under such circumstances, population movements became one of the most important reasons behind the increasing difficulty in keeping the family unified and in taking care of children. World War I came upon the middle of a period between refugee waves and population exchanges. In fact, the movement of Muslim people

⁸¹⁷ Dumesnil, *İşgal İstanbul'u*, p. 12.

⁸¹⁸ Dursunoğlu, *Milli Mücadele'de Erzurum*, pp. 22-23.

into Rumelia and Anatolia had been accelerated in the nineteenth century with the loss of the Ottoman territories in the Balkans and the Caucasus.⁸¹⁹ One of the biggest waves had come with the Balkan Wars. From the Balkan Wars onwards many Turkish Muslim women had become refugees. Population movements and deportations continued during World War I, the National Struggle and afterwards, when a population exchange was implemented between Turkey and Greece. Leaving behind their properties and houses, refugee women, especially widows, were among the poorest groups of women in the Empire. They frequently died on the road due to gang attacks, epidemics, hunger or cold, while they were also reduced to thievery or prostituting. Furthermore, because they had to flee in hurry, mostly due to the attacks of occupation forces or local non-Muslim communities, many of them lost their children on the road. They frequently saw their children die of cold, malnutrition, or epidemics. Consequently, many families were shattered during World War I.⁸²⁰

The number of refugees reached great numbers due to the continuous warfare. Apart from those who had fled to İstanbul and Anatolia during the Balkan Wars, up to 1,604,031 Muslims had fled from the eastern provinces of the Empire during World War I, as was reported in the newspaper *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* (Portrayal of Opinions) on 11 May 1919.⁸²¹ During the National Struggle as well the number of refugees who had left Aydın province was calculated 80,000 in the first days of the Greek occupation, while this number quickly increased to 120,000 and to 300,000 by

⁸¹⁹ According to Donald Quataert, about 5-7 million Muslims immigrated into Ottoman lands between 1783 and 1913. See Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of The Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, 1600-1914, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 793.

⁸²⁰ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, Vol. 2, *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 1004. For the Muslim people's immigration from Balkans and Caucasus into Rumelia and Anatolia in bad circumstances, see McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 65-81, 113-116, 156-161.

⁸²¹ "Müslüman Muhacirler," *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* (11 May 1919), p. 2. Quoted in Öğün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 36, 40.

1921.⁸²² All these population movements created a problem of housing for families, especially those who were deprived of their male relatives who were under arms or lost or died during the long war years. This problem especially hit the needy women and their children without support of their families.



Fig. 8 Muslim refugee women on the road right after the Balkan Wars.

Source: Güney Dinç, *Mehmed Nail Bey'in Derlediği Kartpostallarla Balkan Savaşı (1912-1913)* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), p. 120.

Other than homelessness and difficulties for children, fleeing their homes meant death for people in large numbers. In this regard, among the first victims were women, children, and the elderly.⁸²³ During their escape from the Russian army in 1916, hundreds of thousands of people suffered from hunger, impoverishment, epidemics, and the deaths of their family members. Out of the 1,604,031 refugees 701,166 people, which was 43.7 percent of all refugees, died on the road.⁸²⁴ Ahmed Emin [Yalman] wrote that nearly half of the refugees who had been forced to leave

⁸²² Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 77.

⁸²³ It is not possible to forget the impact of the Armenian deportations from Eastern Anatolia in 1915 of hapless women and children in the hundreds of thousands. For specific accounts of this subject see Ahmet İnel and Michel Marian, *Ermeni Tabusu Üzerine Diyalog* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010).

⁸²⁴ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 36.

their homelands due to the Russian occupation between 1916 and 1918 had died from hunger and diseases. Furthermore, they received very little help from the government or the Red Crescent and in most of the provinces except two to three to which they arrived the inhabitants did not help them either.⁸²⁵ The lack of help increased the death rate among them. For example, Muzaffer Lermioğlu cited the number of deaths only from his hometown Akçaabat as 23,000 by 1918. Most of these people were displaced persons.⁸²⁶ Furthermore, in February 1919, a report of Erzurum governor stated that among the 448,607 refugees who had departed from Erzurum, only 173,304 people had returned, 108,098 people would have probably returned and 207,105 people were lost.⁸²⁷

Zübeyir Kars states as well that after February 1919, Turkish refugees who had been previously settled down in the houses of deported Armenians in Kayseri had to leave these residences when these Armenian families returned. During this second immigration, about 300,000 Turkish refugees died due to illness.⁸²⁸ In addition, the articles of Arif Oruç in 1919, in the journal *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* stated that out of the 63,614 refugees who had left Aydın province only 42,374 of them could be determined as alive, while the situation of the others was unknown.⁸²⁹

Due to the high death rates among the refugees there were many orphans. In the eastern provinces of the Empire, there were about 90,000 children without parents most of them around Sivas province. Some of these war orphans were taken care of by their relatives, if they had any. Nevertheless, sometimes these relatives too had nobody else to ask for help, like conscripted soldiers whose children had been

⁸²⁵ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 248-249.

⁸²⁶ Lermioğlu, *Akçaabat – Akçaabat Tarihi*, p. 131.

⁸²⁷ BOA, DH.SN.THR, 82/55, 1 Şubat 1335 [1 February 1919]. Quoted in Öğün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 36.

⁸²⁸ Zübeyir Kars, *Millî Mücadele'de Kayseri* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999), pp. 14-15.

⁸²⁹ Yücel Özkaya, *Millî Mücadelede Ege Çevresi*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: Yeni Gün Haber Ajansı, 2001), p. 48.

left motherless.⁸³⁰ This was true for the refugees of other provinces as well. For example, in his historical novel about Safiye Hüseyin, a well-known nurse on the Dardanelles front, İsmail Bilgin, wrote about an old refugee woman and a girl, aged about 10 to 12 years, whom she came across. Asking them about their situation, Safiye Hüseyin learned that the old woman was the aunt of the girl and they had fled from Maydos. The child had lost her mother three years earlier, due to tuberculosis. When the war erupted all their neighbors had fled, but they had stayed in their village in misery having no other relatives to ask for help. Finally, they also had to leave their village out of fear due to the bombings of enemy airplanes.⁸³¹



Fig. 9 Miserable refugee women on the way to Ottoman lands right after the Balkan Wars.

Source: Güney Dinç, *Mehmed Nail Bey'in Derlediği Kartpostallarla Balkan Savaşı (1912-1913)* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), p. 122.

Flight was extremely difficult for mothers because most of them left their homes rapidly due to enemy attacks, taking very few things with them and

⁸³⁰ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 40.

⁸³¹ İsmail Bilgin, *Çanakkale'nin Kadın Kahramanı Safiye Hüseyin* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008), pp. 176-177.

furthermore because they had little children to take care of. For example, another contemporary witness, İsmail Hakkı Sunata, wrote in his memoirs about refugees from Anafartalar village near the Dardanelles front that he saw during his military service. The refugees were on ox-carts and carriages filled with a few provisions, beds, pillows, and unpacked clothes which seemed to have been carelessly packed up in a hurry. He learned that these migrants had left their villages, because the occupation forces had come too near and confiscated their fields.⁸³²

In addition, having many children, women had difficulty fleeing from the invading soldiers together with their children. Halil Ataman, for instance, wrote in his memoirs that when he arrived near Kızılkilise, a district of Dersim [Tunceli], he had seen a group of refugees outside in – 40 °C at night. He pitied one mother, who had tied one of her children on her back, had taken another child who could walk by one hand and held the oxen which carried her cart with the other. Another woman from the same group had three children and was worse off, dragging two children holding their hands and carrying a third child on her back on the snow covered road.⁸³³

Since they had to act as quickly as possible, many women lost their children in the tumult, or had to leave them during the attacks of the occupying forces. Many families fell apart as they fled for their lives. In his memoirs, Bezmi Nusret Kaygusuz wrote about the terrible situation of the migrants in Alaşehir district during the occupation of the Greek army in the Armistice period and likened their escape from the enemy to Judgment Day. He saw many women who had lost their husbands

⁸³² Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara*, pp. 128-129.

⁸³³ Halil Ataman, *Esaret Yılları: Bir Yedek Subayın I. Dünya Savaşı Şark Cephesi Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Kardeşler Matbaası, 1990), p. 73.

and men who carried their children alone. Kaygusuz stated that nobody was thinking about his or her property while trying to flee.⁸³⁴



Fig. 10 A group of refugees, probably a family, on the way to Ottoman lands right after the Balkan Wars.

Source: Güney Dinç, *Mehmed Nail Bey'in Derlediği Kartpostallarla Balkan Savaşı (1912-1913)* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), p. 117.

Some of those refugee women who were lost during such incidents were able to find their relatives only decades later. In the meantime, they were left without the support of their families and suffered greatly. For instance, the mother of İdris Erdinç, who had escaped from gang attacks in the Balkans, had to abandon her son unwillingly, and found him after about a decade during which she had to migrate, find work in factories and marry another man, without knowing that her first husband, a war veteran, was still alive.⁸³⁵ Another woman called Fatma lost her family when she was four years old in 1914 and found them after 61 years of separation, in 1975. During the escape of her family from Erzurum because of the

⁸³⁴ Bezmi Nusret Kaygusuz, *Bir Roman Gibi* (İzmir: İhsan Gümüşayak Matbaası, 1955), p. 190.

⁸³⁵ Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris: Anılar* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 2004), pp. 10-25.

attacks of Russian troops, she had fallen from the ox-cart at one crossroad and had never been found by her parents.⁸³⁶

This situation of lost refugee women was depicted in the literature of the time. Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu], a keen observer and nationalist writer of the time, in one of his stories on the National Struggle period, penned in 1921 and titled *Köyünü Kaybeden Kadın* (The Woman Who Had Lost Her Village), wrote of a poor refugee woman who had lost all her family during her escape from the Greek army. Searching for her village, she had lost her way several times, not knowing that the village was still under enemy occupation. She could only see one of her children, her 13 year old son, once as a captive of the enemy. The civil servants from whom she requested help could not dare to tell her the truth about her village and tried to delay her departure by giving her hope that they would send her home soon and giving her food in the meantime.⁸³⁷

Wartime poverty and hunger especially impeded women's efforts to raise their children and increased child mortality rates. Above all, because women suffered from hunger themselves, they could not properly breastfeed their infants. Finding milk was nearly impossible because it was too costly, especially in the capital city. As a result, babies died due to malnutrition as their only food was war bread soaked in water.⁸³⁸ The situation of older children who had nothing to eat was no better. İrfan Orga wrote in his memoirs that many of the dirty and hungry children he saw on the street during the war years had experienced so much pain that at the age of seven or eight they had become tougher than adult men of the age of forty.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁶ Tekin, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, pp. 104-115.

⁸³⁷ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, "Köyünü Kaybeden Kadın," in *Millî Savaş Hikâyeleri*, ed. by Atilla Özkırımlı, 6th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 117-121.

⁸³⁸ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 250.

⁸³⁹ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, p. 120.

Lower-class women who worked in underpaid jobs were also vulnerable and they could find no proper food for their children. For example, Lynn A. Scipio, Dean of the Engineering School at Robert College, in İstanbul during World War I, noted in his memoirs that many children had died of undernourishment and even starvation in those years. Once he had seen a poor charwoman on the street who bargained with a shopkeeper about the price of tomatoes which she needed for her sickly daughter but could not pay for even the rotten ones. Scipio had convinced the woman not to buy anything from this shopkeeper and had taken her to another shop from which he had bought for her some good tomatoes, potatoes and cheese.⁸⁴⁰

Especially children of the refugee women suffered from hunger. During his military service in the eastern provinces, Hüseyin Atif Beşe wrote in his diary on 20 September 1916 that he saw everywhere children of refugee families who had no parents or had been abandoned by them. Any time he tried to eat something in the military tent, three to four of these children would come in front of him waiting for food. Although he wanted to give his bread to these children, he could not share his pitiful amount of rations.⁸⁴¹

Those children whose mothers were still alive were suffering, too. For example, Muzaffer Lermioğlu wrote about the story of a migrant woman whose husband had died as a martyr and who had to migrate from Trabzon with her children due to enemy attacks. She could not save her children from poverty, cold and hunger despite all her attempts. Eventually, she had to see their deaths and then died on the same day out of hunger and misery.⁸⁴²

The official correspondences between the state authorities also show how the movement of families, especially of women and children, due to the attack of

⁸⁴⁰ Scipio, *My Thirty Years in Turkey*, p. 144.

⁸⁴¹ Erginsoy, *Dedem Hüseyin Atif Beşe*, p. 193.

⁸⁴² Lermioğlu, *Akçaabat – Akçaabat Tarihi*, pp. 265-302.

occupying forces and non-Muslim bands left them without accommodation, food and other material supports. According to a telegram sent on 16 February 1918 to the government and certain deputies from Urfa, a city full of refugees and that experienced great hunger during the World War I, it was stated that people died each day out of hunger. They searched for pieces of bread walking through all of the quarters of the city desperately in vain. Many mothers asked for the blood of slaughtered sheep or goats from butchers or slaughterhouses to use as food for their children, but 80 percent of these women received nothing. Some of these women had been trying to survive with animal carcass they could procure, and in the middle of winter, many of them could not find even grass to eat.⁸⁴³

Impact of the Worsening Health Conditions and Epidemics

The war worsened health conditions, which hit primarily the poor and especially refugee women and their children. Death due to cold weather was common among the children, who had no house in which to take shelter. Many refugees froze to death on the road or on the streets finding no shelter in the places at which they arrived. Arif Oruç wrote as a journalist in 1919 to *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* (Portrayal of Opinions) about an old refugee man who had lost his children and grandchildren on the road. Finally, he had had to leave his six months old grandchild behind on the road in order to save himself from dying from cold.⁸⁴⁴

In these conditions new born babies were under great danger. The problem of lonely and unprotected pregnant women became alarming during the war years because it fuelled the increase in baby mortality rates. Hüsametdin Tuğaç wrote in his

⁸⁴³ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 20-2/2-46, 16 Şubat 1334 [16 February 1918]. Quoted in Öğün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 50.

⁸⁴⁴ Özkaya, *Milli Mücadelede Ege Çevresi*, Vol. 2, pp. 67-69.

memoirs how during his ten days of military leave of absence he had suffered seeing that her sister, Şefika was in deathbed with her newborn baby in the absence of her soldier husband. Not knowing that he had died in battle, Şefika had waited for a letter from him for the previous two months after she had given birth to a son. In the meantime she had gone dry, and the baby had been badly fed. Within a short time she had died together with her baby due to tuberculosis with no chance to receive medical treatment at a sanatorium.⁸⁴⁵

Wartime epidemics further increased the death rate of children and their mothers. The mortality statistics, which were only kept in İstanbul at that time, showed that from 1912 to 1923 more women died than men in the city in all those years without an exception. Child mortality was very high, about 20 percent of the total mortality in the city in 1914, 19 percent in 1915, 18 percent in 1916, 17.5 percent in 1917, and 17 percent in 1918, reaching up to 6979 dead children that year. The real numbers were even higher because the registration of the dead children was irregular.⁸⁴⁶ The deaths of the poor and especially children were not reported in order to reduce costs, and because the state did not want to demoralize the public.⁸⁴⁷ Indeed, losing siblings was very common for war children. In an oral history study, Şinasi Erdal recalled that as a little child between the ages of four to six during World War I, he had suffered from a grave illness. His older brother had also come down with this illness and died. His two other siblings had even died before he had fallen ill, because they had not received medical treatment.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁵ Hüsamettin Tuğaç, *Bir Neslin Dramı: Kafkas Cephesinden, Çarlık Rusyasında Tutsaklıktan Anılar* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1975), pp. 215-216.

⁸⁴⁶ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 249.

⁸⁴⁷ Tevfik Çavdar, *Milli Mücadele Başlarken Sayılarla "...Vaziyet ve Manzara-i Umumiye"* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1971), p. 120.

⁸⁴⁸ Göğüş-Tan, *et al.*, *Cumhuriyet'te Çocuklar*, p. 413.

Malnutrition and lack of basic consumer goods such as cleaning and clothing materials paved the way for the increase in epidemics like typhus, malaria and tuberculosis throughout the Empire among both the soldiers and civilians during the war.⁸⁴⁹ In those years nearly all the provinces suffered outbreaks of plague, tuberculosis, typhus, cholera, relapsing fever, typhoid fever, dysentery, camp fever, paratyphoid, rabies, syphilis, and gonorrhoea occurred.⁸⁵⁰ Having no cleaning instruments such as soap played a particular role in illnesses such as mange among the populace.⁸⁵¹ Hester Donaldson Jenkins, a teacher at the American College for Girls in İstanbul during the war, wrote in her memoirs that during the war because of the lack of food and enough water, epidemics had been widespread in the capital city. Especially the poor had died due to these diseases. The poverty had been so intense that people walked like skeletons in the poor districts of the city.⁸⁵²

Epidemics had had a diverse impact on women and children even before World War I. Between 1912 and 1915 cholera epidemics was widespread.⁸⁵³ During the Balkan Wars and in the first years of World War I, people had feared cholera and invented rumors about the burial of the dead outside the capital city in mass graves.⁸⁵⁴ During World War I epidemics were so common that in Anatolia more than half of the population was afflicted with malaria and at least one person in every family had tuberculosis.⁸⁵⁵ Due to the prevalence of tuberculosis, the Ottoman

⁸⁴⁹ Ahmed Emin wrote that unlike the plague or cholera, typhus was very destructive in İstanbul, and therefore, radical measures had been taken to prevent it. Ahmet Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 250. Hikmet Özdemir also wrote that typhus had been the most significant and dangerous epidemics which caused deaths among both the army and the civilians especially in winter during World War I. Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 195.

⁸⁵⁰ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 224.

⁸⁵¹ Esenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap*, p. 19.

⁸⁵² Jenkins, *Robert Kolej'in Kızları*, p. 222.

⁸⁵³ Makbule Sarıkaya, "Savaş Yıllarında Himâye-i Etfal Cemiyetinin Çocuk Sağlığı Konusundaki Hedef ve Faaliyetleri," in *Savaş Çocukları Öksüzler ve Yetimler*, ed. Gürsoy-Naskali and Koç, pp. 39-40.

⁸⁵⁴ For the rumours about cholera, see Bilgin, *Çanakkale'nin Kadın Kahramanı*, p. 41.

⁸⁵⁵ Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 94.

Society of Struggle against Tuberculosis (*Verem Savaş Derneği*) was founded in 1918. Nevertheless, in the capital city, the highest number of deaths due to tuberculosis was observed during the Armistice period. In only 1920, 2640 inhabitants had died in İstanbul due to this disease while in 1922 this number was about 2700.⁸⁵⁶

Furthermore, due to wartime increase in prostitution and lack of medicine and of sanitary aid, venereal diseases like gonorrhea, syphilis, canker, sores, scabies, crabs, lice, and cauliflower influenced the daily life not only in İstanbul, but also in Anatolia throughout the war and the Armistice period.⁸⁵⁷ Venereal illnesses were so widespread that they became part of the daily life of many. Ahmed Rasim, who wrote in his book titled *Fuhş-ı Atik* (Old Prostitution) (1922) about the prostitution in İstanbul argued that cases of venereal diseases were rare and were seen only among the non-Muslims who had frequented the brothels in Beyoğlu and Galata districts before the war. Nevertheless, after the war, the incidence of venereal diseases increased among the Muslim population and the newspapers' advertising pages were filled with the names of doctors who treated them and talking about these illnesses became ordinary.⁸⁵⁸

Other than İstanbul, syphilis ravaged most of the ruined towns and villages of Anatolia during World War I.⁸⁵⁹ Venereal diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea were known to be common in İzmir and other provinces.⁸⁶⁰ By 1919 these diseases caused at least 35 percent of the deaths in İzmir.⁸⁶¹ One of the leading physicians in the city confirmed that about 80 percent of the population suffered from venereal

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96. See also Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 249-250.

⁸⁵⁷ Zafer Toprak, "İstanbul'da Fuhş ve Zührevî Hastalıklar, 1914-1923," *Tarih ve Toplum*, No. 38 (March, 1987), p. 40. See also Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara*, pp. 434-435.

⁸⁵⁸ Ahmet Rasim, *Dünkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık* [originally published as *Fuhş-ı Atik*, İstanbul, 1922] (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1987), pp. 246-247.

⁸⁵⁹ Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, p. 98.

⁸⁶⁰ Berber, *Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak*, pp. 101-102.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

diseases. Many women got the disease from their husbands who frequented the brothels of the city.⁸⁶² Even in other regions of Anatolia where prostitution was not as organized as it was in the capital city or İzmir, adultery, prostitution or poverty due to population movement paved the way for the spread of venereal diseases among women. In his World War I memoirs, İsmail Hakkı Sunata wrote of a married woman who transmitted syphilis to an army doctor she had sex with because she had also various relations with other men.⁸⁶³ Another contemporary observer, Arif Oruç, confirmed that even in one of the most decent districts of the Empire, the Sandıklı district of Hüdavendigâr province, he had seen patients with syphilis in 1919.⁸⁶⁴ About the same time, Trabzon province and its neighboring districts suffered also from this illness. The municipal doctor of Giresun reported that about 20 percent of all inhabitants were syphilitic.⁸⁶⁵

The death of mothers due to all these diseases was also one of the reasons behind the crisis of motherhood. As a result of the death of their mothers, many children were left without any care and many of them lived on the streets, while a great number of them died due to hunger or cold. Furthermore, whether their mothers were alive or dead, an important sum of children worked on the street out of poverty. Among the uncared for or orphan children of poor women some could only beg or become child prostitutes to survive. The orphans who had widowed mothers or widower fathers to take care of them were in relatively better conditions, but they also suffered from hunger and epidemics and frequently worked full-time or part-

⁸⁶² Emmet W. Rankin, "Health," in *A Survey of Some Social Conditions in Smyrna*, ed. by Rıfat N. Bali, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁶³ Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara*, pp. 434-435.

⁸⁶⁴ Özkaya, *Milli Mücadelede Ege Çevresi*, Vol. 2, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁶⁵ Sabahattin Özel, *Milli Mücadelede Trabzon* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), pp. 75-76.

time.⁸⁶⁶ Those who had also lost their parents or whose parents had abandoned them were in the worst situations.

During World War I, especially in those area like the Black Sea region in Anatolia where women died as civilian victims of the guns and bombs of the Russian army, many unprotected orphans died on the streets due to hunger.⁸⁶⁷ Muzaffer Lermioğlu, who was an eyewitness of the events, wrote that in Samsun's Saathane square hundreds of half naked and starving people, the children of refugees, and orphans of the fathers who died in the war, wandered and each day many of them died out of hunger or fainted because of it. In a single night in 1917, he had seen 23 corpses of these dead children who were collected from the streets and buried in mass graves in Fenerburnu.⁸⁶⁸ Similarly, during his visit of the Aegean provinces, Arif Oruç wrote in 1919 about a refugee orphan who had died due to hunger. Although he was traumatized to see this, he realized that people were accustomed to such scenes in those days.⁸⁶⁹

Increase in the Number of Orphans and Poor Children

Before the foundation of the Republic, there were some tens of thousands of war orphans and abandoned children who wandered the streets because out of the 90,000 war orphans only about 12,000 were accommodated by the state-run orphanages.⁸⁷⁰ Due to hunger they did anything to find food and many of them started working at very young ages. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo remembers that hungry children including

⁸⁶⁶ For working children in the capital city, see Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 189-199.

⁸⁶⁷ Lermioğlu, *Akçaabat – Akçaabat Tarihi*, pp. 263-264.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 264

⁸⁶⁹ Özkaya, *Milli Mücadelede Ege Çevresi*, Vol. 2, p. 61.

⁸⁷⁰ Kathryn Libal, "The Children's Protection Society: Nationalizing Child Welfare in Early Republican Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (Fall 2000), p. 61.

him, deprived of his mother's support, walked the streets, collected dog feces, sold it to the tanneries and bought themselves food with the little amount of money they received for it.⁸⁷¹ İdris Erdinç also remembers that when he arrived in İstanbul with his father to find his lost refugee mother, he started working as a porter in the streets with a large basket on his back. Although he was only 14 he carried packages and goods to the port, train station or the Cağaloğlu district in return for a few piasters.⁸⁷² Children had to work at very young ages in industries such as shoe making, garment making, weaving, embroidery and other fine needlework, cigarette making or in restaurants and hotels in different kinds of occupations, in stores and shops as clerks and messengers, in domestic service as an occupation that only the girls were allowed, and as street vendors.⁸⁷³ Child labor was frequently used during World War I due to the existing shortage of men and due to poverty. According to Ahmed Emin, in those years it was impossible to prevent child labor and in many cases children worked in jobs beyond their strength. For example, among the porters there were feeble children including girls who tried to carry heavy loads.⁸⁷⁴

Other than working in a definite job, children often begged on the street. In her memoirs about Armistice period İstanbul, Véra Dumesnil wrote about running children in the street who begged for one piaster from her.⁸⁷⁵ Begging was common in Anatolia as well as in İstanbul, especially among the refugee women and children as seen among the refugees of the Trabzon province, which was one of the most ruined regions of the Empire during World War I.⁸⁷⁶ Not all beggars were orphans. Some had mothers who allowed or encouraged them to beg because of living in

⁸⁷¹ Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo*, p. 16.

⁸⁷² Akgül, *Şoför İdris*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁷³ Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 189-199.

⁸⁷⁴ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 259.

⁸⁷⁵ Dumesnil, *İşgal İstanbul'u*, p. 8.

⁸⁷⁶ Özel, *Millî Mücadelede Trabzon*, p. 77.

extreme poverty.⁸⁷⁷ Moreover, some children were tortured in many ways by adult men and women who wanted to exploit the money earned by begging.⁸⁷⁸

Many children resorted to stealing food or other basic goods in order to survive. Some even stole food from their own mothers out of hunger. For example, Şükûfe Nihal, as a contemporary observer wrote in her novel *Yalnız Dönüyorum* (I am Coming Back Alone), penned in 1938, about a twelve year old hungry child who had been chased by her mother because of stealing the bread that was to be served in the evening to all of the family during the war years.⁸⁷⁹ Unlike this example, which influenced only a single family, children's crimes such as theft or booty due to hunger were an important source of insecurity in certain parts of the Empire which influenced greater numbers of people. Homeless and orphan children often lived together and attacked villages in the eastern and south eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia because of hunger. While searching for food, they walked as a group and left nothing as food to the inhabitants of the villages or towns they attacked.⁸⁸⁰ In addition, theft was common among beggar children and some of them had also secondary occupations, such as stealing coal and wood.⁸⁸¹

In destitution, some of the orphan and homeless children started prostitution at very young ages. This situation shows itself in the literature of this period as well. For instance, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, a famous writer of the time, in a novel called *Hakka Sığındık* (We Took Refuge in God), published in 1919, writes about orphan siblings who lost their mother short after their house was burnt in one of the İstanbul fires. The children lived on the street, selling first their clothes. They soon started begging, and because they could not receive enough money from it, they resorted to

⁸⁷⁷ Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, p. 197.

⁸⁷⁸ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 258.

⁸⁷⁹ Çılgın, "Savaşın Gerçek Kurbanları: Çocuklar," pp. 355-356.

⁸⁸⁰ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Tragedisi*, p. 222.

⁸⁸¹ Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, p. 197.

stealing vegetables from the farmer's market. Finally, the older sister started prostitution at the age of 11 in order to find money to save her little brother, who soon died from whooping cough. The municipal functionaries put his corpse in a coffin in which two other children had already been laid, covered with lime.⁸⁸²

Little boys were also among the child prostitutes and they bargained for it with grown up men on the street. Ayla Kutlu in her novel *Bir Göçmen Kuştı O* (He was a Migratory Bird) (1985) describes such children who appeared during the Armistice period in the streets of İstanbul. The virginity of little girls or boys was sold for the price of an oke (1283 grams) of bread, while the following nights were sold for half of it.⁸⁸³

Novelist, Kemal Tahir as well in his novel *Yorgun Savaşçı* (Exhausted Warrior) (1965) writes about the boy prostitutes of İstanbul during the Armistice period. Being followed by the police, the protagonist, Captain Cemil spends the night in Gülhane Park, sitting on a bench. Two boys appear next to him and start talking with him, while in the middle of the conversation they say that they were prostitutes. They add that a lot of soldiers and foreigners were their clients. One of the boys asks him whether he wants to be with him, saying that his price was 25 piasters and his friend would take 100 *paras*⁸⁸⁴ for standing as guard.⁸⁸⁵

Although they found a place in the literature of World War I and the Armistice period, the number of prostitute children and their living conditions cannot be easily determined.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸² Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Nimetsinas; Hakka Sığındık; Meyhane'de Kadınlar*, 7th ed. (İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1981), pp. 231-244.

⁸⁸³ Ayla Kutlu, *Bir Göçmen Kuştı O*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1996), pp. 164-165. Quoted in Mehmet Törenek, *Türk Romanında İşgal İstanbulu* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2002), p. 143.

⁸⁸⁴ A *para* is one fortieth of a piaster. 100 *paras* is equal to 2.5 piasters.

⁸⁸⁵ Kemal Tahir, *Yorgun Savaşçı*, 13th ed. (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınları, 1997), pp. 167-168. Quoted in Törenek, *Türk Romanında İşgal İstanbulu*, p. 150.

⁸⁸⁶ Finding the exact number of the prostitutes of other groups is also not easy. For instance, the official records state the number of White Russian women in the İstanbul brothels as 171 while this

Briefly, many poor women lost their capacity to look after their children during World War I, because they were left with no money or food and proper houses. Furthermore, population movements shattered the families. Epidemics raging throughout Anatolia and Rumelia left many children motherless. Child mortality increased due to hunger, epidemics and homelessness. Because of receiving not enough care from their mothers who could be dead or extremely poor, children started working in various sectors and on the street. Working conditions were too heavy for many of them and some had to start begging, stealing, usurping, prostituting or doing these alternately. Consequently, unprotected children due to the wartime crisis of motherhood created an important socioeconomic problem against which the state and welfare institutions had to take serious action.

Wartime Measures for the Maintenance of Motherhood:

Housing Assistance and the Protection of Children

The increase in the number of needy and indigent mothers and children forced the state and welfare institutions to bring in new measures for the protection of home and children during the war. The great part of the people who had difficulties with accommodation or childcare mostly belonged to either soldiers' families or refugee families. Therefore, they were the primary targets of the social measures. Because the crisis of motherhood was a multifaceted problem, the Ottoman government had to introduce various laws and regulations to find a solution to the housing problem of soldiers' families and the refugees. In the face of the increasing number of orphans and homeless children, the government needed to take some measures aimed at

number is quite probably much lower than the real number of White Russian women prostitutes. See Paul Dumont, "Les années blanches," in *Istanbul 1914-1923: capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires*, ed. Stéphane Yerasimos (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1992), p. 193.

protecting and educating them. The welfare institutions took actions to protect women and children in various parts of the Empire. Nevertheless, despite all these actions the wartime measures for the protection of poor mothers and children remained insufficient and exclusive in many ways.

Housing Assistance

During World War I, the housing problem that afflicted poor and refugee women were taken more seriously by the state. The Ottoman government first of all protected refugee women who needed to settle down, soldiers' families who had difficulty paying their rents, and women who had lost their houses due to wartime fires or bombardments. As mentioned before, when World War I erupted, there were already many refugees who arrived from Balkans due to the Balkan Wars to İstanbul and Anatolia and who had not yet settled down and lived in squalor. In order to find of a solution to their housing problem and to the inhabitants of Edirne province and Çatalca sub-province whose houses had been destroyed due to the war, the government introduced a provisional law on 19 September 1914. According to the Article 1 of this law, these migrants and inhabitants were granted the right to cut wood from the state forests (*mirî ormanlar*) without paying taxes on the product and only for once in order to build their own houses.⁸⁸⁷

Furthermore, in 1331 [1915-1916] a draft law was introduced to find a solution to the housing problem of war veterans and the orphans and widows of the

⁸⁸⁷ “Balkan Muharebesinde Edirne Vilâyetiyle Çatalca Sancağında Meskenleri Harab Olan Ahâlî ile Muhacirinin İnşâ Edecekleri Hanelere Muktezî Kerestenin Meccanen Mîri Ormanlarından Kat'ı Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat,” 6 Eylül 1330 / 28 Şevvâl 1332 [19 September 1914], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, pp. 1277-1278. See also, “Edirne Vilâyetiyle Çatalca Sancağında Meskenleri Harap Olan Ahali ile İskân Edilen Muhacirinin Mîri Ormanlarından Meccanen Kereste Kat ve İmâl Etmeleri Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 596-597.

martyrs according to which the families of the men who had died in the battle received free landed property or land from the state. The families of higher ranking soldiers could take a landed property or land which was worth up to the five years of his salary, whereas the families of the lower ranking soldiers who received lower salaries could take a house or land worth up to the ten years of his salary.⁸⁸⁸

According to the law that was introduced on 23 March 1915, in order to protect the soldiers' families, especially widows and orphans who had difficulty in paying their rents at the absence of their breadwinners, it was forbidden to evacuate those soldiers' families who were unable to pay their rents. Since this law created difficulty to those families who were dependent on rental income, the Ministry of War or related institutions paid the rent of these soldiers' families to the landlords. In return, the rents of the families of army officers were cut from the officers' salaries. Nevertheless, because many soldiers' families abused this law, landlords abstained from renting out their houses to soldiers' families. Therefore, the Judicial Commission of the Ottoman Parliament ordered in the following years that this law be applied to only those soldiers' families who had rented their homes before the war mobilization.⁸⁸⁹

Soldiers' families were protected not only by rent aid but also with special privileges. For instance, during World War I, to prevent homelessness of the soldiers' families, the Council of State decided on 11 June 1916 that the municipalities had no right to pull down the houses in those quarters where soldiers'

⁸⁸⁸ "Malulin-i Askeriyye veya Eytam ve Erâmil-i Şühedâya Meccanen Emlâk Tefvizi Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 162-163.

⁸⁸⁹ "Seferberlik Müddetince Efrad ve Zabitanın Tahtı İsticârında Bulunan Meskenlere ve Hukuku Tasarrufiyelerinin Teminine Dair Layihai Kanuniyye," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, pp. 388-391. See also, "Seferberlik Müddetince Efrâd ve Zâbitânın Taht-ı İsticârında Bulunan Meskenlere ve Hukuk-ı Tasarrufiyelerinin Teminine Dâir Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 10 Mart 1331 / 7 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [23 March 1915], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 7, p. 530.

families lived. This state council decision was to remain in force until the end of the war mobilization for protecting women and children without breadwinners.⁸⁹⁰ Those poor women who were not soldiers' families, however, received no rent aid from the state despite the fact that the rents increased enormously both in the capital city and in the provinces. According to Ahmed Emin, no measures were taken to find a solution to the housing problem and therefore everybody had to solve this problem without the help of the government until 18 March 1918, the date that an "economic law" was projected by the government.⁸⁹¹ For that reason, the housing problem continued during the war years and it got worse especially in İstanbul with the arrival of new refugees from the İzmir-Aydın regions which had been occupied by the Greek troops and the arrival of about 150,000 White Russian refugees during the Armistice period. The requisitioning of houses by Allied forces further aggravated this situation in those years.⁸⁹²

During the National Struggle as well, the Ankara government tried to find a solution to the housing problem of those families whose houses had been destroyed due to the war. A bylaw of 19 October 1922 attempted to help such people. According to Article 1 of this bylaw, the Social Welfare Commissions (*Muavenet-i İçtimâiyye Komisyonları*) were founded according to which the Ankara government was obliged to repair the destroyed houses or help in the construction of new ones.⁸⁹³

The victims of fires such as the great fire of Fatih in the capital city also received some help from the government and the Commission for the Victims of

⁸⁹⁰ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, Vol. 7, pp. 3741-3742.

⁸⁹¹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 150.

⁸⁹² Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 28.

⁸⁹³ "Tahrip Edilen Mahallerde Muhtacı Muavenet Olanların Meskenlerinin Tamirine ve Müceddeden Hane ve Baraka İnşasına Muhassas Tahsisatın Sureti Sarfını Mübeyyin Talimat," 19 Teşrin-i Evvel 1338 [19 October 1922], *Düstûr*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 3, pp. 142-145.

Fires (*Harikzedegân Komisyonu*) was founded on 12 June 1918.⁸⁹⁴ Welfare institutions such as the Red Crescent Society also helped women who had lost their houses because of fires. For example, in a 1919 report, the Red Crescent Society stated that it assisted the families who were victims of fires in the capital city by providing them clothing, sets of bedding, goods and provisions which were worth about 50,000 Ottoman liras. Among these families, about 12,500 people received underwear from the Society, while those families who could save no furniture from these fires received additionally furniture such as beds, quilts, cushions or clothing items such as shoes. The Society reported that many people who were not victims of the fires also demanded such items pretending to be victims of fires.⁸⁹⁵ Nevertheless, despite such measures, in most of the cases the victims of fires had to wait for years before a new or repaired house was allotted to them. For instance, the victims of the Fatih fire of 1918 had to wait for about four years to receive their homes.⁸⁹⁶

Similarly, victims of enemy attacks who had to flee to other provinces had difficulty in receiving help in terms of housing. In order to solve the housing and settlement problems of the refugees after the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman statesmen had made some legal regulations such as the Settlement of Refugees Regulation (*İskân-ı Muhâcirîn Nizâmnamesi*) of 13 May 1913, and tried to strengthen the Department of Tribes and Refugees (*Aşâir ve Muhâcirîn Müdürlüğü*).⁸⁹⁷ However, upon the failure of this organization to house the refugees with its own limited budget, the state delegated private contractors and companies with the task of settling them. Nevertheless, in practice these contractors and companies, in order to

⁸⁹⁴ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 166. For the measures taken in the capital city during the Armistice period about victims of fires see also, *ibid.*, pp. 166-183.

⁸⁹⁵ *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁹⁶ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediye*, Vol. 3, p. 1248.

⁸⁹⁷ Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, Vol. 1, *Prelude to War* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006), pp. 567-568.

maximize their profits, avoided providing most refugees with what they were entitled.⁸⁹⁸ Many of the refugees of the Balkan Wars could only be settled in the mosques in the capital city for a long time.⁸⁹⁹



Fig. 11 This caricature criticizes the housing problem. A rich man is looking at poor people who have died on the street out of cold and says that they could be saved from this weather when he finishes building his apartments, a residence that only the rich could live in during the war years.

Source: *Aydede*, No. 13 (13 Şubat 1338 [13 February 1922]), p. 1.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 567-571.

⁸⁹⁹ For the list of such mosques and their district, see *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Salnamesi* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası Matbacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1329 [1331]), pp. 219-225.

The budget of the Department of Tribes and Refugees increased due to the migrations related to World War I especially in 1916. The initial budget of the Department was 10,000,000 piasters for this year,⁹⁰⁰ while with four new imperial decrees this amount was increased to about 160,000,000 piasters by 7 November 1916. Out of the 156,169,950 piasters which were spent on the refugees in 1916, about 626,250 piasters were used for the foundation of workshops (*dâru'l-mesâi*) for the employment of refugee children and widows.⁹⁰¹

Welfare institutions also helped refugee women and children in terms of food and housing from the Balkan Wars onwards. Nevertheless, the welfare institutions other than the National Defense Society⁹⁰² generally provided only some relief by distributing food, clothing or other items, but they could not find a permanent solution to the housing problem. The Red Crescent Society helped the sick and the poor in general by distributing food and providing medical service. For example, from 13 July 1918 to the end of November 1918, the Society founded a soup kitchen for the refugees in Samsun which fed about 3000 people daily and provided free medical treatment for the poor.⁹⁰³ During the National Struggle as well the Society helped the refugees in terms of food, clothing and medicine. By August 1922, Bahaeddin, an officer from the center of the Red Crescent Society in Milas district of Aydın province wrote that they distributed 350 grams of bread per day to adults and

⁹⁰⁰ "Meclis-i Umuminin Münakit Bulunmadığı Esnada Bütçenin Tahsisat-ı Müttehavile Cetveline Dahil Tertibata Vuku Bulan Zamaim Hakkında İradat-ı Seniyye Üzerine Muvazene-i Maliyye Encümenince Tanzim Olunan Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 274, 279, 281-282.

⁹⁰¹ "1332 Aşâir ve Muhâcirin Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi Bütçesine 50,000,000 Kuruş İlâvesi Hakkında İrade-i Seniyye," 25 Teşrîn-i Evvel 1332 / 10 Muharrem 1335 [7 November 1916] *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 1372. See also "1332 Aşâir ve Muhâcirin Müdüriyyet-i Umumiyyesinin Bütçesine 50.000.000 Kuruş Tahsisat-ı Munzamma İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 141-142.

⁹⁰² Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 66.

⁹⁰³ *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid*, pp. 6-7.

210 grams of bread to children. The refugees also received clothing and medicine from the Society.⁹⁰⁴

As stated before, during the Armistice period, many women and children who fled to the capital city due to the invasion of Anatolia lived in places like the Davutpaşa barracks, which were allotted to them on the order of the Sultan.⁹⁰⁵ These women and children were frequently visited by elite women, who were chairwomen of welfare institutions.⁹⁰⁶ The elite women's aid to the refugees was generally in terms of the employment of the widows and children, which will be studied in detail in Chapter Seven. Furthermore, some elite women worked to provide clothing for the refugees. For example, under the chairmanship of the wife of Trabzon governor a Commission of Sewing Clothes to the Refugees (*Muhâcir Elbise ve Dikiş Komisyonu*) was founded which was made up of the wives of civil servants and notables. This commission sewed clothing to the refugees with fabric bought at a discount from the capital city.⁹⁰⁷

The Ankara government as well introduced laws and regulations concerning refugees throughout the National Struggle. On 5 June 1921, a regulation on the management and conduct of refugees was issued.⁹⁰⁸ Ankara government, despite its enormous budget restraints, allotted 150,000 Ottoman liras [15,000,000 piasters] for refugees in Anatolia in its 1921 budget.⁹⁰⁹ Due to the fact that many refugees were not settled down including those who had come with the Balkan Wars until the

⁹⁰⁴ TKA, 612/29, 12 Ağustos 1338 [12 August 1922].

⁹⁰⁵ For other places that the migrants lived in the capital city of the Armistice period, see Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 82-87.

⁹⁰⁶ Dumesnil, *İşgal İstanbul'u*, p. 12.

⁹⁰⁷ Yüksel, *Giresun Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 116.

⁹⁰⁸ "Muhâcir ve Mültecilerin Tarzı İdare ve Sevklere Hakkında Nizamname," 5 Haziran 1337 [5 June 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, pp. 74-77. The regulation entered in force on 15 June 1921.

"Muhâcir ve Mültecilerin Tarzı İdare ve Sevklere Hakkında Nizamnameye Zeyl," 12 Haziran 1337 [12 June 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, p. 79.

⁹⁰⁹ "Muhâcirinin Sevklere İçin Muktazi Yüz Elli Bin Liranın Avans Olarak İtasma Dair Kanun," 2 Temmuz 1337 / 20 Şevvâl 1339 [2 July 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, p. 81.

National Struggle period, the Settlement of Refugees Regulation, which dated 13 May 1913, was amended by the Ankara parliament on 26 April 1922 to find a solution to this problem. According to Article 1 of this new regulation those refugees whose immigration to different parts of the Empire from their hometowns had occurred up to six years before were to be settled down with the help of the Ankara government.⁹¹⁰

Measures about Homeless and Orphan Children

During World War I measures for the protection children became an important issue for the Ottoman state, which had been left with little alternative in the face of increasing poor, homeless and unprotected women and children and of the demands coming from impoverished mothers. Indeed, the government needed to intervene in the waste and loss of this human source of the army and of the economy. Actually, the Ottoman state had been taking measures about raising, disciplining, and educating children especially from the nineteenth century onwards.⁹¹¹ In terms of economy, widows and orphans of the war dead had been allotted pensions as early as the nineteenth century by the state.⁹¹² The fund for needy persons (*muhtâcîn tertîbi*) was also used to help poor women with many children or those women who had difficulty raising their children with an ill or disabled husband who could not financially support his family.⁹¹³ Children left with no relatives and even illegitimate children were supported and they were housed with a family and were provided with

⁹¹⁰ “30 Nisan 1329 Tarihli İskâmı Muhacirin Talimatnamesini Muaddil ve Ona Müzeyyel Mevaddı Nizamiye,” *Düstûr*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 3, pp. 68-69.

⁹¹¹ Füsun Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*”ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 32.

⁹¹² Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet, 1876-1914*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 51.

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*

a small pension.⁹¹⁴ The state introduced new welfare institutions during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II for poor or orphan children, like the Poorhouse (*Dârü'l-aceze*) which was opened in 1896 and which had a department for breastfeeding under the age of four (*Irzâhâne*) by 1903, a hospital for children, which was opened in the capital in 1899 as *Hamidiye Etfâl Hastahâne-i Âlîsi* (the Hamidiye Sublime Hospital for Children), and a state school which was one of the first examples of state orphanages and which was founded in 1903 with the name *Dârü'l-hayr-ı Âlî* (the Sublime House of Charity).⁹¹⁵

During the continuous war years, the role of the state in children's welfare increased further, because the number of the children left to their destiny and the number of the war orphans escalated. The state had to deal with thousands of children who had no shelter or food. As early as 1911, with the eruption of the Tripolitan War, the children of war martyrs were accepted in free boarding schools.⁹¹⁶ Nevertheless, such measures were not sufficient as the continuous wars increased the number of orphans. Therefore, new institutions were founded to take care of the orphans and abandoned children. Even those institutions destined only to help children, such as the state orphanages (*Dârü'l-eytam*) and the Children's Protection Society (*Himâye-i Etfâl Cemiyeti*), which was founded on 6 March 1917⁹¹⁷ or semi-official institutions such as the Red Crescent Society and the National Defense Society had difficulty to fulfill the needs of the war orphans. The problem of children became so acute that they became the subjects of new official celebrations devised to create awareness about the child question and to increase the social measures for them. The Students' Feast (*Mektepliler Bayramı*) started in 1915, the Children's

⁹¹⁴ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile*, 8th ed. (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2007), pp. 96-97.

⁹¹⁵ Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet*, pp. 199-250.

⁹¹⁶ Cüneyd Okay, *Meşrutiyet Çocukları: İnceleme* (İstanbul: Bordo Kitaplar, 2000), p. 63.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64. See also, Libal, "The Children's Protection Society," p. 61; and, Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 258.

Feast (*Çocuklar Bayramı*) was first celebrated on 15 May 1916 and the Gymnast Feast (*İdman Bayramı*) began the same year. These celebrations, which were introduced during World War I, were all about children's education and health hit by the social impact of the war and show how the child question alarmed the rulers.⁹¹⁸

Children of the fire victims or war martyrs could receive help from the state for their education.⁹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as Ahmed Emin writes, although there were about a hundred orphanages maintained for non-Turkish children by foreign missions or non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire, there existed no single Turkish orphanage, public or private before World War I except for the *Dârü'l-hayr-ı Âlî*, founded in 1903. During the war, the state orphanages increased to about eighty, but within a short time their numbers were reduced to 65 due to financial difficulties.⁹²⁰ The government began to take protection and education of the children of war martyrs more seriously after the outbreak of the war. In addition, it began to search for new sources to provide more money for these children's education and care. The consumption items such as tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and the postal services including all mails and telegrams were additionally taxed for this purpose in 1915.⁹²¹ During the war years, especially the prices of tobacco products were increased to

⁹¹⁸ Üstel, "*Makbul Vatandaş'ın Peşinde*", p. 29. See also, Okay, *Meşrutiyet Çocukları*, p. 69. The children also celebrated the Tree Feast (*Ağaç Bayramı*), the Flower Feast (*Çiçek Bayramı*) and the Wheat Feast (*Buğday Bayramı*) during World War I. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁹¹⁹ "Dersaadet ve Vilâyât Leylî ve Neharî Sultani ve İdâdiler ile Menâtik-ı Harbiyye Felâketzedegânı ve Şühedâ Evlatları İçin Küşad Olunan Sultanilere İlâve Olan Rüşdî ve İbtidâî Sınıflarının Tahsisatı İçin Maarif-i Umumiyye Bütçesinin Usulü Beyninde Nakli İcab Eden Mebâlîğ Hakkında Madde-i Muvakkata-i Kanuniyye Suretidir," *Meclis-i Mebusan, Sene: 1330, Kanun Lâyhahaları*, Vol. 1, p. 286.

⁹²⁰ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 257.

⁹²¹ "Evlâd-ı Şühedânın Ta'lim ve Terbiyesi İçin Vücûda Getirilecek Müessesât Masârifine Muktezî Vâridât Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 16 Mayıs 1331 / 15 Receb 1333 [29 May 1915], *Düstür*, Vol. 7, Tertîb-i Sâni, pp. 610-612; "Evlâd-ı Şühedânın Talim ve Terbiyesi İçin Vücûda Getirilecek Müessesât İdaresine Muktezî Varidat Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 650-656. The provisional law of 1915 became a law in 1917. "Evlâd-ı Şühedânın Ta'lim ve Terbiyesi İçin Vücûda Getirilecek Müessesât Masârifine Muktezî Vâridât Hakkında Kanûn," 3 Nisan 1333 / 11 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [3 April 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 608-609; and "Evlâd-ı Şühedânın Ta'lim ve Terbiyesi İçin Vücûda Getirilecek Müessesât Masârifine Muktezî Vâridât Hakkında Kanûn," 3 Nisan 1333 / 11 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [3 April 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 612-613.

create funds for the institutions helping and educating war orphans⁹²² and helping the refugees by providing them food and rent aid.⁹²³ Because the number of children who were admitted to the state orphanages and secondary schools (*Sultani*) was less than it should be, the Ministry of Education was allotted extra money in the financial year 1331 [1915-1916]. Out of 8000 orphans, only 2000 children entered the state orphanages and 500 children the boarding secondary schools, while 6000 orphans received no help. To solve this problem a total of 5,123,666 piasters were added to the budget that year.⁹²⁴ During the financial year 1332 [1916-1917] as well the money spent on orphans was increased to 25,530,000 piasters.⁹²⁵

As the war progressed and the number of orphans increased, the Ottoman government felt the need for a specialized institution for state orphanages. As a result in 1917 the General Directorate of State Orphanages (*Dârü'l-eytâmlar Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi*) was founded on 2 April 1917. The institution was attached to the Ministry of Education and it had an annexed budget.⁹²⁶ For the first financial year that the institution was founded, which was 1333 [1917-1918], its budget was estimated as 37,000,000 piasters.⁹²⁷ Nevertheless, the institution had to request an additional 42,060,400 piasters within a short time due to the wartime inflation.⁹²⁸ The

⁹²² See BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 15/22, 29 Şaban 1333 [12 July 1915]; BOA, DH.EUM.KLU, 9/15, 2 Ramazan 1333 [14 July 1915]; BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 155/16, 17 Ramazan 1333 [29 July 1915]; and BOA, İ.DUİT, 89/39, 19 Receb 1340 [18 March 1922].

⁹²³ See BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89-3/1-22, 26 Şevvâl 1333 [6 September 1915], and BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-3/1-20, 26 Rebîülâhır 1340 [27 December 1921].

⁹²⁴ “Maarif Nezareti 1331 Senesi Bütçesinin Bazı Fasıllarına Tahsisat İtasına Dair Kanun Lâyihası,” 16 Kânunuevvel 1331 [29 December 1915], *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 87-88.

⁹²⁵ “1333 Senesi Darüleytam Müdüriyyeti Umumiyyesi Bütçesi,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 662-663.

⁹²⁶ “Dârüleytâmlar Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi Teşkîli ve Müteferriâtı Hakkında Kanûn,” 2 Nisan 1333 / 10 Cemâziyelâhır 1335 [2 April 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 575-576.

⁹²⁷ “Dârüleytâmlar Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesinin 1333 Senesi Bütçe Kanûnu,” 3 Nisan 1333 / 11 Cemâziyelâhır 1335 [3 April 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 601-602.

⁹²⁸ “1333 Senesi Darüleytâmlar Müdüriyyeti Umûmiyyesi Masraf Bütçesinin Birinci Faslının İkinci ve Dördüncü Maddeleri ile Maliye Nezaretinin Sene-i Mezkure Bütçesinin Otuzdokuzuncu Darüleytâmlar Faslı Tahsisatına '42.060.402' Kuruş İlavesi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-*

budget for the following financial year from 1 March 1918 to 28 February 1919 increased to 52,700,000 piasters.⁹²⁹

Some scholars estimate that the number of state orphanages reached about one hundred, while the number of boys in these institutions was about 15,000 and the girls about 5000 in 1916.⁹³⁰ However, in the official documents the number of state orphanages in 1917 is stated as 65 and that of the children as 11,680. At least 10,000 children were waitlisted. The authorities calculated that with the addition of these children the number of children to be cared in state orphanages would reach to 23,000 and their care would require 128 state orphanages and a budget of 70,260,400 piasters. Knowing that even this number of children was lower than the real number of orphans in need, the Fiscal Equilibrium Council of the Ottoman parliament even planned that the state might have to look after to 100,000 children and the money for this task was calculated although the Ottoman government was incapable of paying for it.⁹³¹

Despite the urgent need, children were accepted according to a hierarchy to the state orphanages, state boarding schools and other institutions, which reflected the government's efforts to support the war. The children of war martyrs were at the top of the list in many cases. Nevertheless, the laws about the admission of children in such institutions were revised several times due to their ambiguity. For instance, the law about the General Directorate of State Orphanages on 2 April 1917 did not mention the orphans of war martyrs or veterans explicitly. After the amendment of the law, the children of these soldiers started to be accepted in state orphanages and

1333 *Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 126-127.

⁹²⁹ "Dârüleytâm Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesinin 1334 Senesi Bûdce Kanûnu," 3 Mart 1334 / 19 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [3 March 1918], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 10, pp. 137-139.

⁹³⁰ Okay, *Meşrutiyet Çocukları*, p. 68.

⁹³¹ "1334 Senesi Dârül-Eytâm Müdüriyyet-i Umumiyyesi Bütçesi," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 343-362.

the children war martyrs, veterans and refugees were given priority in 1918 while poor and unsupported orphans were accepted in the second place.⁹³²

Those children who were admitted to the boarding schools which taught a craft or the military schools were the most advantageous. Their admission again was related not only to their poverty or their exam results, but to their parents. Often the orphans of war martyrs or veterans were given priority, especially in the entrance to military schools. According to the regulation about the admission of these children in military schools, first the sons of martyr soldiers and gendarmes; second the sons of gendarmes and military staff including not only soldiers but also military *imams* (Muslim priests), doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists, accountants, civilian officials, reserve officers and the deceased of the retired army staff of these occupations; third, the sons of this staff who could not send their children to high schools because there was none in their working district were accepted.⁹³³ Later on, the brothers of the army staff listed above who had nobody to take care of them also were accepted to the military schools with an amendment to the law.⁹³⁴ According to the law which concerned the protection of the children of war martyrs and veterans, children of the deceased or wounded soldiers who had been mobilized for World War I were exempted from the education fees and boarding fees of the schools they entered until

⁹³² “Darül-Eytâm Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi Teşkilatı Hakkındaki 2 Nisan 1333 Tarihli Kanunun Birinci Maddesini Muaddel Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye Esbâb-ı Mucibe-yi Hâvi Maarif Nezâreti Vekâleti Tezkeresi Sureti,” *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye, No.: 428-501*, Vol. 2, pp. 12-15. See also “Dârüleytâmlar Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesinin Teşkiline Mütedâir 10 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 Tarihli Kanûnun 1 inci Maddesini Muaddel Kanûn,” 8 Nisan 1334 / 26 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [8 April 1918], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 10, p. 452.

⁹³³ “Şühedâ Vesâire Evlâdlarının Leylî Mekâtib-i İdâdiyye-i Askeriyyeye Kayd ve Kabulü Hakkında Nizâmname,” 16 Eylül 1331 / 20 Zilka’de 1333 [29 September 1915], *Düstûr*, Vol. 7, Tertîb-i Sâni, pp. 743-745.

⁹³⁴ “Şühedâ Vesâire Evlâdının Leylî Mekâtib-i İdâdiyye-i Askeriyyeye Kayd ve Kabulüne Mütedâir 20 Zilka’de 1333 Tarihli Nizâmnamenin 1 inci Maddesini Muaddel Mevâdd-ı Nizâmiyye,” 17 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1331 / 22 Safer 1334 [30 December 1915], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 259-260.

they graduated.⁹³⁵ Due to the wartime inflation, however, the state felt the need to restrict the children admitted to all boarding secondary schools without a fee to 20 percent of all the students in these schools in 1919.⁹³⁶ The practice of free education for the war martyr's children continued during the National Struggle as well.⁹³⁷

Frequently, those poor orphans who were accepted neither to the state orphanages nor to the free boarding schools were directed to the Poorhouse (*Dârü'l-aceze*) in the capital city. Nevertheless, even for being accepted, they had to have been born in İstanbul. Babies also entered a special department in this institution, as mentioned before. Children could only leave the Poorhouse in case they were adopted by adults who had the necessary qualities according to Article 17 of the institution's regulation. During their stay, the children were taught and obliged to work in crafts such as tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, hosiery, ironworking and weaving.⁹³⁸ Other than the Poorhouse, the Turkish orphans of İstanbul were accepted to eight orphanages established in this city by 1920.⁹³⁹

Although it was difficult to find a place in the state orphanages, those children who were admitted to these institutions were generally in bad condition. Many of them were poorly fed or dressed and the education they received was often interrupted due to economic restraints. For instance, the Samsun state orphanage to

⁹³⁵ “Şühedâ ve Malulini Guzat Evladının Himayeleri Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 878-883.

⁹³⁶ “Mekâtib-i Sultâniyye ve İdâdiyye Talebesinden Alınacak Ücûrâtın Sûret-i Ta'yîniyle Leylî Meccânî Talebenin Adedi Hakkında Karârname,” 18 Ağustos 1335 / 21 Zilka'de 1337 [18 August 1919], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 11, pp. 342-343. The inflation had also forced the government to increase the school fees in 1917. For example, see “Mekâtib-i Sultâniyye Leylî Talebesinden Alınmakta Olan Ücûrâtın Tezyidi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye Hükümetin Esbâb-ı Mucibe Lâyihası,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 363-364.

⁹³⁷ “Evladı Şühedanın Tercihen Leylî Mekteplere Meccanen Kaydı Hakkında Heyeti Umumiye Kararı,” 21 Eylül 1337 [21 September 1921], *Düstûr*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, p. 135.

⁹³⁸ “Dârülaceze Nizâmnamesi,” 12 Nisan 1332 / 22 Cemâziyelâhir 1334 [25 April 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 901-907.

⁹³⁹ For more information about these orphanages see Johnson, *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 235-238, 242-246, 255.

which Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was accepted as an orphan had to be closed because the state could not pay the food expenses of the children in 1918 after the death of Sultan Mehmed Reşat. Thousands of orphan girls were distributed to their relatives or to total strangers who wanted to adopt them to employ them as servants. Hasan İzzettin and his two sisters, however, were among the few who were sent to İstanbul state orphanages. Here again the food problem was intense. In the Beykoz state orphanage to which he was sent, little Hasan, with many other orphan boys, was obliged to work in agriculture. They had to cultivate their own food in the fields near the orphanage to survive.⁹⁴⁰

In the orphanages located in those regions haunted by widespread famine and food scarcities, the situation was worse. Halide Edib wrote in her memoirs how children struggled to steal food from one another, which often ended with wild fights and the abuse of the weaker children in the orphanage she directed in Syria.⁹⁴¹ The children in the Giresun orphanage were even worse off because they were victims of severe neglect and torture. In this orphanage, which was opened for the children of deceased refugees and war orphans, it was reported that the children were not taken care of, they were whipped, they died out of hunger and their corpses were not even buried, but were eaten by rats.⁹⁴²

Because of the inadequacy of the state measures for the protection of children the welfare institutions and foreign philanthropists stepped in to take further action. Foreign aid came to the war orphans and babies in the form of money, clothing, food and milk.⁹⁴³ The welfare institutions as well provided such means to children and

⁹⁴⁰ Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo*, pp. 19-25.

⁹⁴¹ Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), p. 444.

⁹⁴² Yüksel, *Giresun Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 118.

⁹⁴³ Aid was sent from United States, different countries in Europe and Muslim benefactors from countries like India. See for example, BOA, HR.SYS, 2175/2, 24 November 1915; BOA, HR.SYS, 2175/3, 11 January 1916; BOA, HR.SYS, 2175/5, 25 March 1916; BOA, HR. SYS, 2420/83, 18 May

circumcision feasts for boys, but they had difficulties undertaking children's education due to its higher cost. For instance, only in 1915, the İzmir branch of the National Defense Society, among its many other charity activities helped the families of the war dead or veterans, organized collective circumcision feasts for poor boys, opened a kindergarten in Karşıyaka and covered the travel expenses of poor children who were sent to İstanbul for education.⁹⁴⁴ By July 1917, the Society demanded from the Ottoman Red Crescent the fabric necessary for the clothing of the orphans that the Minister of War Enver Pasha had ordered to send from the war fronts to an orphanage on Büyükkada, İstanbul. The Society stated that they had provided the children with food, but they were unable to find the two thousand *arşins* (1360 m) of fabrics in wartime.⁹⁴⁵

During the National Struggle period as well many institutions tried to help war orphans. The women's branch of the Kastamanu Society of the Defense of Rights (*Kastamonu Müdâfaa-i Hukûk Cemiyeti*) organized circumcision feasts for soldiers' sons.⁹⁴⁶ The women's branch of the Konya branch of the Red Crescent Society worked again for children by circumcising 16 poor boys and buying clothes for them. Furthermore, they bought 33 dresses for girls in the Konya State Orphanage and 7 pairs of trousers for the male students of the Teachers' Training College.⁹⁴⁷ During World War I the Red Crescent Society helped similarly poor and naked children in the convalescent hospitals it opened in Erzurum, Erzincan, Kemah

1916; BOA, HR.SYS, 2426/20, 20 September 1916; BOA, HR.SYS, 2447/25, 30 January 1918; BOA, İ.DUİT, 13/46, 26 Şevvâl 1339 [3 July 1921]; and BOA, DH.EUM.5.Şb, 5/36, 19 Muharrem 1333 [7 December 1914].

⁹⁴⁴ Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 89.

⁹⁴⁵ TKA, 12/305, 24 Temmuz 1333 [24 July 1917].

⁹⁴⁶ Açıksözcü Hüsnü, *İstiklâl Harbinde Kastamonu* (Kastamonu: Kastamonu Vilâyet Matbaası, 1933), p. 65.

⁹⁴⁷ Ahmet Avanas, *Milli Mücadele'de Konya* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1998), pp. 221-222.

and Kayseri in terms of clothing and gave each of them underwear and socks to protect them from the winter cold.⁹⁴⁸

The Kastamonu branch of the Children's Protection Society as well tried to help about 100 children in this region, and circumcised 200 boys with a feast. Nevertheless, the project to build an orphanage on which they started work was cancelled later on.⁹⁴⁹ A similar attempt to protect 350 orphans with the aid of rich people in Trabzon also was aborted after three to four months because of its financial burden.⁹⁵⁰

The high and increasing infant mortality rates were particularly one of the concerns of welfare institutions. Article 4 of the regulation of the Children's Protection Society assured that it would open breastfeeding homes (*irzahane*) and persuade other profit making institutions to found similar homes for babies abandoned in the street or babies whose parents were unable to look after them. Furthermore, in the following lines of Article 4, the Society promised that it would educate women on marriage, pregnancy, childbearing, and post-natal care.⁹⁵¹

Moreover, the chairman of the Red Crescent Society, Dr. Besim Ömer, was well known for his works in obstetrics and was a very active person in the protection of children during World War I. He founded the first maternity hospital in the Ottoman Empire and wrote books on the nutrition of children, the medical treatment they had to receive and the reasons behind child deaths.⁹⁵² Under his guidance, the Red Crescent Society took care of the women lacking the protection of a family

⁹⁴⁸ Sarı and Özaydın, *I. Dünya Savaşında Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin*, pp. 163-164.

⁹⁴⁹ Açıksözcü Hüsnü, *İstiklâl Harbinde Kastamonu*, pp. 81-82.

⁹⁵⁰ Özel, *Millî Mücadelede Trabzon*, p. 76.

⁹⁵¹ Quoted in Sarıkaya, "Savaş Yıllarında Himâye-i Etfal Cemiyetinin," p. 45.

⁹⁵² Âkil Muhtar Özden, *Doktor Besim Ömer Akalın, 1863-1940* ([İstanbul]: Ahmet İhsan Basımevi Ltd., 1941), pp. 3-5.

during their pregnancies and helped in the opening of maternity hospitals which had become more important in unfavorable wartime conditions.

During the war, the Red Crescent Society tried to educate poor women about child bearing and the public about the importance of maternity hospitals. For example, the Adana Center of the Red Crescent Society founded a maternity hospital in 1918. The chairman of the center declared this initiative as the first step for the progress in health matters in their province. Although the hospital was backed up from the private treasury of the province, the chairman explained on 26 February 1918 in an official letter to the Red Crescent General Center that they still needed the financial assistance of the inhabitants of their city. For such a reason they decided to educate the public on the importance of this issue and to show films in cinemas about the activities of the Red Crescent, women's health issues and childcare.⁹⁵³

Nevertheless, because the problem of infant death was mostly related to malnutrition of both the mother and the baby which was due to wartime poverty, such measures did not end the high rate of child deaths alone.

In sum, although the ideologues of the Young Turk era such as Ziya Gökalp and other contemporary feminist women writers and later on the nationalist forces eulogized motherhood,⁹⁵⁴ neither the state nor the welfare organizations were able to support and to encourage childbearing and child rearing during the war years. The Ottoman elite of the time were also aware of their lack of means for the protection of the thousands of children who were left parentless due to the war. Even after the end of the war, the conception of the ideal woman in the minds of the state elite was one who could endure poverty and take care of their homes and children devotedly without much protest. Despite the inadequate help, which they mostly could not

⁹⁵³ TKA, 155/83, 26 Şubat 1334 [26 February 1918].

⁹⁵⁴ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 221.

receive, wartime mothers, especially those who were poor, widows, or refugees faced with the housing question and the resulting child question, had no option other than to bargain for even the slightest improvement in their conditions with the state by searching for solutions to their problems.

Lower-Class Women's Negotiation of the Housing Assistance and Protective Measures for Children

Some scholars interpret women's war experience as a strengthening of patriarchal roles, while at the same time a transformation of gender roles with the inversion of these roles in wartime conditions. However, some other scholars interpret the wartime experience of women as the dissolution of patriarchal family ties, which resulted in the liberation of women. The first interpretation ignores women's autonomy in terms of motherhood and their different motives in it while reducing women's actions to the passive acceptance of the patriarchal norms in continuing the motherly duties that society expected from them.⁹⁵⁵ In those conditions in which women had to take care of their children alone without the help of the fathers, who were on the front, this was partly true. Nevertheless, not all women were sacrificing mothers who accepted all the burden of their children without bargaining or mothers who raised their children only seeking the approval of a patriarchal society.

On the other hand, the second interpretation, presenting a liberation narrative, overlooks the distress and difficulties these women experienced during the period. This section explores the women's agency by scrutinizing their challenge to or criticisms of the roles of motherhood that the state and society imposed on them. In

⁹⁵⁵ For example, see Ayşe Saraçgil, *Bukalemun Erkek: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Ataerkil Yapılar ve Modern Edebiyat* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 220.

this regard, it depicts their survival struggle derived from a subjective reasoning, without reproducing a liberation narrative and without overlooking their agonizing experiences. Furthermore, this section shows how women had to struggle to fulfill their basic duties as mothers in order to take care of their children with subjective reasons and due to the wartime hardships, rather than the imposition of the motherhood roles by the state and society.

Women's Demands Related to Housing

First, the absence of a house to live in safety and the insufficiency of their means to look after their children forced an important number of women to request help in the war years. As mentioned above, one of the first choices of women who had lost their homes due to fires, bombing or forced migration was seeking refuge with their relatives.⁹⁵⁶ For many, however, this was not possible and they struggled to get the most out of the measures provided by the state and other institutions. In most of the cases they became victims of the regulations which discriminated against them according to the status and ranks of their soldier husbands or sons. Moreover, generally they had to wait a very long time before getting any help.

Many women, most of them members of soldiers' families, demanded that the state pay their rent because the pensions they received were inadequate for even their basic needs. Ayşe, the wife of a soldier named Kazım (son of Bektâşi), wrote in a petition on 25 November 1915 that her husband had been called to arms a few months earlier, and the monthly salary of 30 piasters which had been allotted to her as relief money was not sufficient to pay her rent. Therefore, she requested that the

⁹⁵⁶ For example, see Ertur, *Tamu Yelleri*, pp. 124-125, 151.

Ministry of War pay her rent from “the national help fund” (*muâvenet-i milliye*) during her husband’s service as a soldier.⁹⁵⁷ Her petition was taken seriously and the Ministry of War wrote to the National Defense Society and requested that they help Ayşe by paying her rent.⁹⁵⁸

As stated before, the Ottoman parliament had issued a law which forbade the eviction of soldiers’ families as tenants as long as the mobilization continued. Nevertheless, this created further problems for both the landlords and tenants. Archive documents give indices for the most well-known conflicts between landlords and tenants ending with forced or illegal evictions, which was a result of housing problem for tenants and financial bottlenecks for low-income landlords due to the war. Women were the victims of both greedy landlords as low-income and poor tenants or of abusive and mean-spirited tenants as low-income landladies without another source of income. In both cases women mostly appealed to the state, the courts, and the army for financial aid to pay their rent if they were soldier’s wives or relatives or for helping in the eviction of tenants who did not pay their rent on a regular basis.

Poor women tenants who were the victims of forced eviction were among the worst sufferers. Mostly because they were not able to pay their rents or to raise the rents along with the inflation rate, the landlords forced them to vacate their houses. Despite the law against the eviction of soldiers’ families, they were frequently thrown out of their homes by physical use of force by landlords. However, women in this situation struggled against such treatment by their landlords or the security forces or public officials who accompanied the landlords. For example, after Fatma and her daughter Raşide were forced to move out of their home by the police, she

⁹⁵⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2293, Dos. 36, Fih. 1-22, 12 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1331 [25 November 1915].

⁹⁵⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2293, Dos. 36, Fih. 1-23, 12 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1331 [25 November 1915].

wrote a complaint petition to the Ottoman parliament. She claimed that her two sons were war martyrs, and another one was still serving in the army, and therefore the legal procedure for soldier's families must be applied to save them from being homeless.⁹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, after the investigation made for this eviction, the İstanbul General Directorate of Police reported on 21 March 1918, that Fatma and her daughter had been legally evicted from the house they lived as tenants because the Fatih Court of Peace (*Fatih Sulh Mahkemesi*) had announced a decision of eviction on 2 March 1918. The explication was found sufficient by the government, and therefore, Fatma and her daughter could not return to their house.⁹⁶⁰

Many women protested that they had been evicted by their landlords on a moment's notice or when they were not at home. In Eskişehir, the wife of Captain İbrahim Efendi was one of those women whose household goods were evacuated by her landlord while she was out of home. Upon this, she sent first of all a telegram to the Eskişehir governor and claimed that she had been evicted forcefully on 4 June 1917 and called on the local government to rectify this wrongdoing by her landlord. Her petition was forwarded to the governor of Saruhan, and finally to the Ministry of War. Nevertheless, the officials decided on 27 August 1917 that the eviction had been legal, because at the time of eviction it was realized Captain İbrahim's wife had been in Adana, which was her hometown, and her brother-in-law Mehmet had been living as tenant in the house in Eskişehir.⁹⁶¹

In a similar case, Rukiye, who lived in Tekfurdağı [Tekirdağ] district and who was the wife of the soldier Mustafa serving in the capital city, complained that she had been forced to be moved out of her house because her landlord had wanted to hire it to other tenants. She protested the physical force used against her and her

⁹⁵⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/7-28, 3 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [16 March 1918].

⁹⁶⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/7-31, 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [26 March 1918].

⁹⁶¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2298, Dos. 59, Fih. 2-52, 27 Ağustos 1333 [27 August 1917].

children as a soldier's family and requested that the authorities be ordered to prevent such actions against the poor families of those soldiers who fought in the war sacrificing their lives and leaving their children to the protection of the government. Her request was taken seriously and the governor of Edirne province was informed about her situation on 3 October 1918.⁹⁶²

Sometimes, landladies and tenant women fell out with each other due to the wartime economic difficulties. Therefore, low-income landladies were also among the petition writers to the state and the Army against their female tenants who did not pay their rents or did not move out when ordered. In certain cases they became the victims of their female tenants, because some women used their soldier husbands or sons to legitimize their non-payment of rent. In one example, Mevhibe, landlord of a house, had to deal with her tenant, Ayşe Saadet's son-in-law named Necmeddin, who was a heavy artillery officer in the army. In her petition to the Ministry of War on 5 April 1915 Mevhibe explained that her tenant, Ayşe Saadet, did not pay her rent and lived in her house without a contract. When she had sued Ayşe Saadet, the son-in-law of her tenant, Necmeddin, had objected to her and had said that because he was a soldier who occupied her house, the government would not evict him and his family. He eventually had had to return the keys of the house to Mevhibe when she won the lawsuit. All the same, against her will and without her knowledge these tenants reentered the house and occupied it again with the help of the police force. Seeing that no further legal action was left that she could take, Mevhibe eventually wrote a petition to the army to protect her "right of disposition" by emphasizing that she was also the mother of a soldier, and that her only source of income was the house she rented.⁹⁶³ Consequently, Mevhibe accepted that her tenants to stay in her house on

⁹⁶² BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 7-3/1-13, 29 Muharrem 1337 [4 November 1918].

⁹⁶³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2291, Dos. 28, Fih. 3, 23 Mart 1331 [5 April 1915].

condition that her rents were cut from the salary of the army officer Necmeddin.⁹⁶⁴ However, she was not able to receive her money. When she asked the reason for this situation to the 6th Army Corps where Necmeddin was registered, she was informed on 3 July 1915 by the director of the Second Branch Office that no heavy artillery officer called Hüseyin Necmeddin was registered in the 6th Army Corps.⁹⁶⁵ In other words, Necmeddin had cheated Mevhibe by pretending to be a soldier to gain time.

In another petition, a landlady, named Hayriye, informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that she had not received her rent for the previous three years because of the law which forbid her to evict her tenant, a family of whose two members were soldiers, one fighting in Iraq and the other in the Caucasus. She claimed that she was also member of a soldier's family because she had three soldier sons fighting at the front and her husband was serving in Makriköy [Bakırköy] in the capital city as a senior captain (*kolağası*). Therefore, she requested the government compensate her for the accrued unpaid rents she had not been able to collect from her tenant. Her petition was taken seriously and an investigation was made by the government officials. The Ministry of Internal Affairs requested that the Ministry of War on 19 February 1917 pay the rent to Hayriye, stating that after the investigations it had been understood that her tenants were poor soldier's families who received pensions for soldiers' families without a breadwinner from the state and who were incapable of paying their rents.⁹⁶⁶ On 4 September 1917, the Ministry of War informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the rent of Hayriye's tenants, which

⁹⁶⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2291, Dos. 28, Fih. 3-7, 9 Mayıs 1331 [22 May 1915].

⁹⁶⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2291, Dos. 28, Fih. 3-14, 7 Haziran 1331 [20 June 1915], the note dates 20 Haziran 1331 [3 July 1915].

⁹⁶⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 28/14, 26 Rebîülâhır 1335 [19 February 1917]. See also BOA, DH.HMŞ, 5/6-5, 22 Rebîülâhır 1335 [15 February 1917].

was 80 piasters a month was started to be paid by the National Defense Society from February 1917 onwards.⁹⁶⁷

Those landladies who had rented their only house to soldiers' families had further problems, because they were left with no money or house in which to take shelter themselves. Indeed, some low-income women who were not able to pay their rents refused to leave the homes in which they lived. Again, paying no money to their homeowners was a kind of survival method for many poor and low-income people during the war years. However, this situation aggrieved those women who were low-income homeowners whose only source of revenue was rental income. Many claimed in their petitions that they had become homeless and lived in misery on the streets or in insecure places. Atiye from the Akhisar district of the Aydin province sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to complain about her tenant. She wrote that her first husband had died in the Balkan Wars leaving behind two orphans, and that her second husband was fighting on the front from the war mobilization onwards. Seven months earlier, she had bought a house in which to live with her children. However, because she was not able to evict the tenant, she had had to live homeless with her fatherless children for months. She requested that the government warn the authorities about her situation in order to protect her right of property of a soldier's low-income wife. On 29 November 1917 the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the Aydin governor to deal with Atiye's situation immediately.⁹⁶⁸

Saime, the wife of Captain Doctor Memduh, also requested help from the army on 25 June 1918 in the eviction of the tenant who occupied her house. She

⁹⁶⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 39/6, 6 Zilhicce 1335 [23 September 1917].

⁹⁶⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 42/75, 14 Safer 1336 [29 November 1917].

wrote that she had no other house in which to live.⁹⁶⁹ Another petition was written to the government by a man to protect his women relatives owning a house. Azim Bey claimed in his petition that the house, which was located in the Lala Hayreddin quarter of İstanbul and which belonged to his wife and his war martyr brother-in-law's wife, was occupied by a tenant called Doctor Hasan Süleyman, who refused to evacuate it. As a result, his brother-in-law's wife was left without a house and lived in misery with her fatherless children. He requested from the government that a decision for the eviction of Doctor Hasan Süleyman should be made to protect this family from poverty and ruin. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in response to this demand, informed the Ministry of Justice about the pending law on similar cases on 8 May 1919.⁹⁷⁰

Another landlady who was also a martyr soldier's family complained to the army on 2 July 1916 that her tenant had locked her furniture and belongings into one room of her house in the Samatya district of İstanbul. Because the house was locked she could not enter into it and lived on the street. Furthermore, she stated that her tenant was in jail for the crime of using counterfeit money and she had not received her rent for the previous two months. She demanded the army authorities allow her enter her house since she had lived in poverty for a long time.⁹⁷¹

To help to those soldiers' families without a breadwinner who were unable to pay their rents and were forced to move out of their homes by their landlords, the state and semi-official institutions such as the National Defense Society provided accommodation facilities or paid their rents. However, when many poor women were offered to live in another place, they mostly refused it fearing to lose their social connections which helped them to survive in hard times. On 23 June 1918, an official

⁹⁶⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2300, Dos. 67, Fih. 1-15, 25 Haziran 1334 [25 June 1918].

⁹⁷⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 51/35, 8 Şevvâl 1337 [9 May 1919].

⁹⁷¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2300, Dos. 67, Fih. 1-44, 6 Temmuz 1334 [6 July 1918].

army document stated that four soldiers' families who lived in the Hacı Ferhad quarter near Aksaray had resisted both the eviction and resettlement in another place with the help of the National Defense Society and of their landlords because they were receiving various assistances in kind from the Laleli Mosque in their district. Because of this local community solidarity, they were afraid of losing this help. Therefore, despite the fact that the Fatih Peace Court had decided to evict them, they did not want to go to the new residence found for them.⁹⁷²

In another case, a widowed landlady called Makbule failed to evict her tenant, named Sıddıka, the wife of the soldier Ali, for similar reservations. A petition of Makbule's son, which dated 29 June 1918 and addressed to the National Defense Society, which was willing to pay the rents of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, revealed that the tenant Sıddıka had paid previously 25 piasters as rent to Makbule's house in Edirnekapı. Sıddıka had found another house in which to resettle in Eđrikapı with a rent of 50 piasters. The first two months of rent had already been paid and some of her furniture had been carried to the new house. Nevertheless, although she knew that the National Defense Society was going to pay her rent Sıddıka refused to move the rest of her furniture due to warnings or rumors told her by her neighbors. The son of landlady Makbule complained in his petition that her mother had been left homeless, and furthermore, the rent aid of the Society had been annulled. He requested that the rest of the furniture of Sıddıka be carried away with the help of the police forces. The Society decided that Sıddıka had to leave the house, since she had found another house and her rent would be paid by the Society.⁹⁷³

⁹⁷² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2300, Dos. 67, Fih. 1-10, 23 Haziran 1334 [23 June 1918].

⁹⁷³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2300, Dos. 67, Fih. 1-22, 30 Haziran 1334 [30 June 1918].

Women victims of big fires and bombardments, and refugee women were also among the petition writers who asked help from the state to find solutions to their housing problems. Some of the women whose houses had been burned in fires demanded help only in the form of money or furniture because they were comparatively better off and could find places to live more easily than others. For instance, in July 1918, Fatma Aliye, whose house had burned with its furniture in the great Fatih fire, requested only some money in a petition sent to the government. She probably had little housing problem as she lived not in İstanbul where this fire occurred but in Hüdavendigâr province with her husband, who was the governor of one of its sub-districts called Pazarcık.⁹⁷⁴

Many women were in worse positions demanded much more for redress of their grievances. For instance, a low-income woman named Hatice, daughter of Ahmed, whose house had burned during the Zeyrek fire, requested a greater sum of money in her petition written to the Grand Vizier because she had been left with no place to live. On 7 September 1918 the government was informed about her situation in an official correspondence. Hatice had a soldier husband who she did not know was dead or alive, and she had three brothers, two of whom had died as martyrs at the Dardanelles front, and one was a prisoner of war in the Caucasus. Therefore, she was left with no breadwinner and at the same time she had to take care of her three little children. She was forced to live among strangers, many of them men, with whom she had no family tie. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, alarmed by the possible immoral consequence of this situation of Hatice and her children, ordered the İstanbul governorship to allocate the necessary money for her from the fund for fire victims (*harikzedegân îânesi*).⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-23/3-16, 13 Şevvâl 1336 [22 July 1918].

⁹⁷⁵ BOA, DH.UMVM, 58/16, 9 Zilhicce 1336 [15 September 1918].

Other than money, women also requested help in the form of land and landed property especially when they had to move to another region. For example, a fire victim called Hafize, whose two houses in the Kırkçeşme quarter of Fatih had been demolished in 1918, requested that the government compensate her losses by giving her a house and some vineyards or orchards in the Biga district of Hüdavendigâr, where her brother lived and she also had decided to live. On 28 September 1918, in a petition to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, she stated that she had two children from her deceased husband, a regiment inspector named Hacı Tahir Efendi. After the fire, she had managed to save only some furniture, but this had not helped her to survive because she had no man to take care of her (*başında erkek olmadığı için*) and because she had been left destitute with her two children and her old mother (*iki çocuğum ve bir ihtiyâr vâlidemle çırılçıplak kaldım*). Adding that she was also a refugee with no social ties in the capital city, she claimed that in order to benefit from the protection of her brother, Rıfat Efendi, she had been forced to settle in Biga. Nevertheless, her request of settlement in that district and getting some vineyard or orchard from the state to support herself was rejected by the government on the grounds that her request did not comply with the laws, because she refused only monetary help in the form of the payment of her debts and insisted on land in another province.⁹⁷⁶ It is understood from the correspondences between the petitioner and the government offices that the government probably helped her only financially.

Even when they were entitled to aid in kind or cash, women faced some problems in receiving these aids because of legal procedures. Especially when they attempted to build new homes for themselves on the land of their burned houses, they encountered bureaucratic obstacles in the form of municipal restrictions. Many

⁹⁷⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM, 156/51, 30 Muharrem 1337 [5 November 1918].

women tried to transcend these bureaucratic barriers. For example, a petition from Emine, whose house in the district of Hüsrevpaşa had burned in the great Fatih fire, requested from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 11 September 1921 that she be allowed to build a new residence. She stated that she had asked the Fatih municipality to allow her to build one room from stones and yet her request had been turned down. Claiming that in some places such new buildings were allowed, she pleaded to be allowed as the winter was approaching and as she was incapable of paying rent.⁹⁷⁷

Furthermore, female fire victims were deprived of stable residences, because the places in which they lived could be temporary and they could easily be evacuated by officials. Women resisted such practices and demanded secure accommodation. For example, Safiye, who was a victim of the great Fatih fire, was evicted by the chief inspector of the Babiâli Police Station from the residence in Babiâli in which she had been placed with her two children by the government. On 29 May 1919 the government informed the İstanbul Fire Committee that she had requested to return to the house from which she was forcefully dislodged. The government ordered the Committee to resettle her immediately in this house or in one of the barracks built for fire victims in Aksaray.⁹⁷⁸

It is understood that those women who were left without economic support after the deaths of their husbands at war demanded housing facilities from the Ministry of War as well. In September 1915, the wife of a soldier who had died at the Dardanelles front, named Emine, demanded a house because she had neither a family nor any income, and had been left homeless with the death of her husband.⁹⁷⁹

Similarly, the wife of Second Lieutenant Mustafa Efendi, who died in the Bingazi

⁹⁷⁷ BOA, DH.UMVM, 165/6, 8 Muharrem 1340 [11 September 1921].

⁹⁷⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 52/113, 29 Şevvâl 1337 [30 May 1919].

⁹⁷⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89-4/1-13, 23 Zilka'de 1333 [2 October 1915].

battle, demanded around the same time a home from the Ministry of War, claiming that she was all alone and had no pension.⁹⁸⁰ Another woman who demanded a home from the Ministry of War was Hüsniye, whose husband had died in battle and who had a nine year old son to take care of. She complained to the army that after her husband's death she had been left destitute, without any help and that the room that she still occupied with her son was not a secure place to live in or to raise a child properly. Therefore, she asked that a new residence be given to her by the state. On 6 October 1915 the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the İstanbul Governorship about her situation.⁹⁸¹

Some women requested homes from the army, because the pensions they received were not enough to pay their rent. One of these, named Necmiye, who lived in the Kartal district of İstanbul, and who was wife of a captain serving in Batum, claimed that the payment garnered from her husband's salary did not help her even to survive because she was a tenant. She claimed that she lived in misery with her two little children because of paying rent (*iki sagîr çocuğumla beraber kira köşelerinde hal-i sefâletle vakit geçirmekteyim*) and demanded that she be given a proper house to live in to relieve her poverty in her petition on 19 September 1918.⁹⁸²

In addition to poor soldier's wives or war widows, refugee women frequently requested places to live from the state. They probably constituted the largest group of claimants, and therefore, were an important burden for the state. For instance, in his novel *Sözde Kızlar* (So-called Virgins) (1923) Peyami Safa, a contemporary author, implied the crowdedness of the Administration for Refugees (*Muhacirîn İdâresi*) in a dialogue between one of the caretakers of the building and Mebrure, a refugee girl who is the protagonist of the novel. Although she came only to make inquiries about

⁹⁸⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89-4/1-16, 24 Zilka'de 1333 [3 October 1915].

⁹⁸¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89-4/1-25, 27 Zilka'de 1333 [6 October 1915].

⁹⁸² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2300, Dos. 67, Fih. 1-189, 19 Eylül 1334 [19 September 1918].

her father, who was lost during the Greek occupation, the caretaker did not at first listen to her and believed that she was one of those refugee women who asked for food or a place to live. He shouted at her and tried to discourage all other migrants in the building by telling her that there was no place for her to live and even the mosques were over-flowing and further residents were not being accepted because of the threat of epidemics.⁹⁸³

Women's Struggle for Motherhood

In the absence of effective welfare measures from the state and welfare institutions women sought alternative sources of help to find shelter and protect their children. In this regard, first of all, neighborhood relations and solidarity in a quarter were very important for low-income women. These kinds of social relations created a kind of temporary social security, albeit they were not flawless, until they were replaced by the modern social security system provided by the state.⁹⁸⁴ Actually, with the advent of the war and with the impoverishment of larger numbers of people, the importance of the neighborhood in the old quarters of especially the capital city decreased as it failed to offer sufficient protection. Nonetheless, its marginal benefit and importance for poor women increased in this period. Indeed, for poor women, the neighborhood was still an important means of solidarity and source of help in hard times. For instance, İrfan Orga wrote in his memoirs how neighbor women immediately helped

⁹⁸³ Cevdet Kudret, *Türk Edebiyatında Hikâye ve Roman*, Vol. 2, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Kadar (1911-1922)*, 5th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1987), p. 376.

⁹⁸⁴ Aişe Aslı Sancar, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Kadın ve Aile* (İstanbul: Hanımlar Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), p. 59. See also, Dilâver Cebeci, *Tanzimat ve Türk Ailesi: Sosyal Değişme Açısından Tanzimat İstanbul'unda Türk Ailesi Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2009), pp. 106-107; and Serdar Soydan, *Bir Zamanlar İstanbul'da* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), pp. 80-81.

his mother during her illness, coming to their home each day and looking after her children.⁹⁸⁵

Sometimes, women showed their protest and resentment when they were not supported by the state, as seen above in their petitions. Not being able to receive sufficient help from the government in terms of food, pensions or housing, many of them, especially those who had children, used the discourse of motherhood to legitimate their complaints and demands, not because they internalized patriarchal norms, but as a means to survive. Indeed, expressions of guilt are evident in the writings of some intellectuals who admitted the failure of the Ottoman state and army to protect women. For example, in a short story published in the periodical *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland) on 15 July 1918 and titled “*Donmuş Kundak*” (Frozen Swaddle), Hasan Dünder wrote about a refugee mother’s protest of a wounded Ottoman soldier. Her baby had died on the road during the flight she had been forced to make because of the enemy attacks. Near Hasankale, while walking on the Pasinler plain she realized that her baby had frozen to death. She looked with hatred at the Ottoman soldiers because they could not protect her hometown from the enemy attacks and threw the dead baby to the ground in front of the soldiers to insult them.⁹⁸⁶

In many cases mothers were the main protectors of their fatherless children since the state and semi-official institutions’ help fell short of meeting their needs. Despite this lack of aid which made being a good mother increasingly difficult in war years, the vast majority of women resisted leaving their motherhood roles. Many lower-class women had to struggle to raise their children without the help of their husbands or adult sons who were sent to the front and died within a short time. For

⁹⁸⁵ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 134-135.

⁹⁸⁶ Hasan Dünder, “*Donmuş Kundak*,” *Türk Yurdu* 14, No. 160 (15 Temmuz 1334 [15 July 1918]), pp. 4295-4297.

that reason, many of them had to work outside the home to feed their children. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo recalled how her mother, Şakire, tried to save her four children by working and bustling about all day long after the death of his father and his elderly brother and after the land they rented for farming had been expropriated by the landowner during the war. Şakire cut firewood from forests illegally and sold them to bring food to the house. She also accepted some help from her neighbors who were very probably as poor as she was.⁹⁸⁷

It is possible to cite several similar examples of mothers who had to work at more than one job in order to support their children. In one example, a peasant woman called Ayşe, whose husband had died in battle, looked after her four children while working as a midwife and bathing corpses without getting any help from others.⁹⁸⁸ Furthermore, it is important to remember that continuous warfare caused many women to be widowed and forced them to remarry. In these second marriages, many women continued to take care and raise the children of previous marriages along with their new children. For example, Süleyman Nuri in his memoirs wrote how his stepmother had to struggle to raise her many children alone while her house was burnt in one of the fires in İstanbul in 1916 and her husband died soon afterwards due to typhus fever. Süleyman Nuri was serving as a soldier and learned about her through her letters in which she had asked for help. Not being able to provide any kind of relief because of his military service, he could only read from the letters that she had built a house alone hiring only a construction foreman for technical details. After she had built the house, she worked at various jobs such as

⁹⁸⁷ Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo*, p. 16.

⁹⁸⁸ Tekin, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, pp. 170-171.

washwoman in the homes of others, as plasterer in construction, as quilt maker and as dishwasher in the Red Crescent soup kitchens.⁹⁸⁹

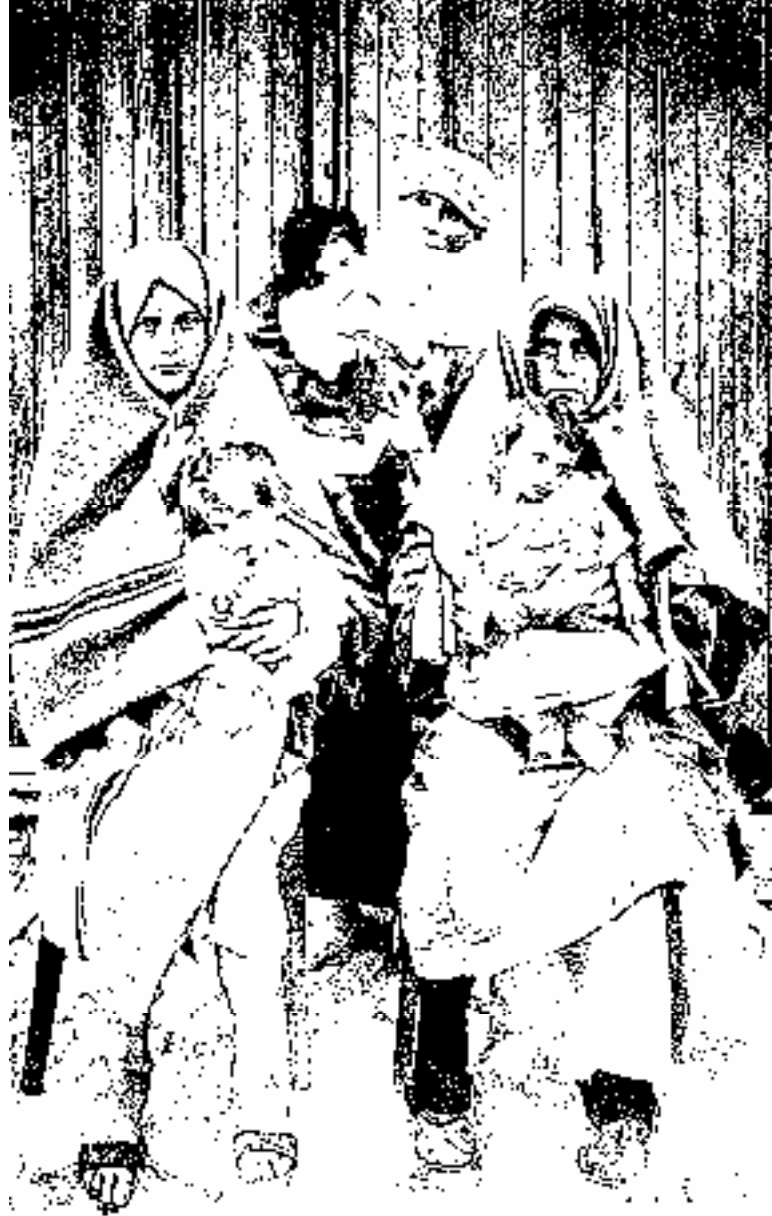


Fig. 12 Refugee mothers whose children are about to die due to hunger.

Source: Clarence Richard Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day or the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 290.

⁹⁸⁹ Süleyman Nuri, *Çanakkale Siperlerinden TKP Yönetimine: Uyanan Esirler* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2002), pp. 121-123.

There were also grandmothers who were left behind as the only parent of the orphans. For example, because her daughter-in-law Sıdıka had died in giving birth to her fourth son, Asiye had had to look after all her orphan grandchildren and frequently she had found nothing other than herbs that she collected from the mountains to feed them.⁹⁹⁰

Despite these courageous attempts and the devotion of certain women to protect the children, not all women were so diligent or strong. Many poor women tried to save themselves from such a burden by sending their children to free boarding schools. This provided primarily some financial relief by reducing the number of children to feed. Women first of all wanted to send their sons to vocational schools. In a petition to the government in June 1921, Melek Hanım, widow wife of a former auditor, requested that her 15-years old son, Mehmed Nuri, be accepted to one of the Industrial Schools and be given a free boarding education by claiming that she lived in to the utmost misery (*son derecede fakr ü sefâlet içinde bulunduğundan*).⁹⁹¹ Another widow called Münire, whose husband was an army postal clerk who died as martyr in Yemen, claimed that she lived in misery with her three sons under the age of adolescence. On 16 November 1920, in a petition to the government, she requested the allocation of some money from the relief fund (*atiyye tertibi*) and the acceptance and free registration of her sons to the military school.⁹⁹² İrfan Orga also wrote in his memoirs that despite his wishes, he and his brother were sent to military school by their impoverished mother, who had no other alternative to provide them a good education.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹⁰ Özer, *Toprağın Sancısı*, pp. 24-25.

⁹⁹¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-17/1-27, 18 Şevvâl 1339 [25 June 1921].

⁹⁹² BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-14/1-66, 16 Rebülevvel 1339 [28 November 1920].

⁹⁹³ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, p. 217.

Sometimes women were in such a desperate situation that they had to leave even their unweaned children to the state's care. Archive documents show that among those children sent to orphanages and boarding schools there were those who had just finished babyhood. For example, Fatma, living in İstanbul and in the quarter of Macuncu Kasım, asked that the Ministry of War on 3 March 1916 accept her two year old son İsmail, whose father had died in the war, to the Kadıköy State Orphanage. She claimed that after the death of her husband, Ali, at Arıburnu front, she had asked that this institution accept her son in vain as the authorities had refused her request on the pretext that the age of İsmail was not suitable. Although sending a two year old to an orphanage was not acceptable in normal conditions she wrote that she had no other choice, because the widow's pension she received was not sufficient to cover their expenses and even the rent she had to pay. Using the patriotic discourse, Fatma asked that the authorities force the Kadıköy Orphanage to accept her son. She reminded the authorities that they could not allow that "the son of a father who had laid down his life for his state and his nation" be deprived of education.⁹⁹⁴ Her petition had an impact on the authorities and the Ministry of War requested that the Ministry of Education order the Kadıköy State Orphanage to accept Fatma's son on 22 March 1916.⁹⁹⁵

Other than orphanages or boarding schools, the poorest women left their children at poorhouse at very early ages, because they were not capable of feeding them. In June 1918, a woman called Fatma İkbâl who lived in Kadıköy and whose husband was serving as a soldier, requested that the government accept her one year old son Halil İbrahim to the poorhouse because she had nobody to assist her and she

⁹⁹⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1757, Dos. 174A, Fih. 15-8, 19 Şubat 1331 [3 March 1916].

⁹⁹⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1757, Dos. 174A, Fih. 15-11, 9 Mart 1332 [22 March 1916].

was incapable of raising him up.⁹⁹⁶ Another woman called Fatma who lived in Göztepe also requested in August 1922 that her fifteen day old son, called Nevzâd, who was currently in the Haseki Women's Hospital be accepted to the poorhouse. She claimed that her gardener husband had been lost for a few months and because she had many children she could not look after him.⁹⁹⁷

As mentioned before, those children in the state orphanages did not receive enough care or they often were treated badly. Probably because of the lack of sufficient care in these institutions, those mothers who wanted to check the health of their children or wanted to see them frequently had certain problems after their children were placed in state orphanages. For instance, the petition of Ayşe Gülnaz and her friends submitted to the Ottoman parliament on 28 February 1917 to allow their children at state orphanages to come home once a week was rejected. It was argued that because the children in state orphanages were orphans and the children of soldiers who had died in battle, they were not allowed to go home once a week like other boarding school students and it was only permitted that their relatives visit them at these orphanages.⁹⁹⁸

These mothers had reason to want their children to come home on weekends at least because their children frequently suffered from malnutrition in the orphanages. İrfan Orga wrote in his memoirs how his little brother suffered from constant hunger and became ill in a charity school for war orphans in Kadıköy. Her mother had sent them to this school in 1916 due to acute poverty believing that they could find good food. Nevertheless, within two years the food and hygiene got worse

⁹⁹⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/10, 9 Ramazan 1336 [18 June 1918].

⁹⁹⁷ BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/29, 3 Muharrem 1341 [26 August 1922].

⁹⁹⁸ "Meclis-i Mebusana İta Edilip Haklarında İstida Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidaları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 865.

and the children both got sick because of hunger and İrfan's little brother Mehmet nearly died. Eventually, their mother had to take them out of the school in 1918.⁹⁹⁹

These problems in the state orphanages were not the only crisis that mothers had to deal with. Especially towards the end of the war, an increasing number of women began to make application for the acceptance of their children to free boarding schools. The state became incapable to respond to these applications because of the capacity restrictions of these schools. Therefore, new restrictions were introduced for acceptance to these schools. The petitions of many women who wanted free boarding education for their children were turned down because of the 20 percent quota declared by the state in 1919 to limit the number of orphan and poor children in state schools to one-fifth of all students. One of these women was Habibe, a refugee woman from Ayvalık who had fled to İstanbul after the occupation of her hometown by the Greek army. In June 1921 she asked that the government accept and register her sons in one of the state secondary schools. Nevertheless, because these schools were overcrowded with children who had free education, the government refused her demand. As a second alternative to a free boarding education, because Habibe was living in destitution in a hospital as a poor refugee and because she was incapable of feeding her two sons, one at the age of 11 and the other 9, the government asked that the General Directorate of State Orphanages accept these children on 22 June 1921.¹⁰⁰⁰

In 1922, the government announced that the state schools would not accept any students who wanted to get free boarding education in order to cut the expenses of the state probably due to the already crowded number of scholarship students. This practice was found unacceptable by the Ministry of Education, which warned

⁹⁹⁹ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 164-180.

¹⁰⁰⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-17/1-24, 15 Şevvâl 1339 [22 June 1921].

the Grand Viziership on 22 July 1922 about the special status of these schools, which had to accept students without money due to their regulations. Among these schools were especially the Teachers' Training College (*Dârü'l-muâllimîn*) and the Women Teachers' Training College (*Dârü'l-muâllimât*), whose graduates were desperately needed by the state.¹⁰⁰¹

Although in most of the cases the children were seen as a burden as dependents, there were even some cases in which the war orphans could not be shared. This was especially true for the female relatives, when a dead soldier had left behind a son. This is because, in some cases, male children were considered as important social security providers and breadwinners for many Muslim Turkish women during the war. Indeed, boys, be they young or old, were accepted as the breadwinner of the family.¹⁰⁰² During the war, more children started to bring home money and food at very early ages by working on the street or as apprentices in the shops of artisans. This was accepted as an alternative to boarding school for many mothers who needed immediate help. They hoped that the boys could learn a craft, while also helping the family in this way. For example, although she wanted her son to get a better education, İrfan Orga's mother placed him temporarily as apprentice in a barbershop, but his apprenticeship had only lasted one day.¹⁰⁰³

In order to acquire the guardianship of sons or grandsons, women sought help from the state. For example, on 21 August 1916, the Public Security Branch Office of the Ministry of War wrote to the higher authorities that a deceased soldier's mother, named Ülfet, had written them a petition in which she demanded that her grandson, named Fuad, be given to her. To explain her request, she claimed that her

¹⁰⁰¹ BOA, İ.DUİT, 99/52, 7 Zilhicce 1340 [1 August 1922].

¹⁰⁰² See for example the story of little Mahmut who at the age of seven becomes the breadwinner of his family after the death of his father in 1908. Orhan Karaveli, *Bir Ankara Ailesinin Öyküsü*, 7th ed. (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009), pp. 39-43.

¹⁰⁰³ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 189-193.

grandson's mother was not able give him the necessary instruction and education.¹⁰⁰⁴ Displaying the inability of the widow mother to educate her child, the mother-in-law Ülfet both claimed that her daughter-in-law was not strong enough in terms of finances and furthermore she implied that this woman, very probably her rival in control of the boy, was an immoral woman who could not educate her own child.

Orphan boys acquired another value as husbands in the war years during which many women became widows, and some men who wanted to seize their money or properties forced the relatively better off ones into unwanted marriages. Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran, a contemporary Turkish bureaucrat and novelist, wrote in his memoirs that he saw wealthy women in the Sürmene district of Trabzon province who married orphan boys under the age of adolescence in order to protect both these children and themselves. Because these women were wealthy, many men tried to intimidate them into marriage to exploit their wealth. It was a strategy of these relatively wealthy but yet alone women to marry an orphan boy to prevent the animosity of those men with whom they did not want to be united in marriage.¹⁰⁰⁵

Leaving Motherhood as a Last Resort:

Abandonment, Infanticide, and Abortion

Looking after their children was not an option for some mothers, although sons could bring money and social security or daughters could provide them some security by marrying with richer men at early ages. Children were especially a burden for refugee women. Therefore, there were refugee women who had to leave their children behind during the enemy attacks. For example, the mother of İdris Erdinç

¹⁰⁰⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2289, Dos. 22, Fih. 60, 8 Ağustos 1332 [21 August 1916].

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ebubekir Hazım Tepeyran, *Belgelerle Kurtuluş Savaşı Anıları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1982), pp. 118-120.

had to leave her only son to one of her neighbors and escape elsewhere. She was only one of those women who after learning the death of their husbands had released herself from her motherly duties and sought a safer place. This was true for many other young widows who were afraid of gang attacks in the Balkans.¹⁰⁰⁶

The refugees of the Black Sea region were not in a better situation. During their escape from the Russian army many of them left their children on the road, willingly or not. For instance, the bombardment of a Russian torpedo boat forced the inhabitants of the Görele district of Giresun to flee in the direction of Tirebolu on 28 July 1916. When they arrived at this destination it was very difficult to pass across the river of Harşit. The only means of transportation was a raft, called a *kelek*, as there was no bridge on the river. Because they had to wait for many days in the rain without any food or drinking water many refugee mothers went crazy and killed their own children by throwing them into the river. Hundreds of migrant women killed both themselves and their children in this way.¹⁰⁰⁷

During the occupation of the French forces of southern Anatolia in 1920, the inhabitants of the Kadirli district also fled when they heard the rumor that the French army was coming towards them with heavy weapons. This escape was later on called “run away-run away” (*kaç-kaç*) among those who experienced the tragedy. The refugees were mostly women, children and old people who tired easily. Among them many mothers left their little children under a myrtle bush (*murt çalısı*) in order to save their own lives.¹⁰⁰⁸

The abandonment of children during flight was so common that it became the subject of folk literature. For example, during the escape from the Russian

¹⁰⁰⁶ Akgül, *Şoför İdris*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Yüksel, *Giresun Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cezmi Yurtsever, *Kadirli Tarihi* ([Osmaniye]: Kadirli Hizmet Birliği Kültür Yayınları, 1999), pp. 237-238.

occupation forces which approached in winter 1914-1915, many refugee Muslim Turkish women of the Ardahan district saw their children die due to hunger and cold. Many of them had to abandon their children to death in order to save their own lives. Many lost their way on the road. The tragedy of the migration was described in an epic poem by an anonymous poet:

During the coldest month of the year, in winter days,
The wretched family is on the mountain roads,
Hungry, naked children on the bosoms of their mothers,
Died and left in the wilderness, Ardahan.

Mothers left their own children [on the road],
Hoping maybe they could save their own lives,
The mountain was misty [she] was got lost,
The flat world was filled with death, Ardahan.¹⁰⁰⁹

Similarly, in the Black Sea region which was one of the most damaged regions after the Russian occupations, thousands of children were left to their destiny by their mothers. In summer 1918, the government sent the regulations of the Children's Protection Society to the Trabzon province because there were an important number of abandoned children who had become a source of difficulty for the local authorities.¹⁰¹⁰

Other than those children who died or were abandoned by their refugee mothers, other children who had little chance to survive were illegitimate ones. Especially illegitimate sexual relations that increased with conscription or the deaths

¹⁰⁰⁹ “Zemheri ayında, kış günlerinde,
Perişan aile dağ yollarında,
Aç, çıplak sabiler ana koynunda,
Can verip sahrada kaldı Ardahan.

*Bıraktı analar öz evlâdını,
Belki kurtarırım derken canını,
Dağlar duman seçemedi yolunu,
Düz dünya mevt ile doldu Ardahan.”*

Raci Damacı, “Saz Şairleri: İsmiyok, II,” *Türk Folklor Araştırmaları* 3, No. 64 (November, 1954), p. 1053.

¹⁰¹⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-2/1-34, 28 Şevvâl 1336 [6 August 1918].

of male relatives and husbands during their military services caused unwanted pregnancies and births, which led many women to abandon them. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that most of the illegitimate children who died at very early dates from natural causes were actually victims of their mother's incapacity to take care of them.¹⁰¹¹ The government's growing suspicion of infanticide when an illegitimate baby died during the war years indicates that many women probably resorted to infanticide. On 8 May 1919, the İstanbul Governorship informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the illegitimate daughter of a woman called Kadriye had died within 24 hours following her birth. The governorship warned the authorities that this death might have actually been an infanticide, because she was illegitimate since Kadriye's husband was a soldier who had been under arms for the last two years.¹⁰¹² On 20 May 1919 the İstanbul Governorship reported to the government that after the investigations it was understood that the daughter of Kadriye had died from natural causes as it was proved with a doctor's report sent to them from the district of Üsküdar.¹⁰¹³

Poor women who were in a desperate situation and prostitutes, who saw children as a burden for their profession, were especially prone to killing them during the war years. On 30 January 1922, the İstanbul governorship warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs that a woman named Seher from Karahisar-ı Şarkî, who lived in the poorhouse in the capital city, had killed her fifteen-day old daughter by suffocating her the day before.¹⁰¹⁴ Similarly, on 8 February 1920 the Sivas governor informed

¹⁰¹¹ This was also common in other cultures. For instance it was argued that about 50 percent of all child deaths due to natural reasons were that of the illegitimate children who were not taken care of their mothers in the nineteenth century France. See Michelle Perrot, "Drames et conflits familiaux," in *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, Vol. 4, *De la Révolution à la Grande Guerre*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999), p. 249.

¹⁰¹² BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 7/90, 8 Şa'bân 1337 [9 May 1919].

¹⁰¹³ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 9/12, 19 Şa'bân 1337 [20 May 1919].

¹⁰¹⁴ BOA, DH.UMVM, 120/23, 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1340 [11 February 1922].

the government that a prostitute called Fidan who was in prison for the crime of infanticide had escaped with a male prisoner.¹⁰¹⁵

Wartime infanticide and abortions are also described in many of the literary works written on this period. These literary pieces serve to illustrate the various reasons forcing men and women to kill their own children during World War I. For example, in his *Sözde Kızlar* (So-called Virgins) (1923) Peyami Safa depicts the murder of an illegitimate baby born with syphilis. The villain of the novel, Behiç, passes the illness to his mistress, who learns his secret only after her son was born. The father hates the baby and despite mother's pleading, murders him by burying him alive. Trying to console the mourning mother, he explains that they were not alone in this crime and many people in İstanbul had been obliged to do the same thing.¹⁰¹⁶

Poverty and the need to find another husband as security provider appear as important reasons behind infanticide. For instance, in his novel *Onlar Savaşırken* (While They Were Fighting) (1978) Bekir Eliçin mentions the suspicious death of an illegitimate baby during birth. Sabriye, the wife of soldier Sari Ahmet, was raped by the headman Alâettin Efendi, who after this incident forced her to become his mistress. She became pregnant and when the pregnancy was discovered her husband divorced her and her brother-in-law threw her out of the house. Nobody accepted her with the "bastard in her womb" (*karnındaki piçi ile*). She lived in the hayloft of a widow who pitied her. The writer emphasized that "luckily the baby is born dead (!) that the poor woman is saved," implying the infant was killed one way or another.¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹⁵ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 31/97, 18 Cemâziyelevvel 1338 [8 February 1920].

¹⁰¹⁶ Peyami Safa, *Sözde Kızlar*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 2007), pp. 159-166.

¹⁰¹⁷ "İyi ki bebek ölü doğdu (!) da kadıncağız kurtuldu. Daha sonra yaşlı bir adam avratı üstüne aldı." Bekir Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken* (İstanbul: Okar Yayınları, 1978), pp. 165-167.

Although these poor mothers killing their offspring out of poverty were not alone in this crime, they were more easily found and punished by the authorities. Salâhaddin Enis, a contemporary novelist, in *Zâniyeler* (Adulteresses), published in 1924, which tells the story of wartime social decadence in İstanbul, emphasized the hypocrisy of the Ottoman elite about abortion. The main character of the novel, Fitnat, a woman who became the mistress of men of İstanbul high society, read one day in the newspaper that a poor woman living in one of the huts built of tin in Samatya had been found guilty of committing murder because she intentionally had a miscarriage. Fitnat protested the decision of the court, claiming that at the same moment that she had had an abortion out of extreme poverty many rich women did the same thing, but they were never caught or blamed.¹⁰¹⁸

Another group of women that was unable to carry out their motherly duties were those who were in prison due to the crimes such as theft, cheating, injury and homicide, incidents of which increased during the war time. The situation of the mothers in the prisons, most of them impoverished, was the worst and forced them to abandon their motherly duties to survive themselves. Due to the vulnerable situation of these mothers and to prevent further child deaths which could be both intentional or not the state felt the necessity to improve the conditions of the jails. For instance, in the Spring of 1916 the Kastamonu governor requested that the government to give more food to women prisoners who had to breastfeed their babies. The governor stated on 28 May 1916 that before these women had been given only one person's food which was sufficient neither for them nor their children. On 5 June 1916 the government decided to provide more food for these nursing mothers.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁸ Salâhaddin Enis, *Zaniyeler*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 1989), p. 132. First publication is in 1924.

¹⁰¹⁹ BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 61/20, 8 Rebiülevvel 1335 [2 January 1917].

Other than increasing their food, the government also helped unassisted mother prisoners by providing them more suitable places to look after their children. The Ministry of Justice demanded from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 1 August 1918 that such women pass all their term of imprisonment in a special department for them in the poorhouse.¹⁰²⁰ The children of prisoner parents who were old enough to be taken care by state institutions also were accepted to the poorhouse, as archive documents show. For instance, in July 1921, two sons of Hasibe and Ali Rıza, 11 year old İbrahim Hakkı and 9 year old Hasan Naci were taken in the poorhouse for the term of the imprisonment of their parents, who had to stay in prison for 91 days for not paying their debts.¹⁰²¹

In sum, in order to find shelter for themselves and the children they were not capable of looking after, many women requested help from both the state or welfare institutions and their neighbors or relatives. In those cases that they could acquire no aid and when push came to shove due to extreme poverty, some women did not always act as sacrificing and devoted mothers. It was true that some women struggled to raise their children by building their own houses or working multiple jobs, as will be examined on in Chapter Seven on the working life of Turkish women. However, many others, mostly unwillingly, had to abandon their children or committed infanticide in the worst cases.

Concluding Remarks

Women experienced a great crisis of motherhood from the Balkan Wars onwards, but especially with the advent of World War I. Being a mother as the single parent of

¹⁰²⁰ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M, 34/86, 25 Zilka'de 1336 [1 September 1918].

¹⁰²¹ BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 83/73, 20 Zilka'de 1339 [26 July 1921].

children was quite difficult due to wartime poverty after the breadwinners of the family were recruited as soldiers or died at the front. Women suffered as well from homelessness, malnutrition, illness, or the terrible conditions as refugees, which aggravated the problem of taking care of children as dependents. Furthermore, because of the death of underprivileged mothers due to such problems, many children were left without any care.

The state and welfare institutions were aware of disadvantaged women's problems as mothers, and tried to introduce some measures to alleviate their housing problem and to provide care and education for their children. However, the laws, regulations and institutions for helping the poor mothers of fatherless children remained inadequate. Both the state and welfare institutions, due to budget restraints and ideological reasons, discriminated among women by giving priority to the children of the men who had died in battle to support the war efforts. In addition, the government propagated an ideal image of Ottoman woman as self-sacrificing mothers of both their children and of homeland and as devoted wives of their husbands who were fighting at the front for the honor of their families and country.

Although many low-income women were victims of these unfavorable conditions, they neither passively accepted the role of selfless and sacrificing mothers and devoted wives, nor the laws and regulations that discriminated among them. First, they struggled to get more help from the state and institutions despite the difficulties. Furthermore, in case they got no help, many women abandoned their children or only motherly duties, as seen generally among refugee women, and sometimes resorted to infanticide due to the misery.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WOMEN AND WORK LIFE: OPPORTUNITIES, RESTRICTIONS AND PROBLEMS

During the war, Ottoman women played an important role as civilians who directed the economic affairs on the home front. Many scholars argue that the entry of a comparatively large number of women into the work life during the war years helped the emancipation of especially Muslim-Turkish women. Indeed, many new job opportunities for women emerged in the absence of men who were taken under arms. Women filled the positions left by men and acquired an important experience in terms of earning their livings and becoming part of public life. Many middle-class women started their own enterprises or founded associations for providing jobs for poor women. Women also entered into the army as workers and officials of the First Women Workers' Battalion.

Despite these positive changes, Turkish women had important restrictions on finding remunerative jobs for both social and economic reasons. Unless they found a job, most of the soldiers' families could not survive with the inadequate pensions provided by the state. Those widows and orphan girls who were not even within the group of soldiers' families were worse off since they did not receive any monetary aid. With the addition of the refugees, the number of poor and unorganized female workforce increased considerably. This created an abundant supply of cheap labor for the emerging Muslim-Turkish capitalists during the war years.

However, because of their abundance, the weakness of the nascent bourgeoisie and the slowdown in many sectors due to the war, even those ordinary women who were willing to work remained unemployed. Furthermore, even in those years, when they needed jobs most desperately, there was a social pressure against

their working outside the home. This pressure restricted their search for jobs and job opportunities. The emerging Turkish capitalist-national economy's need for cheap women's labor had not yet been accompanied by a cultural and social transformation encouraging women to work outside their homes. The greatest part of the women's workforce had continued working at home through the putting-out system and at looms. Women's work had been seen as supplementary and temporary, not professional until that time. Moreover, the great part of the Ottoman middle-class women had been isolated from working life. Working both at home and in the mills that emerged in the nineteenth century had been considered only jobs appropriate for lower-class women.

The war created contradictory conditions and policies toward women's work life. On the one hand, the war conditions and national economy policies compelled them to enter into work life as wage earners. On the other hand, the social impact of the war, social problems on the home front, the conscription of men forced the state to take over the patriarchal role of the men and to oversee the women's morality and sexual lives. That is, the war did not automatically generate conditions ending the patriarchal social control and restrictions that obstructed women's participation in work life during the period.

In addition, even when women were employed, they were paid much less than their colleagues in Europe and the United States. Ottoman women workers had been receiving poor wages from the nineteenth century onward, as compared with that of men and their European counterparts. The war conditions, which created an extremely high cost of living, further decreased their wages. Moreover, the lack of enough jobs, unsanitary working conditions, grueling working hours, the lack of any institution to take care of their children, and increasing vulnerability to sexual or

other forms of abuses in the work place aggrieved and distressed working women. Paradoxically, the conscription of their husbands, fathers and brothers did not relieve the patriarchal pressure, but exposed women to other forms of abuses and restrictions. In addition to all these problems, in a structural level, the usual gendered division of labor that restricted women's job fields to specific professions and sectors which were an extension of household labor, such as nursing, weaving, sewing, cleaning, cooking and partly teaching children, continued. Women had to fight against these problems and restrictions mostly through individual strategies rather than organized ones.

The modernist and progressive accounts of wartime developments concerning women's work lives conventionally have argued that Turkish women's entrance into work life in the absence of their male relatives liberated them. Taking some emotional and too optimistic remarks in contemporary middle-class women's journals for granted, the scholars have seen women's entrance into work life as a progressive march toward women's emancipation.¹⁰²² Surely, the increase in the number of working women must partly contributed to their rights, decreased gender seclusion, and created self-awareness and self-consciousness among especially some educated and professional women. However, work life also created new problems and burdens for women that have not been examined so far. This chapter emphasizes the restrictions and problems that working women had in work life and their response to these restrictions and problems through their subjective consciousness and anonymous strategies. In this regard, the main argument of this chapter is that

¹⁰²² For an analytical approach to class-specific worldview and discourse of the Ottoman women's journals see Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Kadın Dergilerinde (1869-1927) Osmanlı Hanımları ve Hizmetçi Kadınlar," *Toplumsal Tarih* 64 (March, 1999), pp. 15-24. Karakışla, aware of social and political positions of Ottoman women's writers and women's publications, does not replicate such "liberation" discourse of the middle-class and elite women. He underlines how these writers and journals addressed the Ottoman elite women and educated women, who were mostly unaware of or indifferent to lower-class women's problems.

women were exploited as a workforce by the emerging “nationalist economy” under the uncontrolled and extraordinary conditions, but they struggled against these work conditions and acquired an important experience as working women.

For a better understanding of the importance of wartime developments, this chapter begins with the historical developments in terms of the vocational education and work life of women before World War I. It continues with an explanation of the real job opportunities that women acquired in this period. This is followed by a detailed account of restrictions and obstacles to women’s entrance into work life. It closes with the examination of women’s strategies to compensate the negative work conditions and to circumvent the restrictions.

Women’s Work Life in the Ottoman Empire before World War I

The work life of Ottoman women had a long history before World War I. Nevertheless, despite the evolution of the educational opportunities, the number of women workers and of their job fields was limited. The huge part of them was employed in the homes. As the Ottoman Empire was not an industrial society,¹⁰²³ there was a very small number of industrial workers. Therefore, there was not much pressure on women to work outside home.¹⁰²⁴ According to one estimate in 1908, of

¹⁰²³ Şevket Pamuk writes that the first attempts of the state at industrialization were mainly for the production of goods for the army, palace and state officials in the first half of the nineteenth century. These attempts failed and only in the second half of the nineteenth century were a limited number of factories opened with private capital. Looking at the cotton production levels, Pamuk says that the industrialized cotton textile production which was the key production branch of the Industrial Revolution entered Turkey only after a century, by the 1930s. See Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme, 1820-1913*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005), pp. 146-148. Korkut Boratav also writes that the dependency of the Ottoman Empire on importing textiles during the nineteenth century and the small number of factories even in 1913 and 1915 statistics reveal that it was very difficult to accept the existence of an Ottoman industry. See Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁰²⁴ Affan Hikmet, Ahmet Cevat Emre, Cemile Selim Nevşirvanova, *Milli Azadlık Savaşı Anıları* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2006), p. 17.

about 250,000 industrial workers, female workers made up about 70,000 to 75,000.¹⁰²⁵ It is argued that most of these women were non-Muslim, especially Greeks and Armenians in Anatolia. Muslim women constituted the great part of the female workers only in Thrace.¹⁰²⁶

Despite the lack of a large number of working-class women in factories and workshops, women played an important role in the Ottoman economy as a cheap labor force. It was true that in the Ottoman society Muslim women's entrance into the work life was largely restricted by the conservative social norms or traditional social structures. Nevertheless, women's labor was especially exploited at home. Women's working at home through the putting out system was suitable to Ottoman society's general approach to the gendered division of labor and women's place in society. In some industries like silk spinning, weaving, and carpet making, female laborers were employed through the putting out system. This system, in Donald Quataert's words, "corresponded well with Ottoman society's view of female labor as supplemental."¹⁰²⁷

In rural areas, women most frequently worked in agriculture and textiles, both of which could be done at home or among the family. There were also women in the service sector of small Islamic monasteries called *zaviye* as washerwomen, nurses, or tomb keepers as early as the sixteenth century.¹⁰²⁸ Women were also known to have worked in mines for long centuries as has been revealed by sultanate orders dating

¹⁰²⁵ M. Şehmus Güzel, "1908 Kadınları," *Tarih ve Toplum* 2, No. 7 (July, 1984), p. 8.

¹⁰²⁶ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 132. See also Çağlar Keyder, "Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and in Republican Turkey, ca. 1900-1950," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 131.

¹⁰²⁷ Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing, 1800-1914," in *Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730-1914*, writ. Donald Quataert (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1993), p. 85.

¹⁰²⁸ Kadriye Yılmaz-Koca, *Osmanlı'da Kadın ve İktisat* (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 1998), pp. 96-97.

back to this century.¹⁰²⁹ After the integration with European capitalism during the nineteenth century in certain sectors, female workers started to work in the newly emerging factories along with other traditional sectors stated above.¹⁰³⁰ However, working at home, as the main form of employment of female labor, continued during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, a small number of wealthy women owned enterprises and engaged in trade. In the classical age of the Ottoman Empire, women sold fabrics as merchants or owned weaving looms, embroidery looms, grain mills or bakeshops.¹⁰³¹

Although they were mostly unpaid laborers as members of peasant households or sometimes paid agricultural laborers, an important majority of Turkish women in the countryside worked in agriculture. The labor of women was particularly important in the Black Sea region, the Marmara region, Adana, İzmir and Aydın where the capitalist agriculture had emerged. In these regions, women workers contributed to the production of tobacco, cotton, grapes and figs.¹⁰³² The *arusâne resmi* (bridal tax), which was taken by the state from the groom, when the daughter of a *reâyâ* (Ottoman subject) married, is a clear evidence that women's labor considered by the state as an economic asset that was transferred with marriage and therefore taxable.¹⁰³³

Women also worked in textiles and carpet production. Especially young, unmarried girls were employed in textile production.¹⁰³⁴ Most of the workers in silk

¹⁰²⁹ Caporal, *Kemalizm'de ve Kemalizm Sonrasında*, p. 136.

¹⁰³⁰ Yılmaz-Koca, *Osmanlı'da Kadın ve İktisat*, p. 152.

¹⁰³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-95. In addition, Suraiya Faroqhi writes that owners or users of almost half of the spinning mills in Bursa in 1678 were women. See Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Dünyası'nda Üretmek, Pazarlamak ve Yaşamak*, trans. Gül Çağalı Güven and Özgür Türesay (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), p. 240.

¹⁰³² Yaraman, *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, p. 101.

¹⁰³³ Yılmaz-Koca, *Osmanlı'da Kadın ve İktisat*, p. 81.

¹⁰³⁴ Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms," p. 904.

production in Bursa were non-Muslim girls. They generally lived in the factories, and quit their jobs after they had saved enough money for their dowries.¹⁰³⁵

According to Donald Quataert, the cheap labor of Ottoman women and children enjoyed by textile sector made certain export-oriented textile products competitive in the world market during the nineteenth century.¹⁰³⁶ Ottoman girls and women predominantly worked in cotton and wool yarn spinning in the steam-powered mills that emerged in the late nineteenth century concentrated in Salonica, Macedonia, İstanbul, İzmir, and Adana. For example, a mill in the Yedikule district of İstanbul employed 300 female workers. In Adana, one mill employed 300 females, who produced 1 million kilograms of yarn a year. Another mill in the same province had 550 female workers, who worked in twelve hours shifts.¹⁰³⁷ In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, because of the decline in the textile sector due to the economic crisis, tobacco processing began to develop and attracted a huge number of female laborers.¹⁰³⁸

In the early twentieth century, as an industrial workforce, women worked primarily in tobacco, silk, canned food, soap, matches, paper, and printing houses.¹⁰³⁹ They made up more than half of the workers in textiles production and about 95 percent of the workers in silk production in 1913.¹⁰⁴⁰ By 1915, they were employed in stockings factories of Adana and Urfa on a wide scale. Only in Urfa there were 1000 women working in stocking factories. The number of women who worked in

¹⁰³⁵ Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 56.

¹⁰³⁶ Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Manufacturing in the Nineteenth Century," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 89-90. See also Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 137.

¹⁰³⁷ Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing, 1800-1914," p. 87-88.

¹⁰³⁸ Donald Quataert, "Premières fumées d'usines: Some General Factors Favoring the Development of Industry in Salonica," in *Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730-1914*, writ. Donald Quataert, p. 163, 170.

¹⁰³⁹ Yaraman, *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Caporal, *Kemalizmde ve Kemalizm Sonrasında*, p. 137.

carpet making in İzmir, Sivas, Ankara and Konya (including Akşehir, Isparta and Niğde) reached about 4780. It was reported that 11,000 women were employed in textile manufacturing in Aydın. The number of those female workers who were employed in Kütahya, Eskişehir, and Karahisar was about 1550. Women also worked on 1000 looms in Diyarbakır that men had left due to war.¹⁰⁴¹ In many of these factories, the salaries of women were about one-third to one-sixth of what was paid to men.¹⁰⁴²



Fig. 13 Muslim women who work in silk production in Bursa.

Source: Raif Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa (1876-1926)* (İstanbul: Avrasya Etnografya Yayınları, 2006), p. 213.

Other than these occupations, women had limited work opportunities. Other than these occupations, women had limited work opportunities. Education in midwifery began in 1842 with the establishment of School of Science of Midwifery (*Fenn-i*

¹⁰⁴¹ Muhaddere Taşcıoğlu, *Türk Osmanlı Cemiyetinde Kadının Sosyal Durumu ve Kadın Kıyafetleri* (Ankara: Akın Matbaası, 1958), p. 45.

¹⁰⁴² Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 142.

Kıbâle Mektebi).¹⁰⁴³ In 1858, the Ottoman state opened the first *rüştiyes* (secondary schools) for girls.¹⁰⁴⁴ Women also started getting education in industrial schools in the second half of the nineteenth century. Midhat Pasha opened an industrial school for orphan girls in Rusçuk in 1865. In 1869, the school was reopened in the Yedikule district of İstanbul.¹⁰⁴⁵ This was followed by the Üsküdar Day School for Girls (*Üsküdar Nehârî Kız Okulu*) in 1878, which was turned into an industrial school in 1881.¹⁰⁴⁶ In 1879, two other industrial schools for girls were opened in Cağaloğlu and Aksaray.¹⁰⁴⁷ All of these institutions were merged under the name of the İstanbul Industrial School for Girls (*İstanbul Kız Sanayi Mektebi*) in 1912.¹⁰⁴⁸ After the enactment of the Regulation of Public Education (*Maârif-i Umûmiyye Nizâmnâmesi*) in April 1869, the first of the Women Teachers' Training Schools (*Dârü'l-muallimât*) were opened in 1870.¹⁰⁴⁹

The establishment of several vocational high schools for girls gained momentum with the Second Constitutional Era. In 1911, the first *idâdiye*, which roughly corresponds to senior high school for girls, was opened in İstanbul.¹⁰⁵⁰ This paved the way for the opening of the Higher Women Teachers' Training School (*Dârü'l-muallimât-ı Âliye*) in 1913.¹⁰⁵¹ In the educational year 1913-1914, the only *idâdiye* for girls in İstanbul was transformed into a high school (*sultâniye*). Its name was changed into *Bezm-i Âlem Sultânisi* (Bezm-i Âlem High School) in 1915 and it was reopened in another building in Aksaray. Three other high schools for girls were

¹⁰⁴³ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 52.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Elif Ekin Akşit, *Kızların Sessizliği: Kız Enstitülerinin Uzun Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), pp. 92-93.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Akşit, *Kızların Sessizliği*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁴⁹ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, 9th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), pp. 188-189.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, p. 55; and Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 224.

¹⁰⁵¹ Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, pp. 86-87.

opened in the Çamlıca, Erenköy and Kandilli. Only after 1922 was a high school for girls opened in İzmir, which was followed by another in Ankara.¹⁰⁵² Women could be educated as kindergarten teachers by 1914.¹⁰⁵³ On 7 February 1914, they started to attend conferences at İstanbul University (*Dârü'l-fünûn*).¹⁰⁵⁴

Despite these educational reforms for girls, before World War I the limited types of work suitable for Turkish women were nearly all performed at home or in segregation from men.¹⁰⁵⁵ Nevertheless, some middle-class and educated modernist women fought these limitations and traditional rules and principles in everyday life. In 1913, Turkish women started working in the Telephone Company (*Telefon İdâresi*) in İstanbul as officials and inspectors.¹⁰⁵⁶ The same year they began to sell their handicraft products in Kapalıçarşı. A woman named Enver opened seamstress shops in different districts of the capital city to produce clothing for soldiers. After her shops were pillaged, she sold homemade food to subscribed clients. There was an Ottoman Women's Company (*Osmanlı Kadın Ticârethânesi*) in Babıali. Another entrepreneurial woman named Seyyide Kemal opened a pastry shop called the "Patisserie for Ladies" (*Hanımlar Pastahânesi*) in Sultanahmet. Some of the machine operators and typesetters of the periodical *Kadınlar Dünyâsı* (World of Women) and the *Evkâf-ı İslâmiye Matbaası* (Evkaf-ı İslamiye Printing House) were women.¹⁰⁵⁷ In sum, Turkish women acquired experience in work life and some forms of business before World War I, although they were limited in number.

¹⁰⁵² Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 224.

¹⁰⁵³ Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 224.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Hester Donaldson Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman's Life* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), pp. 189-192.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 296-297.

Wartime Opportunities for Working Women

It is generally argued that work life of women during World War I was an important contributor to their “emancipation.” Indeed, wartime conditions created some opportunities for women and increased the number and varieties of jobs they could enter. Furthermore, most of the new work opportunities were due to the workforce vacuum created by the military conscription and war efforts. For this reason, even Turkish women managed to legitimize working outside their homes.

Both the Turkish nationalist elite and the scholars have viewed this development as a chance for the development of Turkish women’s rights.¹⁰⁵⁸ Women’s quick entry into work life was seen as a revolutionary change by some contemporary observers as well. Ahmed Emin stated that the rapid changes in women’s participation in work life during the war years “satisfied even the most radical feminists.”¹⁰⁵⁹ Besim Ömer Pasha, who was an important figure for the education of women as nurses in the Ottoman Empire,¹⁰⁶⁰ also argued that women’s work during the war had contributed to the “emancipation” of women even in Anatolia.¹⁰⁶¹ Indeed, women’s entry into work life was one of the most important goals of the feminists of the time and surely an important gain for Turkish women who had long been secluded from public life and accordingly from work life, especially in cities and towns. A feminist of the time, Sabiha Sertel, described the

¹⁰⁵⁸ For instance, A. Afetinan interprets the increase in the number of Turkish women workers in World War I as a development which further liberated women. See A. Afetinan, *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman* (Paris: UNESCO, 1962), p. 44. Fatmagül Berktaş as well argues that women’s activities during the Balkan Wars, World War I and National Struggle played an important role in their political emancipation. She compares this process to the gaining the right to vote of the lower-class men without any property by universal conscription to the national armies. See Fatmagül Berktaş, “Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Feminizm,” in *Tarihin Cinsiyeti* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), p. 95.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Özden, *Doktor Besim Ömer Akalın*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶¹ BOA, HR.SYS, 2422/71, 26 June 1916.

rapid change in women's lives as "a victory."¹⁰⁶² Undoubtedly, there was some sort of change created by the war, which introduced some opportunities, albeit limited, for women willing or ready to enter into work life.

Working Women in New Jobs

In order to increase the number of Muslim women who could work in a job, a society named the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (*Osmânî Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslâmiyesi*) was founded officially on 14 August 1916 under the patronage of Nâciye Sultan, wife of Vice-Commander and Minister of War, Enver Pasha.¹⁰⁶³ This association provided jobs for thousands of women. During the war years, women started to be employed as cashiers, ticket officers on Bosphorus steamers, post office clerks, secretaries and even as street cleaners and garbage collectors.¹⁰⁶⁴ Women also started working as barbers in the Beyoğlu, Sirkeci and Divanyolu districts of İstanbul.¹⁰⁶⁵ There were more than 300 young Turkish women who worked as clerks in the general post office and many other departments of the government. Women also appeared in shops as cashiers or in other services,¹⁰⁶⁶ and worked in the Exchange of War Prisoners Commission (*Esir Mübâdele Komisyonu*) of the Red Crescent Society in İstanbul.¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶² Sabiha Zekeriya [Sertel], "Kadınlara Çalışma Hakkı," *Büyük Mecmua* (18 September 1919), p. 170. Quoted and translated in Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923* (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999), p. 23.

¹⁰⁶³ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Mary Mills Patrick, "Women," in *Modern Turkey: A Politico-Economic Interpretation, 1908-1923 Inclusive*, ed. Eliot Grinnell Mears (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 146.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Millî Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız*, p. 145.



Fig. 14 Two Turkish women who work as street sweepers in İstanbul during the Armistice period.

Source: Demetra Vaka, *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 8.

Upon the increasing importance of women's contribution to war effort and economy, together with the relatively secular ideology of the Unionist government, the education of Turkish women at the university level began in war years. University education of women started on 12 September 1914 in the University for Girls (*İnâs Dârü'l-fünûnu*).¹⁰⁶⁸ Women, surely belonging to upper and middle class families, started having education in fine arts and were hired as actresses in the City Theater of İstanbul (*Dârü'l-bedâyi*) in the later years of the war.¹⁰⁶⁹ Furthermore, the School of

¹⁰⁶⁸ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Yaraman, *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, pp. 103-104.

Commerce organized special courses for women and private courses were opened for women who wanted to make an independent living in 1917.¹⁰⁷⁰

Women were also active in small trade in the war years. In 1917 the Ottoman Incorporated Company of Female-Specific Products Bazaar (*Hanımlara Mahsûs Eşyâ Pazarı Osmânlı Anonim Şirketi*) was opened in İstanbul.¹⁰⁷¹ The founders of this company were women who brought goods from Anatolia to the capital city on the Mudanya-İzmir road and sold these behind the Galata dock.¹⁰⁷² Similar bazaars were created in Anatolian cities like Bartın and Kayseri.¹⁰⁷³ There were also entrepreneurial Turkish women who started their own businesses. Naciye Hanım opened a photographer's shop in which she served only women at the beginning of 1919 first in the Yıldız district of İstanbul and later in Bayezid.¹⁰⁷⁴ Seyyide Kemal Hanım opened a patisserie and Fatma Nefise Hanım a workshop (*İş Yurdu*).¹⁰⁷⁵ Calibe Hanım opened a tailor shop in Kadıköy in which she hired only Turkish girls and which she moved to Beyoğlu later on.¹⁰⁷⁶

Unlike European women, Ottoman women were not employed in large numbers in arms factories during the war. Therefore, the war did not create a huge demand for female labor in this sector. On the other hand, as noted by Vedat Eldem, nor did many sectors employing female labor force come to a halt during the war. Except for carpet making, the demand for which from Europe declined due to the war, production rates did not drop radically in those sectors that women were

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 237. See also Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁷¹ Faik Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki'de Milliyetçilik, Din ve Kadın Tartışmaları*, Vol. 1 (İstanbul: Su Yayınları, 1999), p. 35.

¹⁰⁷² Toprak, *Türkiye'de Millî İktisat*, p. 317.

¹⁰⁷³ See Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 133; and Kars, *Millî Mücadele'de Kayseri*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁷⁴ S. A. Ak, "İlk Profesyonel Kadın Fotoğrafçımız: Naciye Hanım," *Sanat Olayı*, No. 34 (March, 1985), pp. 78-79. Quoted in Yaraman, *Resmî Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, pp. 102-103. See also Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki'de*, Vol. 1, p. 35.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki'de*, Vol. 1, p. 35.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Sinan Korle, *Kızıltoprak Günlerim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997), p. 90.

employed.¹⁰⁷⁷ In the absence of a sufficient number of male laborers, the percentage of women as industrial workers increased from 20 percent in 1913 to 30 percent in 1915.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Ottoman government supported women's employment for accelerating war mobilization, as was being done in other combating countries.¹⁰⁷⁹ Many women were hired in factories in substitution for the men conscripted into the army. In the Adana and Urfa Sock Factories, the number of women workers increased remarkably. In Diyarbakır, women began to be hired in a workshop of 1000 carpet looms. Because the factories in Hereke, Karamürsel and Eyüp Sultan were in need of workers after the male workers had been conscripted, women were generally accepted as workers.¹⁰⁸⁰

Turkish women also acquired knowledge especially in nursing and tailoring in the war years. The army needed these two occupations in particular.¹⁰⁸¹ During the Balkan Wars, many women worked as voluntary nurses taking care of wounded soldiers.¹⁰⁸² The efforts to educate a new generation of nurses accelerated with the Tripolitan and Balkan Wars.¹⁰⁸³ Although the first School of Nursing for Muslim women was founded in 1925 by the Red Crescent,¹⁰⁸⁴ Turkish women took nursing courses during the war years from October 1914 to April 1915 in the conference hall

¹⁰⁷⁷ Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 263-264.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Yaraman, *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Taşçıoğlu, *Kadının Sosyal Durumu ve Kadın Kıyafetleri*, p. 45-46.

¹⁰⁸¹ For the transliterations of two articles in *Türk Yurdu* on these two new occupations of Turkish women, see Sadık Albayrak, *Meşrutiyet İstanbul'unda Kadın ve Sosyal Değişim* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2002), pp. 293-296.

¹⁰⁸² Nil Sarı and Zuhâl Özaydın, "Türk Hemşireliğine Osmanlı Hanımefendileri'nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)'in Desteği," *Sendrom*, No. 3 (March, 1992), p. 66.

¹⁰⁸³ Nil Sarı and Zuhâl Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve Kadın Hastabakıcı Eğitiminin Nedenleri II," *Sendrom*, No. 5 (May, 1992), p. 73.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Leman Birol, ed., *Kızılay Hemşireleri 50 Yıl İnsanlık Hizmetinde: Kızılay Hemşirelik Koleji 1925-1975* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, 1975), p. 33. The first school of nursing in the Ottoman Empire is opened by Americans in the [Admiral Bristol] American Hospital in İstanbul in 1920. Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 88.

of *Dârü'l-fünûn*.¹⁰⁸⁵ These first women nurses were regarded as so important that even the *Başkadın Efendi* (the first wife of the Sultan) was invited to the commencement day of the first 30 graduates¹⁰⁸⁶ and aristocratic women started learning the profession in Bursa.¹⁰⁸⁷ On 18 March 1915, the İstanbul University Hospital (*Dârü'l-fünûn Hastahânesi*), which was reopened due to the war, demanded the assignment of ten of these new graduates.¹⁰⁸⁸ By 1916, there were only 24 Turkish women working as nurses in the hospitals of the capital city.¹⁰⁸⁹ The same year, seven women nurses of the Kadırga Birth Clinic (*Kadırga Seririyât-ı Vilâdiyesi*) were sent to the military hospitals of the 4th Army in the Jerusalem-Damascus region.¹⁰⁹⁰

During the war, nursing became so important that Ottoman intellectuals and writers began to support this profession as a “women’s profession” by writing poems praising the profession or calling women to work as nurses. Tevfik Fikret, Abdülhak Hamid, Süleyman Nesib, Hüseyin Daniş, Faik Ali Ozansoy, Mehmed Emin Yurdakul, Nigâr Hanım, and Fazıl Ahmet Aykaç were only some of the poets who eulogized nursing from 1913 onwards.¹⁰⁹¹ Women nurses also became symbols of the Red Crescent Society during the war and they appeared frequently on the

¹⁰⁸⁵ Sarı and Özaydın, “Türk Hemşireliğine Osmanlı Hanımefendileri’nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)’in Desteği,” p. 70.

¹⁰⁸⁶ TKA, 195/5, [date not indicated on the document]. See also *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün’akid*, p. 34; and *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Devletlü İsmetlü Baş Kadınefendi Hazretlerinin Riyaset-i Fahriyesinde Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi* ([İstanbul]: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1330 [1914]), pp. 102-112.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Sarı and Özaydın, “Türk Hemşireliğine Osmanlı Hanımefendileri’nin ve Hilâl-i Ahmer (Kızılay)’in Desteği,” p. 74.

¹⁰⁸⁸ TKA, 373/4, 5 Mart 1331 [18 March 1915].

¹⁰⁸⁹ Sönmez, *Kızıl Toprak Ak Yemeni*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün’akid*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹¹ Nil Sarı and Zuhâl Özaydın, “Kadın Hastabakıcılar ve Osmanlı Toplumunda Uyandırdığı Yankılar,” *Sendrom*, No. 8 (August, 1992), pp. 10-13.

postcards, rosettes, medallions and plaques of the Society. Nurses were depicted often helping the wounded soldiers or serving them water in such iconography.¹⁰⁹²



Fig. 15 Turkish nurses who assist a surgeon in a surgery during World War I.

Source: *Harb Mecmûası*, no. 14 (Safer 1335 / Teşrîn-i Sâni 1332 [14 November– 13 December 1916]), p. 215.

The army was in such great need of nurses by autumn 1916 that it wrote to the Red Crescent Society that the students of the nursing courses could practice in the Practice School (*Tatbikât Mektebi*) attached to the Directorate of Military Hospitals (*Askerî Hastahâneler Müdüriyeti*) in İstanbul. It was stated that students could be found by the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women and if they were in financial need, they could be helped financially.¹⁰⁹³ About 40 young Armenian young women refugees in Kayseri were educated in the Red Crescent

¹⁰⁹² See for example some plaquettes, medallions and rosettes of the Red Crescent Society in Celil Ender, ed., *Kızılay Onur Sembolleri (Madalyalar, Madalyonlar, Bröveler, Rozetler)* (İstanbul: Barok Matbaacılık ve Yayıncılık, 2001), pp. 46-50, 79-80, 83.

¹⁰⁹³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2440, Dos. 145, Fih. 17, 26 Teşrîn-i Evvel 1332 [8 November 1916].

hospitals as nurses.¹⁰⁹⁴ Just like them, many nurses received professional education after they began to work as nurses.¹⁰⁹⁵ The importance of trained midwives also increased because local governments demanded their work.¹⁰⁹⁶



Fig. 16 A group of women who are employed in the Army Sewing Depot.

Source: *Harb Mecmûası*, no. 11 (Ramazân 1334 / Temmuz 1332 [14 July – 13 August 1916]), p. 174.

Seamstress was also an important profession during the war years. An advertisement for Ottoman women in the newspaper *Tanîn* (Reverberation) on 27 February 1915 wanted women to sew clothing for soldiers by applying to the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society (*Hilâl-i Ahmer Hanımlar Hey'et-i Merkeziyyesi*) or by paying for it. The advertisement declared that thousands of poor women were ready

¹⁰⁹⁴ Sarı and Özaydın, “Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve Kadın Hastabakıcı Eğitiminin Nedenleri I,” *Sendrom*, No. 4 (April, 1992), p. 11. See also *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1335-1919 Senesinde Mün'akid*, p. 8. On 13 August 1917, the head doctor of the İncesu Sanatorium in the Ankara-Kayseri district wrote to the army that these women, who were to be further educated in nursing, should be accepted to the Sanatorium with legal registration. ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2966, Dos. 153, Fih. 29, 13 Ağustos 1333 [13 August 1917].

¹⁰⁹⁵ Orhan Yeniars, *Türkiye Kızılay Tarihine Giriş*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Kızılay Bayrampaşa Şubesi, 2000), p. 94.

¹⁰⁹⁶ For instance, two women, Bedriye and Cemile, were sent to İstanbul Midwifery School and their educational expenses were paid by the Bursa municipality. Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 204.

to sew these at a very low price.¹⁰⁹⁷ Thousands of women also worked in the army's sewing workshops where they both learned the profession and produced soldiers' clothing.¹⁰⁹⁸ A sewing school was opened by Behire Hakkı in 1913 with 27 students, a number which increased to 366 in 1917. These students opened their own shops, worked at home or became sewing teachers, increasing the number of women tailors further.¹⁰⁹⁹ The school was also supported by the government because it saved many poor women from destitution by giving them a means to support themselves.¹¹⁰⁰



Fig. 17 Women who are preparing clothing for the army.

Source: *Harb Mecmûası*, no. 11 (Ramazân 1334 / Temmuz 1332 [14 July – 13 August 1916]), p. 174.

Other job opportunities during the war years were found in the Ottoman army as women workers, female clerks and officers. On 10 September 1917 a draft of the

¹⁰⁹⁷ Sönmez, *Kızıl Toprak Ak Yemeni*, pp. 35-37. See also *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Devletli İsmetli Baş Kadınefendi Hazretlerinin*, pp. 84-97.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Çolak and Uçan, *II. Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Basında*, pp. 51-53. Before World War I several attempts of Turkish women to open their tailor shops failed because in this sector Greek and foreign tailors were dominant. See for instance, the tailor shop of the periodical *Kadınlar Dünyası* (World of Women) in 1913, Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Osmanlı Hanımları ve Kadın Terziler (1869-1923), III," *Tarih ve Toplum* 39, No. 234 (June, 2003), pp. 39-48.

¹¹⁰⁰ For instance, an official note sent to the Istanbul Directorate of Education by the Ministry of Education on 31 May 1915, reveals that the government wanted to accelerate the architectural renovation and construction of the tailoring school building. BOA, MF.MTK, 1209/47, 18 Receb 1333 [1 June 1915].

Internal Services Regulation of the First Women Workers' Battalion of the First Army of the Empire (*Birinci Orduyu Hümayuna Mensub Kadın Birinci İşçi Taburu Hizmet-i Dahiliye Talimatnamesi*) was prepared¹¹⁰¹ and it was introduced to the First Army on 19 February 1918.¹¹⁰² The battalion was thought of as an experience and its purpose was stated as “accustoming women to provide their own livelihood” (*kadınları bizzat temin-i maişete alıştırmak*). It had both female officers who were paid salaries and female workers who received daily wages. Although the battalion was sent to the front women worked behind the front.¹¹⁰³

Women in the First Women Workers' Battalion worked in diverse occupations. They served as secretaries, workers in the road building for the army or in agriculture, cooks, tailors, and nurses. The army also accepted voluntary secretaries or nurses to this battalion.¹¹⁰⁴ Those women who were selected as workers were especially peasant women whose men had been conscripted into the army.¹¹⁰⁵ 149 women were selected as army construction workers.¹¹⁰⁶ The secretaries and female officers started working as of 23 October 1917, and the female workers from November 1917 onwards.¹¹⁰⁷ It was decided that the Battalion would have companies as many as possible, each company being made up of two squads.¹¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the existing personnel of the Battalion never exceeded 100 women during the war years.¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-3, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹¹⁰² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6, 19 Şubat 1334 [19 September 1918]. According to Ahmed Emin the Battalion was constituted on 9 February 1918. See Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 236.

¹¹⁰³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-4, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹¹⁰⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-4a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹¹⁰⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 129, Dolap 62-22, Dos. 86-1, Fih. 1, 17-1. Quoted in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, Vol. 1, p. 341.

¹¹⁰⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-53, 23 Ağustos 1333 [23 August 1917].

¹¹⁰⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-61, 24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1333 [24 October 1917].

¹¹⁰⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-62, 31 Teşrin-i Sâni 1333 [31 November 1917].

¹¹⁰⁹ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 132. See also, Meral Altındal, “Kadın Birinci Taburu Tarihçesi,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 7, No. 41 (May, 1997), p. 15.



Fig. 18 The First Women Workers' Battalion while doing agricultural work.

Source: *Harp Mecmûası*, no. 25-26 (Şabân 1336 / Mayıs 1334 [May 1918]), p. 411.

Some social problems, too, created new job opportunities for women. Venereal diseases such as syphilis plagued the country during the war years. However, especially in the Anatolian countryside, the majority of men did not allow their wives to be examined by male doctors due to their conservatism. Therefore, there was an acute need for female doctors to treat women.¹¹¹⁰ On 5 October 1918, the Council of Ministers allowed women to be educated to become doctors, dentists, and pharmacists in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹¹¹ Second, in order to prevent the smuggling of gold and silver, which was common in the war years, the government began to appoint women as plainclothes policewomen (*taharrî memûreleri*) to the customhouses. By 1917, a policewoman who worked in a customhouse in İzmit earned 400 piasters per month.¹¹¹² It was also reported that most of the workers of the Forensic Medicine Institution (*Tıbb-ı Adli Müessesesi*) were women.¹¹¹³

Women acquired new experience in the countryside as well. Their agricultural activities increased during the war. Furthermore, in the absence of their men, peasant women learned things that they had never done before. An observer of

¹¹¹⁰ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 262-263.

¹¹¹¹ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 89.

¹¹¹² BOA, MV. 207/52, 2 Cemâziyelâhîr 1335 [26 March 1917].

¹¹¹³ BOA, MV. 216/159, 26 Zilhicce 1337 [22 September 1919].

the war years from the Güzlük village of Kastamonu named Hasan Kanatlı said in an interview that because there were no men left in their village, the women conducted the funerals of the dead and they had started to butcher animals when needed.¹¹¹⁴

Gaining a Place in Society through Voluntary and Associational Works

War time work life also provided an opportunity for Turkish women to gain public places in society. More precisely, so to speak, the government had to sell prestige and public acceptance, which had long been denied to women, through honoring them with medallions and certificates in return for their contributions to the war effort. Some women turned this crisis of the Ottoman state into an opportunity. Many Turkish women from the elite Ottoman families worked for nationalist causes, and thereby attained relatively important social prestige and public acceptance. They were rewarded with medallions by the state institutions and semi-official institutions for their contribution to the national causes by working for the state. Most of the women who received the medallions of the Red Crescent Society had founded establishments or associations which provided jobs for lower-class women, had donated money to the Society, or had worked as voluntary nurses.¹¹¹⁵ Nearly all of the members of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society were elite women who worked through the Balkan Wars, World War I and the National Struggle for national causes. They worked voluntarily in the hospitals of the Red Crescent Society, collected money for the Society and contributed to the ammunition of the

¹¹¹⁴ Murat Duman, *Cumhuriyetimizin Önsözü Çanakkale: Savaşlar – Hatıralar ve Kahramanlar* (İstanbul: Ares Kitap, 2006). Quoted in Sönmez, *Kızıl Toprak Ak Yemeni*, p. 88.

¹¹¹⁵ For the list of the names and status of Turkish women who received gold, silver and bronze medallions from the Red Crescent Society see *Hilâliahmer ve Kızılay Tarafından Kendilerine Madalya Tevcih Edilenler, 1868-1968: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği Onursal Üyeleri 1968* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, 1968), pp. 3-13, 45-63.

army by sewing or having other women sew thousands of units of clothing, sheets and bandages.¹¹¹⁶ Although some of these things were prepared by voluntary women themselves, most of the work was done by poor women or refugee and orphan girls from the Balkans hired in the Workshop (*Dârü's-sanâ'a*) of the Women's Center which was first founded in 1913.¹¹¹⁷

Elite and some educated women also acquired important political and public experiences by opening and participating in associations for the benefit of poor women. In other words, by becoming patrons of the poor, they created for themselves an important political status in the Ottoman public sphere from 1911 to 1922 due to continuous warfare. They mostly viewed themselves as soldiers on the home front, coping with the social problems related to the war.

Women started helping financially to the unsupported or orphan daughters of war martyrs or refugees as early as the Balkan Wars with the foundation of the Ottoman Turkish Ladies' Society of Welfare (*Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*) in 1913.¹¹¹⁸ This kind of charity work continued during World War I. The Ladies' Society to Help Soldiers' Families (*Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*), which was founded in 1914 under the auspices of Enver Pasha's wife Naciye Sultan, the chairwoman of which was Nuriye İsmail (Canbolat), distributed food to soldiers' families.¹¹¹⁹ 22,600 soldiers' families, poor elementary school students and the victims of the great fire in Fatih district received food from this society. Furthermore, it helped the education of the children of men who had died in battle and veterans, provided dowry for the poor soldiers' daughters, and helped

¹¹¹⁶ *Türkiye Kızılay Derneği 73 Yıllık Hayatı, 1877-1949* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, 1950), pp. 16-19.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹¹¹⁸ Çakır, "Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği," pp. 92-93.

¹¹¹⁹ Kurnaz, *Yenileşme Sürecinde Türk Kadını*, p. 168; and Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 119.

financially to the patients and puerperants.¹¹²⁰ In 1915, another institution called the Union for Assistance to Martyrs' Families (*Şehit Ailelerine Yardım Birliği*) was founded by Nakiye Hanım, an important female educator of the time. The Union also helped the education of orphans by enrolling them in day schools and boarding schools and worked for the assignment of pensions to families of men who had died in battle until the end of the National Struggle.¹¹²¹

The Şişli Women's Charity Association (*Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniyesi*) was founded in 1915 to provide food for the poor. Some of its female members were rewarded with Red Crescent Society medallions for their aid to the Society's soup kitchens.¹¹²² In addition, the Society of Ladies Benevolent to Unassisted Families (*Bikes Ailelere Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*) founded in 1916 helped the soldiers' families and other poor families, gave money for the treatment of sick children in the hospitals, provided free lunch for the children of soldiers and men who had died in battle at school, and covered the educational expenses of some of these children.¹¹²³

In brief, women from different social and economic backgrounds entered new jobs in this period for their own subjective reasons. Most of these job opportunities were created by the government for supporting the war mobilization. Elite women also worked for the sake of military mobilization and the national cause. Some of them tried to enhance their public status and their rights by contributing to the war effort. One of the most important opportunities for these women was to found

¹¹²⁰ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, pp. 212-213. Because they had difficulty meeting the needs of greater numbers of women and children some of whom had sent request telegraphs from the Anatolian provinces, the Society had to demand further help from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Rahmi Çiçek, "Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyetinin Faaliyetleriyle İlgili Bir Belge," *Tarih ve Toplum* 20, No. 116 (August, 1993), p. 15.

¹¹²¹ Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını*, p. 119; Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 213; and Kaplan, *Cemiyetlerde ve Siyasî Teşkilatlarda Türk Kadını*, p. 42.

¹¹²² Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Şişli Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniyesi (1915)," *Tarih ve Toplum* 35, No. 210 (June, 2001), pp. 5-12.

¹¹²³ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 214.

philanthropic and nationalist associations that not only helped the poor, but also created a public role for them which they could later on be used for demanding their political rights. They also started their own businesses in the war years for personal benefits. However, poor women had to work as the only breadwinners of their families due to the lack of any social security system protecting them from adverse economic conditions. They had to be engaged in industrial and agricultural work. They were mobilized and accepted as nurses, tailors, or workers for military purposes.

Social and Economic Restrictions to Women's Work Lives

In spite of the opportunities of work life from which some Ottoman women benefited during the war years, the vast majority of women still had difficulty working outside their home due to economic, social and ideological restrictions. First, ordinary women had difficulty in earning their livings especially in the cities due to the small number of suitable jobs in a society strictly observing traditional norms and a poorly industrialized economy. Therefore, the work opportunities remained limited especially during the war years, which shook the economy. In addition, the waves of orphans and women refugees to İstanbul and other central and western Anatolian provinces from the Balkans, Caucasus and other parts of Anatolian towns under military occupation or threat of occupation increased considerably the supply of female labor in urban areas.

Finally, Ottoman society was still based on a religious and traditional culture which pursued a traditional gender division of labor. Whereas some feminists of the time welcomed women's entrance into work life, some approached the matter

conservatively. Not only many of conservative-minded ordinary women but even middle-class and educated women who had no feminist goals warily approached working the home outside as the press of the time and some memoirs reveal, as will be discussed below. Yet, alarmed by the social problems that unemployed and unsupported women could create, and motivated to boost war efforts and the development of the “national economy,” the Ottoman-Turkish elite attempted to found organizations for the professional education and employment of women. Most of the new job opportunities that allowed Turkish women to work during the war years, however, were due to the efforts of the Ottoman state and middle-class to support the war mobilization and to protect the social order and accordingly moral values shaken by the social impact of the war. In addition, in order to ease the burden social assistance expenses created for war widows and orphans, the government authorities oriented those widows and orphans who were looking for financial assistance from the state to working to earn their own bread. These motivations of the Ottoman-Turkish bureaucracy and middle-class individuals cooperating with the Unionists created not only job opportunities for women, but also new restrictions, patriarchal interventions and problems for women who wanted to work. Another obstacle before the Turkish women who had long been secluded from public and working life was their lack of professional knowledge. The war revealed how Turkish women needed to be educated when their labor and efforts were needed. In this respect, Turkish women needed to be educated in the first stage before being provided jobs.

Limited Job Opportunities

The most important obstacle to women's participation in work life was the limited number of jobs for them. Given the fact that the war adversely affected the weak Ottoman economy, which was not able to provide many job opportunities, it was not easy to find an appropriate job for the average woman even in the absence of the male work force. As will be described in the following section at length, many low-income women had difficulty in finding jobs. Therefore, during the war years, only a few institutions could employ women.¹¹²⁴ Although women started to work in sectors that had not been open to them before the war, most of this work was due to the wartime obligatory work laws.¹¹²⁵

Especially the increase in the number of refugee women, war widows and orphans aggravated the problem during the war years. According to an article published in the newspaper *Âti* (Future) on 11 February 1918, the number of widows which had been counted as 60,000 in the Ottoman Empire before the war was estimated at 800,000 after the war.¹¹²⁶ Widows constituted a socio-economic problem in the provinces as well.¹¹²⁷ This development increased the number of poor women who had to work for their very survival. However, the economy was not able to absorb this labor supply. Therefore, only the government or the army employed some of these women sometimes compulsorily. By doing so, the government and the

¹¹²⁴ *The Turkish Woman in History* (Ankara: The Press Department of the Ministry of Interior, 1937), pp. 32-33.

¹¹²⁵ Paul Dumont, "İmparatorluk Savaşta," in Paul Dumont and François Georgeon, *Bir İmparatorluğun Ölümü* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet, 1997), pp. 109-110.

¹¹²⁶ "Kadınların İktisâdiyyâtındaki Mevkileri," *Âti*, No. 42 (11 Şubat 1334 [11 February 1918]), p. 4. Quoted in Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap*, p. 82.

¹¹²⁷ For example, in 1916, there was a protection house for widows which was named *İnegöllü Oğlu Saffet Bey Erâmilhanesi* (Widow's House of Saffet Bey Son of İnegöllü) in Bursa. In 1919, this institution merged in the Directorate of Poorhouse due to financial difficulties of the local elites for supporting it. See Kaplıanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 206.

army both enjoyed very cheap labor and controlled and assisted these women and orphans by employing them in return for small money or of economic aid in kind.

The Ottoman government and philanthropist middle-classes attempted to protect some refugee women by establishing women's shelters. All of these women living in these women's shelters were expected to be productive first of all in the production of textiles for the army. For instance, those women who took refuge in women's shelter in Bursa were forced to produce socks on machines which were sent to them by the İzmir Aid to Refugees Association (*İzmir Muhâcirîn Muâvenet Cemiyeti*).¹¹²⁸

All the same, during World War I, Ottoman women were not heavily employed in arms production unlike the European or American working class women. According to the industrial statistics during World War I about 5000 workers were employed in the Ottoman war industry.¹¹²⁹ Especially women living in the provinces had little chance to work in this industry since all of the armament factories were located in the European regions of the Empire.¹¹³⁰

As a result, many women applied for places in the poor house, claiming that they were destitute and had nobody to take care of them.¹¹³¹ However, the poor house did not accept newcomers as easily as it had before. The demand of the İstanbul governorship of 5000 Ottoman liras from the government to finance the Poorhouse was turned down by the government in 1918.¹¹³² Many women lost their chance to enter this institution. For instance, Emine, who was a previous resident of the poor house, was not accepted again although she had nobody to support her. She

¹¹²⁸ See for example women's shelter opened in Çekirge district of Bursa in 1918-1919. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹¹²⁹ Çavdar, *Milli Mücadele Başlarken Sayılarıyla*, p. 50.

¹¹³⁰ William C. Fuller, Jr., "The Eastern Front," in *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, and Mary R. Habeck (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 57.

¹¹³¹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/86, 11 Receb 1336 [22 April 1919].

¹¹³² BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/11, 5 Zilka'de 1336 [12 August 1918].

informed the authorities that she had lost her family during the Balkan Wars; she was placed in the the poor house when she first came to İstanbul before she married with a man who later left her. The government instead wanted her to work in an institution that produced ammunitions for the army and on 10 February 1917 and requested a job for her from the National Defense Society.¹¹³³

On the one hand, the lack of a sufficient number of vacant posts in factories and state departments, society's negative approach to women's working, and on the other, the importance of women's cheap and mostly unpaid labor for the war effort and the national economy, and the importance of women's working to prevent social problems like prostitution or venereal diseases motivated the foundation of many women's associations for women's education and employment. The establishment of these associations since the beginning of the Second Constitutional Era, which became opportunities for well-educated and middle-class women to work outside the home and gain a public acceptance, in fact indicate the existence of restrictions and obstacles before the ordinary Turkish women's participation in work life.

One of the first of them was the Women's Mutual Benefit Association (*Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvâniye*), which educated girls and opened right after the proclamation of the Second Constitution in Salonica. The continuous warfare accelerated such attempts. The Ottoman Turkish Ladies' Welfare Institution (*Osmanlı Türk Hanımları Esirgeme Derneği*) was founded right after the Balkan Wars in 1913 and provided both vocational education and jobs for poor girls and women.¹¹³⁴ In World War I, women's education and employment were taken even more seriously. On 15 April 1917, a male educator named Ahmed Edib opened a

¹¹³³ BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/51, 18 Rebiülâhır 1335 [11 February 1917].

¹¹³⁴ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 46-49. For such institutions for women's education and employment during the Second Constitutional period, see also, Çakır, "Osmanlı Kadın Dernekleri," pp. 141-144.

private teaching institution for women named the Home of Knowledge Institute (*Bilgi Yurdu Müessesesi*) while in the same year another male educator named Ahmed Halid founded the Training Center of Turkish Woman (*Türk Kadını Dershânesi*).¹¹³⁵

Ottoman women opened similar associations not only in the capital city, but in the provinces as well. The Compassion Committee (*Şefkat Heyeti*), which taught girls sewing in Konya and another institution opened by an Armenian woman named Aktuniadis to provide jobs for women in Samsun, were only two of these. The sewing school (*Biçki Yurdu*) of Behire Hakkı had branches in Biga, İzmir, and İstanbul,¹¹³⁶ and by 1923 it had 1380 graduates.¹¹³⁷ The Kastamonu Ottoman Ladies' Workshop (*Kastamonu Osmânlı Hanımları İş Yurdu*), founded in 1916, taught sewing and handcrafts.¹¹³⁸ In 1916, the Women's Welfare Association of the Consumption of National Products (*Ma'mûlât-ı Dâhiliyye İstihlâkı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*) also opened seamstress shops in various districts of İstanbul in which women and girls sewed soldiers' clothing.¹¹³⁹

One of the most organized attempts of women for this aim was the Ladies' Workshop of the Red Crescent Society (*Hilâl-i Ahmer Hanımlar Dârü's-sanâ'ası*), which was founded after the Balkan Wars¹¹⁴⁰ for poor refugee women.¹¹⁴¹ It started with 500 Ottoman liras assigned by the Central Office of the Red Crescent Society¹¹⁴² and first only 15 girls and women were employed in a small house in the Cağaloğlu district in İstanbul on 7 August 1913. In two to three months, this number

¹¹³⁵ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 49.

¹¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

¹¹³⁷ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 218.

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹¹³⁹ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 54-55.

¹¹⁴⁰ Nezihe Muhittin, *Türk Kadını* (İstanbul: Nümune Matbaası, 1931), p. 49.

¹¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. See also *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi Dârü's-sanâ'ası: Eytam ve Eramil-i Şühedâ'ya Muavenet* ([İstanbul]: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1339 [1923]), p. 3.

¹¹⁴² TKA, 293/1, 1 Haziran 1329 [14 June 1913].

rose to 110.¹¹⁴³ The workshop also provided some social security. Female workers had places to live both in Beyazıt and Sultanahmet. Workers could receive free lunch regularly in the workshop. In 1916 the number of workers reached 160. With those women who worked at home for the institution, their number was 1500.¹¹⁴⁴ The workshop paid its workers' daily wages for those days they could not come to work due to illness and sent doctors to their houses for free. All of the workers received a certificate for medical services (*sıhhi hüviyet varakası*). Workers who wanted to get married were provided with dowries and those workers who were victims of the great Fatih fire were placed in schools as temporary residences and were helped financially. Workers also received double wages for the religious feasts and various types of clothing yearly.¹¹⁴⁵

Among all of these institutions that employed women the most well-known was the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women. Founded in 1916, it opened three workshops in Çapa, Fatih, and Üsküdar.¹¹⁴⁶ During World War I, it found 60,000 jobs in different sectors for women.¹¹⁴⁷ The Ministry of War requested that the Society and many other social institutions on 3 May 1920 employ first of all the widows and orphans of retired army officers.¹¹⁴⁸ An institution with a similar name, the Society for the Employment of Muslim Women (*İslâm Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti*) was founded with the support of the state in 1918.¹¹⁴⁹

These institutions were mainly a social precaution for eliminating the problems that unprotected war widows could cause. In this respect, these institutions

¹¹⁴³ *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi Dârü's-sanâ'ası*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹¹⁴⁶ Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları*, p. 124.

¹¹⁴⁷ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 221.

¹¹⁴⁸ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 90.

¹¹⁴⁹ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Harb Malulleri ve Şehit Kadın ve Çocukları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti," *Toplumsal Tarih* 17, No. 99 (March, 2002), p. 20. In 1926 another institution was founded as the Society for the Employment of Women and Children of War Veterans and Martyrs (*Harb Malulleri ve Şehit Kadın ve Çocukları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti*). *Ibid.*

implicitly show the weakness of the Ottoman economy to provide the necessary number of jobs for Turkish women and limitations before the women who wanted to work in the market. Due to the lack of enough job opportunities in the market, the government agencies and civil associations led by Ottoman-Turkish bureaucrats, middle-class men, their wives and daughters or educated middle-class women cooperating with the war efforts of the government undertook the education of women for the market and/or directly provided jobs for them.

These institutions also served the efforts of the government to foster a national economy. Probably for this reason although it was an institution for the employment of women, the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women was founded and directed by men.¹¹⁵⁰ In order to prevent criticisms, women were also allowed to be regular members in 1917, and a board of women was established within the Society. Nevertheless, feminists of the time in the women's periodical *Kadınlar Dünyası* (World of Women) criticized that no woman was allowed on the board of directors in 1921.¹¹⁵¹

Furthermore, one-fourth of the members of the Society were Muslim male entrepreneurs who were associated with the ruling Committee of Union and Progress.¹¹⁵² Evidently, this was an important group who supported and enjoyed the national economy policy and needed women as a cheap workforce. Consequently, the initial aim of the Society was to employ an additional 10,000 women.¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁵⁰ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 54.

¹¹⁵¹ "Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti Yine Erkeklerin Elinde," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, No. 194/6 (5 Şubat 1921 [5 February 1921]), p. 14. Quoted in Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 67.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹⁵³ Ahmad, *War and Society under the Young Turks*, p. 280.

Table 9. Women Workers Sent to Different Institutions by the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women from its Foundation to the End of 1917

Name of the Institution	Number of Women Workers
Women Worker's Brigade	125
Régie Factory	317
Municipality of İstanbul	259
Taksim Flannel and Stocking Factory	135
National Textile Corporation	22
Cooks Sent to Various Soup Houses	20
Janitresses Sent to Several Institutions	84
Eyüp Military Clothing Workshop	1592
Defterdâr Textile Factory	1140
Beykoz Leather and Shoe Factory	863
Makriköy Textile Factory	833
Sultân Ahmed Military Sewing House	157
Levâzım Thread Factory	272
Ahır Kapı Military Clothing and Tent Workshop	650
Sarâchâne Factory	371
Various Other Institutions	45
Total	6885

Source: *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslâmiyesi, 1333 Senesi Raporu* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsân ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1334 [1918]), p. 14. Translated and quoted in Karakışla, *Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women*, p. 90.

The Society soon became a profitable business investment, but the profits dropped enormously immediately after the war as the workforce declined and its capital decreased due to corruption.¹¹⁵⁴ It largely stopped its activities in 1920 while it continued to hold congresses in 1921 and 1922 and survived until 1923.¹¹⁵⁵

Other institutions such as workshops for widows and orphans were also opened not only for their protection, but for boosting the national economy and war mobilization. Archive documents reveal that in the provinces, too, the newly emerging national bourgeoisie promoted the employment of male and female children and their education in institutions in which they also worked. A letter sent from Çankırı [Kengiri] district of Kastamonu province on 24 March 1915 reported to

¹¹⁵⁴ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 57.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

the government that the war orphans of their district were employed in a workshop which was founded to produce socks and underwear for the army with the efforts of the Association of Helpers to the Soldiers (*Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*). At that time 60,000 socks were demanded by the army and the production began while a school for the education of these children, which seemingly was one of the first aims of the workshop, had not yet been opened.¹¹⁵⁶

Patriarchal Restrictions

A second restriction the work lives of Turkish women was the patriarchal expectations and negative approach of society to working women. Women's vocational education before World War I was not seen as too important because their roles in the gendered division of labor were defined as wives and mothers even by educated people. Examining the course books of the civics (*ma'lûmât-ı medeniyye*) lessons during the Second Constitutional Era, Füsün Üstel shows how ideal women were defined by the intellectuals. She notes that in Ali Seydi's book, *Kızlara Mahsûs Terbiye-i Ahlâkiye ve Medeniye* (Education of Morals and Civics Proper for Girls), published in 1913,¹¹⁵⁷ there was no word about working women.¹¹⁵⁸ Although Ottoman women had started receiving vocational education, especially as teachers and midwives, in the late nineteenth century, there were very few institutions which trained women teachers. As early as 1913, women begged for the entry of their

¹¹⁵⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM, 130/39, 23 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [8 April 1915].

¹¹⁵⁷ Ali Seydi, *Kızlara Mahsûs Terbiye-i Ahlâkiye ve Medeniye*, Kısım-ı Salis (İstanbul: Artin Asaduryan Matbaası, 1329 [1913]).

¹¹⁵⁸ Üstel, "Makbul Vatandaş"ın Peşinde, pp. 118-119.

daughters into the Women Teachers' Training School because the number of applicants to this school was far more than the number that would be accepted.¹¹⁵⁹

On the other hand, an education, which was seen as a springboard to launch a career as a working woman, was perceived as against the Muslim religion or social norms by some groups. Ahmed Rıza, the prominent secularist intellectual leader of the Young Turks and Minister of Education in the Second Constitutional period, wrote in his memoirs how his attempts to open a girls' high school for in the ruined palace of Adile Sultan in Kandilli had failed in the Second Constitutional Era. His attempts had been interpreted as a sign of irreligiousness during the March 31 Movement. Even feminist women of the time had been indifferent to his efforts.¹¹⁶⁰ Social prejudice against women's education continued to be predominant in the war years too. The education of orphan girls was thought of as secondary to that of orphan boys.

There was an attempt by the Ottoman government in October 1916 to open secondary schools for girl orphans (*Dârü'ş-şafaka*) in each province. For this aim, the government asked for help from the local prominent and wealthy figures of all provinces on 28 October 1916 with a notification, and requested that they become members of the Muslim Teaching Association (*Cem'iyet-i Tedrîsiyye-i İslâmiyye*), which would open secondary schools for orphan girls in İstanbul and other provinces.¹¹⁶¹ On 14 November 1916, the Aydın governor complained that they were unable to find members. Talat Pasha in return wrote that during World War I many Muslim merchants had emerged in İzmir and that they were capable of paying the yearly subscription fee of 4 Ottoman liras for membership and urged the Aydın

¹¹⁵⁹ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 248.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ahmed Rıza, *Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayân Reisi Ahmed Rıza Bey'in Anıları* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1988), pp. 30-33, 63-64.

¹¹⁶¹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 124/41, 2 Muharrem 1335 [29 October 1916].

governor to continue his attempts.¹¹⁶² Obviously, the local Muslim bureaucrats, power-holders and merchants of İzmir were not enthusiastic about promoting women's education.

Middle-class women were also the least experienced at work life. Turkish women of the middle and upper-classes generally had never worked outside their homes. They did not work at home either because many of them had servants.¹¹⁶³ Grace Ellison wrote in 1915 that the Turkish women she saw complained of not being permitted to work. Ignoring that, she talked with relatively well-off middle-class women, Ellison wrote that she wanted to inform these women that there were plenty of working-class women in England who were tired of overworking or not being able to find work.¹¹⁶⁴

Despite their lack of experience, more bourgeois and educated women started working as teachers, voluntary nurses, and clerks during the war years. However, this development was criticized even among the women themselves. An article by Nezihe Rikkat in the periodical *Türk Kadını* (Turkish Woman) titled "Erkekleşme" (Becoming Mannish) criticized women's increasing participation in work life.¹¹⁶⁵ Among those middle-class women who did not disapprove of women's working, there were some who gave reasonable explanations for their cautious approach to women's work life. Partly due to the negative impact of the war on work life, some saw work as a burden for women. Samiha Ayverdi wrote that one of her childhood friends who had worked from 1918 onwards for long years had "wasted away."¹¹⁶⁶

Halide Nusret Zorlutuna also wrote about the war years as a period in which she had

¹¹⁶² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 24/61, 2 Safer 1335 [28 November 1916].

¹¹⁶³ Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, pp. 123-124.

¹¹⁶⁴ Grace Ellison, *İstanbul'da Bir Konak ve Yeni Kadınlar: İngiliz Kadın Gazetecinin Gözüyle Türk Evi ve Gündelik Hayat* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2009), p. 148.

¹¹⁶⁵ Nezihe Rikkat, "Erkekleşme," *Türk Kadını*, No. 13 (28 Teşrin-i Sâni 1334 [28 November 1918]), p. 195.

¹¹⁶⁶ Sâmiha Ayverdi, *Dünden Bugüne Ne Kalmıştır*, ed. Aysel Yüksel and Zeynep Uluant (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2006), p. 148.

to “work for survival” in a private high school in Kadıköy only because she needed money.¹¹⁶⁷ By saying so, she in fact implied her dislike of women’s working.

The criticisms of men against women’s entrance to work life were more obvious. Some protested Muslim women’s attempts to work by claiming that it harmed motherhood. İsmail Hakkı İzmirli wrote in *Dini’-t-tevhîd* (Unity of Religion) in 1923 that women’s education had to be restricted in case they ignored their housework and motherly duties.¹¹⁶⁸ Women who wanted to work were victims of such opinions. In another example, Sabiha Sertel, at the age of nineteen in the wartime years, could not dare to work due to social pressure. Although the married women around her were allowed to work, her relatives feared that she would not be able to get married if she did so.¹¹⁶⁹

As a result of social pressures, many formerly well-to-do women in İstanbul did not work, but survived instead on the money they gained by selling whatever they could, such as household goods.¹¹⁷⁰ İrfan Orga wrote that his mother, Şevkiye, started working first at home, sewing for a boss in the Kapalıçarşı until the spring of 1916, a job which ended because the government had bought all the available fabric for the army. Although she was encouraged to work in the Army Sewing Depot in Gülhane, she could not go to this workplace because her mother-in-law did not allow it. Therefore, they had to sell everything they could, from furniture to jewelry first. Only when they were left with nothing else to sell did her mother-in-law have no other choice than to let her work in a job.¹¹⁷¹ Even intellectual women were not exempted from such pressures. Halide Nusret Zorlutuna remembered that although she had started living on her articles, poems, and stories written for various

¹¹⁶⁷ Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romani*, p. 98.

¹¹⁶⁸ Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki’de*, Vol. 1, p. 114.

¹¹⁶⁹ Erduran, *Sabiha*, p. 36.

¹¹⁷⁰ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, p. 22.

¹¹⁷¹ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 157-164.

periodicals during the war, she continued to work in places isolated from men and she had seen neither the owners of these periodicals nor their executive offices.¹¹⁷²

Politicians and Ottoman middle-class men were also reluctant to support working women because of political and moral concerns. In May 1916, the governorship of Bursa with a notification attempted to control women's outdoors activities.¹¹⁷³ The local newspaper of this province, *Ertuğrul*, reported in May 1918 that conservatives had complained about those women merchants who sold their goods on the street.¹¹⁷⁴ Turgut Çarıklı recalled that his father, Hacim Muhittin [Çarıklı], who was the governor of Bursa during the National Struggle, had banned women without veils on the street in order to satisfy the conservative-minded population, although he was personally a progressive (*ileri görüşlü*) man.¹¹⁷⁵

The situation was not different in the capital city, which was more open to new ideas and trends of modernization as compared to the Anatolian provinces. Although many women quitted veiling outdoors, they had to endure the opposition of the people on the street. Although many women quit veiling outdoors, they had to endure the opposition of the people on the street. İrfan Orga wrote how some children near Beyazıt stoned his mother Şevkiye when she wanted to quit the veil despite the oppositions of her mother-in-law.¹¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, until the end of World War I, men and women continued to be segregated from each other in public transport and other many public places. For instance, on the boats of the capital city women were obliged to stay in closed cabins below decks. Even riding in the same

¹¹⁷² Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romani*, p. 100.

¹¹⁷³ *Ertuğrul*, No. 326 (25 May 1916). Quoted in Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 224, 257.

¹¹⁷⁴ Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 224.

¹¹⁷⁵ Turgut Çarıklı, *Babam Hacim Muhittin Çarıklı: Bir Kuvay-ı Milliyecinin Yaşam Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2005), p. 96.

¹¹⁷⁶ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 186-187.

carriage with their husbands or sitting next to them raised criticism.¹¹⁷⁷ Segregation continued also in university as female students received education in another building in the first years. Later on, in the Armistice years, the female students entered the *Dârü'l-fünûn* after the male students took their courses in the morning hours. The girls had to wear charshafs and were only allowed to discard their veils during the courses.¹¹⁷⁸ Only in 1921 did the Arts Faculty of *Dârü'l-fünûn* headed by İsmail Hakkı [Baltacıoğlu], agree that women and men could attend lectures together.¹¹⁷⁹

It is true that working life enabled those women in the ranks of the bureaucracy to discard their veils during office hours. Nevertheless, in case their skirts were shorter than the officially prescribed length, they were sent to their homes by police force.¹¹⁸⁰ They worked in segregation from men in the government offices and they did not leave their offices, but used male doormen to send documents. The rules were so strict that male officers evacuated the government building first in order to prevent any physical intimacy between female and male staff.¹¹⁸¹ Despite such precautions, the press published articles against women working in the post offices and the Ministry of Finance offices on the grounds that women officials were overdressed and saw every sort of man, with good or bad intention, to carry out their jobs.¹¹⁸²

Even the philanthropic activities of women were found suspicious. On 15 June 1915, the police warned the Red Crescent Society about young women aged between 15 and 16 who carried aid boxes and collected donations from men on the

¹¹⁷⁷ A. Afetinan, *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman*, p. 42.

¹¹⁷⁸ Sunata, *İstanbul'da İşgal Yılları*, p. 23.

¹¹⁷⁹ A. Afetinan, *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman*, p. 41.

¹¹⁸⁰ Nermin Abadan-Unat, "Social Change and Turkish Women," in *Women in Turkish Society*, ed. Nermin Abadan-Unat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), p. 8.

¹¹⁸¹ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 125.

¹¹⁸² Ahmed Şirani, "Kadınlığın Hayat-ı İctimaiyesine İndirilen Darbeler – II," *İ'tisâm*, No. 16 (13 Mart 1335 [13 March 1919]), pp. 34-37. Quoted in Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki'de*, Vol. 1, p. 96.

streets or in the coffeehouses on behalf of the Society until nine o'clock at night. The police stated that such scenes had to be forbidden and the donations should be collected only on the main streets and from women rather than men.¹¹⁸³ On 18 July 1915 the Society was warned by the police department that Muslim women should not be allowed to carry aid boxes on the street.¹¹⁸⁴

In this regard, many of the voluntary nurses in the war were under pressure, albeit in a different form. This was the disapproval and exclusion by the doctors, who were exclusively male. Doctors frequently disapproved of them. Some doctors claimed that these nurses disobeyed the disciplinary rules by arriving late to the hospitals and being absent from the hospitals without an excuse.¹¹⁸⁵ The Medical Field Inspector General (*Sahrâ-yı Sıhhiye Müfettiş-i Umûmîsi*) wrote to the Red Crescent Society on 1 June 1915 that the voluntary nurses did not arrive to the hospital in due time, they disappeared for days or left the hospital at all sorts of time with minor excuses. The Inspector General demanded that this voluntary staff also be forced to work like the paid nurses and that the head doctors be given the authority to punish or dismiss the latecomers and the absentees.¹¹⁸⁶ On 11 August 1915, two Muslim Turkish women nurses were dismissed from the Galata Red Crescent Hospital (*Galata Hilâl-i Ahmer Hastahânesi*).¹¹⁸⁷ Similarly, on 13 May 1915, the surgeon general of the Imperial War Academy Hospital (*Mekteb-i Harbiye-i Şâhâne Hastahânesi*) wrote to the Red Crescent Society that two of his hospital nurses had been dismissed because each had missed one day of work.¹¹⁸⁸

¹¹⁸³ TKA, 93/45, 2 Haziran 1331 [15 June 1915].

¹¹⁸⁴ TKA, 93/46, 5 Temmuz 1331 [18 July 1915].

¹¹⁸⁵ TKA, 23/217, 26 Haziran 1331 [9 July 1915].

¹¹⁸⁶ TKA, 23/211, 19 Mayıs 1331 [1 June 1915].

¹¹⁸⁷ TKA, 44/124, 29 Temmuz 1331 [11 August 1915].

¹¹⁸⁸ TKA, 146/23, 30 Nisan 1331 [13 May 1915].

The education of women in nursing also was met with disapproval. Due to social pressure, women started to learn the profession of nursing in special courses instead of going to school. The commencement day for the nurses who graduated from the courses in the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society in 1913-1914 was criticized by some groups who argued that such a ceremony held by and for women was unnecessary.¹¹⁸⁹ The proclamation of the Women's Center, which was devised to encourage Ottoman women to begin learning nursing on 22 May 1915, was cancelled at the last minute on the grounds that the army could by no means support this initiative.¹¹⁹⁰ The attempts to open a nursing school in 1916 also failed.¹¹⁹¹ Although this was a project dating back to the Crimean War when Florence Nightingale had set an example for nursing in İstanbul, the first foreign private nursing school was only opened in 1920 by Americans, and the first national Nursing School on 21 February 1925.¹¹⁹² Most of the nurses in World War I were those 300 women who had taken nursing courses for five months from Dr. Besim Ömer Pasha in 1913-1914.¹¹⁹³

Although there was a great need for female doctors due to gender segregation in Ottoman-Muslim society,¹¹⁹⁴ even the educated Turkish people were not yet ready to approve of women's education in medicine during the war years. Only seven female students dared to enroll in the Faculty of Medicine of the İstanbul University (*Dârü'l-fünûn Tıp Fakültesi*) in September 1922. Until 1925, female students had to put on their veils while attending lectures with male students. Those female doctors

¹¹⁸⁹ Sarı and Özaydın, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve Kadın Hastabakıcı Eğitiminin Nedenleri I," p. 10.

¹¹⁹⁰ Yet, within one and a half year, on 8 November 1916, the Army itself demanded from the authorities to raise nurses under the great pressure of the acute need for nurses that stemmed from the war. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

¹¹⁹¹ Recai Ergüder, "Kızılay Hemşireliğinin 50 Yılı," in *Kızılay Hemşireleri 50 Yıl İnsanlık Hizmetinde*, ed. Leman Birol, p. 23.

¹¹⁹² Birol, ed., *Kızılay Hemşireleri 50 Yıl İnsanlık Hizmetinde*, pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁹⁴ See for example, BOA, MF.MTK, 1193/39, 15 Muharrem 1332 [14 December 1913].

who graduated from *Dârü'l-fünûn* and who had studied in Europe or America had to work as general practitioners and they could not become specialists because of the prejudices of the male colleagues. Until 1930 female doctors could not receive official appointments from the Ministry of Health.¹¹⁹⁵



Fig. 19 This illustration compares the number of women working as nurses in different countries that were allies of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. According to this illustration, the number of Ottoman women nurses was limited to only 284 in 1917 while the same number was 1500 in Bulgaria, 12,960 in Hungary, 2,804 in Austria, and 67,000 in Germany.

Source: *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyet-i Merkeziyesi Tarafından Tertib Edilen Takvim*, Vol. 3, 1933 – 1917 (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1333 [1917]), p. 179.

There were some economic reasons behind the social resistance to women's work life as well. While doctors wanted to dismiss nurses or prevent women from performing their profession, working-class men as well feared to lose their jobs because of female workers' competition. Although women as workers increased from 1913 to 1915, there were some sectors in which they were not allowed to work. For instance, women were not employed in the Fez Factory (*Feshâne*) and the İzmit

¹¹⁹⁵ A. Afetinan, *The Emancipation of the Turkish Woman*, pp. 46-47.

Factory (*İzmit Fabrikası*) until 1916 probably because male workers feared their competition as cheap labor.¹¹⁹⁶

Work for Moral Discipline and Control

Due to both the economic and social restrictions, the wartime work life of women was redefined by the authorities as a means for protecting women from moral degeneration and prostitution. Besides many qualifications which determined the working ability of women, the army demanded from each applicant to the Women Workers' Battalion (*Kadın İşçi Taburu*) to prove that they were virtuous women by bringing certificates (*ilm ü haber*) signed by the headmen of their districts.¹¹⁹⁷ This was also true for women officials employed in government offices.¹¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, women's work places were especially segregated from men. The female workers of the Battalion lived in the Edib Bey Manor House (*Edib Bey Köşkü*) in the Sultantepe district of İstanbul,¹¹⁹⁹ which was a neglected and old building in which women workers were forced to stay isolated from public life.¹²⁰⁰

Such kinds of gendered restrictions and segregations also were exerted over women workers in workshops opened and directed by elite Turkish women. This was done with a discourse of nationalism and national motherhood. These women mostly belonged to the families of the Ottoman-Turkish bureaucrats and elite groups, and therefore, their similar efforts were the part of the national mobilization. Yet, some women appropriated these discourses to gain the social acceptance and status they

¹¹⁹⁶ Önder Küçükerman, *Anadolu'nun Geleneksel Halı ve Dokuma Sanatı İçinde Hereke Fabrikası: Saray'dan Hereke'ye Giden Yol* (Ankara: Sümerbank Genel Müdürlüğü, 1987), p. 55.

¹¹⁹⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-5, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹¹⁹⁸ See for example the application of Hikmet Hanım as a guardian. BOA, DH.MP.HPS.M, 46/71, 30 Zilka'de 1339 [5 August 1921].

¹¹⁹⁹ See ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2623, Dos. 1, Fih. 1-11, 17 Teşrin-i Sâni 1333 [17 November 1917]; and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2623, Dos. 1, Fih. 1-31, 23 Teşrin-i Sâni 1333 [23 November 1917].

¹²⁰⁰ Karakişla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 134.

might need for their public activities. A contemporary observer, Ruşen Zeki, argued that the Ottoman Turkish Ladies' Welfare Institution (*Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği*), which was directed by Nezihe Muhiddin and which had branches in Kasımpaşa, Kanlıca and many other districts of the capital city, distinguished from other women's organizations by being highly nationalist.¹²⁰¹ The Women's Centre of the Red Crescent Society was also known for its nationalist goals, like preparation of clothes, gloves and food to the army.¹²⁰²

Elite women's attempts to open new workshops were also supported by the state and other institutions for their role of social control over poor women. On 24 September 1921, [Nigar] Hanım, who had previously founded the Turkish Women's Tailoring House (*Türk Kadınları Dikiş ve Biçki Evi*) in Adana, informed the Red Crescent directory in Adana that she had opened another tailor shop in which she only employed the the wives of officers who had died in battle and refugee women and asked for support.¹²⁰³ On 23 May 1923, the vice-president of the Red Crescent Society demanded in an official letter that Ulviye Hanım, a teacher in the workshop of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society who came to Ankara to sell the art work of war orphans, be guided and helped by the government officials.¹²⁰⁴

The Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, too, was in cooperation with the state. On 12 July 1917, it demanded from the government that the children it protected primarily be employed in all available positions. On 27 July 1917, the government requested that the governors of all provinces employ primarily the orphan girls of the Society in companies, workshops, farms, or in houses for

¹²⁰¹ Ruşen Zeki, "Bizde Hareket-i Nisvân," in *Nevsâl-i Millî 1330* (İstanbul: Artin Asaduryan ve Mahdûmları Matbaası, 1330 [1914]), p. 345.

¹²⁰² Rıdvan Ege, *Turkish Red Crescent Society* (Ankara: Türkiye Kızılay Derneği, [1997]), p. 18.

¹²⁰³ TKA, 150/113, 24 Eylül 1337 [24 September 1921].

¹²⁰⁴ TKA, 74/204, 23 Mayıs 1339 [23 May 1923].

domestic work.¹²⁰⁵ Adolescent girls who had no family were sent to the Society by the government for their very survival and for the protection of their chastity and morality through employment. Two of them, Seher and Behice, fifteen and eighteen respectively, were sent first of all to the Society in October 1918 on the grounds that their lives and their chastity could be guarded only in this way.¹²⁰⁶

The role of employment against prostitution showed itself most clearly in the correspondences between the police, welfare institutions, and the government. On 17 December 1916, the İstanbul Police Chief wrote to the Red Crescent Society that the police department, in cooperation with the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, had turned the Edhem Pasha Mansion in Fındıklı into a workshop for women. For this aim, the police chief demanded 150 beds from the Red Crescent. The workshop was opened to support those women who were described in the official letter as “Muslim women who are walking around on the street seriously in need of protection and compassion and who are begging to earn only one day’s subsistence money or who are giving up their innocence and chastity and falling into prostitution and debauchery because of this.”

Its first aim was explained as helping these poor and destitute women to earn their living with their own work in an innocent and moral way.¹²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the government did not find this practice legal and rejected forcing prostitutes to work in this workshop. On 9 May 1917, the police wrote to the government that they had accomplished to open a boarding workshop for women (*Leyli Dârü’s-sanâ’a*) with the capacity of 100 beds in Kabataş and wanted permission to force Muslim

¹²⁰⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 37/6, 20 Şevvâl 1335 [9 August 1917]; and BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 36/31, 7 Şevvâl 1335 [27 July 1917].

¹²⁰⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-3/1-11, 21 Muharrem 1337 [27 October 1918].

¹²⁰⁷ “... *cidden mücib-i rahm ve şefkat bir halde sokaklarda dolaşan ve ancak bir günlük nafakasını kazanmak için dilencilik eden, ve yahud bu maksad için ismet ve iffeti hâk-i târik fuhuş ve safahate düşen İslâm kadınları.*”

TKA, 74/80, 4 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1332 [17 December 1916].

prostitutes to work in this institution. This demand, however, was turned down by the Ottoman government on the grounds that such prostitution made in accordance with the regulations did not constitute a crime according to the existing criminal code.¹²⁰⁸

In sum, there were important social, ideological and economic restrictions to women's entry in work life during World War I despite the increasing number of poor and low-income women in need of jobs. There were not enough jobs and job fields deemed appropriate for Muslim women. Therefore, many elite and middle-class women and bureaucrats established several associations in order to provide suitable jobs for women of soldiers, widows and orphan girls. The main motive for these attempts was to safeguard their morality and convert their cheap labor to war mobilization through the production of items needed by the government and the army. Many of these attempts reproduced patriarchal social control over women. In addition, the Ottoman society's traditional view of women's work also continued during this period. Many intellectuals and writers criticized the women's working outside their homes and defended the preservation of classical functions and the duties of women.

Working Women's Wartime Problems

Many scholars admit that women's work was important during World War I because of the lack of male workers and for it was cheap. Unfortunately, women workers were often prone to low wages, long working hours and sweatshop system, and over-exploitation. Their work places lacked hygiene and they were provided with no social security, retirement pensions or child care aid. Furthermore, whether they

¹²⁰⁸ BOA, DH.EUM.SSM, 10/67, 30 Zilhicce 1335 [16-17 October 1917].

worked in factories or in government offices, women were forced to comply to strict clothing rules and segregation with men. They were also frequently the victims of sexual harassment in the work place. During World War I politicians were reluctant to or incapable of taking effective legal measures to eliminate these problems.

Unemployment, and Low and Unpaid Wages

Many lower-class women who were willing to work were unemployed or could find only temporary or irregular work. A Turkish widow interviewed by American researchers in the Armistice period states that she went to work to clean the houses or clothes of others whenever she was called and all the money she earned covered only food. She added that she was seldom called for work and those days she could find no work she stayed hungry.¹²⁰⁹ In addition, some women had to work more than one job at the same time to make ends meet. Muazzez İlmiye Çığ, a prominent Turkish archeologist, recalls that although her father worked as a teacher in Bursa, her mother also sold products such as soap and cologne, going to different villages on donkey and bought flour and oil in return during the period. She also sewed clothes as an additional job to contribute to the family's small budget.¹²¹⁰

Those women who had a more permanent job in government offices or municipalities had problems, too. First, they did not receive their salaries in an orderly fashion. The situation of midwives in the provinces was especially difficult because the government did not pay their wages, but forced the municipalities to do it from the private budgets of the provinces and from the fund for helping the municipalities (*husûsî bütçenin belediyeye muâvenet maddesi*). Although a

¹²⁰⁹ Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 295-296.

¹²¹⁰ Saime Yüceer, *Tanıkların Anlatılarıyla Bursa Tarihi (Sözlü Tarih Arşivi 1919-1938)* (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi Basımevi, 2005), p. 65.

notification was sent by the government in January 1915, for about one year no province had taken measures to pay these salaries.¹²¹¹ The wages of the women medical personnel or staff such as nurses and laundry women were also very low. Five Turkish nurses, Emine Güzide, Hatice, Fatma Bedrin, Saime and Nesibe who were hired by the İstanbul Beylerbeyi Hospital (*İstanbul Beylerbeyi Hastahânesi*) between 1 February 1915 and 14 August 1918, earned about 437 piasters.¹²¹² Four Turkish laundry women at the İstanbul Mirgün Hospital (*İstanbul Mirgün Hastahanesi*), Melek, Bemire, Fatma and Münire, who were hired by the institution between 7 July 1916 and 21 November 1916, were worse off as they each received 220 piasters.¹²¹³

Women industrial workers were among the most exploited and received low wages. They entered into industrial work life as a very vulnerable work force in World War I. In the textile and tobacco production women were most frequently employed at very low wages as unskilled workers.¹²¹⁴ Women and children workers of the Oriental Carpet Manufacture Ltd. whose numbers reached about 15,000 earned about 1.6 piasters per day. The average wages of Ottoman workers remained nearly the same from 1913 to 1915 despite the sudden increase of the prices of products in war years.¹²¹⁵ In 1913, the daily wages of all workers varied from 4 to 17.5 piasters, while this was from 4 to 19.6 piasters in 1915. In 1913 among those seven production branches of which the daily wage was below 10 piasters were sugar, canned foods, textiles, cigarette paper and tobacco production in which women

¹²¹¹ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 19/2, 1 Rebülevvel 1333 [17 January 1915]; and BOA, DH.UMVM, 36/52, 14 Rebüülâhır 1334 [19 February 1916].

¹²¹² *Milli Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız*, p. 150.

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹²¹⁴ Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfının Sosyal Varlığı* (İstanbul: Sosyal İnsan Yayınları, 2008), p. 51.

¹²¹⁵ Lütfi Erişçi, *Sosyal Tarih Araştırmaları* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), p. 96.

workers were employed the most. The lowest paid workers were those women who worked in silk and tobacco production factories.¹²¹⁶

Table 10. Daily Wages of Men, Women and Children Workers in 1915 in Piasters

Production Branch	Men	Women	Children
Sugar, sesame oil and biscuits	17-25	8-10	-
Canned food	25-30	8-10	-
Tobacco	[10<]	[10<]	[10<]
Dowel	15	9	-
Wool yarn and textile	[8.4]	[8.4]	[8.4]
Cotton textile	10-13	4-6	2-4
Raw silk	[4]	[4]	[4]
Other textiles	[5.04]	[5.04]	[5.04]
Cigarette paper	10-15	[2-6]	[2-6]
Printing and other paper	8.2	3-5	2-4
Soap	12-15	2-6	[2-6]
Other chemicals	13-15	-	2.5

Source: Organized using the data from A. Gündüz Ökçün, ed., *Osmanlı Sanayii 1913, 1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistiki* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997).

Ahmet Makal writes that Ottoman entrepreneurs saw women's cheap labor as a factor that lowered production costs and risks. Furthermore, women's secondary role in work life and the acceptance of men as the real workers in Ottoman society forced women to accept lower wages in order to enter into the labor market. Finally, women's low possibility to be members of labor unions was an important factor which motivated entrepreneurs to hire them.¹²¹⁷

Contemporary observers state that many poor women were employed in return for only food and board in the war years. Cemile Selim Neşirvanova, a socialist woman writer, for instance, wrote that during the war years, the employers found an opportunity to exploit war widows and enjoyed forced labor practices in

¹²¹⁶ A. Gündüz Ökçün, *Osmanlı Sanayii: 1913, 1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistiki / Ottoman Industry Industrial Census of 1913, 1915* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997), p. 23.

¹²¹⁷ Ahmet Makal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Çalışma İlişkileri: 1850-1920* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 1997), pp. 196-197.

sewing clothing for the army or in hospital work in return for food.¹²¹⁸ The situation of women in the countryside was no better. They worked in other people's houses without getting any money as domestic servants. These domestic workers were called as *ekmekçi* (bread eater) colloquially.¹²¹⁹

There is no accurate information on the wages of women workers that the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women sent to different institutions. Average wages were only recorded for women workers sent to work in the army. Nevertheless, even these wages were mostly lower than average since all women workers sent by the Society were very popular among the institutions at which they were employed because they took less money.¹²²⁰ Only an interview with Mehmed Arif Bey in the newspaper *Vakit* (Time) on 9 February 1918 reveals that the salaries of the workers were calculated on a piece-work basis and were at least 10 piasters per day.¹²²¹

This minimum wage of 10 piasters calculated as 40 cents in American money devaluated to 10 cents in terms of purchasing power toward the end of the war.¹²²² Although the wages of other women who worked for the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women are unknown, an official correspondence reveals that women employees of the Women Worker's Battalion took less money than what was given for the same work to civilian women in other work places to which the Society sent women workers.¹²²³ The wages of the head secretary, the food supplies officer of the Battalion, and company leaders were from 600 to 800 piasters. The battalion and company secretaries and the warehouse keeper of the Battalion

¹²¹⁸ Hikmet, *et al.*, *Millî Azadlık Savaşı Anıları*, p. 104.

¹²¹⁹ Tekin, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, p. 105.

¹²²⁰ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 91.

¹²²¹ Ahmed Emin, "Kadınları Çalıştırmak Teşebbüsü," *Vakit*, No. 111 (27 Rebiülâhır 1336 / 9 Şubat 1334 [9 February 1918]), p. 1. Quoted in Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 93.

¹²²² Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 259.

¹²²³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-58, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

earned from 500 to 700 piasters. The ages of the seamstresses were from 500 to 700 piasters, squad leaders from 400 to 600 piasters, nurses from 300 to 450 piasters, and cooks from 250 to 350 piasters.¹²²⁴ Compared with the high prices of basic consumption goods, these wages were not enough for those women who had dependents. . The female personnel of the Battalion had no right to demand additional provisions from the army, unlike the male army officers. Furthermore, ten percent of these wages were cut and sent to the Society for the Employment of Muslim Women each month.¹²²⁵

Women workers in the Ladies' Workshop of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society were also a disadvantaged group in terms of wages. They received daily wages according to the quantity of the work and handicrafts they had done. The fact that these products were stated to be sold at prices lower than average indicates the cheapness of the labor of these women.¹²²⁶ The Society for the Employment of Muslim Women had a profit of 50,000 Ottoman liras within one year in 1917, which shows that hiring women was very profitable for the employers of this period.¹²²⁷ There were also rumors about the profits of the Society during the war.¹²²⁸

Even those women and children who took refuge in the poor house were expected to work for economic profit as well as for their own social discipline and control. On 17 December 1921, the director of the poor house demanded that the government that residents of the institution between the ages of about 10 to 50-55 who were able to work be forced to work. A regulation was prepared for this purpose according to which all the residents from the age of 12 to 60 had to work. Those who

¹²²⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-12, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²²⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-12a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917]

¹²²⁶ BOA, HR.SYS, 2422/71, 26 June 1916. See also Ellison, *İstanbul'da Bir Konak*, p. 73.

¹²²⁷ *İkdam* (9 February 1918). Quoted in Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları*, pp. 125-126.

¹²²⁸ Refik Halid Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab: 1918 Mütarekesi Devrinde Olan Biten İşlere ve Gelip Geçen İnsanlara Dair Bildiklerim* (İstanbul: İnkılâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1964), p. 137.

did not work were to be punished unless they had a disability. Punishments could be as harsh as being evicted from the poor house to getting arrested. Children were to work six hours a day. The money paid for this work was also very little. The daily wages could not be above four to five piasters.¹²²⁹ On 2 April 1922, the director of the poor house requested money from the government for teaching young women and girls carpet production in their institution.¹²³⁰ Refugee women and children were also placed to workshops in the provinces. In Sivas they were expected to work in carpet production, weaving and fabric production.¹²³¹ Quite probably most of these people worked for board.

Orphan girls were also seen as cheap work force and their professional education was partially supported by the state.¹²³² An industrial school for orphan girls was founded in Bebek in İstanbul. However, orphan girls were generally seen as potential domestic servants. For example, the Fiscal Equilibrium Council of the Ottoman parliament admitted in its report in 1918 that the education of orphan girls in cooking, waitressing and domestic service was beneficial for providing skilled domestic workers for society.¹²³³ During the National Struggle as well orphans were taught crafts, and boys were placed in schools or in a job. The only guarantee provided for the girls, which was incomparable to the professional education of the boys, was the money these girls earned from their work such as handcrafts during their stay in the state orphanage as an aid to the girls' dowries when they married.¹²³⁴

¹²²⁹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 117/95, 19 Rebülâhır 1340 [20 December 1921].

¹²³⁰ BOA, DH.UMVM, 115/62, 4 Şa'bân 1340 [2 April 1922].

¹²³¹ Kaya, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Milli Mücadele'de Türk Mültecileri*, p. 53.

¹²³² "Maarif Nezaretine Merbut Darüleytamlar Müdüriyet-i Umumiyyesi Teşkili Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 575-580.

¹²³³ "1334 Senesi Dârül-Eytâm Müdüriyyet-i Umumiyyesi Bütçesi," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 343-362.

¹²³⁴ "Darüleytamlar Talimatnamesi," 5 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1338 [5 December 1922], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 3, pp. 170-171.

Just before the war, the work conditions of women and children in the Empire were so bad that the Sivas deputy of the Ottoman parliament Ömer Şevki proposed a draft law in 1910 according to which children under the age of 12 were prohibited from working in places like factories, workshops, and mines. Even in the state orphanages, orphans under 12 years could not be forced to do handicrafts for more than three hours a day. Working more than nine hours a day was forbidden to all children under the age of 17 and night work was forbidden to these children and women. Those jobs which were dangerous for children and beyond their strength were also outlawed. Yet, the penalty for wrongdoing was not high, because according to the Public Works Council of the Ottoman parliament, since there were no big factories in the Empire, they needed to lower the penalties in order not to delay the growth of new ones.¹²³⁵ Even this draft law with low penalties was never put into practice, especially during World War I when the work conditions worsened and when women and children suffered from unhealthy working conditions and overexploitation. During the Armistice period the average age of working children was as low as 11.¹²³⁶

Politicians were also aware of the low wages, adverse conditions, and bad treatment of girls and women on the shop floors. For example, Mahmut Pasha argued that children's work in industrial or agricultural tasks in state orphanages was wrong, arguing that children's employment impeded their education. He stated that children were forced to work until the ages of 16 to 18 as ordinary workers in factories or

¹²³⁵ "Bilumum Müessesat-ı Sinaiyede ve Taş ve Maden Ocaklarında Erkek ve Kız Çocukların ve Kadınların Suret-i İstihdamı Hakkında Sivas Mebusu Doktor Ömer Şevki Beyin Teklif-i Kanunî Layihası," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 371-375.

¹²³⁶ Sarıkaya, "Savaş Yıllarında Himâye-i Etfal Cemiyeti'nin," p. 44.

farms and some of these orphans were going to be forced to work until the ages of 20 to 30 contrary to their will.¹²³⁷

The orphans in the Beirut, Ordu, Armaşa, Samsun and Erzurum state orphanages were all sent to Beykoz orphanage in 1919 where there was a factory.¹²³⁸ In İstanbul, especially the Yedikule, Büyükdere and Çağlayan state orphanages taught industrial skills to their students. However, the state orphanages did not successfully turn into productive workshops despite the aims of some ambitious politicians who planned to put the unpaid labor of orphan boys and girls at the state's and employers' disposal.¹²³⁹

Evlatlık as Unpaid Domestic Servants

The state discriminated among the boy and girl orphans to the disadvantage to the girls and it was decided by the council of ministers that the orphan boys were to be sent to an artisan as apprentices. Therefore, they were entitled to have a professional education to some extent, while the girls were given to modest families as *evlatlık* (adopted children).¹²⁴⁰ These adopted girls were generally of lower status than other daughters and sons and were supposed to do the domestic work that servants or the slaves of wealthy women did.¹²⁴¹ There were families who treated the servant girls

¹²³⁷ Ebubekir Sofuoğlu, "Osmanlı Devletinde Yetimler İçin Alınan Bazı Sosyal Tedbirler," in *Savaş Çocukları Öksüzler ve Yetimler*, ed. Gürsoy-Naskali and Koç, pp. 55-56.

¹²³⁸ Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was an orphan who had to spend the winter of 1919 in the wool production unit of this factory. He also had to do agriculture in the fields near Beykoz state orphanage to fight the hunger that all orphans suffered after the occupation of İstanbul by the Allied Powers on March 16, 1920. Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo*, pp. 24-25.

¹²³⁹ Safiye Kırbaç, "Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Birinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Almanya'ya Gönderilen Dârüleytam Öğrencileri," in *Savaş Çocukları Öksüzler ve Yetimler*, ed. Gürsoy-Naskali and Koç, p. 88.

¹²⁴⁰ BOA, MV, 220/85, 28 Zilhicce 1338 [12 September 1920].

¹²⁴¹ For the responsibilities and works *evlatlık* had to do at home, see Ferhunde Özbay, *Turkish Female Child Labor in Domestic Work: Past and Present*, Project Report prepared for ILO / IPEC 1999 İstanbul (İstanbul: The Boğaziçi University Printing Office, 1999), pp. 22-23; and Ferhunde Özbay, *Türkiye'de Evlatlık Kurumu: Köle mi, Evlat mı?* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Matbaası,

well according to the old customs by educating them and getting them married when they grow up.¹²⁴² Indeed, Fatma Aliye wrote about how even the slave girls who entered into the elite households at early ages could actually see it as a way to move up the social ladder and become ladies.¹²⁴³ However, as some etiquette books of the time reveal, by advising to do the opposite, in many cases servants were treated badly and with rough words by their patrons.¹²⁴⁴ Bad treatment must have been so common that writing about Suat Derviř, Liz Behmoaras emphasizes that she was known to be naturally kind because she treated her servants like members of the family.¹²⁴⁵

The *evlatlık* system was turned into one which provided cheap servants due to the wrong practices of the Ottoman state in the war years.¹²⁴⁶ Nail Moralı, writing about the *evlatlıks* in İzmir during the Armistice period, states that when these girls reached puberty they suffered from the sexual harassment of their male masters, who pinched them or forced them to mutual exhibitionism. Knowing that they would be thrown out of the house immediately, these girls could only try to escape from their

1999), p. 26. By the way, this decision also had historical roots. In the Ottoman Empire Muslim women had little chance to enter into households as servants, because most of the servants were slave girls who were picked at very early ages. Although the Ottoman state banned the trade of slavery in 1857, slavery continued, because this law did not ban existing slavery. Even after 1880s many former slaves continued working in the same households out of necessity and they were only gradually replaced by free domestic labor. See for instance, Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Kültürü ve Gündelik Yaşam: Ortaçağdan Yirminci Yüzyıla*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), pp. 126-127; and Ehud Toledano, *Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression, 1840-1890* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 281-282..

¹²⁴² See for example, Korle, *Kızıltoprak Günlerim*, pp. 61-65.

¹²⁴³ Fatma Aliye, *Osmanlı'da Kadın: Cariyelik, Çokeşlilik ve Moda*, trans. and ed. Orhan Sakin (İstanbul: Bizim Kitaplar, 2009), pp. 23-26.

¹²⁴⁴ Lütü Simâvî, *Teşrifât ve Âdâb-ı Muâşeret* (Ankara: T.B.M.M. Basımevi, [2010]), p. 115.

¹²⁴⁵ Liz Behmoaras, *Suat Derviř: Efsane Bir Kadın ve Dönemi*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2008), p. 42.

¹²⁴⁶ Ferhunde Özbay, "Evlerde El Kızları: Cariyeler, Evlatlıklar, Gelinler," in *Feminist Tarihyazımında Sınıf ve Cinsiyet*, writ. Leonore Davidoff, p. 29.

masters, but could not complain to anyone.¹²⁴⁷ In case that they escaped from the house, these girls were easily forced into prostitution.¹²⁴⁸

According to Münevver Ayaşlı, although the *evlatlıks* were not slaves, they led a life of slavery. If they were given to bad people they lived lives of misery and in case they escaped from the house because of this bad treatment they were sought by the police force and started living the lives of criminals.¹²⁴⁹ Many poor families who had given their daughters or sisters as *evlatlık* lost their connection and wanted to learn whether these girls were dead or alive.¹²⁵⁰ An official correspondence between the government and the Directorate of the Poorhouse on 14 December 1921 also shows that many of the orphan girls who were given to families were badly treated and neglected and therefore they were forced to live a dog's life on the streets.¹²⁵¹

Bad Treatment and Harassment of Working Women

In the absence of their men, another problem afflicting working women, especially those who worked outside their homes, was the disturbing and harassing behavior of employers, foremen and civil servants. Especially women working in industry were often harassed by their male foremen or directors of the factories. This situation shows itself in the novels written on this period as well. İlhan Tarus, in his novel *Var Olmak* (To Exist), published in 1957, told the story of ordinary people in World War I. He wrote about a woman named Saniye who started living in the house of the

¹²⁴⁷ Moralı, *Mütareke'de İzmir*, p. 11.

¹²⁴⁸ Ferhunde Özbay, "1911-1922 Yıllarında Anadolu'nun Kimsesiz Kız Çocukları," in *Savaş Çocukları Öksüzler ve Yetimler*, ed. Gürsoy-Naskali and Koç, p. 115.

¹²⁴⁹ Münevver Ayaşlı, *Rumeli ve Muhteşem İstanbul* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2002), pp. 83-85.

¹²⁵⁰ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ., 13/27, 23 Ramazân 1337 [22 June 1919].

¹²⁵¹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 119/19, 18 Rebiülâhır 1340 [19 December 1921].

director of the Régie in Biga named Halit Bey as a servant in return for a very low four *mecidiyes* [80 piaster] of monthly salary in order look after her family. Sexually harassed by her employer, she left the house and started working in the tobacco factory in order to support her family. Nevertheless, Halit Bey continued to harass her sexually on the shop-floor regularly, which forced her to quit this job.¹²⁵²

Women civil servants such as teachers were also vulnerable to sexual harassment and mobbing. Şaziye Hanım, former history teacher of the Mihrimah Sultan Girl's Exemplar School (*Mihrimâh Sultân İnâs Nümune Mektebi*) in Beşiktaş was disturbed by obscene letters from a man named Necati. She had to change her workplace and started teaching at the Şehid Muhtar Bey Girl's Exemplary School (*Şehid Muhtar Bey İnâs Nümune Mektebi*). Known as a somewhat freewheeler personality (*etvâr ve harekâtında bir dereceye kadar serbestiyet olan*), she was suspected for some time of having encouraged such harassment. Only in time was she acquitted in the eyes of the school administration.¹²⁵³

Long Working Hours, Hard Working Conditions and Lack of Social Security

Another problem of working women was long and grueling working hours and unsanitary and unsafe working conditions. A draft law proposed by Sivas deputy Doctor Ömer Şevki Bey on 30 December 1910 and designed for the improvement of women and children's working conditions, was never accepted.¹²⁵⁴ During World War I, no measures were taken to improve women's working conditions by the state and even limiting women's work day to 15 hours, which was already a very long

¹²⁵² İlhan Tarus, *Var Olmak* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınevi, 1957), pp. 35-43.

¹²⁵³ BOA, MF.MTK., 1225/13, 23 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [16 April 1917].

¹²⁵⁴ Mesut Gülmez, *Türkiye'de 1936 Öncesinde İşçi Hakları, Türkiye Yol-İş Sendikası'nın Türkiye İşçi Hakları Kitabından Ayırbaşım* (Ankara: Türkiye Yol-İş Sendikası, 1986), p. 46.

work day, could not be applied.¹²⁵⁵ The socialist organizations of the war years, too, although they were against the exploitation of women's and children's labor,¹²⁵⁶ did not emphasize their problems sufficiently in their programs.¹²⁵⁷ The work day of many industrial women workers could be over 14 hours. They had to work in damp, airless and dark places which looked like barns and which did not have devices for protecting the health of the workers. As a result, tuberculosis was very common among workers.¹²⁵⁸

Refik Halid Karay, a famous Turkish writer, in his story “*Sus Payı*” (Hush Money) (1909) demonstrated the early death of women workers in the raw silk production factories in Bursa due to unhealthy working conditions. Hasip Efendi, the foreman of such a factory, observed each month the death of an adolescent girl due to work-related tuberculosis because women in his factory had to work 14 hours a day in return for 3 to 4 piasters in a very humid and hot place, inhaling dirty and poisonous air.¹²⁵⁹

Table 11. Work Day of Women Workers in Hours in Certain Sectors in 1915

Production Branch	Number of Hours in a Work Day		
	Summer	Winter	Break
Sugar, sesame oil and biscuits	9-11	7-9	1
Raw silk	14	14	2
Printing and other paper	9-10	9-10	-

Source: Organized using the data from A. Gündüz Ökçün (ed.), *Osmanlı Sanayii 1913, 1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistik* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997).

¹²⁵⁵ Şehmus Güzel, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Toplumsal Değişim ve Kadın,” *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 3-4, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p. 871.

¹²⁵⁶ M. Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi, 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), p. 63, 69, 89, 91.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²⁵⁸ Erişçi, *Sosyal Tarih Araştırmaları*, p. 95.

¹²⁵⁹ Refik Halid Karay, “Sus Payı,” in *Memleket Hikayeleri*, 12th ed. (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1990), pp. 134-135.

These conditions grew worse during World War I as the Ottoman working class lost nearly all means of organization before entering into war and because of the war mobilization. Those workers who worked for the military arms and ammunitions production worked in really hard conditions.¹²⁶⁰

Another group of women who suffered from difficult working conditions were nurses. Sometimes they were exposed to death risk while carrying out their jobs. Although most of the Turkish nurses worked in the hospitals in İstanbul, some nurses had to work or voluntarily did work in fronts or risky zones of armed conflict. Safiye Hüseyin [Elbi] was one of these nurses who dared to work in the Reşit Paşa Hospital Ship (*Reşit Paşa Hastahâne Gemisi*), which was tasked with taking wounded Ottoman soldiers from the Dardanelles front to the capital city and therefore was regularly bombarded.¹²⁶¹ In an interview, she stated that one of her friends, an Austrian nurse who had wanted to quit the ship because of seasickness and had started working in an army hospital on land, had been killed due to enemy bombardment of this land hospital from the air. Other than bombardment, in the Reşit Paşa Hospital Ship, the medical personnel suffered from hunger, head lice, lack of coal and cold.¹²⁶²

Nurses also had to work for long hours taking care of wounded soldiers in numbers beyond their capacity. During the Battle of the Dardanelles, about 19,000 wounded soldiers were sent from the front to İstanbul hospitals in 1915. In an interview, General İsmail Pasha's wife, who had started working in a hospital in Galatasaray with another friend as a voluntary nurse, admitted that as two women they were almost at a loss when 400 wounded soldiers came to the hospital all at

¹²⁶⁰ Erişçi, *Sosyal Tarih Araştırmaları*, p. 95.

¹²⁶¹ Çolak and Uçan, *II. Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Basında*, p. 120.

¹²⁶² Ekrem Şama, *Şu Boğaz Harbi: Bir Başka Bakışla Çanakkale Savaşları* (İstanbul: Gonca Yayınevi, 2004), pp. 311-318.

once. Only with the arrival of many new young nurses who were graduates of nursery courses were they able to accomplish their tasks, and even then with difficulty.¹²⁶³ During the National Struggle about 35,418 injured people were treated in 1.5 to 2 years until the beginning of 1922. According to some estimates this number reached from 50,000 to 60,000.¹²⁶⁴ Women nurses were very important for the treatment of the injured soldiers and yet they had to overwork in such circumstances.

In addition, working women had important problems taking care of and feeding their children. A survey made by American researchers in İzmir in May 1921 revealed that women workers of the city received very low wages that only helped them to buy food. Those women working at the Régie had to hurry home to earn extra money by doing washing or some cleaning for providing their families with other basic necessities. Hundreds of children of women workers were on the street and were under-fed because their mothers could not buy enough food for them.¹²⁶⁵ Many poor children thus had to work, and therefore child labor was also common in the city. Children worked at least 10 hours a day in tailor or shoe shops, in tobacco or carpet factories or in bakeries in very bad conditions that harmed their health and growth. Those working girls in the cigarette factories were often the daughters of women workers who were forced to have their children work, too, because of low wages.¹²⁶⁶

Difficulty in taking care of children for working women was illustrated in the memoirs and literature on this period as well. İrfan Orga wrote how he and his brother Mehmet suffered from hunger, because their mother could not bring enough

¹²⁶³ BOA, HR.SYS, 2422/71, 26 June 1916.

¹²⁶⁴ Ege, *Turkish Red Crescent Society*, p. 18.

¹²⁶⁵ G. C. Stearns, "Industrial Conditions," in *A Survey of Some Social Conditions in Smyrna*, ed. Bali, p. 45.

¹²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

money at home working the army depot. Hoping that her children could receive enough food there she placed them in a school for orphans in 1916. Nevertheless, in 1918 the children were on their deathbeds due to malnutrition in this school and with the Armistice she left her job and started working at home where she could take care of her children personally.¹²⁶⁷ Reşat Enis also wrote in his novel *Despot* (Tyrant) (1957) about the tragedy of a family who suffered a lot after the father died in battle. Naciye, as mother of two orphan boys, went to work in the cigarette factory in İstanbul, leaving home at dawn and returning late in the evening.¹²⁶⁸ Her children could eat meat only when some valuable item from their mother's wedding chest was sold. Eventually, fearing to get tuberculosis due to bad the working conditions in the factory, Naciye decided to walk off the job and leave İstanbul for their home city Eskişehir in the hope of finding better conditions.¹²⁶⁹

For women who needed to work, children often constituted an obstacle to being employed. Both employers and official and civil associations preferred women without children. At first, women with children were not envisaged to be employed in the First Women Workers' Battalion.¹²⁷⁰ The Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women stated that women workers were not allowed to bring their children to the army.¹²⁷¹ However, probably in the face of impossibility of implementing this decision due to the attachment of women to their children or due to the lack of other people to take care of their children, on 2 September 1917, the army authorities declared that the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, had allowed those women with children older than the age which required them to carry them on their

¹²⁶⁷ Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, pp. 164-182.

¹²⁶⁸ Reşad Enis, *Despot* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1957), p. 7.

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁷⁰ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-50, 3 Ağustos 1333 [3 August 1917].

¹²⁷¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-57, [date is not written on the document].

laps to bring them along to work.¹²⁷² Finally, on 11 September 1917, the First Army Commander approved this decision.¹²⁷³

The weak social security system in the Ottoman Empire was another important problem for working women. Most of the social assistance was provided through traditional practices in the family, among the religious communities, and in the guilds. Modern social security practices such as retirement pension had started in 1866 first in the army and in 1881 for other government officers. The retirement pension was accepted by other private institutions as well in the following years. Nevertheless, most of the rights were acquired by soldiers and civil servants who constituted an already powerful group in Ottoman society.¹²⁷⁴ Nearly all working women were not in this group.

Even those women working for the army suffered from weak social security. The working hours of these women were eight hours a day¹²⁷⁵ and they had the right to have free medical service both for themselves and their children.¹²⁷⁶ They also had certain minor privileges like paying no letter postage,¹²⁷⁷ and the right to pay reduced fees or nothing on ships, tramways, trains, tunnels, bridges and other means of transportation. Nevertheless, they had no right to retirement.¹²⁷⁸ Furthermore, women workers were paid no money and given no food on the days they did not work, unlike the female officers, who received monthly wages but no meals.¹²⁷⁹ The Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women demanded that women army secretaries, warehouse keepers and officers be given provisions to the degree that

¹²⁷² ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-54, 2 Eylül 1333 [2 September 1917].

¹²⁷³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-52, 11 Eylül 1333 [11 September 1917].

¹²⁷⁴ Makal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Çalışma İlişkileri: 1850-1920*, pp. 210-217.

¹²⁷⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-6a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁷⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-13a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁷⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-8, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁷⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-14, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁷⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-9a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

male officers took.¹²⁸⁰ Women officers, however, were not given provisions and workers were only given food when they lived in the Battalion barracks.¹²⁸¹

As a result of weak social security, for many lower-class working women with no retirement right, entering the poor house was the only option. For example, Zenciye Gülfidan, who worked as a servant for ten years in the Women Teachers' Training School in İstanbul, had gone blind and lost her job in July 1921. Having no family member to look after her, she took refuge in the school for some time. Eventually, on 26 October 1921, she was accepted to the poor house.¹²⁸²

The government was especially eager to promote marriage both for the promotion of the "National Family"¹²⁸³ and very probably because of lack of sufficient social security for women. Marriage was also a requirement for female workers of the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women after the age of 20 and for male workers after the age of 25. Unmarried women personnel above the age of 20 were dismissed with a 10 percent cut of their remuneration. After marriage they had a raise of 20 percent and if they had a child their wages could be raised another 20 percent.¹²⁸⁴ Women employees were allowed to leave their positions after getting married.¹²⁸⁵ The marriage requirement could have been restrictive for those women who needed to work because of economic hardship. Only those women who were not able to get married due to an illness were exempted from this obligation.¹²⁸⁶

¹²⁸⁰ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-57, [date is not written on the document].

¹²⁸¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 6-12a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁸² BOA, DH.UMVM., 120/20, 27 Safer 1340 [30 October 1921].

¹²⁸³ Toprak, "The Family, Feminism and the State," pp. 449-451.

¹²⁸⁴ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-10, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917]. See also, Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti: Kadın Askerler ve Millî Aile," *Tarih ve Toplum* 51 (March, 1988), pp. 36-37.

¹²⁸⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-8, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁸⁶ Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları*, p. 128.

Patriarchal Control over Women in Work Places

Strict control in terms of “morality” was another problem of working women. Both employers and especially the government needed to assure the preservation of women and girl employees’ purity, chastity and honor in work places in order to attract the cheap labor force of women. Therefore, the workplace discipline rules and the state authority started to substitute the men’s control and authority. The increasing sexual harassments of working women in the absence of their men also necessitated the state’s intervention in women’s lives in moral terms. Thus, despite its protective aspects, the restrictive rules and practices sometimes made things more difficult for women. During their rest, police officers kept a close watch on every action of women workers of the army. In addition, male or female officers of the army frequently inspected their behavior and all relations.¹²⁸⁷ Guardian male army officers lived together with their families near the barracks of women army workers. These officers were not even allowed to travel more than an hour distance in order to eliminate any indiscipline or misconduct among women workers.¹²⁸⁸ If women army workers were seen with an unknown man, a promiscuous woman or any male member of their families without the knowledge of the army they were discharged immediately.¹²⁸⁹

The Ottoman army was also quite conservative about the appearance and clothing of its women workers. Women did not wear uniforms, but they had to conform to army regulations in clothing. They wore the clothes provided by the army that consisted of a cloak, a coat, a jacket, baggy trousers, a headscarf, a *yeldirme* (a

¹²⁸⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-7, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁸⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-5a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁸⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-11a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

kind of light cloak worn by women), a gaiter, and a pair of shoes.¹²⁹⁰

Correspondences between the Ministry of War, the army and the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women in August-September 1917 reveal that Muslim women worker's use of baggy-trousers and a jacket without putting on a *yeldirme* was not approved by the War Minister, Enver Pasha. Therefore, those women workers who had to toil for long hours in the open air had to wear additional garments unsuitable for their tasks.¹²⁹¹

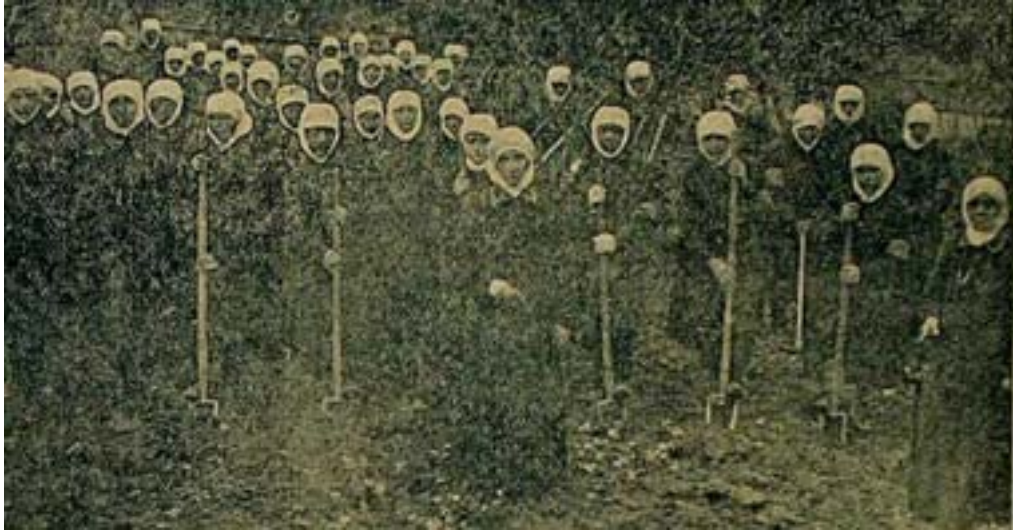


Fig. 20 Women workers in the First Women Workers' Battalion with their army clothing in which they were ordered to do agricultural work. Although their clothing was unfit for this work, especially during the summer, the army authorities forced them to wear to do so.

Source: *Harp Mecmûası*, no. 25-26 (Şabân 1336 / Mayıs 1334 [May 1918]), p. 411.

Women civil servants in the Finance Ministry were also under control in terms of morality. They had to work in separate offices on the doors of which it was written “Special for ladies. It is forbidden to enter” (*Hanımlara mahsustur. İçeri girmek*

¹²⁹⁰ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-14a, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].

¹²⁹¹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-52, 11 Eylül 1333 [11 September 1917] and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1941, Dos. 217, Fih. 1-54, 2 Eylül 1333 [2 September 1917].

memnû'dur).¹²⁹² Those women civil servants such as teachers were dismissed immediately if they were caught in an immoral act.¹²⁹³

The moral control of working women was so strong that some of them who were thought to be under risk of moral degeneration by their immoral families were also guarded and kept separated from their families. For instance, Saniha, whose mother was a pasha's daughter who had started prostitution and therefore had been exiled to Ankara, was not allowed to go near her mother despite her mother's petitions for it in 1917. Instead, she was forced to stay and work in a workshop in İstanbul, because the authorities claimed that otherwise her mother would force her into prostitution.¹²⁹⁴

Loss of Job

Finally, one of the worst problems of working women was losing their jobs due to military occupations, budget restrictions or conservatism during the Armistice period. First, women who worked as civil servants such as teachers, school directors, cleaners of the state buildings and midwives lost their jobs when the enemy occupied their working districts. Some of them found new positions or demanded their accrued salaries from the government. However, they had to cope with the red tape and had great difficulties surviving during the transition period. Women who took their salaries from the local municipalities were worse off.¹²⁹⁵ Some working women, in addition to losing their former jobs, also had to suffer captivity. Fatma, who worked as both the assistant manager and first teacher of the Baghdad School for Girls

¹²⁹² Nimet Günaydın, "İlk Kadın Memurlar," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası* 3, No. 4 (May, 1967), p. 67.

¹²⁹³ BOA, DH.UMVM, 159/11, 4 Receb 1337 [5 April 1919].

¹²⁹⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.1.Şb, 8/1, 2 Muharrem 1335 [18 October 1917].

¹²⁹⁵ See for example, BOA, DH.UMVM, 8/41, 16 Şa'bân 1335 [7 June 1917].

(*Bağdat İnâs Mektebi*), was taken captive by British troops on 11 March 1917. She was released two years later, but could neither find a job nor receive her past salaries.¹²⁹⁶

Second, many women, as civil servants or as students of vocational schools, were victims of budget restrictions during the Armistice. Among the first who were dismissed from their jobs were women in the government offices and the administration of post offices. For example, three plainclothes policewomen who worked in the Uzunköprü customhouse were dismissed from their positions in November 1918 by the government on the grounds that they were not necessary anymore.¹²⁹⁷ Similarly, women in the Ministry of Finance¹²⁹⁸ and the administration of post offices¹²⁹⁹ were forced to leave due to economic reasons and bigotry, as Refik Halid Karay, as director of the administration of post offices of the time claimed.¹³⁰⁰

In sum, despite the limited work opportunities created by the war, women had important problems that were not solved throughout World War I. The first was the excessive exploitation and low wages threatened women workers, their children, and orphaned girls as well as boys, who were left without sufficient care and nutrition. Second, the Ottoman state and authorities increased the patriarchal discipline and control over women to substitute for their men who were conscripted. This affected the women's lives and working options negatively. They were also obliged to get married as the social security was very weak. However, these disciplining attempts did not prevent the bad treatment of women by employers and men. Third, women became vulnerable to psychological and sexual assaults both in the domestic service

¹²⁹⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM, 40/87, 22 Rebiülâhır 1338 [14 January 1920].

¹²⁹⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.SSM, 56/20, 25 Safer 1336 [10 December 1917].

¹²⁹⁸ Günaydın, "İlk Kadın Memurlar," p. 67.

¹²⁹⁹ Halide Nusret Zorlutuna was also among those women who had to leave their position in the administration of post offices. See Zorlutuna, *Bir Devrin Romani*, p. 148.

¹³⁰⁰ Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, p. 204.

and in other occupations. Fourth, for those women who were without family support and who could not find a husband, work life provided no long-term economic guarantee. Finally, the occupation of the country and society's hesitant approach towards women's working worsened this problem. These negative conditions disconfirm the conventional assumptions that the war positively opened the doors of work life for women and that the work life emancipated women all together.

Women's Response to Negative Work Conditions

During the war years, Ottoman working-class women could not show their discontent by going on strike; as the low number of strikes show due to the both authoritarian measures of the Unionist government, which limited organized working-class activities, and the low number of women in labor unions and socialist movements. Social and economic restrictions made it difficult to even find a job. Many disadvantaged women without any breadwinners or a job had little options other than everyday, informal and sometimes illegal ways of survival. Many Turkish women, more often than ever before, resorted to clandestine or registered prostitution, begging or stealing for their very survival. Once they started working, they often resisted low wages, harsh exploitation, and bad treatment through covert ways such as pilferage, indiscipline, resigning or making their voices heard by petitioning. Educated working women, however, had more ability to ask for the amelioration of their conditions in open or legal ways by using their knowledge, literacy, or working experience as a means for resistance and bargaining.

Despite the fact that the Ottoman working class began to appear as an active social and political force in the economy and politics from the mid-nineteenth

century onward,¹³⁰¹ especially years between 1908 and 1912 constituted relatively the golden age of the Ottoman working class movement.¹³⁰² From 24 July 1908 to the end of 1908 in about five months 111 strikes were called.¹³⁰³ The Strike Law (*Tatil-i Eşgâl Kanunu*) of 1909, which was first accepted as a provisional law on 8 October 1908 and became a law on 9 August 1909, caused a dramatic decline in the number of strikes¹³⁰⁴ and was very prohibitive to unionization.¹³⁰⁵ The war years, which encompassed nearly all the Second Constitutional period, also adversely influenced organization and activities of the Ottoman working class.¹³⁰⁶ As a result of this hostile political atmosphere, workers' organizations and organized movements in the Ottoman Empire were extremely weak during World War I.¹³⁰⁷ Only five strikes happened in the Empire from 1913 to 1918.¹³⁰⁸

During the Armistice years, the demise of the Ottoman Empire and power vacuum in the country encouraged the socialist and working class activities. Yet, there were only a few provinces in which socialist movement or working class action emerged.¹³⁰⁹ From 1919 to 1922, the number of strikes was limited to 19. Nearly all of these were in the transportation sector, in railway companies, which were owned

¹³⁰¹ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class, 1839-1923," in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik Jan Zürcher (London; New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The International Institute of Social History Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 19-22.

¹³⁰² Paul Dumont, "20. Yüzyıl Başları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu İşçi Hareketleri ve Sosyalist Akımlar Tarihi Üzerine Yayımlanmamış Kaynaklar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 3 (Autumn 1977), p. 32.

¹³⁰³ Karakışla, "The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class," p. 31.

¹³⁰⁴ Gülmez, *Türkiye'de 1936 Öncesinde İşçi Hakları*, pp. 31-36.

¹³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

¹³⁰⁶ Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi*, p. 106.

¹³⁰⁷ According to Dimitir Şişmanov there was no real socialist movement in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. See Dimitir Şişmanov, *Türkiye İşçi ve Sosyalist Hareketi: Kısa Tarih (1908-1965)*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1990), pp. 55-58.

¹³⁰⁸ Karakışla, "The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class," p. 25.

¹³⁰⁹ Paul Dumont, "La révolution impossible: les courants d'opposition en Anatolie, 1920-1921," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 19, no. 1/2 (Jan.-Jun., 1978), p. 143.

by foreigners.¹³¹⁰ Therefore, the Ottoman workers' movement was not effective in the Armistice period.¹³¹¹



Fig. 21 This caricature mocks the strike of women street cleaners in İstanbul in February-March 1922. An allegedly “feminist” husband orders his street sweeper wife to go back to work by telling her that from then on she would work outside and he would spend the money she earned.

Source: *Aydede*, No. 20 (9 Mart 1338 [9 March 1922]), p. 4.

It might not be expected that Turkish working women were able to resist their oppressors and exploiters in an organized manner in the wartime conditions. Yet, despite these adverse conditions, they were not always been passive in pursuing for their economic rights both in late Ottoman period and during World War I. Women

¹³¹⁰ Karakışla, “The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class,” pp. 25-26.

¹³¹¹ See for example Paul Dumont, “Bolchevisme et Orient: le parti communiste turc de Mustafa Suphi, 1918-1921,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 18, No. 4 (Oct. – Dec., 1977), pp. 377-409.

had been very active from the Tanzimat Period onward. Women textile workers in Samakov had resisted new machines by threatening to break them with shovels, axes and rods in 1851. Women workers of carpet factories had demanded their unpaid wages by protesting this situation in January 1867. Women workers of the Fez Factory had also walked to Bâbiâli and demanded payment of their wages from the grand vizier with a petition on 22 August 1876. Women as the families of male workers were effective in the strike of shipyard workers in January 1873 and May 1876 and in the strike of tramway workers. Most of the 50 strikes from 1872 to 1907 happened in the textile sector in which women were intensely employed.¹³¹² On 23 June 1908, about 50 Turkish women started a rebellion against the high cost of living, low quality of bread and shortage of cereals in Sivas that could only be ended by the army. About 40 of about 100 strikes from 24 July 1908 to 31 October 1908 were organized in sectors in which women worked intensely.¹³¹³ The first strike of women workers, even if organized by men, started in Bursa on 15 August 1910. Workers of the silk factories demanded improvement of their working conditions, higher wages and less working hours.¹³¹⁴

Search for a Job

In the negative wartime conditions, women's first concern was finding a job to survive. The Workshop of the Women's Center of the Red Crescent Society reported that each day the female orphans of man who had died in battle and refugees applied

¹³¹² See for instance, Nikolaï Todorov, "The First Factories in the Balkan Provinces of the Ottoman Empire," in *La ville balkanique sous les Ottomans, XV-XIXe s.*, writ. Nikolaï Todorov (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), pp. 315-358.

¹³¹³ Güzel, "1908 Kadınları," pp. 9-11.

¹³¹⁴ Nicole A. N. M. Van Os, "Bursa'da Kadın İşçilerin 1910 Grevi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, Special Issue No. 39 (1997), pp. 7-10.

to their institution.¹³¹⁵ Nevertheless, because of financial limits, the Workshop was not able to accept all the applicants.¹³¹⁶ The women applicants to the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women as well reached about 15,000 in the Autumn of 1916. The Ministry of Internal Affairs requested that the prefect of İstanbul, Bedri Bey, inform the government about the number of jobs suitable for these women in the government offices, hospitals, and other institutions in the city on 13 November 1916.¹³¹⁷ On 7 November 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs asked the Ministry of Public Education for the appointment of these women to suitable jobs. On 16 November 1916, all of the women's schools in the capital city were ordered to accept these women as cleaning ladies.¹³¹⁸

Despite their efforts, many women could not escape from unemployment. Most of them might have protested this situation by using instruments other than tears. Yet, few of them recorded their anger. One of them, Yaşar Nezihe, who was a poet of lower-class origins and who earned her living using her ability to write letters for others and do needlework,¹³¹⁹ protested that there were not enough jobs for women like her in a poem titled “Ekmek Kömür İhtiyacı” (The Need for Bread and Coal) with the following lines:

In my hand are needle and pen, yet I'm also needy
I have been hungry with my fatherless Vedad for the last 48 hours
I'd like to work, there's no job, I am amazed by this situation
I cry looking at this hungry fatherless child, I'm miserable.¹³²⁰

¹³¹⁵ *Türkiye Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Merkezi Dârü's-sanâ'ası*, p. 10.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹³¹⁷ BOA, DH.KMS, 42/10, 17 Muharrem 1335 [13 November 1916].

¹³¹⁸ BOA, MF.MTK, 1220/74, 22 Muharrem 1335 [18 November 1916].

¹³¹⁹ Çolak and Uçan, *II. Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Basında*, p. 59.

¹³²⁰ “*Elimde iğne kalem var da ben de muhtacım*

Yetim Vedad'ım ile kırk sekiz saattir açım

Çalışmak isterim iş yok, bu hale hayrânım

Bu aç yetime bakıp ağlarım perişânım.”

Yaşar Nezihe, “Ekmek Kömür İhtiyacı,” *Nâzikter*, No. 2 (10 Şubat 1335 [10 February 1919], p. 1.

Many women tried to become nurses because it was considered one of the most suitable jobs for impoverished women. On 9 June 1917, a petition penned by a woman named Esma requested a nurse position from the Red Crescent Society. Esma wrote that she lived in Aksaray in a house behind the hospital in Cerrahpaşa and depicted herself as a woman “lonely and in need of favor” (*bîkes ve muhtâc-ı utûfet*).¹³²¹

Some women, who could not apply for nursing positions, asked that the Society appoint them to other positions. Zehra, a Balkan refugee who lived in Edirnekapı, petitioned for work as a secretary at the Red Crescent Society because she had no money or guarantor for nursing lessons. As a victim of the Balkan Wars, she had arrived with her family to “Muslim territory” penniless and only with her chastity and her soul (*Cenâb-ı hakka çok şükür yalnız ırzımız ve canımız ile*).¹³²²

A nursing education, however, could be used as a means for working in other fields. For instance, a graduate of the nursing courses, Ayşe Bedia, applied for a job as a secretary in the General Directorate of the House of Detention (*Tevkîfhâne-i Umûmî Müdüriyeti*) in the Summer of 1921.¹³²³

Voluntary nursing, however, which was not an option for lower-class women, was seen as an opportunity to learn the occupation as well as a way to show feelings of patriotism. Many elite Turkish women who followed the nursing courses of the Red Crescent were eager to work. The applications of these women to hospitals were taken seriously by the hospital authorities who needed additional staff. For instance, two applicants to the Darüşşafaka Red Crescent Hospital (*Dârü’ş-şafaka Hilâl-i Ahmer Hastâhanesi*), Hatice and Mehpare, who wanted to serve voluntarily to help

¹³²¹ TKA, 43/273, 9 Haziran 1333 [9 June 1917].

¹³²² TKA, 43/141, 1 Mart 1330 [14 March 1914].

¹³²³ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M, 46/68, 26 Zilkâde 1339 [1 August 1921].

wounded soldiers and learn the profession, were accepted without objections on 2 September 1915.¹³²⁴

Many lower-class women without education resorted to the government simply to become servants or cleaning ladies in government offices. Some of these women wanted to work and receive salaries as guards in women's prisons. Some women even rented the house in which they lived to the government to be used as women's prisons. These were often women who had already started working as guards, but could receive no money for it. Havva, who by 1914 voluntarily worked as a guard in the Fethiye Women's Prison (*Fethiye Nisâ Hapishânesi*), which was her own house, demanded several times to get a salary in return for her services in vain, because in the Menteşe private budget there was no money for it.¹³²⁵ Some of these women were able to receive a very low salary, which they sought to increase. On 14 October 1916, Hatice, who worked as a guard in her house that she rented to the government as the Bayramiç Women's Prison (*Bayramiç Nisâ Hapishânesi*), wrote that her salary was 50 piasters and that the rent she received was only 40 piasters. She claimed that she had not been able to receive even this money for the last three and a half months. Arguing that she had to convert additional rooms of her house into prison, she requested that both her salary and the rent she received be increased. She managed to have her rent increased to 80 piasters.¹³²⁶

Women applicants had difficulty in finding vacant positions. Cevahir, a woman whose husband had died at the front, applied to become guard in one of the women's prisons by claiming that she had recently learned that there was a vacant position and that she was living in misery with one daughter.¹³²⁷

¹³²⁴ TKA, 44/182, 20 Ağustos 1331 [2 September 1915].

¹³²⁵ BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 90/66, 10 Ramazân 1332 [2 August 1914].

¹³²⁶ BOA, MB.HPS, 92/54, 13 Rebîülâhır 1335 [7 January 1917].

¹³²⁷ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 45/13, 18 Cemâziyelâhır 1339 [27 February 1921].

In their applications, apart from their poverty, women also emphasized their modesty, a qualification strictly demanded by the state. Emine, who applied for the position of plainclothes policewoman in the Bandırma Customs Office, had to prove first of all that she was a chaste woman in August 1918.¹³²⁸ Women also used a discourse of chastity in their application petitions to a government service to facilitate their admission. A woman named Hikmet wrote in her petition on 4 August 1921 that she previously had applied for a guard position in vain as there had been no vacancy. For increasing her chance in this second application, she wrote that despite her poverty, she had tried to live without going astray and deviating from chastity and moderation (*iffet ve istikâmetden inhirâf etmeksizin*) in wartime conditions, which, she argued, had forced many women into moral corruption.¹³²⁹

Coping Strategies with Heavy Working Life, Restrictions, and Unemployment

For coping with heavy working life, with the restrictions to finding a job and with unemployment ordinary women had many different strategies. In urban areas, leaving the job, absenteeism or indifference to work responsibilities were common strategies of women officials and workers. A former guard of one of the women's prisons named Hacer, who had to leave her position due to family affairs, wanted to return to the same position on 10 October 1921, but could not because her record had been deleted as she had left the job on her own will.¹³³⁰ In another case, a cleaning lady in a government office named Ayşe was laid off on 29 November 1917 and some part of her salary was demanded back from her due to her indifference to her

¹³²⁸ BOA, DH.EUM.SSM., 27/18, 8 Zilka'de 1336 [15 August 1918].

¹³²⁹ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 46/71, 30 Zilka'de 1339 [5 August 1921].

¹³³⁰ BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 46/124, 12 Safer 1340 [15 October 1921].

profession and her absenteeism for two days without permission.¹³³¹ Similarly, a guard in a women's prison named Cemile and a cleaning lady in the same prison named Refika were punished for being indifferent to their jobs on 20 February 1922. In fact, two prisoners had wanted to heat some water for washing their poor clothing and hair by starting a fire in on the tile floor of the ward and ruined the ceramics. Therefore, the guardian and the cleaning lady were accused of neglecting their duties and were punished by the authorities.¹³³²

Similar cases were probably observed in the army as some clauses in the Regulation of the First Women Workers' Battalion (*Birinci Ordu-yı Hümâyûn 'a Mensûb Kadın Birinci İşçi Taburu Hidemât-ı Dâhiliye Ta'limât-nâmesi*) imply. The most important and widespread crimes of female army workers were thought to be absenteeism and being late to work. In addition, some women under hard working conditions were expected to resort to malpractice and slowdown. Women were to be punished for a variety of crimes ranging from rebellion to indifference, immorality or practicing prostitution. Women had to obey the strict moral rules and sexual segregation in the army. Women who communicated with men without a family bond, with promiscuous women or with male family members without the knowledge of army authorities were to be immediately dismissed. The crime of desertion, however, was punished by immediate arrest. Being dismissed, former Battalion workers were to be sent directly to the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women and lose the right to demand further jobs, which could be considered as a very important punishment in wartime economic conditions.¹³³³

¹³³¹ BOA, DH.EUM.MH., 166/47, 3 Rebiülevvel 1336 [17 December 1917].

¹³³² BOA, DH.MB.HPS., 135/73, 6 Receb 1340 [5 March 1922].

¹³³³ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-11; ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-11a; and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 1544, Dos. 7, Fih. 6-12, 10 Eylül 1333 [10 September 1917].



Fig. 22 A Turkish sales-woman who work in a clothing shop in İstanbul during the Armistice period.

Source: Demetra Vaka, *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 32.

Another reaction against negative work conditions was to leave the job by resigning voluntarily. Many lower-class women did not feel free or liberated only because they had to work under bad conditions for long hours in return for a small sum of money. This was recorded by some contemporary observers as well. Demetra Vaka, a woman observer of the time, interviewed some women sales clerks in a shop during the Armistice years in Pera. Most of the 28 women who sewed and designed clothes or kept the accounts of the shop were the daughters of low-income civil servants and they worked not only to support themselves but their families as well. When Demetra Vaka had wanted to take their photographs, they resisted, claiming that their men would not like them to be photographed without their veils. Furthermore, when she had asked them whether they had found themselves free or emancipated by doing

this job, one of them had answered that most of them would preferred to have been be married and to have their own homes and babies than work in that shop. This women interviewee stated that she did not feel free because she was obliged to continue coming to the shop at certain hours and had to be gracious to people who sometimes were rude to her. She stated that only the rich were able to be independent in deciding upon the course of their lives.¹³³⁴

Resignation of the paid or voluntary nurses from the Red Crescent Hospitals due to harsh working conditions was frequent. A Muslim male and two non-Muslim female nurses left the hospital on 18 August 1915, making the authorities search for new personnel with a salary of 300 piasters a month.¹³³⁵ Similarly on 6 November 1915, the head doctor of the Kadirga Red Crescent Hospital (*Kadirga Hilâl-i Ahmer Hastahânesi*) informed the Central Office of the Society that one of their nurses, Hadika, who had started working in the hospital on 8 May 1915, had resigned only six months later. In her letter of resignation, she had emphasized that she quit working in the hospital due to the difficult working conditions, which her body could not tolerate anymore.¹³³⁶ Lûtfiyye and Fatma (Nebiyye), two nurses of the Gureba Red Crescent Hospital in Bursa, also resigned together on 4 January 1917 “because of their legitimate excuses” (*ma'zeret-i meşrûaları sebebiyle*) as hospital authorities wrote to the General Center Secretary.¹³³⁷ This explanation suggests that there were certain resignations not accepted as legitimate. Yavuz Selim Karakışla writes as well that women in the Women Workers' Battalion found agricultural work rather difficult, and as their contract had not yet been signed, many of them left the

¹³³⁴ Demetra Vaka, *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), pp. 32-42.

¹³³⁵ TKA, 44/127, 5 Ağustos 1331 [18 August 1915].

¹³³⁶ TKA, 44/149, 24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1331 [6 November 1915].

¹³³⁷ TKA, 156/174, 22 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1332 [4 January 1917].

Battalion on various pretexts.¹³³⁸ Although 300 women had pre-registered in the early days, only 149 of them had finally registered with the Battalion. Every day two or three new women workers entered the Battalion, but the actual operating personnel never exceeded 80 or 90 women workers since many women wanted to quit their jobs.¹³³⁹

Especially the educated women used legal strategies like petitioning for a wage rise or writing letters or articles to the press to improve their work conditions. On the eve of World War I, Ottoman feminists wanted to improve women workers' situation through the regulation of their wages and working conditions. In an article published in the periodical *Kadınlar Dünyası* (World of Women) on 8 May 1914, it was written that Ottoman women workers suffered more than women workers in western countries. Feminists protested that women's working conditions in the Ottoman Empire were not improved with a regulation and women were overexploited especially in weaving and sock production and in carpet production. The periodical also requested that the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade and the Ministry of Education take measures to improve these conditions.¹³⁴⁰

There were also educated women who bargained for raises individually. For instance, Nebahat Niyazi, who worked for the *Üserâ Şubesi* (the Department of War Captives) of the Red Crescent from 1916 onwards, wrote to the directory of the Society on 23 September 1918 to ask for a salary increase. She claimed that although she loved her job, her monthly salary of 650 piasters was not sufficient and the

¹³³⁸ Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 116.

¹³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹³⁴⁰ "Sanâyide Sefâlet-i Nisvân," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, No. 140 (25 Nisan 1330 [8 May 1914]), p. 2; and "İşçilere İş, İsteyenlere Müzâheret Lazımdır," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, No. 41 (14 Mayıs 1329 [29 May 1913]), p. 1. Quoted in Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 300.

National Insurance Company (*Millî Sigorta Şirketi*) had offered her a job at a salary of 1000 piasters. The Society took her petition seriously and increased her salary.¹³⁴¹

Getting diplomas and a respective wage raise was also among the goals of women because holding a diploma guaranteed, even if not always, higher salaries and more permanent jobs. On 25 September 1921, the head doctor of a Red Crescent hospital recruited Suad, a nurse from the Medical School Hospital, with a monthly wage of 1500 piasters, which was an important sum for a nurse.¹³⁴² Furthermore, an order of the head doctor of the Red Crescent Society declared the salary of a nurse with a diploma as 2000 piasters and that of an unqualified nurse as 1500 piasters from 1 January 1922 onwards.¹³⁴³ The payrolls of nurses at the Adapazarı Hospital Number 115 in 1923 show that with the supplementary payments to their basic salary, the salary of the nurses multiplied about seven times. In addition, the salaries of those nurses with experience and diplomas also multiplied that of the less qualified ones. The best paid nurse who was a head nurse of the first class received 3433 piasters 30 *paras* although her basic salary was 800 piasters, while the worst paid was a 3rd class nurse who received 477 piasters while her basic salary was 70 piasters.¹³⁴⁴ The salary of Celibe, who worked for several years in different sanitariums and who had been recently promoted to the rank of head nurse at the Talas Sanitarium in Kayseri got a wage raise from 360 piasters to 500 piasters in October 1917.¹³⁴⁵ Similarly, in the same institution, another head nurse named Adile who previously had earned 360 piasters and corporal nurses Zarife, Rana, Hikmet, Dilara and Latife, who each previously had earned 260 piasters, all got a 100 piaster

¹³⁴¹ TKA, 44/265, 23 Eylül 1334 [23 September 1918].

¹³⁴² TKA, 44/303, 25 Eylül 1335 [25 September 1919].

¹³⁴³ TKA, 44/317, 1 Kânûn-ı Sâni 1338 [1 January 1922].

¹³⁴⁴ *Millî Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız*, pp. 146-147.

¹³⁴⁵ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 1, 14 Ekim 1333 [14 October 1917]; ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 2-1, 22 Ekim 1333 [22 October 1917]; ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 2-4, 22 Ekim 1333 [22 October 1917]; and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 2-5, 22 Ekim 1333 [22 October 1917].

raise. All of these women were of Armenian origin and had converted to Islam during the war years.¹³⁴⁶

Nurses without registered diplomas or those who did not get a promotion faced losing some part of their wages. For example, on 10 July 1917, the director of a sanitarium in Amasya wrote to the army that among the eighteen nurses in his institution some had earned 350 piasters and some 300 piasters as monthly salary previously. With the promotion of four nurses as head nurse and eight nurses as corporal nurse, the remaining six nurses were obliged to receive a salary of 220 piasters, which was 80 piasters lower than what they previously had earned.¹³⁴⁷ Despite the objections, finally, those nurses who became head nurses received 500 piasters, corporal nurses up to 360 piasters and the remaining nurses were forced to accept the 220 piaster salary.¹³⁴⁸

Lack of a diploma also threatened the jobs of existing nurses. A telegram sent to the Directorate of 3rd Army on 12 June 1918, stated that the nurses at the Elaziz [Elazığ] hospitals were mostly non-Muslim nurses or corporal nurses who had served for the last six to seven years. Because the diplomas they had received from the hospital in which they worked had been sent to the capital city for certification had not yet returned, these nurses continued to work as nurses without diplomas and received lower wages. Claiming that this situation made the nurses vulnerable and prone to unemployment, the nurses demanded their diplomas back after being confirmed.¹³⁴⁹

¹³⁴⁶ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 1-1, 14 Ekim 1333 [14 October 1917]; ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 2, 22 Ekim 1333 [22 October 1917]; and ATASE, BDH, Kls. 3102, Dos. 7, Fih. 2-6, 22 Ekim 1333 [22 October 1917].

¹³⁴⁷ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2996, Dos. 153, Fih. 23-1, 10 Temmuz 1333 [10 July 1917].

¹³⁴⁸ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2996, Dos. 153, Fih. 23-2, 14 Ağustos 1333 [14 August 1917].

¹³⁴⁹ ATASE, BDH, Kls. 2997, Dos. 158, Fih. 4, 12 Haziran 1334 [12 June 1918].

Aware of the vulnerability of their situation, nurses exerted great effort to guarantee a promotion. Those women who continued the nursing courses of Doctor Besim Ömer Pasha in the Conference Hall of *Dârü'l-fünûn* in the academic year of 1913-1914 and started working in the hospitals for the following three to four war years demanded that they be given a diploma from the Red Crescent Society and were permitted to enter into an examination for this purpose. Similarly, those nurses who worked and took nursing courses during World War I in the military or Red Crescent hospitals gained the right to enter this examination to get a diploma.¹³⁵⁰

As a survival strategy, women also used their connections such as neighbors and relatives for getting help with housework and children during the war years.¹³⁵¹ Poor women heavily depended on this solidarity in the face of the weak welfare services that the Ottoman state and semi-official institutions could provide. İrfan Orga wrote in his memoirs that his mother, together with her children, was cared for by women neighbors when she was ill. She also learned of some work possibilities from a widow friend and this way she was able to find a job, food and shelter in the worst days of the war.¹³⁵²

Women's bazaars founded during World War I and the Armistice period in the capital city and other provinces were another survival strategy of poor women, often of rural origins, to earn their living. Not only Turkish women but Greek as well sold the products such as bread, milk and butter they had brought from Anatolia to İstanbul in women's bazaar.¹³⁵³ In the Kayseri women's bazaar they sold their trousseaus and carpets that they had produced.¹³⁵⁴ As Muazzez İlmiye Çığ wrote

¹³⁵⁰ Sarı and Özeydin, "Dr. Besim Ömer Paşa ve Kadın Hastabakıcı Eğitiminin Nedenleri I," p. 17.

¹³⁵¹ For an example of this in the Republican Turkey, see Ferhunde Özbay, "Türkiye'de Kadın ve Çocuk Emeği," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 53 (Spring 1991), pp. 50-53.

¹³⁵² Orga, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, p. 152-156.

¹³⁵³ *Vakit* (11 Jan. 1918). Quoted in Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Amele Taburları*, pp. 123-124.

¹³⁵⁴ Kars, *Millî Mücadele'de Kayseri*, p. 113.

about her mother, there were also women who carried out trade, going to the villages to sell products and buying food in return in Bursa.¹³⁵⁵

Unemployment and negative working conditions forced women to compensate these with some illegal actions like begging, theft or prostitution. The police department reports in İstanbul between July 1919 and March 1921 show that theft was the most frequent crime in the city. From about 22,385 cases of crime reported in the capital city, the number of larceny cases was 7913, more than one-third of all crimes. The third most frequent crime was a category described as miscellaneous crimes, with 5634 cases. Among these crimes was very probably clandestine prostitution.¹³⁵⁶ Begging or working in return for food was also common both in the capital city and Anatolia before and after World War I.

According to Béla Horváth, in case they had nobody to seek support, divorced women begged or worked as servants in 1913.¹³⁵⁷ During the war, many widows were worse off and worked for others only for board. Prostitution was also very common among Muslim women. In İstanbul during the Armistice years, there were seven registered Muslim brothels in Üsküdar and four in Kadıköy. Among the 175 registered brothels, this number of 11 Muslim brothels was very low compared to the proportion of Muslims in the city population because many Muslim women probably did clandestine prostitution.¹³⁵⁸ Registered prostitutes in the city were 2171, among whom 1367 were non-Muslims and 804 were Muslims. Even the Director of the Sanitary Bureau stated that the number of prostitutes in the city was at least between 4000 and 4500.¹³⁵⁹ There were many unregistered prostitutes under the age

¹³⁵⁵ Yüceer, *Tanıkların Anlatlarıyla Bursa Tarihi*, p. 65.

¹³⁵⁶ Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, p. 354.

¹³⁵⁷ Béla Horváth, *Anadolu 1913*, trans. Tarık Demirkan (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), pp. 55-56.

¹³⁵⁸ Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, p. 356.

¹³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359.

of 18. In the venereal diseases hospital in Şişli, there were patients as young as fourteen and the age of girls who carried prostitution in the bars could be as low as thirteen. Most of them had started prostitution out of poverty or had been ruined and forced into it.¹³⁶⁰

Women's periodicals of the time put prostitution on the top of the list of the problems that threatened unemployed or poor women.¹³⁶¹ The lower-class origins of the prostitutes were marked in the literature and visual arts of the time, too. One caricature of Münif Fehim of the Armistice period İstanbul published in the humor journal *Akbaba* (Vulture) on 25 January 1923 shows Muslim prostitutes poorly dressed and miserable on the streets of the Muslim districts of the city, such as Beyazıt, bargaining with clients or waiting for them sitting on the pavements.¹³⁶² In his novel *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* (People of the Captive City) (1956), Kemal Tahir writes about an article in a newspaper that reported that 113 young female prostitutes had been arrested by the police on the street. Because they were too young, these girls had no certificates and about half of them were victims of venereal diseases.¹³⁶³

According to Zafer Toprak, the regulation against venereal diseases during World War I was not effective because it did not prohibit prostitution all together.¹³⁶⁴ The law, dated 18 October 1915, was first of all planned to prevent the spread of venereal diseases that plagued the country.¹³⁶⁵ However, it was impossible to prevent

¹³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

¹³⁶¹ Even male feminists like İsmail Hakkı [Baltacıoğlu] used the threat of prostitution as a discursive strategy for supporting Ottoman Muslim middle-class women's entry in work life. See Elif Mahir Metinsoy, "Osmanlı Kadını'ndan 'Türk Kadını'na: Türk Kadın Hareketinde Milliyetçi Bir Yöneliş Olarak *Türk Kadını* Dergisi, 1918-1919," in *21. Yüzyılın Eşiğinde Kadınlar, Değişim ve Güçlenme: Türk Kadınının Seçme ve Seçilme Hakkını Alışının 75. Yıldönümünde Uluslararası Multidisipliner Kadın Kongresi (13-16 Ekim 2009) Bildiri Kitabı*, Vol. 5, ed. Füsün Çoban Döşkaya (İzmir: Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, 2010), p. 33.

¹³⁶² *Akbaba*, No. 15 (25 January 1923), p. 3. Quoted in Turgut Çeviker, *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü*, Vol. 3, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Dönemi, 1918-1923* (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1991), p. 302.

¹³⁶³ Quoted in Giovanni Scognamillo, *Beyoğlu'nda Fuhuş* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar, 1994), p. 47.

¹³⁶⁴ Zafer Toprak, "Fuhuş: Osmanlı Dönemi," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 3 (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1993), p. 344.

¹³⁶⁵ Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *Eski İstanbul'da Muhabbet*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Cep Kitapları, 1991), pp. 57-58.

prostitution due to unemployment. Some women who were involved in clandestine prostitution established barracks in which more than one woman served men. These, so to say, secret brothels were built on those streets or quarters of İstanbul that were devastated by big fires, such as at the backside of the Tophane Military Post during the Armistice period.¹³⁶⁶ The government punished secret prostitution, but did not shut down the registered brothels. Despite widespread complaints from the populace, the government did not close the newly emerging Muslim brothels. On the contrary, these brothels multiplied. Six of them were opened in 1919 and a seventh on 28 May 1921. The General Directorate of Police reported on 11 July 1921 that they feared that the prostitutes could spread venereal diseases to various other quarters of the city with the closure of these brothels.¹³⁶⁷ In İzmir as well, Turkish women who resorted to prostitution for their very survival were directed to the Yeni Mahalle (New Quarter) district, a quarter which was opened newly during World War I only for controlling and containing prostitution. In time, Greek prostitutes as well started working in this district. Because the governor Rahmi Bey allowed prostitution in this quarter, many city inhabitants protested and called him *Büyük Patron* (Big Boss) in the meaning of “big pimp.”¹³⁶⁸ In a report published in the newspaper *Sabâh* (Morning) on 16 August 1919, the spread of syphilis was explained with the existence of many war widows who did clandestine prostitution in order to feed their children and themselves. It was argued that unless the clandestine prostitution was punished and prostitutes were given suitable jobs, the problem would continue.¹³⁶⁹

¹³⁶⁶ Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, p. 255.

¹³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

¹³⁶⁸ Morali, *Mütarekede İzmir*, p. 74.

¹³⁶⁹ *Sabâh*, No. 10687 (16 August 1919). Quoted in Temel, *İşgal Yıllarında İstanbul'un Sosyal Durumu*, pp. 260-261. This prohibition was done only after the foundation of Republican Turkey on 12 April 1930 but of the negative results of it such as hunting prostitutes from the street or violation of privacy by random home invasions a new more flexible regulation was prepared in 1933. Toprak, “İstanbul'da Fuhuş ve Zührevî Hastalıklar, 1914-1933,” p. 168.

As stated above, the most common crimes committed in İstanbul were theft and larceny. It is not possible to ascertain the number of women thieves among total number of criminals accused of thievery and larceny. However, some examples indicate the fact that women resorted to thievery not only individually, but also in organized manner. On 28 November 1917, a band of entirely women thieves was discovered in İstanbul. These women all were members of poor families who had to resort to such acts to survive.¹³⁷⁰

Those women who were employed in hard work, but underpaid were also prone to committing crimes like stealing goods or other things from the workplace. Due to the widespread pilferage among the women workers, they were kept under close surveillance in their workplaces. An archive document indicates that the secretary of the Navy Sewing Workshop was in reality a forewoman who was responsible for preventing the waste of any sewing material. She was also authorized to search the clothing of the seamstresses for any stolen tissue or equipment, a task that any male guard would not be allowed.¹³⁷¹

Cases of theft were also observed among the nurses working in the hospitals. For example, in September 1915, a female teacher of a public school who also worked as voluntary nurse in the summer in a Red Crescent hospital stole money out of the pockets of the wounded military officers and was dismissed from the hospital.¹³⁷² Hasan İzzettin Dinamo states as well that her mother, Şakire, had died at a state hospital in Samsun because of the suspicious injections by hospital nurses to steal the little purse of her mother hidden at her breast. Seven other women had died at the same day at that hospital and were buried in a mass grave. When the nurses

¹³⁷⁰ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 246.

¹³⁷¹ BOA, MV, 222/184, 11 Rebiulâhir 1340 [12 December 1921].

¹³⁷² TKA, 23/273, 13 Eylül 1331 [26 September 1915] and TKA 23/282, 30 Eylül 1331 [13 October 1915].

were investigated, they defended themselves by lying and saying that there had been a temporary plague epidemic in the hospital.¹³⁷³

In rural areas, theft and begging that stemmed from extreme poverty were widespread among destitute war orphans and widows. Bekir Eliçin, in his historical novel *Onlar Savaşırken* (While They are Making War) (1978), told the story of such destitute women peasants in a central Anatolian village of Genezin in the Avanos district of Kırşehir in those times. Since almost all of the men of the village had been conscripted, the village was full of poor orphans and widows, who were not able to find jobs to survive. Those who were able to find jobs, did not get paid much and lived from hand to mouth. Many women who were not able to find jobs had to sell their household goods or to resort to theft or begging. The great part of theft cases was related to these women's theft of crops, food, and bread.¹³⁷⁴

The Struggle of Women Who Lost Jobs in Occupied Regions

Those women civil servants who lost their jobs in the occupied districts of the Ottoman Empire especially had to fight to improve their deteriorated conditions.

Among these women were teachers,¹³⁷⁵ school administrators,¹³⁷⁶ and midwives.¹³⁷⁷

These occupations were among the first professions adopted by Turkish women.

Many women civil servants tried to take refuge in the capital city for both it was not

¹³⁷³ Asan, *Hasan İzzettin Dinamo*, p. 17.

¹³⁷⁴ Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 122-123; and Korkut Boratav, "Anadolu Köyünde Savaş ve Yıkım: Bekir Eliçin'in Romanının Öğrettikleri ve Düşündürdükleri," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 15-16 (Autumn-Winter, 1982), p. 64.

¹³⁷⁵ See for example teachers Bedia, Fazilet and Hatice Sabri who had to leave their position in Edirne Women Teachers' Training College. BOA, DH.UMVM, 42/107, 6 Zilhicce 1338 [21 August 1920]. See also the example of teacher Meryem Resmiye who had to leave the same school in similar dates. BOA, DH.UMVM, 42/139, 24 Zilhicce 1338 [8 September 1920].

¹³⁷⁶ See for example, deputy principal Hatice Subhiye who had to leave her position in Edirne Women Teachers' Training College. BOA, DH.UMVM, 42/138, 24 Zilhicce 1338 [8 September 1920].

¹³⁷⁷ See for example, midwife Selviye who had to leave her job in Demirköy district in Edirne-Kırkkilise. BOA, DH.UMVM, 43/16, 25 Zilhicce 1338 [9 September 1920].

under occupation and it was much easier to demand their accrued taxes and travel expenses. Although some women simply demanded payment of their travel expenses to escape from occupied districts,¹³⁷⁸ others asked for their accrued salaries that they could not receive due to the occupation,¹³⁷⁹ because as unemployed women their chances to find new posts with an equal amount of salary was low in war.¹³⁸⁰ The schoolmistress of the Aleppo Women Teachers' Training College (*Halep Dârül'muallimâti*), Zehra Arife, who was paid a monthly salary of 1600 piasters, demanded her accrued salary from İstanbul since her working district, Halep, had been occupied by the enemy.¹³⁸¹ Midwife Behiye Meryem who fled to İstanbul after the occupation of Akka, also insisted that her accrued salaries be paid.¹³⁸² However, many women like them could not go to the capital city for seeking help and had difficulty collecting their salaries. Fatıma Zehra, the governess of the kindergarten of the Aleppo Women Teacher's Training College, had much more trouble getting her money because she arrived in Eskişehir, where she was told that she could receive the money only from İstanbul.¹³⁸³

Some of these women struggled to find new jobs in other places under Ottoman rule. Hüsniye, who had to leave Trabzon as a result of the Russian

¹³⁷⁸ See for example, the petition of the teacher Ayşe who had to leave her position in the Tekirdağ Girls' Craft School (*Tekirdağ İnâs Marifet Mektebi*). BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/51, 2 Safer 1339 [16 October 1920].

¹³⁷⁹ See for example, the petition of the teacher Fazıla İbrahim who had to leave together with many other civil servants her position in Edirne Women Teachers' Training College. She demands her salary of the month July in addition. BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/107, 3 Rebiülevvel 1341 [24 Oct. 1922].

¹³⁸⁰ See for example, Sacide, head teacher of Karamürsel School for Girls, and Muazzez who worked in the same school as second teacher, BOA, DH.UMVM, 165/91, 1 Cemâziyelevvel 1340 [31 Dec. 1921]; Hatice Şehnur, head teacher of Gönen Nursery School, BOA, DH.UMVM, 163/99, 3 Zilhicce 1338 [18 Aug. 1920]; Seniha, teacher of Adapazarı Sabiha Hanım Model School for Girls (*Adapazarı Sabiha Hanım Kızlar Nümune Mektebi*), BOA, DH.UMVM, 166/41, 5 Şaban 1340 [3 April 1922]; Zehra Melahat, teacher of Orhangazi School for Girls, BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/96, 6 Şaban 1340 [4 April 1922]; Ayşe, teacher of Tekfurdağ-ı Kebir Primary School for Girls, BOA, DH.UMVM, 163/108, 30 Zilhicce 1338 [14 Sept. 1920]; and Melek, guardian of Orhangazi Women's Prison, BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 133/16, 14 Şevvâl 1339 [21 June 1921]. There are many other demands for accrued salaries not mentioned in here but need further study in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives.

¹³⁸¹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 156/53, 2 Safer 1337 [7 November 1918].

¹³⁸² See BOA, DH.UMVM, 163/6, 4 Receb 1338 [24 March 1920]; and BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/80, 1 Safer 1340 [4 October 1921].

¹³⁸³ BOA, DH.UMVM, 40/34, 30 Zilkâde 1337 [27 August 1919].

occupation in 1916, came as a refugee to Kastamonu with many other civil servants, and tried to find a new position. Finally, she found a job as a deputy principal.¹³⁸⁴

However, some women did not have the chance to find a new post. The schoolmistress of the Jerusalem Girls' Orphanage (*Kudüs-i Şerîf İnâs Dârü'l-eytâmî*) Leyla, who after the retreat of Palestine was appointed to the same position in the Tarsus Girls' Orphanage, had to resign and accept unemployment compensation (*ma'zûliyet maâşî*) because she could not travel from Palestine to Tarsus in wartime conditions.¹³⁸⁵

Those women who had not yet attained the pension right or unemployment compensation received only premiums after they had lost their jobs. The Finance Ministry calculated these premiums as the three-fold of their salaries. Those women liberated from war captivity were entitled to take this premium in case they demanded it immediately within four months after the loss of their jobs. The midwife of the Beirut Maternity Hospital (*Beyrut Vilâdethânesi*) called Havva could only receive this premium, three times her monthly salary of 1000 piasters, when she came to the capital city.¹³⁸⁶

Women with the lowest income such as cleaners in the government buildings, schools and hospitals were in the worst financial position after the occupation of their work districts. Victims of both poverty and misconduct by the officials who abused these women's illiteracy, they could receive even less than what they were entitled. Nimeti, a cleaner of the Kumle-i Sâğir School for Girls (*Kumle-i Sâğir İnâs Mektebi*) in Gemlik, complained that unlike the teachers of her school she could not obtain a certificate that would allow her to collect her accrued salaries. The officials thought that her certificate acquired from the former bookkeeper of the Gemlik Private

¹³⁸⁴ BOA, DH.UMVM, 142/66, 24 Muharrem 1335 [20 November 1916].

¹³⁸⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 62/46, 26 Şevvâl 1340 [22 June 1922].

¹³⁸⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM, 40/46, 27 Zilhicce 1337 [23 September 1919].

Accountancy was not real and so she had to wait longer to receive her money. Therefore, she had had to first find the bookkeeper who had created her certificate and had him visit the officials who had not believed her and persuade them by writing that her certificate was original.¹³⁸⁷ Azize, former cleaner of the Yalova School for Girls (*Yalova İñâs Mektebi*) who was laid up sick in the house of her daughter in a very poor district of İstanbul, wrote in her petition that although she had demanded her accrued salaries from June 1920 onwards, she had not been able to receive it by the time she wrote that petition on 8 February 1922, for more than a year and a half.¹³⁸⁸ Fitnat and Havva, former cleaners of the Tekfurdağı Nursery School (*Tekfurdağı Ana Mektebi*), received no salaries, from the occupation of the Edirne province onwards, and because they had no financial support to survive, the authorities accepted them as simple refugees and only provided them with board.¹³⁸⁹ There were also soldiers' wives among these cleaners who wanted to receive again the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner they had received before they started working. Hatice, who worked in the Emir Ali district government office as a cleaning lady before the occupation of the district, asked for this pension which she had been given by the Gemlik Recruiting Office after the district she worked had been occupied and she started living temporarily and very probably in great misery at the house of a grocer called Mustafa in Kadıköy.¹³⁹⁰

Women did not even have the money to escape from occupied districts and therefore demanded travel allowances (*harcırâh*) from the state. In the meantime, they had problems of housing and food due to financial burdens and lived by receiving temporary support from acquaintances if they had any. Teacher of the

¹³⁸⁷ BOA, DH.UMVM, 10/61, 20 Rebiülahîr 1340 [21 December 1921].

¹³⁸⁸ BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/91, 10 Cemâziyelâhîr 1340 [8 February 1922].

¹³⁸⁹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 42/110, 10 Zilhicce 1338 [25 August 1920].

¹³⁹⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3/3, 1/24, 5 Cemâziyelevvel 1340 [4 January 1922].

Gallipoli Girls' Primary School (*Gelibolu İnâs İbtidâi Mektebi*) Hafize Hacer, after coming from Gelibolu to İstanbul with her mother, had to stay in Kasımpaşa in the house of an acquaintance called Receb as guests in January 1921.¹³⁹¹

Those women who had nobody to ask help from other than the state were in a far worse situation. In addition to demanding their travel allowances, many women civil servants requested for help in case that they did not have any other support from their social network. The former headmistress of the Keşan Nursery School (*Keşan Ana Mektebi*) Fatma Melahat, demanded that in addition to her travel allowance she was given money for her basic needs because she was in a financial bottleneck which she called a “catastrophic vortex” (*câriyelerini bu girdâb-ı felaketden kurtarmanız*).¹³⁹²

In certain cases women could not even take their accrued salaries themselves from İstanbul, because it was impossible to travel from one province to another in wartime conditions. Even if they took the risk of traveling in danger they were not allowed to have travel certificates. In such cases women sought substitutes. Former teacher of the Orhangazi School for Girls (*Orhangazi İnâs Mektebi*), Hayriye, and the cleaner of the school, Fatma, who had come to Bursa after the Greek occupation, lived in misery for six months because the accountancy of this city refused to pay their salaries. Since they could not obtain the necessary certificate to travel under Greek occupation, they were not able to go to İstanbul either. As a last resort they requested that the Ministry of Internal Affairs that a proxy in İstanbul took the money on their behalf.¹³⁹³

Although the government ordered women civil servants to return to their working place under siege or under the risk of occupation, some women who feared

¹³⁹¹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 41/68, 28 Rebiülâhır 1339 [9 January 1921].

¹³⁹² BOA, DH.UMVM, 164/69, 23 Şaban 1339 [2 May 1921].

¹³⁹³ BOA, DH.UMVM, 167/4, 5 Muharrem 1341 [28 August 1922].

captivity and the risk of traveling in wartime conditions refused and demanded their salaries from İstanbul. The schoolmistress of the Balıkesir Women Teachers' Training College, Makbule, and the deputy principal of the same school, Ayşe Sıdika, received no money because the Ministry of Education decided that it was possible in that day's conditions that they returned to their working district.¹³⁹⁴

Pursuing Rights

Even those women whose districts were not occupied had difficulty in receiving their salaries and they tried to take money from the state by writing petitions. Many of them were medical personnel who took their wages from the municipalities they worked. Nuriye, nurse of the Bolu municipality who wanted to take her monthly wages accumulated during the period of her trial from which she acquitted, had difficulty in receiving the money. The municipality resisted paying her accrued wages until January 1919.¹³⁹⁵ Midwife Havva in Trabzon province also petitioned Trabzon governorship because she could not receive her monthly salary of 800 piasters from March 1919 to November 1919.¹³⁹⁶ Another midwife who could not take her salary was Zekiye who worked for the Yalova municipality. On 4 August 1921 she wrote to the government that because she could not receive her 1060 piasters salary for the last nine months, she was entitled to an aid of 300 piasters monthly from the İzmit governorship. Yet, she could not take even this money.¹³⁹⁷

Educated women were to fight in a more organized way against their dismissals at the end of World War I. About 40 women officials in the Department of

¹³⁹⁴ BOA, DH.UMVM, 42/114, 18 Zilhicce 1338 [2 September 1920].

¹³⁹⁵ BOA, DH.UMVM., 80/33, 27 Cemâziyelâhir 1337 [30 March 1919].

¹³⁹⁶ BOA, DH.UMVM., 41/14, 15 Şa'bân 1338 [4 May 1920].

¹³⁹⁷ BOA, DH.UMVM., 164/102, 29 Zilka'de 1339 [4 August 1921].

Post Offices and some of the women officials in the Ministry of Finance, who were dismissed from their institutions with the Armistice, were among this group. There were articles in the press of the time against their dismissals, which claimed that these women had families to look after just like other male breadwinners.¹³⁹⁸ Nimet Günaydın, who worked in the Ministry of Finance as an official during World War I, wrote that despite the dismissals, some of her women colleagues insisted on continuing working after the Armistice.¹³⁹⁹ Refik Halit [Karay], a prominent writer and bureaucrat, working as the director of post offices of the time, also stated in his memoirs that some of these women educated themselves under his guidance as telegraph operators for continuing working in new posts.¹⁴⁰⁰ An official letter sent from the Department of Post Offices to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 30 November 1919 shows that the institution did not dismiss all women, since they were hard working and took less money than men. Some women became permanent officials within the following 3 to 4 months as telegraph operators.¹⁴⁰¹

Some educated women also individually fought for their retirement rights. Seher, former teacher in the Lapseki Girl's Junior High School (*Lapseki İnâs Rüştiyye Mektebi*), requested that her work years were calculated from the time that she started working as a teacher at the age of 17 rather than the legal calculation which started at the age of 20. Because her two years of service were not added, she was not legally accepted as a retiree. She wanted that teachers like herself would be protected by the amendment of the related article in the Retirement and Dismissal Law (*Tekâüd ve Ma'zûliyet Kanûnu*). On 31 October 1915, her request was found

¹³⁹⁸ See for example, Aliye Esad, "Kadınlığın Âtisi," *Âti*, No. 391 (8 Şubat 1335 [8 February 1919]), p. 4; and "Maişet Dertleri: Memuriyetlerinden Çıkarılan Hanımlar," *Tasvîr-i Efkâr*, No. 2838 (12 Eylül 1335 [12 September 1919]), p. 1.

¹³⁹⁹ Günaydın, "İlk Kadın Memurlar," p. 67.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁰¹ BOA, DH.İ.U.M., 16-2/1-20, 15 Rebûlevvel 1338 [8 December 1919].

legitimate by the Education Council in the Ottoman parliament.¹⁴⁰² Nevertheless, on 24 December 1916, the Fiscal Equilibrium Council rejected it.¹⁴⁰³



Fig. 23 This caricature criticizes the unpaid salaries of teachers, some of whom were women. Women teachers complain to *Karagöz* about their financial problems and not finding the Director of Education to claim their rights. *Karagöz* answers that he and his officers deserved a whacking for this situation.

Source: *Karagöz*, No. 1246 (14 Şubat 1336 [14 February 1922]), p. 1.

Women’s resistance to the strict control of their chastity or clothes in workplaces is also not recorded in archival documents. Nevertheless, the high rate of clandestine prostitution shows that women resisted in covert ways. Among the educated women and girls, some tried to curb the control. The students of the Women Teachers’

¹⁴⁰² “Memurin-i Mülkiye Mazuniyet ve Tekaut Maaşlarına Dair Kanunların İkinci Maddelerine Zeyl Fıkra-i Kanuniyye,” *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 68-69.

¹⁴⁰³ “Muallimlerin Hakk-ı Tekaut ve Mazulliyetlerinin Mebdei Hakkında Memurin-i Mülkiye Mâzuliyyet ve Tekaut Kanunlarının İkinci Maddelerinin Tezyil Edilecek Fıkarata Dair Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 170.

Training College in Bursa resisted the traditional forms of headgear that they were obliged to wear at school in 1918. Against the head-kerchief (*yemeni*) proposed by the new director of their school, Hamdi Bey, the girl students found their own headgear more modern. Two students Zehra [Budunç] and İffet were exiled by the school administration and the remaining students were punished for a week.¹⁴⁰⁴

In brief, women constituted the least organized group of working people in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. They did not fight for the improvement of their work conditions in open ways in general. In order to compensate for unemployment or low wages, poor women frequently resorted to prostitution, begging, or theft. In the face of harsh working conditions, they left work without informing their employers or directors. Absenteeism was widespread among low-income working women. On the other hand, although not always successful, educated women had more means to seek better conditions of work by petitioning for a raise or a retirement right and by getting diplomas. Women civil servants, who had lost their jobs because of occupation, also struggled to receive their accrued salaries or other aid. Women who could not fight the exploitation or arduous working conditions chose to resign on various pretexts or got married for their very survival.

Concluding Remarks

As the findings of this study show, emancipation of women with work life during the war years seem to be only partially true. It is true that some educated and middle-class women found for the first time the possibility to work outside their homes in unconventional jobs. Charity work for the war mobilization and the protection of war

¹⁴⁰⁴ Kaplanoğlu, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Bursa*, p. 223.

widows and orphans also provided women with a chance to be respected by the society to some extent and to acquire an experience which would be channeled to searching for other civil rights after the foundation of the Republican Turkey. However, their gains were also limited. Although some educated women gained access to public and associational life, they were forced to return home after the Armistice.

The great majority, ordinary women, were not able to find employment easily outside home. The number and fields of jobs suitable for them were limited. The social pressure and patriarchal restrictions over women continued in this period. Most of the poor war widows remained unemployed and had to commit crime in order to survive. During the war years, they continued to suffer from strict moral control and patriarchal principles and prejudices in finding a job or in the work place. In addition, they suffered from hard and bad working conditions, long working hours, and bad treatment like sexual harassment and violation of rights.

However, as a response to the unemployment, low wages, negative work conditions or loss of jobs due to the occupation, women sought new jobs and demanded raise, financial support, accrued salaries or retirement rights. Sometimes, they had to resort to theft, begging or prostitution for their very survival. Some of them mostly educated and experienced women could bargain effectively for a promotion and wage raise. In general, because of the weak social security in work life, many women were left with little option other than getting married.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WOMEN'S RESISTANCE TO WAR MOBILIZATION

The Kemalist elite and many scholars interpreted women's sacrifices and support to the war mobilization during World War I and especially the National Struggle as an important contribution which legitimized women's citizenship rights such as the right to vote. Historians, whether feminist or not, equally emphasize this role of women with similar arguments. Among the most well-known contributions of Ottoman women were the associations they founded for supporting the army,¹⁴⁰⁵ the financial aid of the elite women for supporting the war economy,¹⁴⁰⁶ the demonstrations and underground activities in which women participated to support the National Struggle,¹⁴⁰⁷ women's patriotism by sending their sons and husbands to the front,¹⁴⁰⁸ or fighting against the enemy as warriors,¹⁴⁰⁹ and Anatolian peasant women's various forms of aid to Ottoman soldiers¹⁴¹⁰ and their sacrifices by carrying ammunition across long distances with their ox-carts or on their backs.¹⁴¹¹ Indeed, some women acted in this way and it is true that these actions enhanced the importance of the social and political roles of Turkish women. Anatolian peasant

¹⁴⁰⁵ Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 72-74; and Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, *Millî Mücadele'de Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1986).

¹⁴⁰⁶ Georgeon, "Harp Maliyesi ve Milli İktisat: 1918 Osmanlı İç İstikrazı," p. 165.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation*, pp. 118-121; Yıldız, *Kadının Adı Anadolu*, pp. 21-50; and Sarıhan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Kadınları*, pp. 76-109.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Mothers motivate their sons to fight against the enemy using their authority. See Sönmez, *Kızıl Toprak Ak Yemeni*, pp. 72-75; and Selman Soydemir and Ömer Faruk Yılmaz, eds., *Hâtrâ ve Fotoğraflarla Büyük Vatan Müdâfaası Çanakkale Cephesi* (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Tansel, *İstiklâl Harbi'nde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız*, pp. 25-55; *Millî Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız*, pp. 30-51, 121-129; Cahit Çaka, *Harp ve Kadın* (Ankara: [Askeri Fabrika] Basımevi, 1948), p. 41; Mehmet Arif, *Anadolu İnkılâbı: Millî Mücadele Anıları (1919-1923)* (İstanbul: Arba, 1987), p. 23; Alagöz, *Millî Mücadele'de Kınalı Eller*, pp. 75-82; Mısıroğlu, *Kuva-yı Milliye'nin Kadın Kahramanları*, pp. 85-152; Necmeddin Şahiner, *Tarihi Değiştiren Kadınlar* (Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2008); and Boray, *Kuvvayı Milliye ve Ölümsüz Kadın Kahramanlar*, pp. 91-149.

¹⁴¹⁰ Şevket Soğucalı, *İstiklâl Harbinde Olaylar* (Ankara: Yeni Cezaevi Matbaası, 1947), p. 132.

¹⁴¹¹ Murat Köylü, *Kurtuluşun Gölgedeki Kahramanları* (Ankara: Fark Yayınları, 2007), pp. 145-150; and Tansel, *İstiklâl Harbi'nde Mücâhit Kadınlarımız*, pp. 55-76.

women became symbols of the war mobilization in arts (Fig. 24) and literature.¹⁴¹²

However, it is important to remember that women's resistance and hesitant approach to the war mobilization had an equal political importance in their experience.¹⁴¹³ The resistance of especially the lower-class women to the war economy and mobilization shaped the everyday politics concerning them.

During World War I, in the eye of the Ottoman authorities, ordinary women had an important place in war mobilization for various reasons. First, they constituted the wives and mothers of the largest part of the conscripted soldiers. The government took their beloved ones and breadwinners away. Therefore, these women's belief in and support of the state's war effort was of great importance for the war mobilization and especially the mass conscription of even young boys. Second, the state strived to control the sexual lives of these women whose male relatives had taken to arms. Many low-income and poor women had to marry someone else for their very survival when their husbands had been drafted to the army. More Muslim women than ever had to resort to prostitution to feed themselves or their poor families. In the face of the increasing dissolution of families, prostitution and venereal diseases in the absence of men at the home front led to the increasing desertion of soldiers in order to protect their families. Therefore, the government undertook the conscripted men's role of patriarchal control of women by intervening in the women's public and private lives at home front. Third, these women had an important economic importance for the Ottoman state's war effort because most of them lived in the rural areas and together with the children and elderly men they were the main agricultural labor force that produced basic cereal

¹⁴¹² See for example, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, "Kara Fatma," in *Akıncı Türküleri* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, [1940]), pp. 58-62.

¹⁴¹³ For a critique of accepting women's wartime contributions as proof of women's competency to act as full citizens, see Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 7.

crops. In addition, these women began to constitute the largest group of taxpayers in wartime conditions. The government wanted them to surrender not only their husbands, boys, father or brothers, but also their limited means of subsistence.

The state's increasing social and economic control over women and war mobilization created some, albeit limited, opportunities for these women. Some women demanded pensions and social assistances designed for them in the absence of their male breadwinners. The war conditions and mobilization led some women to participate in public and associational life more than ever. However, the state's expectations from ordinary women for the war mobilization mostly created a huge burden which caused their further impoverishment. Rather than the beneficiaries, lower-class women became the main victims of the wartime mobilization. However, they did not remain passive or silent, but fought against the adverse effects of the burdensome obligations of the war mobilization. Even when they failed to influence the bureaucracy and the political elite directly, and therefore change their disadvantageous conditions in legal ways, they did not hesitate to use the "weapons of the weak." Their struggle against the unfavorable decisions and acts of the government had an impact in the introduction of new rules and regulations for the relief of these women's grievances.

This chapter deals with the discontent of low-income and poor Ottoman-Turkish women with the war mobilization and their actions to resist the negative impact of wartime mobilization measures. It starts with how women tried to avoid the agricultural duties such as forced labor obligations and heavy wartime taxes. This is followed by an examination of women's role in resisting the conscription of soldiers and their aid in desertions and deserters. Finally, this chapter shows women's acts to evade the laws and regulations which tried to control their sexual

lives, divorce or marriage, which had important economic consequences for them in the war years.



Fig. 24 The famous painting of a Turkish painter, Halil Dikmen, which depicts Anatolian women transporting ammunition during the Turkish Independence War.

Source: *Kadınlar, Resimler, Öyküler: Modernleşme Sürecindeki Türk Resminde “Kadın” İmgesinin Dönüşümü / Women, Paintings, Stories: Transformation of the Image of “Woman” in Turkish Painting in the Modernization Era* (İstanbul: Pera Museum Publication, 2006), p. 51.

Note: Halil Dikmen, *Kurtuluş Savaşı* (The Turkish Independence War), 1933, oil on canvas, 137x243 cm, Ankara State Museum of Painting and Sculpture Collection.

Resistance to the Agricultural Service Obligation and Wartime Taxes

Throughout the long mobilization years of World War I and the National Struggle most of the agricultural work was done by women, children and old people in the countryside. In this period the conscription of men who constituted the main agricultural work force was the most important factor which dropped the production rates radically. Despite the low levels of agricultural production, the state had to increase wartime taxes for feeding the army and civilians. In addition to the tithe tax, one eighth of the crops and paid in kind, peasants were also obliged to pay the army provisioning tax. Furthermore, the Ottoman parliament enacted the Agricultural

Obligation Law (*Mükellefiyyet-i Zirâiyye Kanûnu*), which forced all civilian peasants, most of them peasant women, to do additional agricultural work. To make the things worse, as a military tax in World War I or as a national tax in National Struggle, most of the peasants had to give their animals and vehicles for the transportation of the ammunitions of the army. All of these factors increased the burden on peasant women, who constituted the majority of Ottoman women in those years. Although they were the victims of these laws and additional taxes for war mobilization, they often disobeyed these mobilization measures on the sly and sometimes openly and through formal ways such as petitioning or suing. Some of them petitioned or sent collective telegrams to the authorities to complain about the taxes and other obligations imposed on them. Most of their resistance to war mobilization, however, was in more covert and illegal ways.

Decline in Agricultural Production, and the Agricultural Service Law

During World War I the acute shortage of male labor force in agricultural work due to conscription caused severe problems, particularly in some provinces. Because the heavy agricultural work left to women was beyond their ability, the state searched for alternative methods for increasing the agricultural production, like sending soldiers or civil servants to those provinces in need of agricultural workers. For instance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to the Ministry of War on 18 October 1915 that in Adana province, because men between the ages of 18 and 45 had been conscripted there was nobody left to work in the harvest. In this official letter it was requested that six workers' battalions who had already worked in road construction on the

Güllük, Pozantı and Mamure Raco roads be employed in agriculture.¹⁴¹⁴ A telegram sent from Niğde to the government on 30 July 1916 also demanded that the government temporarily close the government offices for about two months from 2 September to 30 October 1916 in order to send the civil servants to villages to sow seed and fallow the fields, because no men were left for agricultural work in their district.¹⁴¹⁵ Such attempts to ease the agriculture continued in the later years as well. As late as the National Struggle, in the summer of 1922, soldiers were used to help with the harvest.¹⁴¹⁶

Even before the introduction of the Agricultural Obligation Law, the governors of some provinces had attempted to force peasants to do additional agricultural work. The central government had had to cancel some of these practices of local governments. For instance, the government had canceled one order of the Konya governor on this purpose. Konya governor had forced people to work in up to two *dönüms* (a *dönüm* is 940 m²) of soldiers' and martyrs' families' fields or made them pay for others to do it on behalf of them. Those who did not obey this order due to various reasons were obliged to pay 35 piasters. On 4 May 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to the Konya governorship that this compulsory work practice was against the law and therefore the 35 piasters taken from people as punishment had to be paid back.¹⁴¹⁷

Aware of these problems, the government used different strategies to increase production levels. Because it was impossible to find enough men, the government wanted to modernize agriculture and to substitute machinery for the human work force. In order to facilitate the harvest of 1916, the parliament enacted a law which

¹⁴¹⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 59-1/1-62, 9 Zilhicce 1333 [18 October 1915].

¹⁴¹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 18/16, 5 Şevvâl 1334 [5 August 1916].

¹⁴¹⁶ See for example, Erdoğan Sorguç, ed., *İstiklâl Harbi Hâtıratı Kaybolan Filistin: Yd. P. Tğm. İbrahim Sorguç'un Anıları*, 2nd ed. (İzmir: E. Sorguç, 1996), p. 140.

¹⁴¹⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 59-3/1-45, 1 Receb 1333 [15 May 1915].

added 4,800,000 piasters to the yearly budget of the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture to buy agricultural machinery.¹⁴¹⁸

However, Ottoman agriculture, particularly in Anatolia, was still dependent on human power and it was impossible to compensate the huge labor shortage with limited numbers of imported machinery. Therefore, along with the mechanization, the Agricultural Obligation Bylaw, which was enacted on 18 September 1916,¹⁴¹⁹ passed as a law from the parliament about five months later, on 2 April 1917. According to this law non-conscripted men and women from the age of 14 onwards, whose regular occupation was agriculture, could be requisitioned by the government and be obliged to work in agriculture for a period which would be decided by the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture. Non-conscripted men in urban areas also could be forced to do agriculture in the farms of their districts. Those who did not obey this law were to be fined from 25 to 100 piasters, and those who continued to do so were to be jailed from 24 hours to one week.¹⁴²⁰

Although the Agricultural Obligation Law was thought primarily to increase agriculture in the land of the poor soldier's families without a breadwinner, the use of physical force against those who were unwilling to take part in agricultural work turned it into a forced labor system. As a member of the Council of Forest, Mine and

¹⁴¹⁸ "1332 Senesi Mahsulâtının Hasat ve Harman Ameliyatının İcrasını Te'minen Sene-i Merkume Ticaret ve Ziraat Nezareti Bütçesine 4.800.000 Kuruşun İlâvesi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâiyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 340-341.

¹⁴¹⁹ "Mükellefiyyet-i Ziraiyye Kanun-ı Muvakkatı," 20 Zilka'de 1334 / 5 Eylül 1332 [18 September 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 1297-1298.

¹⁴²⁰ "Mükellefiyyet-i Ziraiyye Kanunu," 2 Nisan 1333 / 10 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [2 April 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 596-597. Unlike what has been stated in this law Ahmed Emin writes that these fines were changing between 20 and 500 piaster in the first offense, and imprisonment from one week to three months if the offense was repeated. Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 130.

Agriculture of the Ottoman Parliament Halit Bey was aware of this fact and demanded that this law be rescinded on 7 February 1917.¹⁴²¹

Indeed, in the absence of male peasants, especially peasant women, whom the government aimed to protect by this law, according to the preamble of the law, would be the main victims of forced labor practice related to this law in the following years. As Feroz Ahmad also writes briefly and incisively, albeit without giving details, unlike some urban middle-class or elite Turkish women in the capital city, who acquired new rights to some extent, peasant women were forced to assume “some of the heaviest tasks on the home front.” With the advent of World War I, the Unionist government almost legalized forced labor for maintaining agricultural production. Rather than being “emancipated” with the war, women were affected adversely by this forced labor practice, and had to work more than ever in agricultural work.¹⁴²²

Indeed, peasant women did most of the agricultural work in the war years. In addition, during World War I, Women Workers’ Battalions were organized attached to the 4th Army.¹⁴²³ These women workers’ battalions were sent to the Çukurova district to do agriculture under the guidance of Cemal Pasha.¹⁴²⁴ Women’s labor became quite valuable for local and central authorities. The correspondence between local governors and the government reveal the importance of women’s labor in agricultural production as well. In order to facilitate the harvest of olives from olive trees in the Edremit region, the local governor wrote to the government on 4 November 1914 that there were not enough number of men to do this task in their district due to conscriptions and therefore women should not be sent elsewhere in

¹⁴²¹ “Mükellefiyyet-i Ziraiyye Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 534.

¹⁴²² Ahmad, *War and Society under the Young Turks*, pp. 278-279.

¹⁴²³ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 85.

¹⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Anatolia.¹⁴²⁵ A telegram was sent from Bodrum district to the government on 26 July 1917 on behalf of the general public in Bodrum also reveals that because men were fighting on the battlefield, those who worked in agriculture were only women and children.¹⁴²⁶

As Şevket Pamuk notes, the attempts of the state to increase agricultural production with the Agricultural Obligations Law or by organizing battalions of women for agriculture by the army had a rather limited effect in reality.¹⁴²⁷ Agricultural production levels dropped, wheat production fell 30 percent by 1916, while the decline of exportable cash crops was faster. The decline of wheat production was close to 40 percent and that of tobacco, raisins, hazelnuts, olive oil, raw silk and cotton was more than 50 percent in 1918 compared to the 1913-1914 statistics. Both the land under cultivation and the yields declined from the first year of the war onwards.¹⁴²⁸

According to Vedat Eldem, if the wheat production in 1913-1914 is accepted as 100, it decreased to 75 in 1916, 65 in 1917 and 62 in 1918.¹⁴²⁹ The area of land on which cereals were cultivated, which was 66 million *dönüms* before the war decreased until the Armistice and National Struggle years to 35 million *dönüms*. This was an important factor which caused hunger not only in the capital city but throughout the country. 1920, 1921 and 1922 were the worst years in terms of agricultural production. As a result, during the National Struggle, too, a law was

¹⁴²⁵ BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb, 2/56, 17 Zilhicce 1332 [6 November 1914].

¹⁴²⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 36/40, 8 Şevvâl 1335 [28 July 1917].

¹⁴²⁷ Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 122.

¹⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120. For the production rates and total production areas before the war, see also, Tevfik Güran, ed., *Osmanlı Dönemi Tarım İstatistikleri 1909, 1913 ve 1914 / Agricultural Statistics of Turkey during the Ottoman Period* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997).

¹⁴²⁹ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 379.

passed from the Great National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*) on 9 October 1921 for the revival and regulation of obligatory agricultural service.¹⁴³⁰

An important explanation of the wartime drop in production rates was women's inexperience or weakness in doing agricultural work. According to Ahmed Emin, in some districts peasant women were not accustomed to the agricultural work and despite the urgent need for their work force, they could not "break with social prejudices."¹⁴³¹ However, there were also very important economic factors which played a particular role in this drop of production. The requisition of agricultural means such as animals or vehicles by the army as military tax was one of these. On 11 November 1916, the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs that local people could not do agriculture, because they did not have draft animals and agricultural tools and migrants could not work in agriculture because they did not have land.¹⁴³²

Resistance to Heavy Wartime Taxes

Perhaps one of the heaviest burdens of the war that weighed on peasant women was the wartime taxes. During the long war years, which also included the National Struggle period, the agricultural taxes remained at least double of what had been collected before.¹⁴³³ The war taxes and requisitions undoubtedly can be traced back to the former centuries of the Ottoman Empire, because it had been in continuous warfare. However, the legal bases of the taxes for war mobilization applied and increased during World War I, can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, a

¹⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

¹⁴³¹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 108.

¹⁴³² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/107, 18 Muharrem 1335 [14 November 1916].

¹⁴³³ Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, p. 202.

period marked by the successive and more destructive wars. One of them, the Law for Providing Military Vehicles (*Tedârik-i Vesâit-i Nakliye-i Askeriye Kanûnnâmesi*), was enacted on 9 September 1889. This law regulated a tax levied on transportation means that people had to give to the army for military purposes. A more comprehensive law was introduced with the advent of the Balkan Wars for war mobilization. On 30 January 1913, the Military Tax Law (*Tekâlif-i Harbiye Kanûnu*), which was a provisional law that regulated the taxes for providing the army with provisions, clothing and other goods, was put into effect. During World War I, the government modified this law to some extent and passed a more detailed version from the parliament on 27 July 1914 with the same name. During the National Struggle as well, on 7-8 August 1921, Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] as the leader of the national resistance forces announced ten orders for war mobilization under the name of the National Taxes (*Tekâlif-i Milliye*).¹⁴³⁴

During World War I, in the first months of the war mobilization, the Military Tax Commissions (*Tekâlif-i Harbiye Komisyonları*) collected 25 percent of food items such as sheep, potatoes, dry beans, chickpeas, onions and butter as well as wheat for provisioning the army.¹⁴³⁵ According to Ahmet Cevdet Çamurdan, in the last years of World War I, the need to feed the army was so severe that the government added a 25 percent new agricultural tax to the 12.5 percent tithe tax, under the name of the Army Provisioning Tax (*Ordu İâşe Hissesi*). With this new tax, the rate of agricultural taxes increased the agricultural taxes to 37.5 percent of the total production, which was so high that nobody was able to pay it all without going hungry.¹⁴³⁶

¹⁴³⁴ Hikmet Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet, 2001), pp. 24-26.

¹⁴³⁵ Toprak, *Türkiye'de 'Millî İktisat'*, p. 269.

¹⁴³⁶ Ahmet Cevdet Çamurdan, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Doğu Kilikya Olayları* (Adana: A. C. Çamurdan, 1975), p. 84.

These high wartime taxes resulted in tax avoidance. As Zafer Toprak states, due to the wartime uncertainties, peasants preferred to hide their yield.¹⁴³⁷ Şevket Pamuk writes that during World War I people covertly resisted the wartime demands of the state at the local level, using the “weapons of the weak” described by James Scott like foot dragging, concealment, and evasion. Therefore, the amount of cereals which reached urban centers declined despite the government measures.¹⁴³⁸ Peasants were very effective in this resistance to high taxes. Both the small and large producers of cereals hid their crops, bribed government officials and minimized the amount they surrendered to the government using all the methods, including smuggling the harvest from the field.¹⁴³⁹ According to Şevket Pamuk, during the war, agricultural producers could avoid taxes and other demands and they kept a large part of the food for themselves.¹⁴⁴⁰ In parallel to these arguments, according to Çamurdan, harvest owners frequently bribed the tax collectors, and they thereby achieved to give no more than three to five percent of their crops as tax.¹⁴⁴¹

The Ottoman state was well aware of the smuggling of harvests in the countryside. Consequently, on 20 September 1917 a bylaw was introduced to punish those peasants who concealed or consumed their yields in order not to give it as army provisioning tax. According to this bylaw, signed by Sultan Mehmet Reşat; the Grand Vizier, Mehmet Talat; the Minister of War, Enver Pasha; and the Minister of Justice, Halil, such peasants were to be punished with imprisonment from six months to three years or pay fines from 50 to 500 Ottoman liras.¹⁴⁴² Despite such legal

¹⁴³⁷ Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 82.

¹⁴³⁸ Pamuk, “The Ottoman Economy in World War I,” p. 124.

¹⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁴¹ Çamurdan, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Doğu Kilikya Olayları*, p. 84.

¹⁴⁴² “Seferberlikte Seferber Ordunun İaşesine Muhtas Hisse-i Öşrü Vermemek Kastı İle Mahsulâtını Ketm Edenler Hakkında Kararname,” *1333 Meclis-i Umumînin Mün’akıt Olmadığı Esnada Hey’et-i Vükelâca Bâ-İrade-i Seniye Mevki-i İcrâyâ Konulan Mukarrerat*, Cüz: 1, *Levâyih-i Kanuniye-i Âdiye* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, [1992-1993]), p. 25.

precautions, in those regions plagued by hunger such as the eastern parts of Anatolia, peasant avoidance of taxes was most widespread. It was reported from these districts that peasants rebelled against the tax collectors. For instance, on 26 June 1918 the Ministry of Finance informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that in the Midyat district of Diyarbakır province, some peasants had openly refused to pay tithe tax to the tax collectors by defying their authorization, and harvested the yield against the laws.¹⁴⁴³

Peasant women, in those conditions when the agricultural production rates decreased and peasants could not pay their debts, did not welcome heavy and additional agricultural taxes for military purposes.¹⁴⁴⁴ They constituted the most important group among those who resisted the agricultural taxes due to poverty and hunger. They petitioned or sent collective telegrams to warn the government that they were unable to pay wartime taxes, especially during 1917 and 1918, when the negative impacts of the war such as hunger were felt the most.

In some cases, village headmen expressed their grievances and demands in the face of high taxes. For example, a telegram sent from Malatya in July 1917 warned the government about women peasants' problem of hunger in their district. According to the telegram, because men had been on the front for the last three years, most of their wives had difficulty to pay the high taxes. It was argued that if they paid the amount demanded by the state, they would be left with no seed to sow for the next year and furthermore they would go hungry for that year.¹⁴⁴⁵

Likewise, twenty Turkish women sent a telegram, signed by Hatice and her friends, from the İskilip district of Ankara to the government on 16 June 1917. They introduced themselves as soldiers' families. In their telegram they requested that they

¹⁴⁴³ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 3-4/5-27, 24 Ramazân 1336 [3 July 1918].

¹⁴⁴⁴ Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, p. 202.

¹⁴⁴⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 37/49, 1 Zilka'de 1335 [19 August 1917].

be not forced to pay even the tithe tax in these hard times in the absence of their husbands. They explained that because they had no fields to harvest cereals but vineyards and gardens, neither they nor their ancestors had ever paid taxes. Claiming that they produced only enough food for themselves, they stated that in case they paid the tithe, this would make them deprived of even their pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and they would go hungry.¹⁴⁴⁶

On 25 November 1917, five other Turkish women, Ayşe, Zekiye, Şefika, Hatice and Ayşe, sent a telegram to the government from the Gölpazarı sub-district of Bilecik. They complained that during that year a second tax for provisioning the army had been demanded from them. They stated that if they paid this second tax, they would be left with no seed for cultivation and even nothing to eat that year. The petitioner women implored the government not to take this tax from them.¹⁴⁴⁷

In a similar case, twenty-two Turkish women sent a collective telegram from Fatsa on 24 January 1918. They argued that because their husbands had served in the army for the state from the war mobilization onwards, they had to work on the land themselves. Claiming that the amount of crops they yielded was not even sufficient to feed them for two or three months, they also wanted the government not to force them to pay additional taxes for the provisioning of the army.¹⁴⁴⁸

Some petitioner women stated how much difficulty they had had to send a telegram to the government in their anti-tax petitions in order to impress the authorities by emphasizing their grievance. For example, nine Turkish women sent a telegram from Ordu to the Ottoman parliament on 1 February 1918, by which they explained that for that year they had difficulty to even pay the tithe tax and nothing was left to them to sow or eat. Because they had nothing to give for the army

¹⁴⁴⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 46/22, 22 Rebiülâhır 1336 [4 February 1918].

¹⁴⁴⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 43/16, 18 Safer 1336 [3 December 1917].

¹⁴⁴⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-11/3-12, 15 Rebiülâhır 1336 [28 January 1918].

provisioning tax they had to come the district center to send this telegram, walking a 20 hour road in one meter deep (*bir buçuk arşın*) snow. According to the petitioners, most of their neighbors had not dared to come this distance. They pleaded that they not be pressured by tax collectors and the gendarmerie to pay the additional taxes.¹⁴⁴⁹

The same day, another telegram was sent from Ordu, this time by eight Turkish women who explained that they were the families of men who had died in battle. They also declared that they were not able to pay the army provisioning tax which was taken with the tithe tax. They had made an application to the army commander of their district to not pay this tax, but their demand had been rejected. They claimed that they were going to starve together with their children. They requested to be exempted from this tax, arguing that as women they were mothers who brought up the soldiers who defended the country (*o vatan muhâfızları, arslan askerleri biz kadınlar yetiştirmedik mi?*) and that their husbands on military service had entrusted their little children to them and the government.¹⁴⁵⁰

Some peasant women sometimes directly petitioned the Ottoman parliament instead of the government in order to be exempted from taxes or to complain of over-taxation. On 22 November 1917, Emine and her friends sent a telegram from Hüdavendigâr province to the Ottoman parliament and requested that their grain not be taken from them as an army provisioning tax for the second time. As a result, the Council of Petition of the Ottoman parliament decided to warn the Hüdavendigâr governor that these taxes were to be paid by the peasants only after the amount which

¹⁴⁴⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-11/3-18, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [20 February 1918].

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See also another telegraph of eight women sent from Ordu the same day, BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-11/3-19, 6 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [17 February 1918].

they and their animals consumed as food, fodder and seed had been set aside for them.¹⁴⁵¹

During the late years of the war, the women continued to raise their voices against the taxes. On 26 January 1918, for example, Ayşe and her friends from Danişment village petitioned the Ottoman parliament requesting that they be exempted from the army provisioning tax. The Ministry of War, in return, informed the Council of Petition that they had taxed nothing against the law and these women had been provided with enough food, fodder and seed.¹⁴⁵² Likewise, on 9 February 1918, Hamiye and her friends petitioned the Ottoman parliament from the Garip farm in Düzce to complain of the tax demanded by the army. Although they were poor soldiers' families without a breadwinner, who were unable to grow even enough crops to feed themselves, they were obliged to pay the army provisioning tax. They requested to be exempted from it. In view of their economic situation, consequently, they were taken seriously and the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the Bolu governorship to ban any taxation practice which could cause harm to the populace.¹⁴⁵³

Dealing with Rural Hunger and Unpaid Debts due to War Mobilization

Indeed, hunger among the peasants was so common during World War I that it impeded agricultural production activities in some areas, because peasants did not have seed needed for cultivation. Therefore, the government decided to help in early

¹⁴⁵¹ "Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstidâ Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidâları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, p. 367.

¹⁴⁵² "Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstid'a Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstid'aları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cedveldir," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye No.: 428-501*, Vol. 2, p. 345.

¹⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

1916 those peasants who suffered deprivation of seeds due to the drought, locust invasions, flood, hail, and war related reasons. The peasants were to be provided with enough seed for cultivation for the next year. For this reason the budget of the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture was revised and an important sum of money was added to it.¹⁴⁵⁴

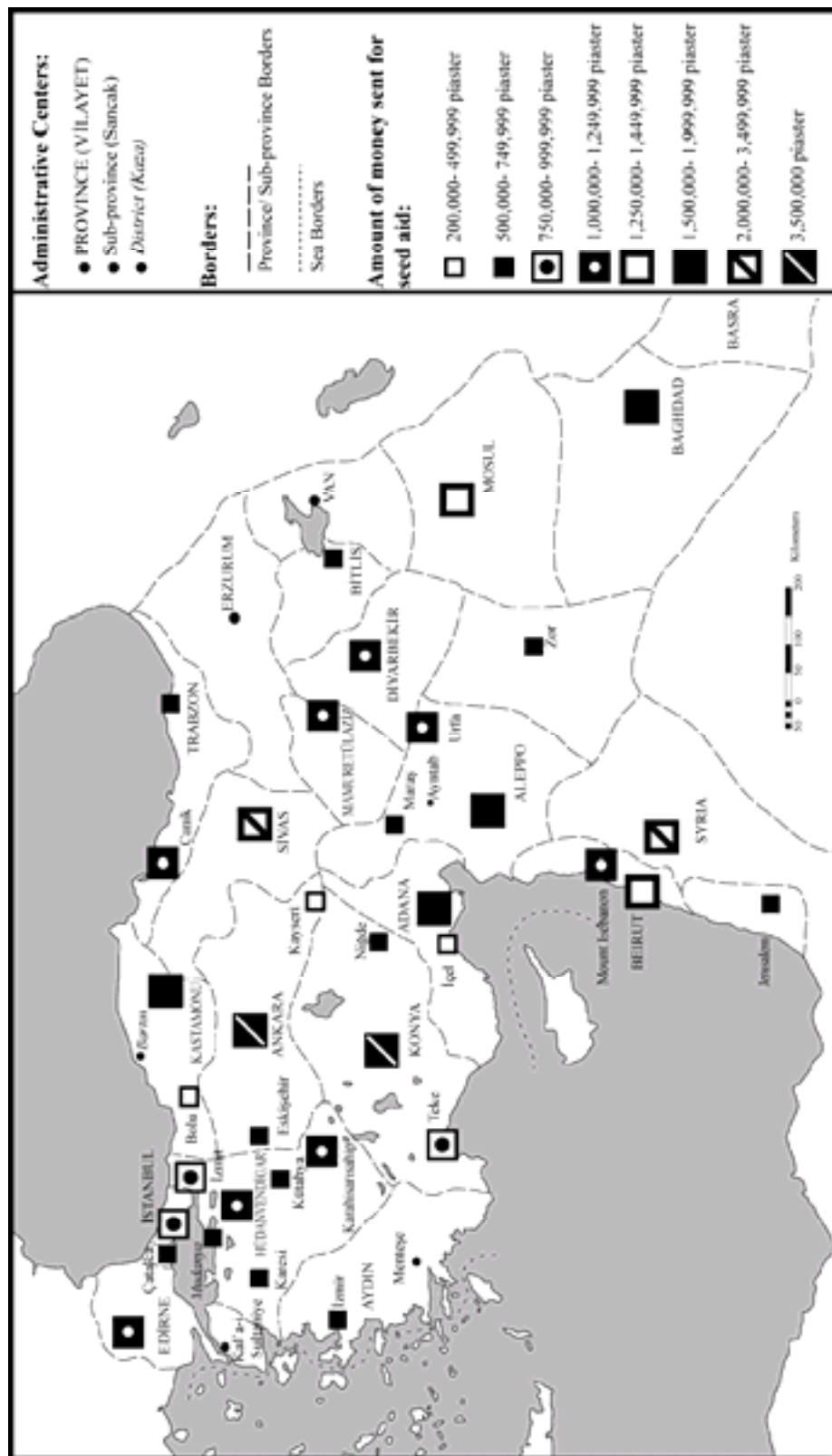
Despite these attempts in certain regions, many peasants did not receive such seed, and therefore protested on the grounds the government had not provided them with seed. For instance, peasants from the adjacent villages came to Erzurum and gathered in front of the government office in April 1919 to complain that they had not been given seed that year. Two of their representatives, who talked to the Erzurum governor, asked whether the government had left them to their fate by not providing seed for agricultural production.¹⁴⁵⁵

Along with the men, peasant women also protested that they had been left with no food or no seed due to the wartime taxes. Sometimes they did this in more covert ways, like complaining about this situation in the letters sent to their husbands or sons in the army. One illiterate mother had made her husband write to her soldier son fighting in Seddülbahir in Dardanelles June 1915 that because they had given almost all of wheat they harvested that year to the army, they had had to buy more expensive bread from the bakery rather than making it at home cheaply. Intentionally or not, she had motivated her husband to write that she was very upset because of

¹⁴⁵⁴ “Muhtacin-i Zürraa Tâvizen Verilecek Tohumluk Hububat Esmâmı ve Sâir Olmak Üzere 1331 Senesi Ticaret ve Ziraat Bütçesine Faslı Mahsus Olarak Mevzu Tahsisattan İstimâl Olunmayan Miktarın 1332 Senesi Bütçesine Devren Sarfı Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 331-332; “Muhtacin-i Zürra’a Tohumluk Zahire İtası Hakkındaki 21 Teşrinisâni 1331 Tarihli Kanuna Müzeyyel Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 514-515; “Muhtacin-i Zürra’a Tohumluk İtası İçin Evvelce Verilen Beş Milyon Kuruşluk Tahsisat-ı Fevkalade 5.000.000 Kuruş Daha İlavesi Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 515-516; and “Muhtacin-i Zürraa Tevzi Olunacak Tohumluk Zahire Karşılığı Olarak 1331 Maliye Bütçesine 5.000.000 Kuruş Tahsisatı Fevkalade İlavesi Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 516-517.

¹⁴⁵⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-2/2-49, 12 Nisan 1335 [12 April 1919]. Quoted in Öğün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 178.

Map 5. Distribution of Seed by the Government to Different Regions of the Ottoman Empire According to the Bylaw of 4 September 1916 in order to Prevent Food Scarcity and Crisis of Agricultural Production



Note: The data is taken for this map from *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâhî-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), pp. 295-296.

this situation and that she asked whether this situation would always continue the same from then on.¹⁴⁵⁶

In their complaint telegrams as well women were very straightforward about their fear of hunger. Forty-one women from Kırkkilise [Kırklareli] who identified themselves as mothers and wives of soldiers (*asker evlâdlarımız vâlideleri ve âileleri*) sent a telegram to the government on 27 September 1916, in which they explained their problem in a very simple language with the following words:

We sent our sons and husbands to the war. We did agriculture by gripping the plough. They don't give the food right of the little children, animals and servants [us]. They want to take almost all of our crops. The food that we have already eaten is also taken into account. We will go hungry. We beg that you have pity on us. Firman.¹⁴⁵⁷

The government sent a telegram to the Edirne governor on 30 September 1916 to ask for further information. In return, on 7 October 1916 the Edirne governor tried to prove that these women were wrong and wrote that the tax collectors had calculated the daily need of the peasants at 500 grams of food and left them one year's food according to this calculation.¹⁴⁵⁸ Who was right or wrong is unknown, but it is obvious that the agricultural requisitions aggrieved the peasant women and led them to raise their critical voices against these practices.

Likewise, twelve other Turkish women collectively sent a telegram on 7 May 1918 from the İskilip district of Çorum in Ankara province. They claimed that the taxes collected from them would leave them hungry. They declared that each day 78 people had died in their district due to hunger and the daily bread had been calculated as half *kıyye* (650 grams)¹⁴⁵⁹ for four persons, which was about 162.5 grams of bread

¹⁴⁵⁶ Necati İnceoğlu, *Siper Mektupları* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2001), p. 72.

¹⁴⁵⁷ “Evlâd ve zevçlerimizi askere gönderdik sapanı yapışarak ziraâtte bulunduk sagîr, hayvanatla hizmetkârların yemeklik hakkını vermiyorlar hemen bilcümle mahsûlatımızı almak istiyorlar şimdiye kadar yediğimiz de nazar-ı dikkate alınıyor aç kalacağız merhamet buyurulması niyâz ederiz fermân.”

¹⁴⁵⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 80/35, 9 Zilhicce 1334 [7 October 1916].

¹⁴⁵⁹ One *kıyye* is 1,300 grams.

for one person. They complained that Çorum governor had wanted them to deliver an additional 100,000 *kıyye* (130 tons) of grain to the local government and the army as tax. According to these women, if they gave these cereals, they would die out of hunger on the streets. They requested the cancellation of this tax on the grounds that “the government could not allow that the families of those soldiers who were fighting for the protection of the honor of the nation die because of hunger.”¹⁴⁶⁰

Furthermore, there were demands to pay debts related to agricultural production from the populace. Since many tax farmers (*mültezim*) were unable to pay their debts to the state due to the war time conditions, the government also had to revise the debts of contractors. In January 1915 some part of the debts of the tax farmers who had been conscripted to the army due to World War I and therefore who could not collect the taxes and pay it to the state were postponed¹⁴⁶¹ and these debts were exempted from interest if they were paid before the end of the financial year [1914-1915] 1330.¹⁴⁶²

Peasant women who had difficulty harvesting enough yield to pay back their debts to the creditors such as the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraât Bankası*) were also among the petitioners. On 3 October 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture about the petition of a woman called Zehra from the Kumkale district of Çanakkale, who demanded that her debts to the Agricultural Bank were postponed. She wrote that because the war had started at a time that they were going to harvest, their yield had been destroyed. In addition, as her brother had been conscripted, she was unable to pay back her debt. Adding that

¹⁴⁶⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-3/2-33, 29 Receb 1336 [10 May 1918].

¹⁴⁶¹ “Hâdisat-ı Harbiye Dolayısıyla Borçlarını Ödeyemeyen Mültezimlerin Zimmetlerinin Bir Kısmının Teciline Dair Kanun Lâyihası,” *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâiyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, p. 86.

¹⁴⁶² “1330 Senesi Gayesine Kadar Olan Âşâr Bakayasınca Bazı Müsaadat İle Mütferriatı Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 167-169.

her debts were increasing due to the interest rates, she argued that this had caused her loss. On 22 October 1916, the Agricultural Bank informed the government that Zehra's debts were going to be postponed according to the notification of the government which forced them to postpone the debts of the soldiers' families. Nevertheless, an investigation was demanded to prove that Zehra lived in a region that had been attacked by the enemy and that her brother really had been conscripted.¹⁴⁶³

Coping with the Corrupt Officers

Other than high taxes and the problem of hunger that forced them to demand seed and the abolition of taxes from the state, one of the most important problems of peasant women was corrupt army officers who could confiscate their animals or goods without paying for them. The government was aware of corrupt officers who acted against the laws in the conscription of men and the confiscation of animals and vehicles for military purposes. The government devised harsh punishments such as capital punishment and lifelong penal servitude during the war years.¹⁴⁶⁴ Despite these laws, as stated before, the gendarmerie and the officers of the recruiting offices regularly accepted bribes to allow deserters to hide. These officers were so powerful that some of the gendarmerie even raped the beautiful wives of soldiers but nobody could punish them.¹⁴⁶⁵ As Korkut Boratav also argues, during long war years, some locally influent people such as headmen, gendarmerie or army officers had

¹⁴⁶³ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 80/48, 25 Zilhicce 1334 [23 October 1916].

¹⁴⁶⁴ "Askerî Ceza Kanunnamesine Müzeyyel Layiha-i Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 471-474. See also, "Asakir Tarafından İka Olunan Cerâim-i Adiyenin Merci-i Tahkik ve Muhakemesi Hakkında Kararname," *1333 Meclis-i Umumînin Mün'akit Olmadığı Esnada Hey'et-i Vükelâca Bâ-İrade-i Seniye Mevki-i İcrâya Konulan Mukarrerat*, Cüz: 1, *Levâ-yih-i Kanuniye-i Âdiye*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Çamurdan, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Doğu Kilikya Olayları*, p. 83.

accumulated money by exploiting the wartime opportunities such as the commerce of deserters and collecting process of wartime taxes.¹⁴⁶⁶

In some respects, their help to deserters made avoidance of conscription easier for many families; however, their other corrupt activities aggrieved the soldiers' families. For example, the personal narratives of wartime soldiers also reveal that some commanders stole the food of the soldiers and sold it in black market. Halil Ataman, a soldier taken captive during the war years, wrote in his memoirs that although the soldiers went hungry, his battalion commander had stolen their bread. Although he revealed this situation, the battalion commander was not punished, and on the top of it, the corrupt commander forced Ataman to do the most dangerous tasks, probably with the intention of getting rid of him.¹⁴⁶⁷ Abdülkadir Kemali had also seen that some part of the food of the soldiers such as broad beans, olive oil or bread had been taken away daily with the order of the Captain of his unit and when enough food had accumulated, they were sent to Çatalca to be sold for private interests.¹⁴⁶⁸

During the National Struggle as well some corrupt army officers confiscated people's goods, provisions, and vehicles or forced them to work illegally. A proclamation published in the newspaper *Açıksöz* (Forthright) on 10 October 1921 explained how such officers were to be punished. It was written that the reports and people's complaints about such officers from various districts showed that some officers seized the vehicles of people illegally, stopped the convoys which carried

¹⁴⁶⁶ Boratav, "Anadolu Köyünde Savaş ve Yıkım," pp. 66-70.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Ataman, *Esaret Yılları*, pp. 70-72.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Işık Öğütçü, ed., *Orhan Kemal'in Babası Abdülkadir Kemali'nin Anıları* (İstanbul: Epsilon Yayınevi, 2005), pp. 197-198.

ammunitions and in some places forced people to work illegally, and led the convoys loaded with goods to directions other than where they were obliged to go.¹⁴⁶⁹

Turkish popular poet-singers in World War I also criticized tax collectors and army officers who used the taxes for war mobilization for personal interests. A poem of Bünyanlı Âşık Mustafa protested how the peasants had difficulty farming due to the wartime taxes which left them without animals. He also wrote that women had been especially impoverished and they had been left without protection. He described how the war mobilization taxes were used for wrong purposes such as buying wine and personal pleasure by the tax collectors with the following words:

They ruined the work of the people
Peasants were left with no ox, and vehicles
Some of them are taking these and give them to [buy] wine
[Alas!] This war mobilization hasn't yet ended.¹⁴⁷⁰

Animal tax rates, which were determined differently according to different districts, were multiplied four times in the first years of the war and during the Armistice period. The last Ottoman parliament in İstanbul passed a bylaw which increased it again and allowed it to multiply eight times more. This decision, however, was not accepted by the Great National Assembly in Ankara and yet the animal tax remained four times higher than what it was before the war.¹⁴⁷¹ There were even some deputies in Ankara who complained about the national taxes during the National Struggle. One of them, Kütahya deputy Besim Atalay Bey, argued on 20 December 1921 that the oxen taken from the peasants for military purposes had adversely affected the agriculture. He argued that each day some of these oxen died due to neglect and

¹⁴⁶⁹ Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye*, pp. 55-57.

¹⁴⁷⁰ "Milletin işini verdiler haraba
Rençberde kalmadı öküz, araba
Bazıları alıp veriyor şaraba
Daha bitmedi ki şu seferberlik."

S. Burhanettin Akbaş, *Bünyanlı Âşık Mustafa (Altınkaynak), 1808-1941* (Kayseri: Bizim Gençlik Yayınları, 1994), p. 34.

¹⁴⁷¹ Mahmut Goloğlu, *Milli Mücadele Tarihi*, Vol. 3, *Üçüncü Meşrutiyet* (Ankara: Başnur Matbaası, 1970), pp. 175.

especially those oxen which were in very bad condition had to be given back to the peasants free of charge.¹⁴⁷²

Peasant women, who were the main victims of the taxation or confiscation of their animals, sent collective telegrams to the politicians to request the protection of their economic rights. A telegram sent to the government from the Çermik district of Diyarbakır province on 20 March 1915 by a woman called Abide and two other peasants, İbrahim and Hüseyin, on behalf of all peasants, complained about the use of vulgar physical force against them during the collection of taxes. They stated that their animals had been taken away as military tax and the remaining ones were not used in agriculture, because they were also used to carry goods. In addition to taking the animals, they complained, the army also had forced women, children and elders to go to other places to work in agriculture. They objected to this forcible sending to other places for work, and claimed that otherwise they would be unable to grow their own crops for food on their own land and, furthermore, their sexual honor would be ruined probably because they thought that being forced to travel far away without their husband's permission they could be exposed to the attacks of stranger men.¹⁴⁷³

Likewise, five women named Fatma, Havva, Ziyet, Esmâ, and Zeynep sent a telegram to the office of the Grand Vizier on 24 April 1915 from the Çermik district of Diyarbakır province to complain about military tax imposed on their animals and vehicles. They wrote that their husbands were at the front and they were obliged to do the heavy agricultural work and to pay a military tax due to the mobilization. They stated that in addition to these burdensome obligations this time the local government had taken all of their donkeys. Claiming that in case their donkeys were

¹⁴⁷² *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol. 15 (Ankara: TBMM Matbaası, 1958), pp. 173-174. Quoted in Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁷³ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 76/1, 5 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [21 March 1915].

also taken away they would have no means to carry the seeds and crops to the fields and from their fields to their houses, they objected to the seizure.¹⁴⁷⁴

On 14 August 1916, four women named Zeynep, Ayşe, Fatma, and Elif also sent a petition from Ayntab [Gaziantep] to the government. They complained that while their sons and husbands were fighting against the enemy, the army wrongly had seized their camels, which were their only livelihood, as military tax. The women wanted their animals back.¹⁴⁷⁵

Probably in view of women's discontent, sometimes local governors wrote to the government to defend peasant women's rights. The Çatalca governor wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 29 April 1915 that despite the fact that it was the sowing time in spring in the fields of soldiers' families; the army had requisitioned the draft animals and all vehicles of the peasants in his district. What is worse, the peasants had been paid nothing for these confiscations. The Çatalca governor demanded that the government order the army not to use the agricultural means of the people for military purposes. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in return, informed the Ministry of War about this situation on 5 May 1915.¹⁴⁷⁶

The Trabzon governor also informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 26 May 1919 about the complaint of a woman named Zeliha from the Giresun district of his province. Her horse had been taken by the army for the transportation of military ammunitions in return for no money. The horse had died during this work due to exhaustion, but Zeliha had been paid nothing in compensation. On 14 June 1919, the government wanted further information about the confiscation of Zeliha's horse and ordered that the legal procedure for defending Zeliha's rights be done.¹⁴⁷⁷

¹⁴⁷⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 76/22, 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1333 [28 April 1915].

¹⁴⁷⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 76/1-15, 1 Zilka'de 1334 [30 August 1916].

¹⁴⁷⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 59-1/1-14, 21 Cemâziyelâhir 1333 [6 May 1915].

¹⁴⁷⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 53/62, 15 Ramazân 1337 [14 June 1919].

There also were men who were probably urged by women as well to write and demand from the government the protection of peasant women as soldiers' families. On 29 April 1915 a telegram was sent from the Gülnar district of İçel by İsmail on behalf of all peasants of his village. He requested that at least one of the donkeys and cart horses of widows, soldier's families and peasants not be taken away as tax. The same day this demand was taken seriously and a telegram was sent for this purpose to the İçel governor.¹⁴⁷⁸

The violation of economic rights under the pretext of war mobilization was also common for properties other than animals or vehicles used in the transportation of ammunition. Archive documents reveal that sometimes the peasants were forced to sell their yield to the army at very low prices. The director general of government inspectors reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 30 November 1915 that in Eskişehir the peasants had been forced to sell their wheat for the provisioning of the army at the price of 28 piasters for each bushel (36.5 kg), which was actually 45 piasters on the market. The report also mentioned that although these peasants needed this wheat for their own needs, the officers had used violence against them to intimidate them into selling their products at low prices.¹⁴⁷⁹

In another case, the government informed the Edirne governor about the petition of a woman called Fatma on 22 August 1918. Fatma accused the army authorities of not paying her the price of the wood that had been cut from her farm in Gallipoli, a sub-province of Edirne in those years, for military purposes and the price of some part of the crops harvested from her land. She wanted the army to make restitution to her and additionally to stop cutting down her olive trees. Consequently,

¹⁴⁷⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 76/25, 14 Cemâziyelâhir 1333 {29 April 1915}.

¹⁴⁷⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 83-3/1-8, 10 Safer 1334 [18 December 1915].

the government ordered the local governor to protect her economic rights.¹⁴⁸⁰

Furthermore, on 26 March 1919, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Ministry of War about the petition of a woman called Sabriye, who lived in the Küçük Ayasofya quarter of İstanbul. She requested that her bureaucratic records for the provisions and other goods that she had given to the military as military tax be reviewed and her economic rights protected immediately.¹⁴⁸¹

When their rights were violated, some women even dared to fight with soldiers. İsmail Hakkı Sunata wrote in his memoirs on the World War I years that as a higher ranking army officer he once had to listen to the complaints of a peasant woman about 28 years old whose face was seamed with scars. She had told him that she was sick of the soldiers of Sultan Reşad (“*Bu sizin Sultan Reşad’ın askerlerinden bıktık*”) and protested the soldiers’ violation of her rights. Although she had been waiting for two days to grind her one carryall of wheat at the mill near her village, she could not because each time her turn had come some soldiers had brought their own carryalls. She had said to Sunata that at last she had insisted to grind her wheat and had fought with two soldiers. Sunata had ordered the troopers under his commandership to grind this woman’s wheat and to find those soldiers who had violated her rights; but the soldiers, who had already escaped from the mill, could not be found.¹⁴⁸²

During the National Struggle as well, a woman called Zeliha complained from the Mülâyım village of the Ilgaz district of Kastamonu that her wheat and fodder had been taken from her to feed the army animals. After the investigations it was understood that this had happened due to the fault of Lieutenant Mustafa, commander of the military unit whose animals had eaten Zeliha’s wheat and fodder.

¹⁴⁸⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 4-3/7-35, 15 Zilka’de 1336 [22 August 1918].

¹⁴⁸¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-5/1-62, 28 Cemâziyelâhir 1337 [31 March 1919].

¹⁴⁸² Sunata, *Gelibolu’dan Kafkaslara*, p. 436.

Consequently, Lieutenant Mustafa was sentenced to 15 days of imprisonment with only dry bread, and 35 Ottoman liras, which was the loss of Zeliha. It was cut from his salary and given to her as compensation.¹⁴⁸³

Resistance to Compulsory Work and Forced Labor

Finally, women were victims of violence against them if they resisted compulsory work, military taxes or requisitioning. According to Article 4 of the Agricultural Obligation Law, those peasants who resisted doing agriculture or who concealed their animals were to be punished. The sub-district directors (*nâhiye müdürü*) were authorized to use force against such peasants and for this purpose these directors were able to put enough number of gendarmes under the order of cultivation directors (*zer'iyât müdürü*).¹⁴⁸⁴ The commissions, which were responsible for collecting national taxes during the National Struggle as well, were called *Tekâlif-i Milliye Komisyonu* (National Tax Commissions) and they had the right to use force when they needed to collect the taxes properly. In order to accelerate the taxation process they eliminated red tape and used methods unconventional to state bureaucracy, which also included intimidation and violence.¹⁴⁸⁵ Some commanders of the National Forces (*Kuva-yı Milliye*) were former bandit-like figures and used force against the populace to take taxes and for the needs of their gangs. This also created enmity against the National Struggle and helped those anti-nationalist politicians who tried to start a rebellion against it.¹⁴⁸⁶

¹⁴⁸³ Açıksözcü Hüsnü, *İstiklâl Harbinde Kastamonu*, pp. 142-143.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Toprak, *İttihad Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 89.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Alptekin Müderrisoğlu, *Kurtuluş Savaşının Mali Kaynakları* (Ankara: AKDTKY Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1990), pp. 183-186; and Şerif Guralp, *İstiklâl Savaşının İç Yüzü* (İstanbul: Dizerkonca Matbaası, 1958), pp. 102-104.

Women also sent collective telegrams against the violence exerted on them to work compulsorily during World War I. On 14 March 1918 fourteen Turkish women who introduced themselves as mothers and wives of soldiers sent a telegram to the government from Uşak to complain that they had been charged with the task of carrying the tithe tax and army provisioning taxes of the financial year 1333 [1917-1918] to a ten hour distance. They protested this situation arguing that because their sons and husbands were fighting on the front, they had been left alone to do agriculture and they worked night and day to do the agricultural work of about three or four families with only one pair of animals. Emphasizing that they were in a critical season for agriculture, the women claimed that they did not have enough animals to carry their tax to the destinations the army authorities wanted. Furthermore, they complained that they had been forced to go this ten hour distance by use of violence against them. Instead of going this long road, they wanted to carry the crops to the train station at Çivril, which was two hours from their village. Explaining that this could relieve their economic sufferings to some extent, they also wanted that money be paid for rent of their draught animals. The government ordered the Kütahya governor on 17 March 1918 to deal with this telegram. The Kütahya governor wrote in return on 3 April 1918 that in response to the request of these peasants, the governorship had sent 30 to 40 camels to the village to carry the tax instead of laying the burden of transportation of the crops collected as tax on the peasant women.¹⁴⁸⁷

Finding records of peasant women's reactions to war mobilization is rather difficult in the archive documents other than what was recorded in telegrams or petitions. Nevertheless, sometimes these women revealed their feelings about the

¹⁴⁸⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 20-1/1-14, 4 Cemâziyelâhir 1336 [17 March 1918].

obligatory mobilization duties in folk songs. During World War I a peasant woman from the Moso village of Araç district of Kastamonu composed a folk song to complain about the heavy wartime taxes and the obligation of transporting the crops collected as tax long distances, when she carried the tithe tax from her village to Bartın. She had had to leave her suckling baby at her village for this task and she protested this situation with the following verses:

My oxen are lying down exhausted
Which of us is taken care of by friend and foe?
My baby! My milk has come oozing out
....
Don't the tears of mothers stop?
Doesn't Sultan Neşat¹⁴⁸⁸ know our situation?
....
How many years did this greedy state
Not leave behind even one shirt to the people?
Love makes you cry, trouble makes you complain, of course

I go and go, but Bartın is out of sight
My legs are swollen, these roads can't be walked.¹⁴⁸⁹

Abdülkadir Kemali also wrote in his memoirs about peasants who were forced to carry grain for the army from their villages to Bursa city-center without being paid for it. The peasants had told him that they had been forced to do this service for the previous two years. One peasant woman had protested that this was work that cannot be done even in return for money. Another woman, whom he asked whether she had

¹⁴⁸⁸ The true name of the Sultan is Reşat, but this woman like many other peasants mispronounces it as Neşat.

¹⁴⁸⁹ “Öküzlerim yorgunluktan yattıyor
Dostla düşman hangimize bakıyor
Yavrucuğum sütüm gelmiş akıyor
....
Anaların göz yaşları dinmez mi
Sultan Neşat halimizi bilmez mi
....
Kaç senedir şu aç gözlü devlette
Bir gömlecik bıraktı mı millette
Aşk ağlatır dert söyler elbette

Giderin giderin Bartın görünmez
Şiştı bacaklarım yollar yürünmez.”
“Araç Notları,” *Halk Bilgisi Mecmuası*, No. 32 (15 2. Kanun 1934 [15 January 1934]), pp. 217-218.

been brought there by force, had fallen down in a fit. She explained with difficulty that she had been forced to leave her baby behind at home, because the gendarmerie had forced her to come at gunpoint. They had not listened to her when she had tried to tell them that her baby was all alone. She feared that the baby would die and stink because it took a total of eight days to go to Bursa and coming back to her village.¹⁴⁹⁰



Fig. 25 Two women carrying ammunition in an oxcart for the Ottoman army on Caucasus roads in World War I.

Source: *Harp Mecmûası*, no. 25-26 (Şa'bân 1336 / Mayıs 1334 [May 1918]), p. 397.

The war mobilization obligations of peasant women multiplied during the National Struggle because the taxes for the war mobilization became more vital to the National Independence War. Only 10 percent of the World War I expenditures, which reached 400 million Ottoman liras by the end of the war, could be met with taxes.¹⁴⁹¹ About 260 million of this amount had been financed by Germany and Austria-Hungary.¹⁴⁹² The National Struggle, however, had a cost of 147 million Ottoman liras and only 13 million of it was Russian aid. The rest of the expenditures

¹⁴⁹⁰ Ögütçü, ed., *Orhan Kemal'in Babası Abdülkadir Kemali'nin Anıları*, pp. 213-215.

¹⁴⁹¹ Eldem, "Cihan Harbinin ve İstiklal Savaşının Ekonomik Sorunları," p. 388.

¹⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 398.

were financed largely with taxes.¹⁴⁹³ Therefore, during the National Struggle, the percentage of the taxes increased sharply in the national budget from 43.8 million Ottoman liras in 1920 to 71.7 million in 1923.¹⁴⁹⁴ Consequently, the poor people most of whom were peasant women, shouldered the great part of the economic burden of the National Struggle.¹⁴⁹⁵



Fig. 26 Women repairing the Çobanlar-Afyon railroad during the National Struggle.

Source: *Milli Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: T. C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 1998), p. 136.

According to a law passed from the Great National Assembly on 5 August 1921, Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] ordered the collection of national taxes (*Tekâlif-i Milliye*), which were quite high due to the extraordinary mobilization efforts against the occupation forces. These taxes demanded up to 40 percent of what people had in terms of food, clothing, equipments, animals or vehicles which could be used for military purposes. Furthermore, the fifth order of the national taxes made it

¹⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

¹⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

obligatory for the people to carry ammunition for the army up to 100 kilometers per month.¹⁴⁹⁶



Fig. 27 Women working on the Azarköy railway during the National Struggle.

Source: *Milli Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: T. C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 1998), p. 136.

The national taxes were not only high but they had some ambiguities as well. For instance, the laws prescribed the requisitioning of the 20 percent of oxen as national tax, it was impossible to tax 20 percent of only one ox of a low-income peasant.

Those peasants who had only two oxen had to give one of them; that is to say, they gave a 50 percent tax instead of 20 percent, which was an economic disaster for them. Some tax collectors did not hesitate to display vulgar use of force against those peasants who resisted such illegal practices.¹⁴⁹⁷ At a closed session of the Great National Assembly, held on 31 October 1921, Mersin deputy Salâhaddin Bey protested that the poor paid nearly all of the 40 percent national tax while the rich

¹⁴⁹⁶ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk: Osmanlıca'dan Türkçe'ye Çeviri (Orijinal Tam Metin)*, Vol. 1, *Metinler* ([İstanbul]: Yeditepe Üniversitesi Kültür Yayınları, [2002]), pp. 538-540.

¹⁴⁹⁷ See for example, Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 188-189.

paid nothing. He said, “the military tax was replaced with peoples’ tax” (*Tekâlif-i Askeriye gitti, Tekâlif-i Adiye kaldı*).¹⁴⁹⁸

The obligation to carry ammunitions according to the fifth order of the national taxes (*Tekalif-i Milliye*) up to 100 kilometers per month was also not welcomed in certain districts. For instance, fearing that the population could accept this obligation as a cruelty, the notables of Kayseri raised a fund and used it to send the necessary goods in five days.¹⁴⁹⁹



Fig. 28 Anatolian women carrying ammunition on their backs during the National Struggle.

Source: *Yarın*, no. 42 (14 Eylül 1338 [14 September 1922]), p. 285.

Because of the greater need for their support during the National Struggle, poor peasant women were extensively used in the transportation of ammunition and payment of the national taxes. According to an oral history study based on interviews

¹⁴⁹⁸ *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, Vol. 2 (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1985), p. 421. Quoted in Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye*, p. 75.

¹⁴⁹⁹ See the declaration of depute Mazhar Müfit [Kansu] Bey on 12 April 1922, *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, Vol. 3 (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1985), pp. 235-236. Quoted in Kars, *Millî Mücadele’de Kayseri*, p. 112.

with eyewitness of the war years, an interviewee from Zonguldak, A. Fahrettin Aytaç said that during those years the number of women who directed the oxcarts was higher than that of men.¹⁵⁰⁰ Hakkı Durna, another witness of the National Struggle, said that “their mothers” carried the ammunitions in the war years.¹⁵⁰¹ Among the women who carried the ammunition from Zonguldak to Gerede, for instance, there were those who were left with no family members to take care of them. Mehmet Akçabelen, an interviewee, emphasized that these women did not receive any money for this service and they had to provide their own food by themselves.¹⁵⁰²

Women who carried the national taxes with pack trains called *mekkâre* from different districts of Muğla were well known. These women were locally called “pack train carriers” (*mekkâreciler*).¹⁵⁰³ The ammunition clandestinely brought to İnebolu also was carried by women, children and non-conscripted old men with oxcarts. In most of the convoys there were women who carried their children on their backs.¹⁵⁰⁴ According to Cevdet Kerim İncedayı, most of these women who traveled from İnebolu to Ankara, had husbands on the military, and they had had to entrust their children to their neighbors, although their villages had been devastated due to enemy attacks. Some of these women were pregnant and gave birth on roads which were very difficult to travel even for sturdy men.¹⁵⁰⁵ These women are generally accepted as the “amazons” of the National Struggle in the Turkish historiography and their wartime effort are regarded as one of the main reasons behind women’s political emancipation after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Nevertheless,

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ali Sarıkoyuncu, *Milli Mücadele’de Zonguldak ve Havalisi* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1992), p. 300, 351.

¹⁵⁰¹ “Sonra, analarımız dahi kağı arabaları ile Mengen’e malzeme taşıdılar.” *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 300, 365.

¹⁵⁰³ Ünal Türkeş, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Muğla*, Vol. 1-2 (İstanbul: Yelken Matbaası for the series “Muğla İli Toplum Yapısı Araştırmaları”, 1973), pp. 392-393.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Asım Gündüz, *Hatıratlarım*, ed. by İhsan İlgar (İstanbul: Kervan Yayınları, 1973), pp. 118-119.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Cevdet Kerim İncedayı, *İstiklal Harbi (Garp Cephesi)*, ed. Muhammet Safi (İstanbul: YKY, 2007), pp. 93-94.

their real experience of this war obligation is still one of the least known parts of Turkish history.



Fig. 29 Anatolian women carrying ammunition during the National Struggle.

Source: *Milli Mücadele'de ve Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* (Ankara: T. C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 1998), p. 133.

In brief, during World War I and the following Armistice and National Struggle years, poor peasant women were the main group who had to pay the taxes, to work compulsorily in agriculture, and to carry the wartime taxes or ammunitions of the army long distances. Often suffering from hunger due to the poor harvest, high and extraordinary taxes and the requisitioning of their agricultural tools and draft animals, they did not hesitate to voice their objections to such practices. During the war when the severe wartime laws and extraordinary conditions allowed the authorities to exert violence against the rebels or any open disobedience, poor and low-income women in rural areas pursued their rights and resisted the war taxes and compulsory work practices detrimental to their economic situation and to their very survival.

The main evidence of their resistance was their petitions sent to the authorities. Many women, petitioning the army and civil authorities, sought their rights and complained about tax obligations, requisitions, compulsory work practices, and wrongdoings of civil and military officials. They also demanded to be exempted from high taxes or the forced labor regime or wanted their seized goods returned. They warned the authorities of the corrupt behavior of army officers or soldiers who caused them economic or physical harm. These attempts sometimes were successful, thereby enabling women to protect some of their rights individually, albeit limited.

Discontent with the Wartime Conscriptions

As discussed in detail before, one of the most important problems of women during World War I was the conscription of their men, which left them without breadwinners. This problem was more severe for disadvantaged women who had nothing to sell in order to survive. Even those women who were willing to sell their labor had little chance to find jobs, especially in the provinces. Therefore, many women resisted the conscriptions using different strategies, which varied from using legal mechanisms such as writing petitions to authorities to illegal ones such as hiding or collaborating with the deserters. Although lower-class women were not the only factor which caused the desertions, they directly or indirectly played an important role behind the huge loss of Ottoman army in terms of soldiers.

Discontent with the Army's Need for More Soldiers

During World War I the Ottoman government constantly tried to increase the number of soldiers, which created important tensions on the home front. Women, who were left without the economic support of men on whom they were especially dependent, felt more insecure with the conscription of men even below or over the normal ages for conscription. Their vulnerable situation at home constituted one of the most important problems which caused Ottoman soldiers' anxiety and their desertions. One of the most important problems that women protested was the conscription of men at the age of adolescence because of the increasing need of the Ottoman Army for soldiers as the war dragged on. In time the government had to conscript even 17 year olds,¹⁵⁰⁶ and high school students.¹⁵⁰⁷ Although it did not pass from the parliament, the government also issued a draft law, according to which those men who were not at the age of conscription but able for fighting were conscripted.¹⁵⁰⁸ Claiming that men were registered at very old ages, the government proposed that those men who were not legally at the age of conscription, but whose ages were

¹⁵⁰⁶ "1314 Tevellütlülerin Hizmet-i Askeriyye ile Mükellefiyetleri Hakkında Layihai Kanuniyye," *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, p. 231; "1312, 1313, 1314, 1315 Tevellütlülerden Evsâf-ı Muayeneyi Haiz Olanların İhtiyat Zâbiti veya Küçük Zâbit Olarak Yetiştirilmek Üzere Celbleri Hakkındaki Dört Kıt'a Karar-ı Muvakkatı Tevhiden Askerî Encümenince Tanzim Kılınan Lâ-yiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 425; and "1316 Tevellütlülerden Hizmet-i Maksure ile Celb Edilecekler Hakkında Lâ-yiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 67-68.

¹⁵⁰⁷ "1312-1316 Tevellütlülerinden Mekâtib-i Sultaniyyenin Sondan Dördüncü Sınıfına Müdavim Bulunanların Hizmeti Maksuraya Tabi Tutulmaları Hakkında Lâ-yiha-i Kanuniyye," *ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁰⁸ "Sinn-i Mukayyedlerine Göre Vâsıl-ı Mükellefiyyet Olmadıkları Halde Hizmet-i Askeriyyeye Elverişli Bulunanların Celbi Hakkında Lâ-yiha-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâ-yih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 379-380; and "Sinn-i Mukayyedlerine Göre Vâsıl-ı Mükellefiyyet Olmadıkları Halde Hizmet-i Askeriyyeye Elverişli Bulunanların Celbi Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 11 Teşrin-i Evvel 1332 / 26 Zilhicce 1334 [24 October 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 1353. This provisional law was annulled later on by the Ottoman parliament, "Sinn-i Mukayyedlerine Göre Vâsıl-ı Mükellefiyyet Olmadıkları Halde Hizmet-i Askeriyyeye Elverişli Bulunanların Celbine Dâir 26 Zilhicce 1334 Tarihli Kanûn-ı Muvakkatın Reddi Hakkında Meclis-i Meb'ûsân Karâr-nâmesi," 23 Kanûn-ı Sâni 1332 / 12 Rebîülâhır 1335 [5 February 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, p. 142.

calculated as at least three years more than the registered one after a medical examination be conscripted.¹⁵⁰⁹ Since all the conscripted men were exhausted in 1915, the government had to begin to conscript in 1916 those who had planned to be called to the army in 1917 and 1918. Because even these soldiers were not enough, boys who would be called to arms in 1919 and 1920 became soldiers by 1917.¹⁵¹⁰

Because the Ottoman government conscripted from some villages adolescent boys even as young as 15 to 16, especially the mothers and sisters of these boys disapproved of this practice. It is possible to see their opposition to this practice in their critical and elegiac folk songs and lyrics. An Anatolian woman from Afşin, fiancée of a boy at these ages who died in the war protested this situation with the following lines:

[Military] harmonicas are being played,
For the sixteen year old to be called to arms.
Can a fifteen year old [boy] become a soldier!
They collect [him] to die.¹⁵¹¹

Another well-known folk song was composed for 15-year old soldiers conscripted from the Tokat district for fighting at the Dardanelles front in 1915. The song, which mourned for them, expressed the people's, especially women's, grievance as below:

Hey! Fifteen year old, fifteen year old.
The roads of Tokat are stony.
The fifteen year olds are going away.
The girls are in tears.¹⁵¹²

¹⁵⁰⁹ "Sinn-i Mukayyetleriyle Şahısları Mûnasip Olmayanların Takdir-i Sinni Hakkında Yapılacak Muamelâta Dair Nüfus Kanununa Müzeyyel Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 780-782; and "Sinn-i Mukayyetleriyle Şahısları Mûtenasip Olmayanların Takdiri Sinni Hakkında Yapılacak Muamelata Dair Nüfus Kanununa Müzeyyel Layihâ-i Kanuniyye," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 160-165.

¹⁵¹⁰ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi: 1838'den 1995'e*, Vol. 3 (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1974-), p. 950.

¹⁵¹¹ "Mızıkalar çalınıyor,
On altılı gelsin diye.
On beşliden asker mi olur!
Topluyorlar ölsün diye."

Source name is Ahmet Duran Yılmaz and the collector of the lament is Abdülaziz Yılmaz. "Şehide Ağıt," in Ömer Faruk Dikici, *et. al., Afşin'in Ağıtları: Eshab-ı Kehf Diyarı*, ed. Ahmet Kır (Kahramanmaraş: Afşin İlçe Milli Eğitim Kültür Yayınları, 2008), p. 32.

As this folk song also implies, the conscription of teenage boys was a very painful experience for widow women and for girls who were left alone with no men other than the elderly.¹⁵¹³

Apart from young boys, because of the urgent need for soldiers, men up to the age of 50 were also called for arms in 1915.¹⁵¹⁴ The same year men up to the age of 55 who were able to use arms were conscripted for the protection of frontiers and sea coasts.¹⁵¹⁵ Women complained about the practice of conscription of older men as well. For example, on 7 October 1914 the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Ministry of War about a petition written by a woman named Hatice who demanded that her husband Mahmud be demobilized, because he had been conscripted at the age of 47.¹⁵¹⁶

Other than the conscription of teenagers and old men, the government made effort to enlist the male population, be young, old or disabled, to participate in the army. It was decided in the later years of the war that those who had paid money to the state to be exempted from conscription were also called to arms if needed in 1916.¹⁵¹⁷ The Yozgat deputy, Şakir Bey, demanded in the parliament on 22

¹⁵¹² “*Hey onbeşli onbeşli.
Tokat yolları taşlı.
Onbeşliler gidiyor.
Kızların gözü yaşlı.*”

Halil Ersin Avcı and Mehmet Ali Bingöl, eds., *Çanakkale Savaşı Karikatürleri: Çanakkale Savaşlarına Mizahi Bir Bakış* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2006), p. 22.

¹⁵¹³ See for example, Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 192-194.

¹⁵¹⁴ “Mükellefiyyet-i Askerriyenin Elli Yaşına Kadar Temdidi Hakkında Layiha-i Kanuniyye,” *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyah-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, pp. 364-365.

¹⁵¹⁵ “Hizmet-i Mefruza-i Askeriyye Haricindeki Efraddan Silah İstimaline Kaabiliyetli Bulunanların Suret-i Celb ve İstihdamları ve Bunlardan Bedel-i Nakdî Kabulü Hakkındaki Layiha-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 369-370.

¹⁵¹⁶ BOA, DH.SN.THR, 56/8, 17 Zilka'de 1332 [7 October 1914].

¹⁵¹⁷ “Efrâd-ı İhtiyatiyye ve Müstahfazadan Bedel-i Nakdî Vermiş Olanların İhtiyaç-ı Mübhem Halinde Taht-ı Silaha Alınması Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyah-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 350-351; and “Efrad-ı İhtiyatiyye ve Müstahfazadan Bedel-i Nakdî Vermiş Olanların İhtiyaç-ı Mübrem Halinde Taht-ı Silâha Alınması Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *ibid.*, pp. 421-422. See also, “Efrâd-ı İhtiyâtiyye ve Müstahfazadan Bedel-i Nakdî Vermiş Olanların İhtiyac-ı Mübrem Halinde Taht-ı Silaha Alınması Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat,” 6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1332 / 21 Zilhicce 1334 [19 October 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8,

December 1915 that those civil servants whose military service had been postponed be forced to pay money, although this proposal was rejected by the Military Council of the Ottoman parliament on 20 January 1917.¹⁵¹⁸ It was also proposed by the government that a tax be paid by those men who did not do military service during the war years for various reasons in 1917.¹⁵¹⁹

Despite the efforts of the state to conscript more and more men, the number of deserters increased as the war progressed. In 1917, it was estimated that 300,000 men had deserted from the army.¹⁵²⁰ This number increased to 500,000 by 1918.¹⁵²¹ According to some estimates, this number was between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 when all the deserters in Anatolia and Arab provinces were calculated.¹⁵²² Although about three million men were conscripted throughout the war, the state had great difficulty to keep them in the army and the total number of soldiers in the Ottoman army did not exceed 800,000 at any time.¹⁵²³

There were various reasons behind the loss of soldiers and desertions. Some of the deserters were 17 to 18 year old boys who were not strong enough to survive the difficult military conditions.¹⁵²⁴ Most of the deserters did so not because they feared death, but because they suffered from hunger due to the acute lack of food.¹⁵²⁵

p. 1334; and "Efrâd-ı İhtiyâtiyye ve Müstahfazadan Bedel-i Nakdî Vermiş Olanların İhtiyac-ı Mübrem Halinde Taht-ı Silaha Alınması Hakkında Kanûn," 19 Mart 1333 / 25 Cemâziyelevvel 1335 [19 March 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, p. 142.

¹⁵¹⁸ "Bu Seferberlikte Memuriyet ve Hizmetleri Dolayısıyla Hizmet-i Askeriyyeden İstisna Edilen Kimseler Hakkında Yozgat Mebusu Şakir Beyin Teklif-i Kanunî Lâyihası," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 365-367.

¹⁵¹⁹ "Mafuviyyet-i Askeriyye Vergisi Kanunu Layihası," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, pp. 321-329; and "Muâfiyyet-i Askeriyye Vergisi Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye," *ibid.*, pp. 404-406.

¹⁵²⁰ Avcioğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, Vol. 3, p. 951.

¹⁵²¹ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in World War*, pp. 261-262; and Hikmet, *et al.*, *Milli Azadlık Savaşı Anıları*, p. 13.

¹⁵²² Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 150.

¹⁵²³ Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 117.

¹⁵²⁴ Süleyman Nuri, *Çanakkale Siperlerinden TKP Yönetimine*, p. 120.

¹⁵²⁵ Aziz Kaylan, *Çanakkale İçinde Vurdular Beni* ([İstanbul]: Tercüman, [1976]), pp. 121-122. For some oral history accounts of the hunger of Ottoman soldiers during World War I see also, Cahit

There were soldiers who had to eat whatever they found, such as their boots or horse manure in order to survive.¹⁵²⁶ Starvation was so common that in order to emphasize this situation army doctors wrote in the reports of dead soldiers due to hunger, “death due to the stopping of the heart due to general weakness” (*umumî zaâfiyet neticesi tevâkkuf-ı kalpten vefat*).¹⁵²⁷

The clothing of the army was also deplorable.¹⁵²⁸ Because they did not have sufficient clothing and ammunition, about 90 percent of the Ottoman soldiers perished or deserted during the Sarıkamış battle. Of the 150,000 soldiers of the 3rd Army only 12,400 survived.¹⁵²⁹ Lack of transportation, insufficient roads, and lack of enough sanitary measures were also among the factors which increased the death toll and the number of deserters.¹⁵³⁰ Halil Ataman wrote in his memoirs that during his military service in the Eastern provinces one day he saw a hill made up of about 2500 corpses of soldiers. They had died due to epidemics and were to be buried in mass graves. He was told that the grave he saw was just the fourth one of many other mass graves of soldiers.¹⁵³¹

Soldiers’ conditions were so bad that some of them tried to evade military service by cutting off their fingers.¹⁵³² In a confidential report Mustafa Kemal wrote to Enver Pasha on 20 September 1917 that even the best-organized divisions had lost half of their soldiers due to sickness or desertions. According to Ahmed Emin, there

Önder, *Doğumunun 100. Yılında Atatürk’ün Silah Arkadaşları: Yaşayan Çanakkaleli Muharıpler* (İstanbul: Yazır Matbaacılık Koll. Şti., 1981), pp. 22-23, 78-79.

¹⁵²⁶ Süleyman Nuri, *Çanakkale Siperlerinden TKP Yönetimine*, pp. 132-133.

¹⁵²⁷ Sunata, *Gelibolu’dan Kafkaslara*, p. 299.

¹⁵²⁸ Süreyya Temel, *Harp ve Sosyal Davalarımız* (İstanbul: İktisadi Yürüyüş Matbaası ve Neşriyat Yurdu, 1947), p. 12.

¹⁵²⁹ Mehmet Arif Ölçen, *Vetluga Irmağı: Çarlık Rusyasında Bir Türk Savaş Tutsağının Anıları, 1916-1918* (Ankara: Ümit Yayıncılık, 1994), pp. 22-34.

¹⁵³⁰ For the insufficiency of the roads, see Pamuk, “The Ottoman Economy in World War I,” p. 121.

¹⁵³¹ Ataman, *Esaret Yılları*, p. 46.

¹⁵³² Ergun Göze, *Rusya’da Üç Esaret Yılı: Bir Türk Subayının Hatıraları*, told by Ahmet Göze (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1989), pp. 51-52.

were so many deserters there would be left nobody to fight during the National Struggle because of these negative conditions which cost the soldiers' lives.¹⁵³³

Although all of these reasons played significant roles in desertions, soldier's anxiety about their families had special importance. Soldiers who were worried about the situation of their families without a breadwinner deserted the army in high numbers. Many soldiers had to live for years without any news from home or heard news, which were not reassuring.¹⁵³⁴ Many of the letters sent to soldier's families were standard in wartime conditions because the soldiers were illiterate and because of war censure.¹⁵³⁵ Nevertheless, soldiers probably were able to learn directly or indirectly something about the situation of their families from other soldiers in their division because most of the divisions were made up from men from the same district or village.¹⁵³⁶ In addition, the newly conscripted ones functioned as carriers of recent bad news from the home front to the soldiers. Consequently, many soldiers left the army and there were soldiers who deserted the army only to work in their own fields.¹⁵³⁷

The politicians of the time, too, were aware of the anxiety of the soldiers.¹⁵³⁸ On 24 October 1916 the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that as a result of their investigations they had found that the disorderly payment of the pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner was an important reason behind the desertions. He added that many civil servants refused to pay pensions to these families under false pretenses and argued that for that reason

¹⁵³³ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 263-264. See also, Erik J. Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Ottoman Army in World War I," *Turcica* 28 (1996), p. 257.

¹⁵³⁴ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 261.

¹⁵³⁵ Necati İnceoğlu, *Siper Mektupları* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2001), pp. 78-80.

¹⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵³⁷ Kars, *Milli Mücadele'de Kayseri*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵³⁸ Enver Pasha recalls in his memoirs that long before World War I, on the eve of the Revolution of 1908, he had met a private soldier who was worried about his family left without any breadwinner. Halil Erdoğan Cengiz, ed., *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), pp. 100-101.

soldiers who heard bad news about the economic situation of their families deserted the army. He demanded that these civil servants be warned and if they continued their actions they were to be sent to martial courts for the crime of facilitating the desertions.¹⁵³⁹ Finding this request legitimate, the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to Enver Pasha on 31 October 1916 that if there was no legitimate ground for the civil servant's incapacity to distribute the pensions they would be found guilty.¹⁵⁴⁰ A circular letter was sent about this situation to all provinces.¹⁵⁴¹

Women's Demonstrations against the War, and Resistance to the Conscriptions

Since the conscriptions meant pauperization, most of the women who were impoverished with the war mobilization opposed or disapproved the war, openly or covertly. This showed itself in various ways. First of all, women played an important role in the decisions of the government to ameliorate their situation to some extent by constantly petitioning about the problems in the payment of their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner, as stated in Chapter Five. Furthermore, there were even women who claimed they lived in misery and demanded that their husbands be demobilized immediately. For example, Hatice Tâlât, the wife of former tax collector Yusuf Ağâh Efendi who was a volunteer in the Ottoman army, petitioned the parliament to receive the former salary of her husband or for his demobilization and appointment to the same position.¹⁵⁴² Similarly, on 1 January

¹⁵³⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 23/51, 9 Muharrem 1335 [5 November 1916].

¹⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 104/40, 4 Muharrem 1335 [31 October 1916]. See also, BOA, DH.HMŞ, 23/124, 3 Muharrem 1335 [30 October 1916]; BOA, DH.UMVM, 124/42, 5 Muharrem 1335 [1 November 1916]; and BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M, 26/3, 5 Muharrem 1335 [1 November 1916].

¹⁵⁴² "Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstidâ Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidâları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, pp. 305-306.

1918, Mazlume, who lived in Kadıköy, requested that her husband be demobilized or that she be allotted the retirement pension of his deceased father.¹⁵⁴³

Pleading, complaining, using tears or all the means they had in their hands, women tried to keep men at home to prevent their families' economic collapse after the conscriptions. İsmail Hakkı [Sunata] recalls how his aunt asked him on his leave as a soldier who would take care of her and her children in case her brother, who was also İsmail Hakkı's father, the only breadwinner of the family, died of sickness.¹⁵⁴⁴ Likewise, when three brothers were conscripted at the same time and there was left no male breadwinners behind, the aunt of a man named Şevket tried to persuade him to stay at home, pleading with him and offering to pay his military exemption money with the gold coins she possessed.¹⁵⁴⁵ Aware of the helplessness and such attempts of women, the decision-makers had enacted a law during the war years according to which the third child that would be called for arms could be exempted from conscription if a family had already had two members died in battle.¹⁵⁴⁶

Rather than remaining silent or showing their discontent with the conscriptions in more covert ways, some women participated in public anti-war demonstrations. The *New York Times* reported on 26 November 1914 that Turkish women had staged a hostile demonstration in İstanbul against the war and they had demanded the return of their conscripted husbands and sons.¹⁵⁴⁷ On 14 December 1914 the same newspaper reported an anti-war protest of Turkish women, this time in the Eastern provinces. In this demonstration, the Turkish women in Erzurum had thrown stones at the government offices and they had rioted for several hours. When

¹⁵⁴³ "Meclis-i Mebusâna İtâ Edilip Haklarında İstidâ Encümenince Mukarrerat İttihaz Edilen İstidâları Mübeyyin Haftalık Cetveldir," *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 4, p. 336.

¹⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Tekin, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Yurtsever, *Kadirli Tarihi*, p. 134.

¹⁵⁴⁷ "Turkish Boatmen Mutiny. Women Make Hostile Demonstration Before German Consulate," *New York Times* (26 November 1914).

they had been threatened by the gendarmerie they had torn off their own clothes and walked on the streets in almost a state of nudity. This way they had evaded the gendarmerie, who had retired in obedience to Islamic law. Women later on had forced the governor to send a telegram to İstanbul protesting the war.¹⁵⁴⁸

In another demonstration which happened in İstanbul in March 1916, Turkish women broke into railway yards when troop trains were about to leave and they shouted slogans against sending the men “to their deaths.” They also threw themselves on the rails in front of the trains. The authorities did not use physical force against these women fearing that it could cause a rebellion among the soldiers and they took the conscripted men out of the cars to calm the women down. Later, the soldiers were sent off secretly at night to their units.¹⁵⁴⁹

Women also resisted the discrimination between the German and Turkish soldiers. Lewis Einstein wrote in his diary on 5 May 1915 that a deputation of Turkish ladies, after visiting the Goeben battleship anchored at Stenia [İstinye], boldly asked the German soldiers why this German ship remained out of the war while their husbands, sons and brothers had been sent to the battle, and protested this situation.¹⁵⁵⁰

Women’s protest of the conscriptions and its results could be as simple as showing only how they felt after their men’s deaths or rejecting the war propaganda and the state’s assistance to soldiers’ families. Abdülkadir Kemali remembered that when as an army officer on duty he had showed war films to hundreds of peasant women in Bilecik for propaganda, the women had started screaming and many of

¹⁵⁴⁸ “Turkish Women Revolt. Throw Stones in Anti-War Riots – 20,000 Christians in Peril,” *New York Times* (14 December 1914).

¹⁵⁴⁹ “Riots Reported in Turkey: People Discover German Success at Verdun Is Exaggerated,” *New York Times* (6 March 1916).

¹⁵⁵⁰ Lewis Einstein, *Inside Constantinople: A Diplomat’s Diary during the Dardanelles Expedition, April-September 1915* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1918), p. 21.

them had fainted. He had had great difficulty in pacifying those women who yelled “so this is the way that our husbands, our fathers die!”¹⁵⁵¹

Feruze Dursun from a village in Bursa also recalled how she had protested the pension given to her for her martyr father. When two soldiers came to their house to inform them of his death, Feruze’s mother had fainted and Feruze had refused the pension, saying “I cannot eat his bloodstained money” (*onun kanlı parasını yiyemem*).¹⁵⁵² The families of those deserters who were caught and killed by a firing squad as punishment also protested the death of their sons and husbands. İsmail Hakkı [Sunata] wrote in his memoirs that a few hours after such a punishment, the wives and mothers of the dead soldiers came to mourn them, laying themselves on the death corpses, sang a local lament song and took the blood of their beloved ones with their fingers and licked it.¹⁵⁵³

Another group of women who strongly resisted the conscriptions were refugees, because being unsettled and having no connections in the newly arrived districts they were in great danger. To provide time for the settlement of refugee families a law was enacted on 1 March 1916 which provided refugee men with three months of postponement of military service after they had arrived in Ottoman lands.¹⁵⁵⁴ This was a small period of postponement compared to the previous law which had allowed refugees to wait for six years for conscription.¹⁵⁵⁵ The

¹⁵⁵¹ “Bizim kocalarımız, babalarımız da demek böyle ölüyorlar.” Ögütçü, ed., *Orhan Kemal’in Babası Abdülkadir Kemali’nin Anıları*, pp. 209-210.

¹⁵⁵² Yüceer, *Tanıkların Anlatılarıyla Bursa Tarihi*, p. 325.

¹⁵⁵³ Sunata, *Gelibolu’dan Kafkaslara*, p. 446.

¹⁵⁵⁴ “Muhacirinin Mükellefiyeti Hakkında – 16 Cemâziyelâhir 1332 Tarihli Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kânûn-u Muvakkatına Müzeyyel – Kânûn,” 16 Şubat 1331 / 25 Rebîülâhir 1334 [29 February 1916] *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, p. 440.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, p. 51.

government also decided in 1917 that all refugee men of military service age who had left behind their families in their hometowns be immediately conscripted.¹⁵⁵⁶

Refugee men together with their women resisted the military conscription. During the winter of 1916-1917 certain refugee families in Trabzon province did not settle down, but lived in marsh areas to evade the conscription. On 3 January 1917 the Trabzon governor informed the government that this way the migrants jeopardized their lives in winter conditions and caused harm to the state treasury. To smooth the progress of their settlement, the governor suggested the government postpone the conscription of the refugee men at least to the month of June.¹⁵⁵⁷

Another request was made by the Erzurum governor on 19 January 1917 who claimed that the conscription of refugees could end up in disaster for them in winter conditions. He added that this could also result with the desertion of the refugee soldiers. He requested extra time for the settlement of refugees and argued that otherwise their families, with no men to direct them, would dissolve. The Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote to the Ministry of War on 12 February 1917 to ask whether the army had found this request legitimate.¹⁵⁵⁸

The Ministry of War wrote on 5 April 1917 that the postponement of the refugees' military service was being misused. The refugee families often stayed not more than the period of postponement in any place. They frequently moved from one place to another to benefit from the postponement period each time, thereby avoiding conscription. As a result, they lived in a disorderly fashion and the Ottoman army could not use them in its war effort. Therefore, the Ministry of War proposed that the postponement of their military service be cancelled and only those who had paid to

¹⁵⁵⁶ “Muhacirinin Mükellefiyetine Mütedair 25 Rebiülâhır 1334 Tarihli Kanuna Müzeyyel Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye,” *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, p. 352.

¹⁵⁵⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 26/59, 13 Rebiülevvel 1335 [7 January 1917].

¹⁵⁵⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 28/43, 29 Rebiülâhır 1335 [22 February 1917].

be exempted stay as civilians. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, approving this proposal, wrote to the Refugee Department (*Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti*) about the cancellation of the refugees' postponement of conscription.¹⁵⁵⁹

This decision caused important problems for refugee women and children. On 28 October 1917 the Ministry of Internal Affairs received a telegram from an immigration officer in Ankara in which it was stated that due to the immediate conscriptions of refugees coming from Çorum to Ankara, women and children who had remained behind were left in a desperate situation. The officer proposed that the conscription of these men be delayed, and after they became soldiers, they were kept in the districts in which they had been settled to assist their families if necessary.¹⁵⁶⁰

The situation of refugees in especially the eastern provinces was also discussed in the parliament in Ankara during the National Struggle period. On 23 October 1920 the Bitlis deputy Yusuf Ziya Bey and his colleagues had proposed that the refugees be conscripted six months after they had been settled. This was discussed and accepted by the parliament on 25 June 1921. Two other postponements were made for the refugees in the eastern provinces on 11 December 1921, and on 3 May 1922.¹⁵⁶¹

Women's Role in Desertions, and the Punishment of the Families of Deserters

Women also took an active role in desertions. They frequently bribed the authorities in order to hide the deserters. Furthermore, punishing the deserters' families was an important leverage for the Ottoman army to defer further desertions even when they

¹⁵⁵⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 31/41, 1 Receb 1335 [23 April 1917].

¹⁵⁶⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 41/12, 18 Muharrem 1336 [3 November 1917].

¹⁵⁶¹ Ögün, *Unutulmuş Bir Göç Trajedisi*, pp. 219-221.

were not involved with hiding the soldiers. Therefore, women became an important part of the fight against desertions during World War I.

A contemporary observer, Bekir Eliçin, wrote in his novel on war years titled *Onlar Savaşırken* (While They Were Fighting) about peasant women who cooperated with the village headman, had sexual intercourse with him, or bribed him in order to persuade him to be silent about their deserter husbands or sons.¹⁵⁶² Women used this strategy not only for protecting the deserters, but for providing one or two weeks of leave for their soldier men as well.¹⁵⁶³

According to Ahmet Cevdet Çamurdan, who experienced those years, together with the corrupted civil servants, the gendarmerie also accepted bribes and especially the commanders of the recruiting offices acquired hundreds of thousands of Ottoman liras during the long war years in this manner.¹⁵⁶⁴ Archive documents reveal that many headmen and boards of aldermen helped the deserters hide rather than inform the army about them.¹⁵⁶⁵ It is very probable that some of these locally influential people accepted bribes, which were generally paid by women as deserter soldiers' families.

Because many women helped to hide deserters, in order to find these soldiers, the houses in which their families lived were searched with no notice at night.¹⁵⁶⁶ Women resisted such attacks by complaining about violence used against them. For instance, deserter Mehmet's wife complained that the Ağlasun sub-district director Tevfik Efendi had beaten her.¹⁵⁶⁷ The deserter Mustafa's wife, named Medine, also complained that the İzmir police officer Halil Efendi had forcibly entered her house

¹⁵⁶² See for instance, Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 20-21, 37, 45, 65-66.

¹⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Çamurdan, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Doğu Kilikya Olayları*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁶⁵ BOA, DH.HMŞ, 3/1-45, 29 Safer 1335 [25 December 1916]; BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb, 12/42, 9 Rebülevvel 1335 [3 January 1917]; and BOA, ŞD, 1373/9, 4 Ramazân 1338 [22 May 1920].

¹⁵⁶⁶ BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb, 20/33, 18 Zilka'de 1335 [5 September 1917].

¹⁵⁶⁷ BOA, DH.HMŞ, 3/1-69, 6 Şa'bân 1335 [28 May 1917].

and that she had suffered a miscarriage.¹⁵⁶⁸ Whether these women were telling the truth or not, these complaints can also be interpreted as women's strategy to evade further attacks due to their corporation with or help to their male relatives.

Aware of the direct or indirect role of soldiers' families in desertions and as an attempt to dissuade soldiers from desertion, the state and the army punished the families of the deserters in several ways. For example, those poor women whose male relatives were absent from their units were deprived of their pensions of soldiers' families without a breadwinner; their properties were confiscated; or they were exiled to another district. However, the authorities did sometimes not approve these punishments unanimously, and in some cases, women could find strategies to mitigate their penalties.

The most unanimously accepted punishment of the deserters' families was cutting off of their pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner. This was approved by both the government and the army. In June 1915 the İstanbul Governorate asked the government whether it was possible to cut this pension, citing article 49 of the obligatory military service law, which permitted giving it until the soldier was demobilized. On 24 July 1915, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, after taking both the opinion of the Ministry of War and Ministry of Finance, replied that the pensions could be cut at the end of the month during which the soldier had left the army.¹⁵⁶⁹

The deserter's families also were punished by the army by confiscation of their properties or assets and their eviction from the houses in which they lived. On 23 June 1915, the Ministry of War wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the Mosul army corps commander had requested the confiscation of the properties of the

¹⁵⁶⁸ BOA, ŞD, 1324/5, 20 Şa'bân 1340 [18 April 1922].

¹⁵⁶⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 88/3, 4/1, 13 Ramazân 1333 [25 July 1915].

deserters' families in order to decrease the number of deserters and make them return to the army. This request was accepted without objection by the government on 26 June 1915.¹⁵⁷⁰ The evacuation of the houses, however, was a much more contested punishment. An official correspondence between the Aydın governor and the government shows that it was an issue of conflict between the local governments and the army units. On 12 December 1917, explaining that this had been demanded from him by the army in his province, the Aydın governor asked the central government whether or not the evacuation of the buildings in which deserters' or absentee conscripts' families lived was found suitable. The Ministry of Internal Affairs replied on 22 December 1917 that this request of the army was unacceptable.¹⁵⁷¹

Finally, the families of deserters were exiled to other provinces as punishment and to discourage further desertions. This punishment, which was evidently a severe penalty, was the most debated among the administrators and military authorities and was resisted by the lower-class women who were sent into exile. In this resistance, women could receive the support of the government more easily because the exile of women and children created additional social and economic problems. In one case, family members who were exiled complained in a petition also about their arrest. The deserter Hacı Mustafa's twelve year old sister Bedriye and her brother petitioned the government, complaining that they had been under custody for the previous two months. On 2 April 1918, the government demanded an investigation from the Karesi governor into their situation. On 22 April 1918, it was reported that Bedriye was not under custody but under surveillance according to the information provided by the local district governorate, while no information was provided about the arrest

¹⁵⁷⁰ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 14/10, 8 Ramazân 1333 [20 July 1915].

¹⁵⁷¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 45/58, 24 Rebiülâhır 1336 [7 January 1918].

of her brother.¹⁵⁷² It is understood that Bedriye had attempted to challenge the actions taken against her by the local government by exaggerating her situation.

The official documents about a deserter's wife elucidate how the government disapproved of the exile of deserters' families because of both their resistance and its economic cost. According to this document, of three deserters from different villages of Bolu two of them had been arrested and their wives had been exiled. The wife of the third one who had escaped was also exiled to Niğde and her cost of travel, which was 1000 piasters, had been paid by the government. On 22 October 1918, the government decided to end her exile and requested this from the Bolu governor. At the same time, the government requested from the civil servants in Edirne, a province in which deserters' families had similar problems, to avoid any exile due to the financial costs of exile. A circular letter was sent to all provinces to this effect.¹⁵⁷³

Some women also struggled against their banishment using strong discursive strategies in their petitions. Emine, a deserter's wife who sent a telegram about her situation from Ayaş district of Ankara to the Ottoman parliament, sets a remarkable example. Rather than appealing simply for mercy, she had interpreted her situation in a manner that the army and the state authorities could find legitimate. Emine explained that she accepted herself and must be accepted by any Muslim to be divorced from her deserter husband and that she had gone to her father's house as a divorced Muslim woman, although at the time that she had sent her telegram, 9 February 1916, Muslim women living in the Ottoman Empire had not acquired the right of divorce. She legitimized her situation, arguing that a person who had deserted the army could not be accepted as Muslim according to the fatwa of the Caliph. Therefore, taking into account the Muslim canon law that marriage between

¹⁵⁷² BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb, 36/2, 16 Receb 1336 [27 April 1918].

¹⁵⁷³ BOA, DH.EUM.6.Şb, 46/12, 6 Safer 1337 [11 November 1918].

a Muslim woman and non-Muslim man was by no means legally possible, she considered herself to be divorced. She requested that her banishment be renounced. The state authorities, after discussing Emine's situation and making an investigation to validate the content of her telegram, accepted her demand. Furthermore, the 5th Army announced to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 15 March 1916 that it renounced the exile of deserters' families as a whole.¹⁵⁷⁴

During the National Struggle as well, the national government continued punishing the families of deserters. A law was proposed to the Grand National Assembly for the exile of deserters' families in November 1921.¹⁵⁷⁵ As a punishment and a means of intimidation, the houses of the deserters also were burned or destroyed by the national forces that searched for them.¹⁵⁷⁶ Deserters' families were forgiven and their punishments of exile were ended in December 1922 only some months after the Greek army left Anatolia.¹⁵⁷⁷

For the duration of this dissertation, no records were found about women who had resisted the conscriptions during the National Struggle, although women's support to the war effort is studied in detail in many sources on this period. However, it is very probable that women's resistance similar to that of World War I might have happened, especially in those regions which rebelled against the National Struggle or unoccupied regions.¹⁵⁷⁸ Whether women supported it or not, desertions were frequent during this epoch as well. When the National Struggle started, some peasants openly

¹⁵⁷⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 89/8, 1/11, 11 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [16 March 1916].

¹⁵⁷⁵ Although this proposal is mentioned in the catalogues of the Prime Ministry Republican archives as BCA, Dosya: 5417, Fon Kodu: 30..10.0.0, Yer No: 55.370..18., 26 November 1921, I could not find any law in *Düstûr* concerning this issue.

¹⁵⁷⁶ İbrahim Çolak, *Milli Mücadele Esnasında Kuvâ-yı Seyyare Kumandanlığına Ait Hâtıratım*, ed. Orhan Hülagü (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1996), pp. 81-82, 94; and Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 182-183.

¹⁵⁷⁷ BCA, Sayı: 2048, Dosya: 54-9, Fon Kodu: 30..18.1.1, Yer No: 6.39..8., Dec. 5, 1922. See also "Teb'it Edilmiş Olan Asker Ailelerinin Masrafları Hakkında Heyeti Umumiye Kararı," 20 Kânûn-u Evvel 1338 [20 December 1922], *Düstûr*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 3, p. 180.

¹⁵⁷⁸ For these rebellions, see Cemil Hakan Korkmaz, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın İkinci Cephesi: İç İsyanlar* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 2008).

declared that they no longer wanted to fight.¹⁵⁷⁹ Some battalions deserted as a whole even with their guards while the gendarmes released the deserters in return for a small bribe.¹⁵⁸⁰ In a secret session of the National Parliament, Refet Pasha confessed in 1921 that despite the punishments, about 200,000 soldiers had deserted in just six months.¹⁵⁸¹ Although the men's own subjective reasons and experiences played the greatest role in these large-scale desertions, the suffering of their women and families on the home front must have played a role in the large number of men's unwillingness to participate in the Independence War. Official-nationalist historiography generally gives records of a number of female war heroes, who other than sending their sons and husbands to the front, fought themselves in gangs for the salvation of their occupied fatherland. Nevertheless, we need further investigations to know in detail about those women who resisted new conscriptions.

In brief, women challenged the conscription of men in İstanbul and many other regions of Anatolia by using all means from tears to open demonstrations. Women frequently complained about the conscription of adolescent boys, or men older than the age of 45. They also demanded the cancellation or postponements of service due to economic reasons. Many women feared that they would be deprived of their only breadwinners if their men died or were disabled. The conscriptions had a more immediate negative impact on refugee women, who were not even settled down and who even dared to live in marsh areas to evade it. All of these fears forced both the Ottoman government in World War I and the National government in later years to enact laws to protect them. On the other hand, the government took strict anti-desertion measures, which caused widespread grievance among soldiers' families.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Avciođlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, Vol. 3, pp. 909-910.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Mehmet Arif, *Anadolu İnkılâbı*, pp. 11-12. See also Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, pp. 185-187.

¹⁵⁸¹ Özdemir, *Tekâlif-i Milliye*, p. 74.

Women played an important role in desertions and they became the target of punishment. Many of them found ways to hide the deserters or mitigate their penalties with methods that ranged from bribing the authorities to using strong discursive strategies. Yet, women's discontent and financial costs of the measures such as exile or arrest led wartime governments to soften these measures in time.

Resistance to the State's Control of Women's Morality and Marriage Life for War Mobilization

Controlling the sexual lives of women at the home front was one of the main priorities in all combatant countries, as was discussed in Chapter Two. This was important both for protecting the soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases and for ensuring them that their wives or fiancées led modest lives while they were fighting at the front. The war effort of the Ottoman Empire also required such control of women's sexuality, because some soldiers had to be away from home for about a decade due to the continuous warfare from 1911 onwards. The government's concern to restrict women's sexual lives and to protect family life was aimed at guaranteeing the conservation of social and moral order on the home front and the resulting demoralization of soldiers. The laws and regulations for this purpose generally made women's lives more difficult. Especially the low income and poor women, who severely felt the lack of their husbands or fathers, mostly for economic reasons, were victims of these measures. They did not easily accept the state's wartime control of their sexuality and marriage life.

Measures against Venereal Diseases as a Means to Control Women's Morality and
Women's Resistance

One of the first methods used for controlling women's morality were the measures introduced against venereal diseases. More than protecting the civilians, these measures also had a military importance because venereal diseases impeded the strength of the Ottoman army. The state generally discovered the syphilitic men during the medical examination at the recruiting offices and the military service of these men was immediately postponed while they were sent to the hospitals to be treated.¹⁵⁸² A notification dated 4 November 1915 of the Directorate General of Health (*Sihhiye Müdiriyyet-i Umûmîyyesi*) stated that these soldiers were sent to specific hospitals in the capital city while in the provinces they were sent to state or municipal hospitals and if no such hospital existed, to the municipal departments.¹⁵⁸³

Because venereal diseases were transmitted mostly by sexual intercourse, the measures against them turned into a fight to protect Ottoman moral codes and they discriminated between men and women. In general, the Ottoman authorities enacted specific laws to prevent the venereal diseases. These laws especially focused on controlling prostitutes, by means of obligatory medical examination, rather than their male clients. For some poor Turkish women who entered into clandestine prostitution temporarily due to poverty before their soldier husbands returned from the front, these measures created further problems by revealing their identities and by permanently criminalizing them.

¹⁵⁸² BOA, DH.UMVM, 37/2, 3 Receb 1334 [6 May 1916].

¹⁵⁸³ BOA, DH.EUM.LVZ, 30/103, 26 Zilhicce 1333 [4 November 1915]. See also, BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 156/14, 21 Muharrem 1334 [29 November 1915]; and BOA, DH.UMVM, 124/6, 21 Muharrem 1334 [29 November 1915]. For another hospital for this purpose see also BOA, DH.UMVM, 95/52, 3 Safer 1335 [29 November 1916].

As a result of the acceptance of venereal diseases merely as a moral problem, the regulation of 18 October 1915 especially targeted women who engaged in clandestine prostitution. The criminalization of women in the struggle against venereal diseases was so evident that the Directorate General of the Police in İstanbul and special organizations attached to the government in the provinces were held responsible for detecting and controlling all of the women involved in prostitution.¹⁵⁸⁴ Accordingly, all brothels which were opened in places other than those specified by the Prefecture of İstanbul (*Şehremâneti*) and the municipalities in other provinces were to be closed.¹⁵⁸⁵ Those women making their living with prostitution individually who did not work within a brothel also had to take a certificate and they were obliged to accept their clients in the districts in which brothels were allowed.¹⁵⁸⁶ The regulation also prohibited the prostitutes from soliciting on the streets and their molestation of men for the same purpose.¹⁵⁸⁷ Those people who encouraged women into clandestine prostitution were to be discovered by the secret police and to punished.¹⁵⁸⁸

Because the capital city was where the brothels were most organized, the prostitutes in İstanbul were particularly controlled. The owner of each brothel had to note the name, nickname, age, nationality, physical depiction and address of the prostitutes he or she employed. Each prostitute had a medical examination book to which her photograph was attached and her age, nationality and the result of her

¹⁵⁸⁴ “Emrâz-ı Zühreviyyenin Men’-i Sirâyeti Hakkında Nizâmname,” 5 Teşrîn-i Evvel 1331 / 9 Zilhicce 1333 [18 October 1915] *Düstür*, Vol. 7, Tertîb-i Sâni, pp. 769-770.

¹⁵⁸⁵ *Emrâz-ı Zühreviyyenin Men’-i Sirâyetine Dâir Neşrolunan Nizâmnameye Mütealîk Ta’limâtname* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1332 [1916-1917]), p. 4.

¹⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

medical examination was mentioned. Those women who refused medical examination were reported by the doctors,¹⁵⁸⁹ and they were forced to pay a fine.¹⁵⁹⁰

Venereal diseases were so common that the state searched for syphilitic women even in jail. On 20 December 1919, the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanded information from the Directorate General of Prisons and Houses of Detention (*Hapishâne-i Umûmî ve Tevkîfhâne Müdiriyyeti*) on the epidemics and “especially” (*bilhassa*) the venereal diseases among the women prisoners and requested that it be written in a record book.¹⁵⁹¹

Those women who were found ill were required to be treated in special hospitals which looked more like prisons and which could make the women patients sent to them by the Sanitary Bureau weep and rebel.¹⁵⁹² The Beyoğlu Women’s Hospital (*Beyoğlu Nisâ Hastahânesi*) accepted only non-Muslim women, while Muslim women were only accepted at the Haseki Women’s Hospital (*Haseki Nisâ Hastahânesi*).¹⁵⁹³ Archive documents reveal that women attempted to escape from these hospitals frequently. In one case, many women in one of the hospitals assigned to treat venereal diseases of women in Şişli escaped from the hospital after it was burned down in a suspicious fire started by women patients in August 1921.¹⁵⁹⁴

Prostitution by Muslim women was also censored by the state for war-related reasons. For instance, on 11 September 1919, an article published in *Times* reported on the increasing number of women who had venereal diseases in İstanbul and claimed that about 40,000 women had such diseases in a city of one million inhabitants. Arguing that this was a great number, the article stated that unlike

¹⁵⁸⁹ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyeye*, Vol. 6, pp. 3303-3306.

¹⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3313.

¹⁵⁹¹ BOA, DH.MB.HPS, 98/35, 22 Rebûlevvel 1338 [15 December 1919].

¹⁵⁹² Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, pp. 363–365.

¹⁵⁹³ Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-ı Belediyeye*, Vol. 6, pp. 3469-3470.

¹⁵⁹⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 55/57, 5 Zilhicce 1339 [10 August 1921]; and BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ, 55/58, 5 Zilhicce 1339 [10 August 1921].

Kastamonu and Konya, where venereal diseases had a long history, the capital city had not suffered from this problem to a great extent before 1913. The article also said that many Muslim women evaded medical examination, because they were clandestine prostitutes. The Ottoman government felt the necessity to falsify this article.¹⁵⁹⁵

Indeed, venereal diseases were quite frequent among Muslim women. For instance the percentage of Muslim patients at the Şişli Women's Hospital (*Şişli Nisâ Hastahânesi*) was very high as the statistics between 1917 and 1920 show. In 1917 among 2512 patients, 1416 of them were Muslim; in 1918 Muslim women were 1675 of the 2841 patients; in 1919 the ratio was 1879 to 3378 and in 1920, it was 1785 for a total of 3132 patients.¹⁵⁹⁶

The application of the regulation against venereal diseases created problems due to both women's insistence on continuing clandestine prostitution and lack of effective control mechanisms. The government sent a notification to all provinces which demanded the distribution of this regulation to all police stations by April 1916,¹⁵⁹⁷ and requested information from the state inspectors about how this regulation was implemented on 5 October 1916.¹⁵⁹⁸ As early as 25 November 1916, the government realized that there were important problems with the application of the regulation throughout the country.¹⁵⁹⁹ Again, the press also reported how the measures to contain prostitution and venereal diseases had failed in İzmir. The local government had to close the brothels in the Ziba Street and then to send the prostitutes to their parents by November 1918, because these brothels had not been

¹⁵⁹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-9/1-46, 7 Safer 1338 [1 November 1919].

¹⁵⁹⁶ Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 244. See for all figures, Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, p. 366.

¹⁵⁹⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.KLU, 16/24, 10 Cemâziyelâhir 1334 [14 April 1916].

¹⁵⁹⁸ BOA, DH.EUM.KLU, 11/51, 7 Zilhicce 1334 [5 October 1916].

¹⁵⁹⁹ BOA, DH.EUM.VRK, 17/6, 29 Muharrem 1335 [25 November 1916].

inspected effectively and had become a source of venereal diseases in the city.¹⁶⁰⁰ Inspecting Muslim prostitutes was more difficult and in many cases not possible because Muslim women were guarded from the eyes of strangers.¹⁶⁰¹ Celal Nuri wrote in his book *Kadınlarımız* (Our Women), published on the eve of World War I in 1912, that even the government could not inspect Muslim prostitutes because the security officers could not enter into Muslim brothels and doctors had difficulty conducting examinations in these places.¹⁶⁰² Muslim women who engaged in clandestine prostitution individually or as group probably took advantage of this situation during the wartime.

Despite the attempts of the state to contain women's sexual lives, adultery or the prostitution of women and temporary marriages for economic reasons were also common in the provinces. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, a nationalist elite and writer of time, in his novel *Yaban* (Stranger), penned in 1932, described the Anatolian countryside from the eyes of its protagonist as a place of corruption where the number of adulterous women who hid deserters (*asker kaçağını koynunda saklayan zinâci kadınlar*) mushroomed.¹⁶⁰³ In his memoirs on his military service in World War I, İsmail Hakkı Sunata also wrote about an adulterous woman, the wife of a low-income miller who did not come home more than once in a week, in an Anatolian village. She slept with an army doctor with whom Sunata was acquainted and because she also slept with other men from whom she contracted a venereal disease, she passed it to the doctor.¹⁶⁰⁴

¹⁶⁰⁰ Berber, *Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁶⁰¹ See for example, Johnson, ed., *Constantinople To-day*, p. 365.

¹⁶⁰² Celal Nuri, *Kadınlarımız*, trans. from Ottoman Turkish by Özer Ozankaya (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993), p. 120.

¹⁶⁰³ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Yaban*, 40th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 110.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara*, pp. 434-435.

Sabri Özer also wrote about an anecdote of his father, who had been a soldier in World War I. After he had acquired a few days of leave from his commander he had gone to his village to visit his family and fiancée. Because the roads were not safe, he had had to pass one night in a village where nobody had opened the door to him except for a poor young woman who had secretly invited him in. This young woman had implicitly intended to have a sex with him and most likely to marry him, probably due to the lack of any male relative and breadwinners who supported her.¹⁶⁰⁵

Conservative intellectuals were especially critical about the state's failure to control women. For instance, Ahmed Şirani protested in the Islamic magazine *İ'tisâm* (Avoiding Sin) on 13 March 1919 that Turkish women prostituted themselves, because the state did not prevent them. He criticized how women were allowed to have certificates for prostitution and the state had opened brothels, parks and bazaars even in the neighborhood of mosques for this aim. He also quoted a rumor according to which the Shaykh al-Islam had responded to the Üsküdar Police Directorate's question of whether poor women should be protected by the state or new brothels opened, since it was not possible to feed the women and therefore they should be allowed to earn their living in other ways (*iâşeleri mümkün değildir; başka şekilde idâre-i maslahât eylesinler!*).

Temporary marriages in the provinces were another problem of which Ahmed Şirani disapproved. In an article he argued that the state allowed the soldiers to get married in those regions in which they did military service and therefore many soldiers had married other soldiers' wives. Because these soldiers left these women

¹⁶⁰⁵ Özer, *Toprağın Sancısı*, pp. 12-18.

at the end of their military service in that region, it emerged that many women had been used as prostitutes under the pretext of marriage.¹⁶⁰⁶

The State's Attempts to Control Women's Wartime Marriages
and Women's Resistance

A second attempt of the state to control women's morality and sexual lives was the enactment of new laws including the Decree on Family Law (*Hukûk-ı Âile Karâr-nâmesi*) of 1917, which gave the state more authority over matters of marriage and divorce. The Council of Ministers decided on the formation of a commission for the preparation of this law on the organization and registration of marriages and divorces on 21 February 1916.¹⁶⁰⁷ This decree was developed during a very significant time, when the intellectual and political elites feared the consequences of the demographic change and the increasing number of war widows. In the periodical *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), on 4 January 1917, an article written by Ziyetullah Nuşirevan on the demographic change in Eskişehir sub-province warned about the decrease of the male population in comparison to that of females. Furthermore, referring to the research done by the Eskişehir Statistic Administration (*Eskişehir İstâistik İdâresi*) in 1916 over a period of six months, it was claimed that about one eighth of all marriages in this sub-province had ended in divorce.¹⁶⁰⁸ On 21 June 1917 it also was reported in another article in the same periodical that the birth rates in Eskişehir were also very low while the death rate was very high for

¹⁶⁰⁶ Ahmed Şirani, "Kadınlığın Hayat-ı İctimaiesine İndirilen Darbeler – II," pp. 34-37. Quoted in Bulut, *İttihat ve Terakki'de*, Vol. 1, p. 97.

¹⁶⁰⁷ BOA, MV., 200/73, 16 Rebiülâhır 1334 [21 February 1916].

¹⁶⁰⁸ Ziyetullah Nuşirevan, "Türk Âleminde: Eskişehir Sancağında Nüfus Hareketleri," *Türk Yurdu* 11, No. 125 (22 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1332 [4 January 1917]), pp. 3288-3293.

men; 23.4 per thousand male and 8.2 per thousand female.¹⁶⁰⁹ The gap between the male and female deaths due to the war reduced the number of male breadwinners as husbands and forced many unmarried and unemployed women to lead delinquent ways of life as was discussed in Chapter Seven. As a result of the social problems these women created, other than the state, the local elites as well created associations which supported the marriage of poor women, considering it an effective way to fight with their poverty and prostitution. The Cide Marriage Association (*Cide Evlendirme Cemiyeti*) in Kastamonu was only one of these.¹⁶¹⁰

The attempts of the state to control women's marriage life during the war years failed. With the Decree on Family Law, the government tried to regularize the marriage issues of all subjects of the Empire and concerned not only the Muslim community, but the non-Muslims as well. Because it was not a radical step for the secularization of the laws about marriage, such as the Civil Code of 1926,¹⁶¹¹ and because it could not offer common laws for all religious groups, it had many shortcomings and incoherent articles.¹⁶¹² This legal regulation remained as a decree, and was never passed from the Ottoman parliament.¹⁶¹³ As a result of this and with

¹⁶⁰⁹ "Türk Âleminde," *Türk Yurdu* 12, No. 137 (21 Haziran 1333 [21 June 1917]).

¹⁶¹⁰ Açıksözcü Hüsni, *İstiklâl Harbinde Kastamonu*, p. 80.

¹⁶¹¹ Some scholars argue that this law could not bring any radical change because in the bad economic conditions of wartime the politicians tried to satisfy the conservatives. See Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile*, pp. 131, 140-141. See also, Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, "Aile Hukukumuzun Tedvini Meselesi," in *Aile Yazıları II: Kültürel Değerler ve Sosyal Değişme*, ed. Beylü Dikeçligil and Ahmet Çiğdem (Ankara: Aile Araştırma Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1990), pp. 37-38.

¹⁶¹² Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile*, p. 125, 131.

¹⁶¹³ The judicial commission of the parliament stated on 12 November 1918 that it was against Article 36 of the Constitution that this law passed on 25 October 1917 as an emergency and was officially published on 31 October 1917, just one day before the parliament was opened. "Hukuku Aile Kararnamesi Üzerine Adliye Encümeni Mazbatası," *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Tekâlif-i Kanuniyye ile Said Halim ve Mehmet Talât Paşalar Kabineleri Âzalarının Divân-ı Âliye Sevkları Hakkında Beşinci Şubece İcrâ Kılınan Tahkikat*, No.: 503-523, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 5 (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993), p. 38.

the pressure of the conservative Muslims, non-Muslim communities and the Allied forces, this decree was annulled on 19 June 1919.¹⁶¹⁴

Indeed, non-Muslims frequently acted against the Family Law during the period in which it was still valid. It was reported from the Kastamonu governor to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 16 March 1919 that although the marriages of both Muslims and non-Muslims were to be done with the decision of the sharia courts, the non-Muslims in this district did not obey it. The governor asked from the government how he was to treat such cases, as the Family Law was not yet annulled.¹⁶¹⁵ His emphasis on this annulment shows that as early as March 1919 the authorities were aware of the possible end of this law.

Poor Muslims also did not favor the Family Law for both economic reasons and out of their conservatism. According to this law, those who wanted to get married had to undergo a medical examination in order to get a marriage license. This examination was not only “shameful” but could also be very expensive. It was reported by the Hüdavendigâr governor on 7 February 1918 that in some districts doctors charged five Ottoman liras, which could not be paid by the poor. As a result, poor people started to disobey the Family Law. The government ordered on 17 February 1918 that no money be taken from the poor by these doctors. Furthermore, on 21 March 1918, the Teke governor reported that many people had not undergo the medical examination because in their district there were only two doctors and people could not come from some regions to the district center to be examined by them. Adding that he previously had asked for additional doctors from the government but

¹⁶¹⁴ “8 Muharrem 1336 Tarihli Hukuk-i Âile Karârnamesinin Lağvı Hakkında Karârname,” 19 Haziran 1335 / 20 Ramazan 1337 [19 June 1919], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 11, pp. 299-300.

¹⁶¹⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-5/1-85, 6 Receb 1337 [7 April 1919].

that these doctors had not arrived, he demanded that in those regions where no doctor worked, medical examination be made not obligatory.¹⁶¹⁶

Another obstacle to medical examination to diagnose possible venereal diseases was the conservatism of men who did not want their future wives to be examined by a male doctor. On 3 February 1918, the Karesi governor wrote to the government that despite the obligation of a medical examination before marriage of both men and women, the people resisted the examination of women. Therefore, the governor proposed to the government that certified midwives examined women if they were qualified enough to do it. As a response, it was written on 11 March 1918 that only doctors could perform this task, but virgins were allowed to have an examination of only some parts of their body such as mouth, nose, elbow and neck.¹⁶¹⁷

Even after the cancellation of the Family Law, the problem of medical examination persisted due to the frequency of venereal diseases in many regions. A bylaw which was enacted by the National Assembly in Ankara on 26 June 1920 resolved that the medical examination before the marriage should continue. It was allowed, however, that in those regions where there was no doctor that this practice should not be applied and women could be examined by female doctors in order to preserve the Muslim rules of the seclusion of women.¹⁶¹⁸ On 24 March 1921 Kütahya province was forced to continue medical examination.¹⁶¹⁹ Furthermore, on 5 February 1921, a law passed from the National Assembly for the prevention and

¹⁶¹⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-1/1-14, 6 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [17 February 1918].

¹⁶¹⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-1/1-24, 28 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [11 March 1918].

¹⁶¹⁸ “Nikâhtan Evvel Muayene Usulünün Devam ve Tarzı İcrası Hakkında Kararname,” 26 Haziran 1336 [26 June 1920], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 1, p. 28.

¹⁶¹⁹ BOA, DH.UMVM, 63/76, 14 Receb 1338 [3 April 1920].

limitation of syphilis.¹⁶²⁰ The discussions on this law provoked a quarrel in the National Assembly on 26 December 1920 because many deputies argued that the medical examination of women for syphilis was against Islamic law.¹⁶²¹

Although it is difficult to learn how women resisted this medical examination, which was made obligatory with the Family Law, it is possible to argue that women did not appreciate the Family Law for their specific reasons as well. One of these was the limited right to divorce provided for them with this law. Having little chance to divorce created poor women additional difficulties in war conditions because they frequently needed to divorce and remarry for financial reasons. Before the Family Law was issued in 1917, two other imperial orders had already provided women with the right to divorce their husbands in specific conditions. The first one, issued on 7 March 1916, gave the right to demand divorce to those women who were left with no subsistence money after their husbands had been lost.¹⁶²² The second one, which was issued on 23 March 1916, gave only the permission to divorce if the husband had been declared insane or had leprosy, white spot disease (*beras*) and similar diseases.¹⁶²³ The Family Law which passed on 25 October 1917 and was published in official gazette on 31 October 1917,¹⁶²⁴ however, was first of all an attempt to

¹⁶²⁰ “Firenginin Men ve Tahdidi Sirayeti Hakkında Kanun,” 5 Şubat 1337 / 26 Cemâziyelevvel 1339 [5 February 1921], *Düstür*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 1, pp. 206-207.

¹⁶²¹ İsmail Doğan, *Osmanlı Ailesi: Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), pp. 139-140.

¹⁶²² “Zevcin Gaybûbiyyetinde Nafakanın Taazzür-i Tahsîli Halinde Zevcenin Fesh-i Nikâhı Talebe Salâhiyyeti Hakkında İrâde-i Seniyye,” 23 Şubat 1331 / 2 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [7 March 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 478-482.

¹⁶²³ “Zevcin Cünûn, Cüzâm, Beras ve Emsâli İletlerle Ma’lûliyyeti Halinde Zevcenin Fesh-i Nikâhı Talebe Salâhiyyeti Hakkında İrâde-i Seniyye,” 10 Mart 1332 / 17 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [23 March 1916], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, pp. 853-857.

¹⁶²⁴ “Hukuk-ı Âile Karârname,” 25 Teşrin-i Evvel 1333 / 8 Muharrem 1336 [25 October 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, pp. 762-781. For the regulation of this law see also, “Hukuk-u Âile Karârnamesine Mütâallik Muâmelât-ı İdâriyye Hakkında Nizâmname,” 31 Kânûn-ı Evvel 1333 / 16 Rebülevvel 1336 [31 December 1917], *Düstür*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 10, pp. 52-57.

increase the state's control on family issues¹⁶²⁵ while the main intervention of the state was on the regulation of marriage and divorce.¹⁶²⁶ Article 38 gave women the right to resist polygamy and to divorce their husband in case he wanted to take a co-wife.¹⁶²⁷ Nevertheless, Article 102 stated that only the husband could divorce, which legalized the superiority of men on this issue.¹⁶²⁸

The problem of those women who received no subsistence money because their husbands had been lost in war found also a place in the Family Law.¹⁶²⁹ Article 126 gave women who had lost their subsistence money with the loss of their husbands in a foreign place the right to demand divorce. Nevertheless, according to Article 127, in case that woman had subsistence money but wanted to remarry she had to wait for at least four years. If this woman's husband was a soldier she had to wait at least one year after the war ended and the prisoners of war were released and returned home. In both cases, the wife had to wait a period of delay (*iddet*) after it had been decided that the lost husband was dead. Furthermore, according to Article 129, the second marriage immediately ended if it was discovered that the first husband was alive.¹⁶³⁰

In war conditions, there were many men who were lost or falsely reported as dead, which created important problems for especially poor wives.¹⁶³¹ In his novel *Onlar Savaşırken* (While They Were Fighting) (1978) Bekir Eliçin wrote about a

¹⁶²⁵ For similar interpretations, see Kurnaz, *Yenileşme Sürecinde Türk Kadını*, pp. 120-123; Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını, 1839-1923* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1997); and Toprak, "The Family, Feminism, and the State," pp. 450-452.

¹⁶²⁶ Doğan, *Osmanlı Ailesi*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁶²⁷ "Madde 38 – Üzerine evlenmemek ve evlendiği surette kendisi veya ikinci kadın boş olmak şartıyla bir kadını tezvic sahîh ve şart-ı muteberdir."

"Hukuk-ı Âile Karârnamesi," 25 Teşrîn-i Evvel 1333 / 8 Muharrem 1336 [25 October 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, p. 766.

¹⁶²⁸ "Madde 102 – Talâkın ehli mükellef olan zevcedir." *Ibid.*, p. 774.

¹⁶²⁹ Kurnaz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, p. 109.

¹⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 777.

¹⁶³¹ Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 32. See also the memoirs of İdris Erdiç as a little boy during World War I. His mother left home after such a false report, Akgül, *Şoför İdris*, pp. 11-12.

corrupt village headman who produced fake documents to claim that a woman's husband had died in battle in order to force her into a second marriage.¹⁶³² Consequently, the Family Law targeted to protect the soldier husbands who for various reasons could not return in time or who were falsely reported as dead during World War I. This regulation was first of all an attempt to support the war effort of the Empire by giving morale to the soldiers. On the other hand, it did not bring any additional aid to poor women because women's protection of economic rights in the absence of the husband was not a reform which was introduced with the Family Law. It only made it difficult for soldiers' women to divorce and remarry. According to the Islamic law, women had the right to receive subsistence money from their husbands if he was going to stay at another region for some time or if he was going to undertake a long journey. This money was provided by the husband before he left or he appointed another man as agent to make the payments to his wife. As early as the sixteenth century women had used their right to litigate in the Ottoman Empire in case they were paid no subsistence money.¹⁶³³

During World War I as well, many women demanded subsistence money from their husbands who left them unsupported for a long time. There were soldiers who wanted a divorce during the military service, which created a great problem for those women who depended on the pension of soldiers' families without a breadwinner and other monetary aid from the state.¹⁶³⁴ There were also women who were left by their husbands without any subsistence money on different pretexts, such as searching for a job. Nefise, who petitioned the government to find her husband in May 1919, was one of them. She stated that her husband, Mustafa, had

¹⁶³² Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, p. 24.

¹⁶³³ Yılmaz-Koca, *Osmanlı'da Kadın ve İktisat*, p. 35.

¹⁶³⁴ As an example to a divorce during military service, see DH.SN.THR, 62/42, 6 Receb 1333 [20 May 1915].

left her and his two children seven months earlier with only 30 piasters. He had told them that he went to İzmir to do business. She had received no information since then and she had had to live in misery. Her husband could not be found even after the investigation of the government by October 1919.¹⁶³⁵ Women in a similar situation frequently wanted a divorce in order to remarry. For instance, it was reported from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 16 October 1918 that a woman named Fatima had sent a petition from Varna to the effect that her husband had left his hometown and gone to Konya five years earlier and from then on she had not been able to receive any news from him. Claiming that she lived in poverty as a result of this, she requested that either she be paid subsistence money or be allowed to divorce.¹⁶³⁶

Despite similar requests from soldiers' wives during World War I, women's demands for divorce or remarriage for economic reasons generally were declined by the state because it was important for the Ottoman army to boost the morale of the soldiers. Especially the remarriages of the wives of lost soldiers was a concern of the state. Even before World War I, at the end of the Balkan Wars, the problem of lost soldiers, whose deaths were not registered created important social problems. A notification dated 24 March 1914 warned that the death of lost soldiers could be decided only by sharia courts and their wives could only remarry after their period of delay (*iddet*).¹⁶³⁷ At the end of World War I, as late as April 1920, the state still tried to postpone remarriage of the wives of those lost soldiers who were reported to be dead. It was demanded from the sharia courts with a notification to delay such women's marriages until the end of the war.¹⁶³⁸

¹⁶³⁵ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 19-9/1-21, 20 Muharrem 1338 [15 October 1919].

¹⁶³⁶ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 19-3/1-9, 15 Muharrem 1337 [21 October 1918].

¹⁶³⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.LVZ, 19/38, 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1332 [5 April 1914].

¹⁶³⁸ BOA, DH.İ.U.M, 19-12/1-5, 15 Receb 1338 [4 April 1920].

There were so many desperate war widows who saw the companionship and support of another man as a solution to their destitution that the number of polygamous marriages increased in some provinces during World War I despite the efforts of the state to decrease polygamy with the Family Law.¹⁶³⁹ Some local influent people like village headmen helped the marriage of those women whose husbands had not returned from war and who needed to get married out of poverty. İdris Erdinç, alias Şoför İdris, confessed in his memoirs how his father, without being informed, had been married to one of these women in Bursa. A headman named Koca Tahir, who also was a chieftain, had taken his birth certificate without asking him whether he wanted to marry or not and he had registered a woman named Aşire as his wife. Consequently, although Aşire was not the biological mother of İdris Erdinç, she had been registered as his mother on his birth certificate.¹⁶⁴⁰

Personal accounts reveal that although women strongly requested second marriages, this choice was for the most part a result of economic hardship. In his memoirs İdris Erdinç told the story of his mother who abandoned him and married for the second time during the war years, without knowing that her first husband was still alive. When she had heard the news that her husband had died in the war, İdris was two years old. She had abandoned İdris after entrusting him to her neighbor Saliye, who was also a soldiers' wife. Then she had gone to Kavala and had worked in tobacco production for some time. From there she had migrated to İzmir and finally, she had got married in Muğla, having no other alternative. Although she also had found her first husband together with İdris, she had said that she had thanked God because only by finding her son, she had been finally saved from misery.¹⁶⁴¹

¹⁶³⁹ See for example in literature, Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Akgül, *Şoför İdris*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁶⁴¹ “*Ama çok şükür oğlumu buldum, çok mutluym. Ancak şimdi kurtuldum ben.*” *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

Just like İdris Erdiñç's mother, many other widows and married women needed to remarry, and for that reason, they requested that their registers be revised as soon as possible. Hanife Havva, who petitioned the government from İzmir in January 1918 and demanded the registration of the death of her husband in the war in order to get married again was only one of these destitute women.¹⁶⁴² Some of these women failed in their attempts due to red tape or corrupt officers. On 15 February 1918, Ayşe from Burhaniye district of Karesi [Balıkesir] sent a telegram to the government in which she explained that she was a war widow who wanted to get married again and who could not since the board of alderman of her village had not given her a certificate. She complained that she had had to file charges against the board of aldermen in the sharia court and had written to the commandership of gendarmerie for legal investigation about them. Nevertheless, her attempts had been futile, and finally she had had to request help from the government with that telegram.¹⁶⁴³

Another woman, Hayriye, whose husband named Hüseyin had died due to illness during his military service was lucky enough to learn about his death through a letter. Even though she had that letter which definitely proved death of her soldier husband, the government demanded further investigation on 8 September 1918 in order to verify his death.¹⁶⁴⁴

Another request came from Ayşe, from Sungurlu district of Konya province, who had worked in İstanbul as a domestic in different places after the death of her husband. In order to be able to get married again, she demanded that the government legally accept the death of her husband. Nevertheless, after the investigations, it was

¹⁶⁴² BOA, DH.SN.THR, 79/79, 7 Ramazân 1336 [16 June 1918].

¹⁶⁴³ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-1/1-15, 7 Cemâziyelevvel 1336 [18 February 1918].

¹⁶⁴⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-2/1-59, 2 Zilhicce 1336 [8 September 1918].

found that she had been legally registered as wife of another man, probably without her knowledge.¹⁶⁴⁵

The Ottoman state also tried to postpone the marriage of soldiers' fiancées with other men until the end of war for military reasons. Marriage of these women was also accepted as an important factor that could increase the number of deserters. As early as March 1911, there were complaints from soldiers that their fiancées had married other men and consequently the government sent notifications to prevent such marriages.¹⁶⁴⁶ Similar marriages increased during World War I because many women had to wait as fiancées of soldiers for long years in much more difficult living conditions. Although those women who lived in better conditions could wait for such a long time,¹⁶⁴⁷ for those poor women who immediately needed to get married for their very survival it was quite difficult and sometimes impossible to wait for the uncertain arrival of their fiancés.

It is not surprising to learn that the engaged women of soldiers often attempted to get married to other men after long years of engagement, and village headmen cooperated with these women probably as a result of bribery or threats. On 2 April 1917, the Ministry of War informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that soldier Abdullah had complained that her fiancée had married another man against her will. The Ministry of Internal Affairs in return wrote on 5 April 1917 that they had received many similar complaints and yet it was not possible to prevent the village headmen from allowing these marriages.¹⁶⁴⁸ Elif, mother of the soldier Poyraz, also complained in a telegram sent to the office of the Grand Vizier on 17

¹⁶⁴⁵ BOA, DH. SN.THR, 82/77, 17 Cemâziyelevvel 1337 [18 February 1919].

¹⁶⁴⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 85/2, 22 Safer 1338 [16 November 1919].

¹⁶⁴⁷ For example Lieutenant Mehmed Fasih could marry with his fiancé in 1924, five years after his engagement in 1918. Mehmed Fasih [Kayabalı], *Gallipoli 1915: Bloody Ridge (Lone Pine) Diary of Lt. Mehmed Faish 5th Imperial Ottoman Army*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2003), p. 237.

¹⁶⁴⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 85/2, 22 Safer 1338 [16 November 1919].

April 1917 that the fiancée of her son, who had engaged to him five years earlier, was married to a gendarme of her village.¹⁶⁴⁹ During World War I, many headmen and board of alderman were put on trial for helping the engaged women of soldiers marry other men.¹⁶⁵⁰

There were also soldiers who claimed that their wives had been forced to remarry. We do not know whether their allegations were true or not, but this implies that there were women on the home front who had to remarry other men mostly for protection during the wartime. A soldier named Alemdarzâde Timur petitioned the authorities in May 1919 to arrest a man he called a “bandit” named Divrikli Hüseyin who wanted marry his wife by force.¹⁶⁵¹ Bayburtlu Ali Osman also petitioned the Ministry of War in April 1919 writing that his wife had married another man while he was fighting as a soldier during World War I and sought the protection of his legal rights.¹⁶⁵²

Despite the legal measures mentioned above, it was difficult for the state to prevent these marriages in many cases and in some cases even to make investigations into them. A soldier named Şâbanzâde Mustafa complained in a telegram to the government in January 1919 that his fiancée had married the son of the Selmanlı township governor in Ankara province. He stated that although he had complained about this situation and the sexual harassment of the Selmanlı township governor of other women as soldiers’ families, no investigation had been made into this situation.¹⁶⁵³ He added with another telegram that the district governor did not help him either.¹⁶⁵⁴ The investigation of the government would also give no results as late

¹⁶⁴⁹ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-6/1-18, 22 Receb 1337 [23 April 1919].

¹⁶⁵⁰ See for example, BOA, DH.İ.UM, 78-1/19, 20 Receb 1333 [3 June 1915].

¹⁶⁵¹ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 52/42, 21 Şa’bân 1337 [22 May 1919].

¹⁶⁵² BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 50/51, 18 Receb 1337 [19 April 1919].

¹⁶⁵³ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-3/1-92, 8 Rebîülâhır 1337 [11 January 1919].

¹⁶⁵⁴ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-12/1-7, 16 Receb 1338 [5 April 1920].

as April 1920.¹⁶⁵⁵ Another soldier, named İsmail from the Çıkırıkçı village of Sındırgı district of Karesi sub-province, wrote in a petition to the Ministry of War in February 1921 that he had learned that his fiancée was going to marry another man and he wanted the protection of his legal rights. The correspondence between Karesi governorship and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in March 1921, however shows that the investigation of this complaint could not be made due to the occupation of this district and only if a marriage certificate was requested from the Karesi governorship could the state initiate legal action.¹⁶⁵⁶

Although most of the petitions and complaint telegrams mentioned that the fiancées or wives had been married by some notables such as a board of aldermen or district governors or by using force against them, it is possible to claim that some of these women cooperated with these marriages for economic reasons considering that many women requested remarriage in the war years. Women's cooperation seems most probable when the soldier was held as a war captive and therefore his return to the hometown was delayed for a very long period. For instance, a soldier Ahmed Nuri who was held as a war captive in Egypt requested in a petition to the Ministry of War that the marriage to another man of her fiancée who had waited for him for the last three and a half years by autumn 1919 should be prevented.¹⁶⁵⁷ Similarly, the father of war captive Emin from the Milas district of Menteşe sub-province also complained in a telegram in May 1919 that his son's fiancée Necibe was illegally married to Şükrü Ağazâde Kazım; but after the investigation it was proved that this marriage was not against the Family Law.¹⁶⁵⁸ This court decision also strengthens the idea that Necibe cooperated in this marriage.

¹⁶⁵⁵ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 14 Receb 1338 [3 April 1920].

¹⁶⁵⁶ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-16/1-45, 16 Receb 1339 [26 March 1921].

¹⁶⁵⁷ BOA, DH.İ.UM.EK, 85/2, 22 Safer 1338 [16 November 1919].

¹⁶⁵⁸ BOA, DH.İ.UM, 19-17/1-70, 29 Şevvâl 1337 [28 July 1919].

In sum, despite the efforts of the state to control their sexuality and marriage life in order to protect the soldiers' health, to keep soldiers' moral high and thereby preventing further desertions, women resisted the laws and regulations which threatened their very survival during this extraordinary period. Many women challenged the Decree on Family Law and other regulations and laws regulating the gender relations. Many women engaged in clandestine prostitution or remarried men other than their soldier husbands or fiancés for economic reasons. In most of the cases, these actions were against the law and were an important social problem which impeded the state's mobilization efforts and lowering the soldiers' moral at the front. Low-income and poor women, who needed a breadwinner the most, were important agents in making the war mobilization more difficult in that sense because of their severe economic problems.

Concluding Remarks

Feminist and nationalist historians generally emphasize the Turkish women's contribution to the war efforts of the Ottoman state and especially of the nationalist resistance movement. This contribution has been seen as an important step, specifically a self-sacrifice or price paid to gain citizenship rights and especially the post-war Republican reforms regarding women, which legally gave astonishing legal and cultural rights to Turkish women for the first time in Turkish history. Indeed, women's willing or unwilling contribution to the war efforts may have paved way for their escalation to the political realm. This was especially true for middle-class, educated and elite nationalist women. The war mobilization opened new venues for

their political and ideological participation and for their raising their own voices, albeit in nationalist terms and for nationalist cause.

However, what has been unknown so far is the ordinary, low-income and poor Anatolian Turkish women's negative response to the war mobilizations. I think that women's direct or indirect actions against war mobilization also had an important role in terms of their relationship with the state and the formation of their rights during war years. Their disobedience, resistance, avoidance, noncooperation and discontent with regard to the mobilization efforts, I think, reveal the hidden importance of ordinary women's labor, economic contribution, and cooperation with the state.

First, problems on the home front which were directly related to women constituted one of the most important reasons behind the desertion of soldiers from the army. The government had to regulate and control the sexual and families life of soldiers' wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers in order to prevent desertions by keeping soldiers' morale high at the front and to prevent venereal diseases detrimental to the fighting capacity of the population. Immoral acts by soldiers' wives, such as clandestine prostitution and those illegal marriages of soldiers' wives or fiancées for financial or other war-related reasons, were also feared by the government and the army because of their adverse effect on the conscriptions by causing harm to soldiers' health or further desertions due to lack of morale of soldiers. Yet, many poor and low-income women, especially in towns, whose male breadwinners had left the home for the military service, needed to and accordingly attempted to remarry men other than their current husbands or fiancés. An increasing number of Turkish women had to resort clandestine prostitution as a temporary survival method. Many women challenged the moral and sexual control of the state

and accordingly of the war mobilization. Such acts by women made the conscription difficult by worrying Anatolian men folk and played a role in the increasing desertions, along with other causes. In addition, as some public demonstrations of women shows, many women were not willing to send their only supporters or beloved ones to death; and some encouraged their men to avoid conscription.

Nevertheless, one of the fiercest but most widespread resistances to war mobilization came from peasant women, who shouldered the heaviest burden of war mobilizations. They had to pay most of the taxes and to finance the war both during World War I and the National Struggle, and they were left without the protection of their male relatives against the violence exerted on them by some officers, soldiers and notables. They did not remain silent in the face of heavy military taxes, legal and arbitrary requisitions and confiscations, and compulsory work practices which forced them to work in public and private farms and to carry the requisitioned harvests, collected taxes, or ammunition to the city centers, army headquarters and fronts. Petitioning the government or resorting to the closest state agents and authorities in person, they expressed their complaints and objections, and demanded the prompt redress of their grievances. The Ottoman government responded to their demands to some extent by investigating their complaints, redressing their problems, rectifying wrongdoings, or modifying the regulations and measures. That is, women's resistance and discontent found an echo among the authorities, albeit limited, and indirectly played a role in the shaping of implementation of mobilization measures in everyday life.

Turkish women's acts against war mobilization and their discontent with its results did not always show themselves in open demonstrations. Many women were courageous enough to send collective telegrams or petition the state to defend their

rights. However, as one of the least organized and weakest groups in Ottoman society, their actions were mostly spontaneous and were showed in their everyday struggles and sometimes in folk songs. Together with what has been recorded in the archives, the memoirs or the press of the time, as a cultural heritage of Turkish society, these folk songs as well reveal many details about how peasant women reacted to their wartime exploitation, their real sentiments against the state, and their everyday experience of war, which had important political consequences in both short and long terms. In the short term, making the war mobilizations more difficult and weaker, such active critical response by women and the lack of cooperation lowered the war-making power of the state. In the long term, I think, this hidden and silent economic and political potential of women compelled the new rulers in the post-war period to consider them more seriously and to seek their consent and cooperation through legal and cultural reforms equalizing women with men, albeit in a limited manner.¹⁶⁵⁹

¹⁶⁵⁹ For a selective and puritanist approach to women's rights and equality among Turkish intellectuals, see Duygu Köksal, "Yeni Adam ve Yeni Kadın: 1930'lar ve 40'larda Kadın, Cinsiyet ve Ulus," *Toplumsal Tarih* 9, No: 51 (March, 1998), pp. 31-35.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

World War I began in 1914 and it ended in 1918 in the world, but for Turkey it is possible to say that it erupted in 1912 with the Balkan Wars and ended in 1923 with the final success of the National Struggle. However, perhaps the period between 1914 and 1918 was the worst part of the war for Ottoman society. This war was the most devastating and disastrous event in Ottoman-Turkish history, which ended the Empire. It brought about immeasurable social, economic, political and diplomatic changes in the previous Ottoman territory from the Balkans and North Africa to the Middle East. Especially the impact of the war transformed Ottoman state and society, dissolved the social, economic and administrative structures of the Empire, and ultimately laid the foundations of modern Turkey.

Except for a few important studies on the economic, administrative and institutional impact of the war on the Empire, the social impact of the war has not attracted the attentions of the Ottoman historians. Particularly lower class people's perception and public opinion about the war, war mobilization, state policies and social and economic developments during the wartime have not been touched so far. As for the women's front of the war years, scholars have examined only elite and middle-class women's associational, patriotic, and intellectual activities. Undoubtedly, all of these are surely very important contributions for understanding the role of women in Ottoman-Turkish history. However, this exclusive focus on economic, administrative and diplomatic events and middle-class and elite women and their educational, associational, intellectual activities leaves a great gap in the literature on the experience of the ordinary lower class women's wartime experience.

This dissertation has attempted to fill this gap modestly by making an inventory of and examining the vast majority of the lower class Ottoman-Turkish women's wartime experience, particularly their sufferings, deprivations, grievances, and their active responses to the adverse wartime conditions, war mobilization measures and state policies, and exploitation and oppression they faced in daily life.

This study first has underscored how despite the remarkable emphasis of the existing literature on women's "emancipation" with World War I, women, particularly the low-income women experienced an incredible misery. They faced hunger, poverty, epidemics, unwilling migration, deportation, extreme exploitation, sexual harassments, and violence both in some European belligerent countries and in the Ottoman Empire. The economic and emotional burden of war mobilization with conscription and death of their male relatives, new obligations, taxes, requisitions and duties imposed by the state troubled and aggrieved them. Therefore, for many women, wartime developments did not bring social or financial autonomy, but new obligations, restrictions, and problems. This was especially true for Ottoman Turkish lower-class women both in the countryside and in the cities.

In the Western combatant countries there were some developments in terms of new education and new work opportunities for women which might be accepted to some extent as emancipatory steps. But even in these wealthier countries, generally a selected group of women such as women munitions workers or women who entered white-collar work enjoyed these opportunities and the positive changes the war brought about. Furthermore, even the improvements in women's conditions frequently were temporary and for the duration of the war. Although women of many Western countries acquired their political rights during or right after the war, this did not provide them social and economic rights. Women suffered from dismissals,

harassments, and discriminatory treatments in most of these countries. And, the considerable part of them were sent back to home to be replaced by war veterans.

In the Ottoman Empire, too, educated middle and upper-class women from privileged social milieus and those women who came from families of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress were more advantaged. Most of these women lived in the capital city and they became more influential with the philanthropic women's associations they inaugurated and through their contribution to the war mobilization by propagating nationalist ideas, becoming voluntary nurses, or providing jobs to lower-class women in their associations in which these women frequently produced clothing for the army. Middle or upper-class women in the capital city were also among the first to benefit from the new education opportunities for women, like university education. Surely, as pointed out by the scholarly studies, the war brought about some social and economic changes from which primarily educated upper and middle class women benefited.

On the other hand, as this study has shown, Ottoman-Turkish women were not a homogenous group free from internal class and status differences. Women workers in the cities were exploited excessively under hard and unfavorable working conditions which got worse with the war. Women peasants in the countryside as well were expected to do additional or forced work in the fields and they were forced to pay high or multiplied taxes to support the war mobilization. Therefore, for Turkish women as well, the meaning of the war years was varied according to their social class or status.

In addition, regional differences influenced Turkish women's war experiences. Most of the war-related problems explored in this study were widespread throughout the Empire. However, as mentioned in Chapter Four, hunger

and shortages were felt largely in the capital city, in the coastal and other regions of the Empire which were dependent on imported food. Food shortages hit hardest Mesopotamia and the Black Sea region and eastern provinces which had been occupied by Russian troops. Second, as shown in Chapter Five, women had more difficulty in receiving their pensions in those provinces like Aydın which had a great number of soldiers' families and in regions which were far from the capital city. Third, as studied in Chapter Six, although housing and child rearing problems were felt the most in the capital city due to high cost of living, particularly refugee women were afflicted with these problems. Before the Armistice years, poor refugee women who came from the Balkans and those who escaped from Russian occupation in the Black Sea region and the eastern Anatolia faced them mostly. During the Armistice, they hit also the western Anatolian women. Fourth, as examined in Chapter Seven, problems like unemployment and low wages were common in all provinces, but finding a job for women was more difficult or impossible in rural regions. Moreover, those women in the occupied regions lost their jobs. Finally, as emphasized in Chapter Eight, wartime heavy taxes, compulsory purchases of agricultural crops by the state and the army at low prices, and agricultural service obligation bore hardest upon peasant women.

The particular nature of the mobilization of manpower for the Ottoman army also created an important difference of Ottoman Turkish women's experience from that of Western women. As has been shown by Belinda Davis, wartime German society differentiated between "soldiers' wives" and "women of lesser means." While accepting the disadvantaged women called "women of lesser means" as legitimate protagonists of wartime street protests mainly deriving from food scarcities, the Germans did not approve the privileged situation of "soldiers' wives"

who took pensions from the state. However, there was no open hatred directed towards “soldiers’ wives” in Ottoman society, probably because most of these women already belonged to the poorest social group in the Ottoman Empire. The majority of them were wives of Anatolian Turkish peasants who could not pay the money to be exempted from military service. Furthermore, the pensions that these women irregularly received from the state as unsupported soldiers’ families provided them no explicit autonomy or economic relief. On the contrary, despite this form of aid, which was not even sufficient to buy bread for each day of the month in many regions, many soldiers’ families who received pensions from the state were reported to be dying out of hunger because of poverty even in the centers of provinces.

A second contribution of this dissertation was to show that women’s movement before the foundation of the Turkish Republic and introduction of the Kemalist “state feminism” cannot be reduced only to the organized activities of elite and educated middle class women during the war years. Regardless of the pioneering role of these women, who were frequently wives or daughters of Unionists or high-ranking bureaucrats, Ottoman feminists were not alone in the women’s fight for rights. Lower-class women as well were an active group in looking for their rights during the war years. Although their struggle was mainly in terms of economic survival, and although there was no direct cooperation or any relation between feminists and these women, the everyday struggles of ordinary women must have affected and inspired some feminists to seek defense against patriarchal culture and practices. Unfortunately, lower class women’s unorganized efforts to survive and their resistance to the adverse economic conditions, the war mobilization, and the state policies regarding them, which generated sometimes extensive, but mostly individual and partial gains, have gone unnoticed until now.

This lack of knowledge on disadvantaged women's historical importance seems to be related to searching for women's voice and experience in the wrong place or to writing women's history with an approach under the influence of conventional intellectual and political historical writing. Indeed, lower-class women's methods to demand their rights were different from those of elite women. Poor women's strategies for seeking self-interest and therefore attaining certain rights could be both legal and illegal, whereas Ottoman feminists from elite backgrounds could not use these more aggressive or illegal methods, unlike some suffragists in Europe who could even make use of violence to demand their rights.

During World War I, lower-class women frequently resorted to state bureaucracy and acquired an important experience in this respect. Many disadvantaged women wrote petitions or sent telegrams to the state in order to request a favor or complain about a situation that they believed to be unfair. However, when their expectations were not met, they did not hesitate to practice illegal activities, like cheating the authorities with wrong certificates and ration cards, hiding their crops and livestock to evade war taxes, bribing the authorities to protect the deserters, trying to survive by begging, stealing, and prostituting. Some women did not hesitate to make violent street demonstrations against the war, mobilization measures, and the shortage of food. Married women without breadwinner in the absence of their husbands got remarried while their soldier husbands were still serving on the front, were lost or were captured as war prisoners. All these spontaneous, everyday, mostly informal and illegal actions for self-interest or survival could be as effective as legal, formal or organized ways of struggle and sometimes they proved to be more influential in forcing the state authorities to take action.

Third, examining these different responses of lower-class women to the war, this study revealed that not only women's participation in war mobilization but their resistance to it as well made women politically important for the state during and probably after the war. Consequently, lower-class women with their everyday forms of politics were not only part of the women's movement in an unorganized form, but they also were part of the political developments of the "total war." For instance, they were directly or indirectly active in soldiers' desertions. Likewise, although they failed in most of the cases to openly struggle against their harsh exploitation through compulsory working, requisitioning and heavy taxation peasant women hindered the war efforts of the state to some extent by resisting in covert ways to taxes or to compulsory work. Their last-resort methods of survival, for instance, clandestine prostitution of soldiers' wives for their or their children's daily bread also lowered the soldiers' morale, encouraged desertion, and caused the spread of venereal diseases both among the civilians on the home front and among the soldiers. Therefore, women's seemingly apolitical actions had unintended political and military consequences.

In this respect, this is not only a social history of Ottoman-Turkish women, but also an examination of the governmentality and polity of the late Ottoman Empire. Since the everyday politics of women appeared in interaction with the state intervention, this dissertation examined the late Ottoman state in its daily interaction with its citizens, more specifically, women. From this perspective, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the Ottoman state, even during its fiercest struggle to stay alive, was responsive to social developments, its citizens' demands and complaints, in particular, to women's experiences and voices. The Ottoman state took seriously and evaluated not only women's specific complaints and demands

expressed through petitions, telegrams, letters or open protests, but also their discontent through their everyday actions. Given the fact that women's actions were manifestation of their opinions, women's disobedience, struggles and illegal behavior were the main means by which their critical opinions reached the Ottoman authorities indirectly. As was discussed in this work, the Ottoman state was not indifferent to women's problems and discontent and considered their mood, and accordingly revised some of its measures and policies, redress women's problems, and tried to alleviate their misery, albeit to a limited degree. This indicates that the Ottoman state was not unresponsive to society, in contrast to the widely-held theory of bureaucratic Ottoman state tradition.

This is also a sort of alternative history of the Ottoman state from the perspective of ordinary women. Indeed, the women's perception of the Ottoman state's policies and war effort revealed itself through their daily actions. These were the main manifestations of their political views and approach to the war, war mobilization and the Ottoman state's policies. Thus, this study points out the existence of political consciousness of ordinary women even in the absence of formal and organized political actions and movements led by them.

In addition, this dissertation made a critical reading of the official documents and revealed that lower-class women's obvious support to the war mobilization or their use of nationalist, religious or patriarchal discourse could have had some pragmatic reasons. They generally mentioned their anger and despair all at once with this discourse. They often exploited the language of the state authorities for their very survival to legitimate their actions, demands and complaints. They wanted the state authorities to live up to their commitments and promises, by using power-holders' own words and discourse. For example, many lower-class women described

themselves as “soldier’s mother,” “soldier’s wife,” or “soldier’s family,” which were the roles that the wartime government often praised and depicted as “mothers of the nation” who deserved the state’s concern and support. In this manner, many lower-class women attempted to demand food, pensions, housing aid, education and care of their children, employment or tax reductions from the government. Consequently, they asked for some of their citizenship rights, although they were not yet holders of political rights, like the right to vote during World War I.

Negotiation with the state through this nationalist language, however, was not an option for many women who were also impoverished due to the war, but who had not sent their men to the front. Those women who could not present themselves to the political authorities with these accepted roles such as “soldiers’ wife” had less bargaining power to demand their rights from the state in legal ways. However, as this dissertation has argued, these women were not passive either and they sought their individual interests through other mechanisms.

Finally, this dissertation has shown that in many regions in the Ottoman Empire, Muslim-Turkish women underwent a more difficult and brutal war experience than women in most other Western belligerent countries. This was mainly because of a longer war mobilization, which continued more than a decade, and because of living in an unindustrialized and poorer empire divided by important ethnic and religious demarcations. However, lower-class Turkish women were not total victims of the war; they also resisted the unequal political or welfare measures of the state just as Western women did. Yet their resistance did not always take the form of open strikes or demonstrations during the war since at that time even Ottoman male workers could not go on strike. Nevertheless, they staged spontaneous anti-war and anti-conscription demonstrations. Again, they played an important role

in food riots. They used gender codes to legitimate and defend their protests and demands. Furthermore, they sometimes attempted to benefit from the religious segregation, which made them immune to the physical attacks of gendarme or army forces.

There are some important issues which could not be studied in detail in this dissertation because of its limits. For instance, the war experience of Ottoman women from different ethnic and religious groups requires further research. Wartime violence towards lower-class women also needs to be examined in detail. In addition, in-depth monographs on lower-class women living in each Anatolian province might enrich our knowledge about the local and more specific dynamics and forms of Ottoman women's wartime experience and agency. Undoubtedly, writing all these subjects requires longer running study, including full access to local archives and libraries, knowledge of local social structures, cultures, religions, and languages, which entail additional years of research which are beyond the limits of a single dissertation.

Although there are such issues which could not be scrutinized in this dissertation, this study contributes to the history of Ottoman women and to the historical writing in general on World War I experience of the Ottoman Empire with a particular emphasis on lower-class Turkish women. Conducting new research on other periods as well by underlining the historical agency of ordinary people, especially ordinary women who are the most ignored in historical literature, can enlarge the definition of Turkish women's politics and agency. I think that such a revelation is very important not only for the lower-class Turkish women studied in this dissertation, but for all those groups that, intentionally or not, have been written out of history.

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- “Mevad-ı Gıdaiyye ve Hevaic-i Sairenin Suret-i Furuhat ve Tevzi’i Hakkında Kanun.” [Law about the sale and distribution methods of food articles and indispensable goods]. 5 Nisan 1333 / 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [Apr. 5, 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, 632-634.
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been witnessed and who died on the battlefield as martyrs]. 21 Temmuz 1331 / 21 Ramazân 1333 [Aug. 3, 1915], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 7, 684

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“Muhacirinin Mükellefiyetine Mütadair 25 Rebiülâhir 1334 Tarihli Kanuna Müzeyyel Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law annexed to the law dated 25 Rebiülâhir 1334 about the military service obligation of the migrants]. 1332-1333 *Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, 352.

“Muhacirinin Sevkleri İçin Muktazi Yüz Elli Bin Liranın Avans Olarak İtasına Dair Kanun.” [Law concerning the order of advance-payment of one hundred fifty thousand Liras which is necessary for the transport of the migrants]. 2 Temmuz 1337 / 20 Şevval 1339 [July 2, 1921], *Düstûr*, Üçüncü Tertip, Vol. 2, 81.

“Muhtacin-i Zürraa Tâvizen Verilecek Tohumluk Hububat Esmâni ve Sâir Olmak Üzere 1331 Senesi Ticaret ve Ziraat Bütçesine Fasl-ı Mahsus Olarak Mevzu Tahsisattan İstimâl Olunmayan Miktarın 1332 Senesi Bütçesine Devren Sarfı Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law related to the transferred disbursement of the amount of money, which was not used from the special division of the 1331 year’s commerce and agriculture budget, to the 1332-year’s budget in order to cover the price of grains for sowing that are going to be given to the needy farmers on loan]. *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, 331-332.

“Muhtacin-i Zürraa Tevzi Olunacak Tohumluk Zahire Karşılığı Olarak 1331 Maliye Bütçesine 5.000.000 Kuruş Tahsisatı Fevkalade İlavesi Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law about the addition of an amount of 5.000.000 piaster as an extraordinary fund to the finance budget of the year 1331 to cover the price of the grains for sowing that are going to be given to the needy farmers]. *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, 516-517.

“Muhtacin-i Zürra’a Tohumluk İtası İçin Evvelce Verilen Beş Milyon Kuruşluk Tahsisat-ı Fevkalade 5.000.000 Kuruş Daha İlavesi Hakkında Lâyihâ-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law about the addition of an amount of 5.000.000 piaster to the extraordinary fund of five million piaster which has been formerly allotted to cover the price of the grains for sowing that are going to be given to the needy farmers]. *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyih-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, 515-516.

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“Muinleri Taht-ı Silâha Alınan Ailelere Muavenet İçin 1332 Maliye Bütçesine 200,000,000 Kuruş İlavesi Hakkında İrade-i Seniyye.” [Imperial rescript about the addition of 200,000,000 piaster to the finance budget of the year 1332 to support the families whose breadwinners are conscripted]. 14 Temmuz 1332 / 27 Ramazân 1334 [July 27, 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, 1237.

“Muinsiz Efrad Aileleri İçin 1329 Maliye Bütçesine Zamimeten 5,000,000 Kuruşun Sarfı Hakkında Kanun.” [Law about the expense of 5,000,000 piaster which is added to the finance budget of the year 1329 to support the families whose breadwinners are conscripted]. *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, 1085.

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support the families whose breadwinners are conscripted]. 27 Şubat 1329 / 14 Rebûlâhir 1332 [Mar. 12, 1914], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 6, 300.

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“Ordu-yu Hümayun İle Ahalinin İaşesini Temin Zımnında Neşr Edilen 10 Temmuz 1332 Tarihli Kanun-ı Muvakkatın Suver-i Tatbikiyyesi Hakkında 29 Ağustos 1332 Tarihli Nizamname Makamına Kaim Olmak Üzere Tanzim Olunan Nizamname.” [Regulation made to replace the regulation, dated 29 August 1332, which concerns the practicing methods of the temporary law dated 10 Temmuz 1332 and is introduced to provide food for the public and for the royal army]. 12 Nisan 1333 / 20 Cemâziyelâhir 1335 [Apr. 12, 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, 646-648.

“Seferberlik Müddetince Efrâd ve Zâbitânın Taht-ı İsticârında Bulunan Meskenlere ve Hukuk-ı Tasarrufiyelerinin Teminine Dâir Kanûn-ı Muvakkat.” [Temporary law about the residences which are given on hire by the soldiers and officers and the assurance of their right of disposition during the mobilization period]. 10 Mart 1331 / 7 Cemâziyelevvel 1333 [Mar. 23, 1915], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 7, 530.

“Seferberlik Müddetince Efrad ve Zabitanın Tahtı İsticârında Bulunan Meskenlere ve Hukuku Tasarrufiyelerinin Teminine Dair Layihai Kanuniye.” [Draft law about the residences which are given on hire by the soldiers and officers and the assurance of their right of disposition during the mobilization period].

Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye, No.: 428-501, Vol. 2, 388-391.

“Seferberlikte Seferber Ordunun İaşesine Muhtas Hisse-i Öşrü Vermemek Kastı İle Mahsulâtını Ketm Edenler Hakkında Kararname.” [Decree about the people who hide their yields with the intension of not giving part of it as the tax which is taken for the provisioning of the mobilized army during the mobilization period]. *1333 Meclis-i Umumînin Mün’akit Olmadığı Esnada Hey’et-i Vükelâca Bâ-İrade-i Seniye Mevki-i İcrâyâ Konulan Mukarrerat, Cüz: 1, Levâyih-i Kanuniye-i Âdiye, 25.*

Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye, No: 428-501, Vol. 2. [Parliament council reports and draft laws: Year 1334, No: 428-501, Vol. 2]. Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993.

Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Tekâlif-i Kanuniyye ile Said Halim ve Mehmet Talât Paşalar Kabineleri Âzalarının Divân-ı Âliye Sevkleri Hakkında Beşinci Şubece İcrâ Kılınan Tahkikat, No.: 503-523, Vol. 1. [Parliament council reports and bills of law of the year 1334 together with the legal investigations carried out by the fifth branch concerning the committal of Said Halim and Mehmed Talat Pashas’ cabinet members to the High Court of Justice]. Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 5. Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993.

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“Sinn-i Mukayyedlerine Göre Vâsıl-ı Mükellefiyyet Olmadıkları Halde Hizmet-i Askeriyyeye Elverişli Bulunanların Celbine Dâir 26 Zilhicce 1334 Tarihli Kanûn-ı Muvakkatın Reddi Hakkında Meclis-i Meb’ûsân Karârname.” [Decree of the Parliament Council about the rejection of the temporary law, dated 26 Zilhicce 1334, declaring that all suitable men will be called to military service, although they are not obligated according to their registered ages]. 23 Kanûn-u Sâni 1332 / 12 Rebûlâhir 1335 [Feb. 5, 1917], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 9, 142.

“Sinn-i Mukayyetleriyle Şahısları Münasip Olmayanların Takdir-i Sinni Hakkında Yapılacak Muamelâta Dair Nüfus Kanununa Müzeyyel Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law annexed to the Population Law concerning the treatment about the estimation of men’s ages whose body ages are not the same with their

registered ages]. *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, 780-782.

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“Şühedâ Ailelerine Verilecek Mükâfât-ı Nakdiye Karşılığı Olarak 1331 Mâliye Bütçesine 500,000 Kuruşun İlâvesi Hakkında Kânun.” [Law about the addition of 500,000 piaster to the finance budget of the year 1331 to cover the recompenses in cash which will be given to the families of martyrs]. 1 Mart 1332 / 9 Cemâziyelevvel 1334 [Mar. 14, 1916], *Düstûr*, Tertîb-i Sâni, Vol. 8, 699.

“Şühedâ ve Malulini Guzat Evladının Himayeleri Hakkında Lâyiha-i Kanuniyye.” [Draft law about the protection of the children of martyrs and disabled veterans]. *1332-1333 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 3, 878-883.

“Şühedâ Vesâire Evlâdlarının Leylî Mekâtib-i İdâdiyye-i Askeriyyeye Kayd ve Kabulü Hakkında Nizâm-nâme.” [Regulation about the acceptance and registration of the martyrs’ and others’ children to the boarding military secondary schools]. 16 Eylül 1331 / 20 Zilka’de 1333 [Sept. 29, 1915], *Düstûr*, Vol. 7, Tertîb-i Sâni, 743-745.

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RÉSUMÉ SUBSTANTIEL

CHAPITRE UN

INTRODUCTION

Cette thèse de doctorat porte sur l'expérience de la vie quotidienne des femmes ordinaires turques pendant la Première Guerre mondiale dans l'Empire ottoman jusqu'à la signature du traité de paix final à Lausanne en 1923. Ce travail examine l'histoire du groupe le plus nombreux des civils à l'arrière, celui des épouses et mères des soldats. Il examine à la fois les souffrances et les réactions quotidiennes des femmes ordinaires face à l'impact social de la guerre, aux mesures de l'État concernant les femmes, aux conditions négatives dans lesquelles elles vivaient et au traitement défavorable qu'elles ont reçu. À cet égard, cette thèse étudie les expériences de guerre des femmes ordinaires qui sont la plupart de fois pauvres, leurs stratégies pour survivre, leurs négociations avec l'État et leur résistance contre les difficultés socioéconomiques, la mobilisation de guerre et d'autres pratiques exploitantes, oppressives et contraignantes dont elles souffraient dans la vie quotidienne.

L'argument principal de cette thèse est que les femmes turques défavorisées ont vécues des grandes difficultés pendant la guerre mais qu'elles sont en même temps devenues des actrices sociales et politiques importantes du conflit par leurs expériences quotidiennes de la mobilisation et leurs stratégies pour survivre et pour renforcer leurs pouvoirs. Cependant, la grande majorité des études historiques concernant les expériences de guerre des femmes dans l'Empire ottoman concerne les femmes qui ont contribué à la mobilisation ou les activités des femmes des classes supérieures ou moyennes qui ont publié des journaux ou fondé des

associations. Contrairement à ces études, cette thèse essaye de lever le voile sur le rôle des femmes pauvres et ordinaires en tant qu'actrices historiques qui avaient leurs propres buts, différents que ceux qui leur ont été imposés par l'État et une société patriarcale. L'histoire de ces femmes est encore inconnue. L'objet principal de cette thèse est de contribuer à combler cette lacune.

Problèmes relatifs à la littérature existante

À cause de plusieurs facteurs la littérature existante sur l'époque entre 1914 et 1923 a ignoré l'expérience historique des femmes défavorisées. La raison principale de ce problème est que les études sur l'histoire sociale de cette période sont très peu en nombre comparées aux études sur l'histoire politique, économique, diplomatique ou militaire de la Première Guerre mondiale et de la Guerre de l'Indépendance turque. Cependant, même la littérature féministe qui étudie la fin de la période ottomane et le début de la période républicaine garde le silence sur l'expérience historique des femmes ordinaires en partie à cause de raisons méthodologiques et idéologiques.

Les premières études sur l'impact social de la guerre ont été écrites en grande partie par les chercheurs américains dont le travail portait sur les villes telles qu'Istanbul et İzmir dans les années 1920 et par Ahmed Emin [Yalman] en 1930. Ce n'est qu'après les années 1980 que de nouveaux ouvrages ont été publiés sur l'impact socioéconomique de la guerre dans l'Empire ottoman. Parmi les auteurs concernés on peut citer les savants Zafer Toprak et Feroz Ahmad qui ont examiné les réformes des « Jeunes-Turcs » pendant la guerre. Mehmet Temel, Nur Bilge Criss et les écrivains qui ont contribué à la volume édité par Stéphane Yerasimos sous le titre *Istanbul, 1914-1923 : capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires* se

sont concentré sur Istanbul tandis qu'Engin Berber a examiné İzmir pendant la guerre. L'impact économique de la guerre a été étudié par Vedat Eldem, Zafer Toprak et Şevket Pamuk. Erol Köroğlu a écrit sur l'impact de la propagande de guerre et Mehmet Beşikçi sur la mobilisation des hommes pour l'armée ottomane. Safiye Kıranlar a étudié les mesures de l'aide social pendant les années de la guerre. Oya Dağlar a examiné les épidémies et les mesures prises pour les combattre et Hikmet Özdemir a analysé l'impact des épidémies pendant la guerre sur les pertes militaires ottomanes. Stanford Shaw a écrit sur l'expérience de guerre de l'Empire ottoman dès le prélude de la guerre jusqu'à juillet 1916. Les migrations des civiles pendant la Première Guerre mondiale et l'échange de population entre les turcs et les grecs dans les années suivantes ont été aussi étudiés dans plusieurs ouvrages. Même si leur nombre est très restreint, il existe aussi quelques études antérieures écrites par Charlotte Lorenz pendant la Première Guerre mondiale et par Yavuz Selim Karakışla au cours des dernières décennies sur les femmes de la classe ouvrière. Fatma Türe a aussi examiné la littérature obscène des années 1920 et les problèmes de la moralité des femmes qui ont été largement liés à l'héritage de la guerre.

Cependant, même les historiennes féministes n'ont pas écrit sur les femmes pauvres mais elles ont concentré leur attention sur les activités des femmes appartenant à l'élite. Les ouvrages sur l'histoire des femmes turques portent sur l'influence des narratives nationalistes et modernistes. Les particularités des femmes et les différences de leurs expériences ont été oubliées. Les écrits des historiennes qui étudient les femmes en Proche Orient ont aussi abordé les femmes sous un point de vue conceptuel identique. Néanmoins, à partir des années 1970, les historiennes féministes en Europe et aux Etats-Unis qui écrivirent l'histoire des femmes et l'histoire du genre ont produit des ouvrages dans des domaines beaucoup plus

nombreux, dont l'impact négatif de la guerre sur les femmes. Pourtant cet impact négatif de la guerre n'est pas étudié pour les femmes ottomanes. La plupart des œuvres sur la Première Guerre mondiale et la Guerre de l'Indépendance turc ont plutôt souligné les contributions des femmes à l'effort de la guerre et leurs activités patriotiques. Les conflits et les luttes entre les femmes défavorisées et l'État, le mécontentement des femmes concernant les mesures de l'aide sociale et leurs conditions ou l'appropriation de ces mesures par les femmes pour survivre n'ont pas été étudiés jusqu'à maintenant.

Démarche théorique

Cette thèse de doctorat tente d'affirmer que les femmes turques n'ont pas eu une expérience de guerre homogène qui peut être expliquée avec le mot « émancipation » et que les luttes quotidiennes des femmes défavorisées pendant la Première Guerre mondiale faisaient aussi partie des luttes politiques de cette époque et avaient une influence sur les lois et les mesures concernant les femmes. Ces arguments sont fondés sur certaines approches théoriques qui ont été développées au cours des dernières décennies. Cette étude utilise premièrement l'approche de l'histoire du genre qui était devenue très populaire après les années 1980 pour montrer les différences sociales entre les femmes turques qui vivaient dans l'Empire ottoman pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. D'ailleurs, cette thèse de doctorat utilise l'approche de l'histoire sociale de E. P. Thompson et s'inspire des plans théoriques et méthodologiques de l'école des « subaltern studies » pour retrouver la voix et le rôle historique des femmes. Elle s'appuie également sur des nouvelles approches pour définir le concept « politique » par les savantes féministes et le concept « sphère

publique » par des savantes telles que Nancy Fraser, Mary P. Ryan et Belinda Davis qui ont aussi étendu le sens de ces deux notions. Elizabeth Thompson et Leslie P. Pierce ont pareillement montré que les femmes musulmanes dans le Proche Orient, dont le rôle dans la sphère publique était différent que celui des femmes en Occident, pourraient avoir eu une influence sur les affaires politiques. Par ailleurs, des savantes comme Partha Chatterjee ont souligné le rôle symbolique des femmes dans la formation de l'Etat nation et dans la modernisation d'une société qui rend les femmes importantes en leur accordant le statut d'actrices politiques.

Finalement, cette thèse utilise les outils théoriques qui ont été introduits par James C. Scott pour montrer les moyens subtils ou secrets de faire de la politique des classes inférieurs contre les dirigeants et leurs discours hégémonique, ainsi que les outils théoriques de l'histoire de la vie quotidienne (*Alltagsgeschichte*). Ce travail de recherche s'inspire aussi des œuvres des historiens comme Barbara Alpern Engel et Mark Pittaway qui ont montré que les femmes ordinaires de la classe ouvrière et des familles paysannes avaient un rôle particulier dans la politique des pauvres et surtout dans leurs pratiques de résistance dans des périodes ou des contextes différents. Fondée sur ces approches, cette thèse de doctorat tente de révéler le rôle historique des femmes turques ordinaires pendant la guerre. Elle fait valoir que les stratégies des femmes défavorisées pour leur intérêt personnel et leurs luttes quotidiennes pour survivre peuvent également être acceptés dans le cadre des affaires politiques.

Méthodes et sources

Il est particulièrement difficile de trouver l'expérience historique des femmes pour une époque au cours de laquelle elles étaient considérées comme des personnes de

seconde classe. La recherche menée pour cette étude était particulièrement laborieuse puisque les documents sur les femmes ont été dispersés dans diverses archives et les notions qui définissaient les femmes étaient différentes pendant l'époque étudiée. Les documents utilisés dans cette thèse de doctorat sont issus de trois archives turques : les archives ottomanes du Premier Ministre (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*), les archives du croissant rouge turc (*Türk Kızılay Arşivi*) et les archives de la direction de l'histoire militaire et des études stratégiques de l'état-major général turc (*Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi*). Bien qu'un nombre important de documents écrits en ottoman turc aient été examinés pour cette thèse de doctorat, il n'a pas été possible de mener des recherches approfondies sur les problèmes des régions spécifiques, du fait notamment de la dispersion des archives et du temps limité pour ce travail.

La géographie de cette étude couvre principalement l'Anatolie et la Thrace. Etant donné que plusieurs ethnies et religions cohabitaient dans l'Empire ottoman, nous avons choisi de nous concentrer sur un groupe spécifique, celui des femmes ottomanes turques. Mon ignorance des langues parlées dans l'Empire ottoman, autre que l'ottoman turc, a joué un grand rôle dans cette décision. Cependant, l'importance politique des femmes turques dans la formation de l'état national turc a été surtout décisive pour ce choix. Finalement, pour ne pas isoler les femmes turques des femmes des autres pays belligérants, nous avons mené une recherche additionnelle comparative afin de mieux comprendre les problèmes similaires rencontrés par des femmes qui vivaient dans différentes géographies au cours la Première Guerre mondiale.

Les sources utilisées pour cette thèse de doctorat incluent les documents des archives nationales turques, les rapports, les mémoires des observateurs

contemporaines, la littérature sur cette époque, les journaux et les magazines, et les documents visuelles tels que photographies, cartes postales et caricatures qui représentent les femmes défavorisées. Toutes ces sources ont leurs forces ou leurs faiblesses pour montrer l'expérience quotidienne des femmes pauvres. Les informations fournies par différentes sources sont confrontées entre elles afin de tester leur véracité. Les pétitions et les télégraphes des femmes défavorisées ont été examinés pour révéler leurs stratégies discursives. Même si ces documents ont été remplis des phrases nationalistes trop identiques au discours de l'État, ce langage des femmes a été considéré comme un moyen des politiques quotidiennes plutôt qu'une évidence que ces femmes ont accepté le discours hégémonique et la propagande des autorités politiques.

Énumération des chapitres

Après cette introduction, le chapitre deux porte sur l'impact de la Première Guerre mondiale sur le front intérieur des pays combattants et le chapitre trois étudie l'impact économique de la guerre sur la société ottomane, les conséquences démographiques des pertes humaines et la mobilisation de guerre et la propagande concernant les femmes. Les cinq chapitres suivants traitent des différents problèmes des femmes ottomanes turques pauvres pendant la guerre. Le chapitre quatre étudie la lutte des femmes contre la faim et les pénuries, le chapitre cinq examine les aides financières aux familles des soldats, le chapitre six se concentre sur les problèmes de logement et d'éducation, le chapitre sept analyse les problèmes des femmes pauvres au travail et le chapitre huit traite de la résistance des femmes à la mobilisation de

guerre : conscription de leurs hommes, impôts de guerre élevés et obligation du service agricole.

CHAPITRE DEUX

LA PREMIÈRE GUERRE MONDIALE ET LES FEMMES ORDINAIRES SUR LE FRONT INTÉRIEUR : UNE PERSPECTIVE COMPARATIVE

La Première Guerre mondiale comme « guerre totale » a rendu nécessaire la participation des femmes aux efforts de mobilisation et a créé divers problèmes sociaux qui ont affligé les femmes. Les pays belligérants ont introduit des lois et des mesures nouvelles pour l'aide sociale aux familles des soldats, pour l'emploi des femmes dans l'industrie de guerre et l'agriculture et pour le contrôle de la moralité en l'absence des hommes. La grande majorité des femmes a généralement souffert de l'impact négatif des circonstances sociales, des politiques économiques et des mesures de mobilisation de guerre.

En dépit de la conviction populaire que la Première Guerre mondiale a permis une certaine émancipation des femmes, les universitaires ont commencé à mettre en doute cette idée au cours de ces dernières décennies. Selon Françoise Thébaud, les études sur les géographies autre que l'Europe de l'Ouest sont nécessaires pour contester cette opinion. Suivant ce postulat, ce chapitre tente d'explorer et de comparer l'expérience de guerre des femmes dans plusieurs des pays belligérants. Après avoir étudié la Première Guerre mondiale comme première « guerre totale », ce chapitre analyse les mesures sociales d'aide aux femmes dans différents pays, le rôle des femmes dans la vie professionnelle pendant la guerre et finalement la résistance des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre.

La première « guerre totale »

De nombreux historiens considèrent la Première Guerre mondiale comme étant la première « guerre totale » de l'Histoire. La Première Guerre mondiale était presque illimitée en terme de destruction, d'impact social et de mobilisation des ressources économiques et de la puissance humaine. La guerre a introduit un nouveau concept, « le front intérieur » (*home front*), en tant que domaine civil dans lequel le combat de guerre continue sous différentes formes. Le développement de la technologie de guerre comme la mitrailleuse, les chars, le gaz toxique et l'attaque aérienne a transformé la Première Guerre mondiale en guerre totale. À cause de la conscription d'un nombre immense d'individus, la guerre a profondément affecté une grande partie de population dans les pays belligérants. Le bombardement de villes, la proximité du front aux résidences civiles et l'occupation par l'ennemi ont rendu les femmes et les enfants vulnérables aux violences de la guerre et ont changé la définition du front. En outre, de nombreuses civiles sont mortes en conséquence des épidémies, de la pauvreté et de la malnutrition.

La guerre économique est aussi devenue un élément intégré de la lutte pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Les pays riches dépendaient moins de la puissance humaine tandis que dans les pays pauvres la mobilisation de guerre nécessitait la mobilisation d'un plus grand nombre des gens et une plus importante confiscation des ressources alimentaires, engendrant une famine récurrente. L'économie était aussi décisive dans l'éruption des révolutions en Allemagne et en Russie qui ont contribué à mettre fin à la guerre. Pour cette raison, la propagande de guerre a été largement utilisée pour mobiliser les civils et les femmes sont devenu un élément important de cette propagande. Les femmes ont aussi joué un grand rôle

dans l'effort de guerre, qu'il s'agisse de la production des armes dans les pays combattant industrialisés ou des forces paramilitaires surtout pendant les dernières années de la guerre. La transformation du rôle des femmes dans les sociétés belligérantes a donné lieu à la remise en cause des rôles traditionnels du genre. Les femmes et les enfants étant plus vulnérables face à la pauvreté et à la violation de leurs droits pendant l'absence de leurs maris, leurs fils ou leurs pères, un certain nombre de mesures d'aide sociale des États a tenté de palier à ces carences.

L'impact social de la guerre et les mesures d'aide sociale pour les femmes

La Première Guerre mondiale a accéléré le développement des mesures d'aide sociale pour les femmes pauvres surtout en terme d'aide alimentaire, de pensions pour les familles de soldats et d'assistance sociale aux migrants ou aux mères. Presque toutes les sociétés des pays combattants ont vécu la pénurie alimentaire à des degrés divers. La faim provoquée par ces manques de nourriture a particulièrement affligé les femmes et les enfants. Par ailleurs, à cause de la pénurie des autres biens de consommation, la gestion quotidienne du foyer est devenue plus compliquée pour les femmes ordinaires. Le système de double prix qui était utilisé pour assurer la distribution de produits alimentaires sans éliminer les privilèges des riches a créé des inégalités dans la distribution de nourriture dans les grandes villes comme Berlin. Les femmes allemandes, protestataires contre cette situation dans les villes, ont compris que leurs démonstrations forçaient les municipalités à fournir plus de nourriture pour les pauvres. En France aussi les femmes protestataires ont forcé le gouvernement français à mieux contrôler la distribution de produits alimentaires. Néanmoins, les mesures de l'aide sociale concernant la nourriture ont souvent créé

des inégalités supplémentaires et une certaine méfiance parmi les femmes ordinaires envers les gouvernements. Les soupes populaires qui ont été ouvertes par le gouvernement allemand à Berlin et dans d'autres régions de l'Allemagne pour les pauvres ont été fermées au mois de août de 1917 à cause du mécontentement de la population.

Une autre mesure d'aide sociale concernant les femmes était les pensions pour les familles des soldats qui étaient distribuées dans les pays belligérants. Le nombre des veuves de la Première Guerre mondiale se montait à presque 3 millions et le nombre des orphelins de guerre se situait entre 7 et 10 millions. La nécessité des pensions était si lourde qu'en Allemagne même le nombre des personnes qui recevaient l'assistance financière par le gouvernement était de 11 millions en 1915. Ces allocations de pensions ont cependant créé des tensions importantes parmi les femmes défavorisées, du fait de nombreux problèmes liés à la distribution de ces pensions. En Allemagne, par exemple, les pensions pour les veuves des martyrs de guerre n'étaient pas calculées selon la situation économique des familles. Le gouvernement français a aussi discriminé les veuves en calculant le montant de leur pension en fonction de la façon dont leurs époux étaient morts. Bien que ces pensions aient été très basses, les conservateurs ont critiqué la nouvelle « autonomie » des femmes, vis à vis des hommes, engendrée par le versement de cette aide financière. Par ailleurs, le versement des pensions aux femmes pouvait être soumis à leur comportement immoral. En dépit de leur nécessité de recevoir un support financier, les veuves de guerre n'étaient pas un groupe de femmes passives qui étaient totalement dépendantes des pensions distribuées par l'État. Elles disposaient de stratégies de survie telles que quitter un emploi pour un autre, vendre des meubles de la maison, se remarier ou se déplacer vers un autre quartier.

Les femmes migrantes vers d'autres régions étaient également victimes de la pauvreté, la faim ou la violence et elle ont généralement reçu l'aide d'associations philanthropiques dédiées aux femmes ou de la Croix Rouge. La guerre a aussi amené les États à fournir des aides sociales aux mères à la suite des questions démographiques tel que ouvrir des maternités ou établir des salles d'allaitements dans les usines. Des mesures semblables ont été également réclamées à l'État par les femmes de la classe ouvrière. Après la guerre, les politiques natalistes ont gagné en importance. Le gouvernement français a commencé une propagande intensive pour encourager la procréation et a introduit des nouvelles aides aux familles. En juillet 1920, les contraceptions ont été prohibées et en 1923 l'avortement a été aboli. Pourtant, avant ces politiques natalistes, le nombre d'enfants illégitimes n'a cessé d'augmenter à cause de la pauvreté et la prostitution des femmes au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale. Les femmes qui pouvaient recevoir l'aide de l'État pendant les années de guerre et après la guerre étaient principalement celles qui avaient accouché des enfants des martyrs de guerre.

Les femmes, la guerre et le travail

Le travail féminin était très important pour la mobilisation de guerre puisque des millions d'hommes ont été envoyés au front. La main d'œuvre des femmes dans les usines d'armement, surtout, avait une importance stratégique. Plusieurs femmes ont commencé à travailler dans des nouveaux secteurs au sein desquels elles ont été acceptées plus facilement puisqu'elles substituaient les hommes partis au front. Néanmoins, les conditions de guerre offraient la plupart de temps des opportunités d'emploi temporaires pour les femmes. Par ailleurs, cette vie professionnelle a

produit plusieurs problèmes et des nouvelles souffrances pour les femmes ainsi que des revenus et des expériences de travail passagers. Le nombre des travailleuses a augmenté particulièrement pendant la dernière année de la guerre. Après la guerre, les femmes pouvaient avoir des emplois dans des secteurs où elles n'avaient jamais travaillés auparavant comme la métallurgie, la chimie, l'électricité, l'industrie alimentaire, les emplois de bureaux et les services publics et administratifs. Surtout, les femmes de la classe moyenne ou supérieure ont trouvé des opportunités nouvelles pour leur éducation, leur ouvrant des portes dans des emplois variés. Les femmes ont aussi commencé à travailler comme employées civiles dans les armées des pays belligérants, substituant les hommes qui purent alors être envoyés au front en plus grand nombre. Elles ne furent acceptées comme soldats qu'en Russie. Les femmes ont été généralement employées dans les armées en tant qu'infirmières.

Le nombre des travailleuses dans les usines a aussi augmenté. De nombreuses femmes de la classe moyenne ont finalement trouvé les emplois dans les usines en tant que superviseurs pour le bien-être des travailleuses, inspectrices du travail, travailleuses sociales et gardiennes de sécurité pour contrôler les travailleuses dans les pays comme la Grande-Bretagne, la France et l'Allemagne. Le travail dans les usines d'armement a fourni aux travailleuses une certaine autonomie économique, les salaires étant plus hauts dans ce secteur.

Malgré ces opportunités, les femmes recevaient des salaires inférieurs à ceux des hommes pour le même travail. En raison des taux d'inflation élevés, même les salaires relativement élevés de certaines femmes leurs ont fourni un avantage économique négligeable. Par ailleurs, les travailleuses ont souffert des conditions dangereuses, très lourdes et malsaines du travail : exploitation extrême, horaires continus et accidents (explosions et empoisonnement du liés au TNT ou à d'autres

produits chimiques mortels). En Grande-Bretagne les travailleuses dans l'industrie de l'armement n'avaient pas le droit de changer d'usine sans avoir obtenu un « certificat de départ » (*leaving certificate*). Les infirmières constituaient un autre groupe de femmes qui occupaient des postes dangereux. Nombreuses sont celles qui tombaient sous les bombardements aériens ou mourraient des suites d'attaques au gaz. Les femmes au travail ont aussi souffert des attentes morales et patriarcales, des diverses formes de harcèlement et des rumeurs qui les insultaient et les accusaient. Elles n'ont été acceptées comme employées civiles dans les armées de la plupart des pays belligérants qu'en raison de la nécessité urgente de leur travail. Elles vécurent aussi de fortes pressions de leur société ou de l'armée dans laquelle elles travaillaient en terme de code vestimentaire et de leur comportement moral.

Les femmes s'activèrent à résoudre leurs problèmes liés au travail et elles prirent des mesures, à titre individuel ou collectif, contre les mauvais traitements qui leurs étaient infligés. La réaction typique des femmes occidentales aux conditions négatives de travail était leur adhésion aux syndicats et aux autres organisations professionnelles. Le pourcentage des travailleuses membres de syndicats et leur participation ou provocation aux grèves augmentèrent sensiblement pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Cependant, les hommes syndicalistes n'appréciaient pas les efforts des femmes qui visaient à gagner des nouveaux droits en raison de leur appartenance aux syndicats. Malgré cette position hostile des travailleurs, les femmes étaient actives aux cours des grèves pendant la guerre. De plus, elles ont organisé elles-mêmes plusieurs grèves grâce auxquelles elles ont négocié leurs conditions de travail avec l'État, surtout en France.

Outre leur appartenance aux syndicats ou leur participation aux grèves, les femmes usaient des stratégies quotidiennes comme dissimuler leur grossesse,

commencer à utiliser les contraceptions plus efficacement, préférer le travail qu'elles pouvaient faire à la maison, l'absentéisme ou commettre des délits tels que le larcin, détournement de fonds, le recel des biens volés, la fraude et la falsification de documents. Par ailleurs, elles changeaient d'usine d'armement en fonction des salaires et refusaient de travailler avec des produits dangereux.

Après l'armistice, plusieurs secteurs ont brutalement cessé d'employer des femmes. Des centaines de milliers de femmes qui travaillaient dans le service public ou dans les usines d'armements ont été renvoyées immédiatement après le retour des hommes du front. Les salaires des femmes ont encore été réduits. Même si les femmes qui travaillaient dans les départements administratifs ont acquis un statut d'employées plus solide, les travailleuses dans diverses industries ont souffert de ces licenciements. Les femmes licenciées n'ont pas bénéficié d'indemnités de chômage si elles refusaient les nouveaux emplois qui leur étaient offerts. Néanmoins, les femmes n'étaient pas complètement silencieuses contre ces licenciements massifs et plusieurs parmi elles ont écrit des lettres de plainte, relayées dans la presse.

Les femmes ordinaires et la mobilisation de guerre

Les femmes étaient au centre de la propagande de guerre, qu'elles aient supporté ou non la mobilisation. La situation vulnérable des femmes pendant la guerre a été généralement utilisée à des fins politiques et afin de renforcer la motivation des soldats. On croyait que les guerres avaient pour but la protection des femmes et des enfants et, par conséquent, les femmes sont devenues un élément indispensable de l'imagerie militaire.

La Première Guerre mondiale a aussi provoqué une montée des sentiments nationalistes et religieux parmi les civils. L'éducation nationaliste des enfants est devenue l'une des priorités des politiciens pendant les années de guerre. Certaines femmes ont joué un rôle actif dans la propagande de guerre en écrivant des livres patriotiques. Pourtant les femmes sont principalement devenu actrices de la propagande de guerre en faisant honte, par leurs mots ou leurs actions patriotiques, aux hommes qui ne s'enrôlaient pas dans l'armée. A l'inverse, la plupart des femmes ordinaires et à faible revenu ont contesté certains aspects de la mobilisation de guerre, comme le contrôle des comportements sexuels des femmes et de la prostitution qui était un élément indispensable de la mobilisation de guerre. Dans plusieurs pays belligérants la prostitution était soit régulée soit complètement abolie. À la suite de ces politiques interventionnistes des États belligérants la prostitution clandestine a augmenté. Par ailleurs, à la campagne il y avait des paysannes qui avaient des rapports sexuels avec les prisonniers de guerre. En raison de l'importance donnée à la sexualité des femmes pour la mobilisation, les réglementations visant à protéger des maladies vénériennes allaient au-delà des mesures de santé publique et sont devenues une question de discipline et de moralité des femmes à l'arrière. Ces réglementations ont aussi injustement pénalisé les femmes qui n'étaient pas prostituées.

Les femmes pacifistes étaient surveillées en de qu'elles constituaient un danger important face à la mobilisation de guerre. Aux Etats-Unis, parmi les femmes pacifistes qui ont été criminalisées et surveillées on compte surtout les femmes médecins ou les institutrices, qui s'étaient prononcé contre la formation militaire dans les écoles publiques, les dirigeantes socialistes qui promouvaient une maternité anti-militariste et les femmes immigrées de la classe ouvrière. Les féministes

pacifistes françaises comme les institutrices Hélène Brion, Marie Mayoux et Lucie Colliard furent jugées et emprisonnées.

En dépit de leur importance politique, les femmes pacifistes constituaient seulement un petit groupe parmi les féministes. Plusieurs suffragistes, croyant pouvoir acquérir leurs droits politiques en supportant les efforts de guerre de leur gouvernement, ont rejeté les idées des pacifistes. Bien que les femmes pacifistes aient organisé des conférences pour la paix à cette époque, la plupart des suffragistes n'ont pas participé à ces événements. Par ailleurs, les femmes pacifistes ne pouvaient avoir d'influence sur certains groupes de femmes de la classe ouvrière qui avaient des raisons subjectives de supporter la mobilisation de guerre. En partie en raison du soutien des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre une longue liste des pays a accordé aux femmes des droits de vote, soit pendant soit immédiatement après la guerre. Cependant, dès que les femmes obtinrent ces droits politiques, leurs luttes précédentes revendiquant notamment le droit de vote furent ignorés. Au contraire, on mis en avant l'idée que des droits politiques leurs furent donnés en récompense de leurs efforts pour la mobilisation de guerre.

Les services des femmes rendus à leurs États pendant la guerre ainsi que leurs résistances à la mobilisation de guerre étaient également significatifs sur le plan politique. Les rebellions et les grèves des femmes défavorisées liées à la pauvreté, aux pénuries de nourriture et de biens ont finalement ouvert la voie aux révolutions en Russie et en Allemagne. Les travailleuses et les femmes ordinaires françaises étaient aussi très actives dans les grèves et les démonstrations contre la guerre en 1917. Elles protestaient aussi contre les conscriptions et ont tenté de faire obstacle au transport des nouvelles recrues. Par ailleurs, le taux important de désertion des soldats pendant la Première Guerre mondiale au sein des armées des plusieurs pays

belligérants était lié à la réaction des soldats faces aux inégalités sociales et aux problèmes endurés par leurs proches restées à l'arrière.

La résistance des paysannes se manifestait principalement dans leurs luttes de survie quotidienne. Les gouvernements des pays belligérants attendaient des paysannes de participer à la mobilisation de guerre en récoltant davantage de produits agricoles. Les paysannes ont été exploitées dans le travail agricole à des degrés variés dans diverses régions. Cependant, les femmes résistaient surtout aux impôts de guerre en dissimulant leur récolte ou leurs animaux afin que les percepteurs d'impôt ne les réquisitionnent pas. Beaucoup d'entre elles ont volé de la nourriture à cause de la famine. Elles tentaient de résoudre leurs problèmes bureaucratiques sans l'aide des hommes et elles étaient plus exposées au harcèlement sexuel ou aux différentes formes d'exploitation des fonctionnaires ou des autres hommes. Finalement, elles déguisaient les déserteurs qui les aidaient dans leurs travaux agricoles.

Remarques finales

L'expérience de guerre des femmes occidentales et leur réaction à l'impact social de la guerre et à la mobilisation n'étaient pas homogènes. Leurs expériences de guerre variaient selon leurs statuts sociaux ou économiques et leurs conditions de vie. En dépit de quelques opportunités comme l'accès à de nouveaux types emplois, bouleversant la division traditionnelle du travail entre les femmes et les hommes, la guerre a engendré des problèmes tels que la pauvreté, les pénuries, la faim ou la sous-alimentation pour la grande majorité des femmes. Face à l'accroissement de la pauvreté et des problèmes sociaux qui affligeaient les femmes défavorisées, les

gouvernements de guerre durent augmenter les mesures d'aide sociale. Les femmes n'étaient pas seulement les destinataires passives de ces mesures mais elles forçaient les gouvernements à accroître ces aides. Elles négociaient également les effets secondaires des mesures de l'aide sociale par leurs États.

La conscription des hommes n'a pas permis de lever entièrement le contrôle patriarcal sur les femmes. Cependant, plusieurs femmes défavorisées ne restaient pas passives face au contrôle de leur comportement par l'État et les mesures de mobilisation qui leur imposaient des sacrifices. Les femmes demandaient des mesures d'aide sociale plus effectives. Elles résistaient aux difficultés et aux problèmes de la vie professionnelle. Elles se remariaient, changeaient d'emplois ou déménageaient dans d'autres régions. Elles commettaient des délits comme le vol, la prostitution clandestine, la fraude fiscale ou l'aide aux déserteurs. Elles montraient leurs mécontentements à travers des grèves organisées ou spontanées, des manifestations contre la guerre ou des émeutes. Les contributions des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre et leur résistance ont créé une conscience de l'importance sociale, économique et politique des femmes.

CHAPITRE TROIS

LE FRONT INTÉRIEUR OTTOMAN : UN BREF EXPOSÉ DE L'IMPACT SOCIAL ET ÉCONOMIQUE DE LA PREMIÈRE GUERRE MONDIALE

Comme dans les autres pays combattants, la Première Guerre mondiale a aussi eu un impact profond dans l'Empire ottoman non seulement sur les soldats du front mais également sur les civils. La guerre a pris fin avec la ruine de l'Empire ottoman et la fondation de la République de Turquie le 29 octobre 1923. Pour comprendre le contexte négatif contre lequel les femmes turques ordinaires ont lutté, ce chapitre expose brièvement l'impact économique de la guerre sur le front intérieur, les conséquences sociales et démographiques des pertes militaires et civils et l'impact de la mobilisation idéologique et de la propagande de guerre sur les civils, surtout sur les femmes.

L'impact économique de la guerre

Les impacts économiques les plus immédiats de la Première Guerre mondiale dans l'Empire ottoman étaient le coût élevé de la vie et l'inflation galopante des biens de consommation. L'arrêt du commerce extérieur et le ralentissement du commerce intérieur ont entraîné une pénurie alimentaire surtout à Istanbul qui dépendait de la farine importée de la Roumanie, de la Russie et de Marseille avant la Première Guerre mondiale. La demande pour les produits alimentaires a également augmenté en raison de la nécessité de ravitailler une armée qui n'avait jamais eu autant de soldats. En plus de cela, les différences de distribution de la nourriture parmi les différents groupes sociaux ont créé des problèmes additionnels. Plusieurs méthodes de distribution (de la fondation des soupes populaires à la distribution directe) ont été

essayées pour résoudre le problème de la pénurie alimentaire ; cependant, toutes ces mesures se sont révélées insuffisantes pour soulager les effets négatifs de ce problème. Outre les régions arabiques comme le nord de la Syrie et le Liban, qui ont été frappées par une grave crise de la faim, la pénurie de nourriture et la faim se sont montrées le plus dangereusement dans les provinces dans l'est de l'Anatolie, même si l'ensemble des régions de l'Anatolie ont souffert du manque de nourriture à des degrés divers.

La guerre a aussi provoqué une récession économique. La production a été complètement arrêtée dans plusieurs secteurs. Le niveau de production a baissé à cause des conscriptions qui avaient provoqué une réduction de la main d'œuvre agricole ou industrielle. En dépit des efforts pour embaucher les femmes, les pénuries de main-d'œuvre dans l'industrie ont continué jusqu'à la fin de la guerre. Même si le gouvernement ottoman s'efforçait d'augmenter le niveau de production agricole en introduisant le Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire (*Mükellefiyyet-i Ziraiyye Kanunu*) en septembre 1916, le niveau de récolte a continué à diminuer pendant la guerre. Comparé au niveau des années 1913-1914, la diminution de la production de blé était de presque 40% tandis que cette diminution s'élevait à plus de 50% pour les produits exportables comme le tabac, les raisins, les noisettes, l'huile d'olive, la soie grège et le coton en 1918. La diminution de la fourniture des biens était également liée aux conscriptions et à l'hésitation des producteurs à investir ou à produire à cause de la guerre.

Les pénuries de la guerre et les autres problèmes économiques ont forcé l'État ottoman à intervenir davantage dans l'économie. Ces conditions ont favorisé le développement de l'idée de « économie nationale » (*Millî İktisat*) qui était supportée également par des intellectuels comme Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Alexander

Helphand Parvus et Moiz Cohen (Munis Tekinalp). En conséquence, les capitulations ont été abolies, les droits de douane ont été augmentés et les nouvelles lois en faveur des entrepreneurs turcs ont été introduites. Par ailleurs, des banques nationales comme la Banque Nationale de Crédit (*İtibâr-ı Millî Bankası*) ont été fondées. Le commerce de nourriture et de céréales de l'Anatolie vers Istanbul est devenu l'affaire la plus profitable de l'Empire ottoman. Quelques gros producteurs de produits agricoles et quelques commerçants en Anatolie trouvèrent une occasion de gagner des fortunes remarquables. Néanmoins, cette situation a aussi favorisé un commerce qui était contraire à l'intérêt économique des civils défavorisés. En raison de ce commerce qui était appelé le « commerce de wagons » (*vagon ticareti*) et qui était fait par les wagons des trains limités à cause de la guerre, les profiteurs de la guerre ont gagné des fortunes.

La guerre et les politiques économiques du gouvernement ottoman ont aussi détérioré la distribution des revenus et ont créé des nouvelles inégalités parmi les groupes sociaux dans la société ottomane. Les pénuries de biens qui étaient engendrées par le taux de production trop bas et la tendance à profiter de la guerre ont créé une forte inflation. Le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs a diminué énormément. Ce déclin du pouvoir d'achat a affligé principalement les femmes et les enfants à l'arrière en l'absence des hommes, traditionnels soutiens de famille. Par conséquent, les femmes turques ont souffert de la faim ou de la sous-alimentation.

Les problèmes économiques pendant la guerre ont aussi nui à la solidarité parmi le peuple et à la confiance du peuple envers l'État. Les fonctionnaires étaient plus enclins que jamais à recourir à la corruption à cause de la pauvreté.

L'impression de l'argent, l'endettement et la taxation de la population sont devenus les outils principaux du gouvernement ottoman pour financer la guerre. Surtout, les

impôts ont directement ou indirectement frappés principalement les pauvres et les gens à faible revenu.

Conséquences des morts et des blessés pendant la guerre

À cause des guerres successives qui avaient commencé avant même la Première Guerre mondiale et continuaient depuis plus d'une décennie, l'Empire ottoman a subi une transformation démographique et une désintégration sociale extrême avant, pendant et après la Première Guerre mondiale. Le pourcentage de pertes était très lourd dans l'armée ottomane. Pendant la guerre, plus de 2.850.000 hommes ont été enrôlés dans l'armée. Le nombre total des soldats qui sont morts, directement ou indirectement, des combats se montait à 771.844. Le nombre de prisonniers de guerre avoisinait 200.000. Quand la guerre fut finie il y avait au moins 500.000 déserteurs. À cause de ces pertes et de ces désertions, le nombre total des soldats dans l'armée ottomane n'a jamais dépassé 800.000. Les femmes turques défavorisées constituaient le groupe le plus nombreux de gens qui souffraient des conscriptions et des pertes militaires puisque les paysans musulmans de l'Anatolie étaient les principales ressources humaines de l'armée ottomane. Plusieurs femmes turques sont devenues veuves très jeunes. Les pertes civiles à cause de la guerre étaient aussi très élevées dans l'Empire ottoman. Les civils furent même plus lourdement touchés que les soldats puisqu'ils furent près de 80% à périr des conflits armés, migrations, déportations, épidémies et malnutrition.

En raison des pertes militaires et civiles plusieurs femmes turques ont perdu leurs hommes qui étaient leurs soutiens de famille. La plupart de ces femmes ont vécu dans la misère pendant les années de guerre et même longtemps après la guerre.

Leurs problèmes ont forcé les femmes ottomanes défavorisées à mener une guerre de survie importante sur le front intérieur. Plusieurs femmes ont négocié les mesures de mobilisation, les impôts et la propagande de guerre d'État ; elles ont pétitionné contre le gouvernement ; elles ont utilisé le discours nationaliste islamiste contre le gouvernement pour légitimer leurs demandes et leurs plaintes ; elles ont élevé leurs voix pour contester les lois et les décrets ; et elles ont lutté contre les fonctionnaires corrompus ou les soldats ottomans cruels. En dernier recours, pour soutenir leurs familles ou pour survivre, elles n'ont parfois pas hésité à s'engager dans les cohabitations illicites ou à utiliser leur sexualité en devenant des prostituées clandestines.

La mobilisation de guerre, la propagande et les femmes ordinaires

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale les dirigeants politiques ottoman ont supporté une idéologie qui était une sorte de mélange entre islamisme et nationalisme ottoman turc et qui était utilisé extensivement pour la mobilisation de guerre. Cette idéologie a eu une forte influence sur la déclaration du *Djihad* (la guerre sainte de musulmans) par le Cheik ul-Islam qui a demandé l'assistance de tous les musulmans aux efforts de guerre de l'Empire ottoman. Par ailleurs, le Comité de l'Union et du Progrès a supporté une idéologie nationaliste pour la création d'une nouvelle bourgeoisie turque et une économie nationale pendant la guerre.

En dépit de l'influence de cette idéologie sur les intellectuels turcs et les soutiens du Comité de l'Union et du Progrès, la propagande de guerre nationaliste et la déclaration de guerre sainte des musulmanes n'ont pas exercé une forte influence sur les gens défavorisés. La force de travail agricole des paysannes a été largement

transformée en travail forcé après l'introduction de la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire en 1916. Les femmes ont souffert des réquisitions de leurs outils ou leurs animaux et des impôts de guerre qui ont diminué le taux de leur production agricole, provoquant la faim à la campagne. Finalement, les femmes défavorisées qui ont été forcées à voler ou à se prostituer à cause de la pauvreté pendant la guerre sont devenues les cibles des lois contre les maladies vénériennes et des mesures de surveillance des comportements. Par conséquent, les femmes pauvres n'ont pas obéi sans résistance aux tentatives du gouvernement pour la mobilisation, bien qu'elles n'aient pas hésité à utiliser un discours dominant d'État comme stratégie pour réclamer leurs droits sociaux et économiques pendant la guerre. D'autre part, les femmes appartenant à l'élite ont accepté le discours hégémonique de guerre plus volontiers. Elles ont participé de façon plus organisée aux efforts de guerre et elles ont acquis des nouvelles positions et de l'expérience dans la vie publique. Par ailleurs, ces femmes ont acheté les fonds pour l'emprunt interne de l'Empire ottoman pour financer la guerre et elles ont supporté le développement de l'économie nationale.

Remarques finales

L'économie de guerre a détérioré le niveau de vie de la grande majorité de la population ottomane. Cette situation a brisé les fondements de la société ottomane et sa structure basée sur la solidarité du peuple et leur modestie en créant des disparités énormes entre les revenus. La corruption de la bureaucratie ottomane, les mesures extraordinaires de la mobilisation de guerre et les impôts lourds ont suscité de la méfiance vis-à-vis des fonctionnaires et ils ont aliéné la majorité du peuple de l'État.

La plupart des civils ont souffert de la pauvreté ou de la mort à cause des problèmes liés aux pénuries, épidémies, migrations et déportations, voire même agression armée dans les régions occupées par l'ennemi. Dans ce contexte, la propagande de guerre et les efforts de l'État pour la mobilisation n'ont pas eu une grande influence sur la majorité de la population ottomane et ils n'ont été bien accueilli que par un petit groupe de la bourgeoisie musulmane, les turcs de la classe moyenne et les adhérents du Comité de l'Union et du Progrès. Cependant, pour les groupes plus nombreux des femmes ordinaires, les conditions de guerre signifiaient uniquement une terrible catastrophe.

CHAPITRE QUATRE

LES FEMMES FACE AU DÉFI DE LA FAIM, LES PÉNURIES ET LES AIDES ALIMENTAIRES INSUFFISANTES

La Première Guerre mondiale a entraîné une grave crise de la faim et des pénuries qui ont forcé les politiciens à créer de nouvelles mesures pour la protection des gens défavorisés. Ces mesures d'aide sociale ont été conceptualisées par les élites pour acquérir l'adhésion du public ou une certaine légitimité politique nécessaires pour créer un front intérieur plus fort afin de mieux supporter la mobilisation de guerre. Par conséquent, ces mesures n'avaient pas pour but de protéger toutes les personnes souffrantes. Même les femmes qui étaient sous la protection de l'État et les institutions de protection sociale étaient face aux problèmes importants, aux fonctionnaires corrompus et à la discrimination. Ce chapitre examine le rôle des femmes défavorisées comme négociateurs dans la création de ces nouvelles mesures ou la modification des mesures existantes. Pour parvenir à leurs fins, elles épuisèrent les méthodes formelles (comme les pétitions ou l'envoi de télégrammes dans lesquels elles utilisaient fréquemment les stratégies discursives) ou informelles comme la dramatisation de leurs problèmes, crier, se plaindre ou participer à des actes de rébellion.

La faim et les pénuries pendant la guerre

Comme il l'a été examiné dans le chapitre précédent, les conséquences économiques de la guerre étaient la raison principale derrière la faim et les pénuries. Les conscriptions militaires et la réquisition des animaux de trait ont aussi influencé négativement la production agricole bien que les femmes et les enfants aient travaillé

extensivement à cette production. Finalement, le manque de moyens de transport à cause des conditions de guerre a aggravé ces problèmes.

La géographie de la faim et des pénuries

Les pénuries alimentaires et des biens de consommation basiques ont frappé la capitale et les provinces en même temps, bien qu'à des divers degrés et pour des raisons différentes. Les prix des biens de consommation ont augmenté surtout à Istanbul non seulement à cause du manque de nourriture mais aussi à cause de la vente des nourritures sur le marché noir. La faim a notamment mis en péril les vies des femmes et des enfants défavorisés dans toutes les provinces de l'Empire ottoman. Pourtant, quelques régions de l'Empire ottoman ont été plus touchées par la faim que dans la capitale : plusieurs villes côtières, dépendantes de produits importés, les régions qui ont été occupées par l'ennemi comme la province de Trabzon, les régions qui ont été touchées par les migrations et les déportations comme l'Est de l'Anatolie et les régions dans lesquelles l'agriculture était peu développable. Cependant, aucune région n'a été plus touchée par la faim que la Mésopotamie.

Les profiteurs de guerre et la pénurie alimentaire

L'une des principales raisons derrière les problèmes liés à la distribution de la nourriture était l'existence des profiteurs de guerre. Cela concernait surtout l'acquisition du droit d'acheter de la nourriture pour l'armée ou pour les autres institutions publiques, domaines dans lesquels les profiteurs de guerre utilisaient leurs connections avec le Comité de l'Union et du Progrès. Les femmes et les enfants

qui n'avaient pas le support financier de leurs époux ou de leurs pères ont le plus souffert du marché noir et des actions des profiteurs de guerre.

Entre toutes les pénuries de guerre les femmes ont été le plus frappées par la pénurie du pain. La plupart des gens ne se nourrissaient que de pain ou de blé concassé et dans certaines régions ils étaient rendus à se nourrir d'herbe comme les vaches. Le pain rationné était de mauvais goût, malsain et il était difficile de le recevoir. Par conséquent, les femmes défavorisées étaient souvent forcées de lutter devant les portes des boulangeries pour acheter un pain. La pénurie du lait constituait également un problème important, principalement pour les nouveaux-nés et leurs mères. La viande était hors de portée des gens, sauf des riches. L'impact des pénuries alimentaires a duré également après l'armistice et a influencé les vies de presque toutes les composantes de la société ottomane. Le sucre est devenu une nourriture de luxe et il a été substitué par les raisins secs et les mélasses. Les gens défavorisés ne pouvaient également pas acheter n'importe quel sorte de thé et le café a été remplacé par une imitation préparée à partir des pois chiches.

La pénurie des autres besoins fondamentaux de consommation

Trouver suffisamment de bois ou de charbon était aussi un problème important pendant la guerre. Les gens sont morts de froid à cause du manque de bois ou de charbon à des prix accessibles. Les pénuries du carburant, bois ou charbon, ont aussi rendu compliqué les tâches ménagères des femmes pendant la guerre puisqu'il n'était pas possible de trouver suffisamment du carburant pour allumer les lampes. La pénurie de vêtements a également forcé les femmes à raccommoder les chaussettes sans cesse, porter des pantoufles avec des semelles cordées au lieu de chaussures ou

marcher pieds nus. Les femmes utilisaient leurs vieux vêtements ou le linge de maison pour confectionner des vêtements à leurs enfants. Comme l'Empire ottoman était dépendant de l'importation de plusieurs textiles et des outils pour la production des vêtements, même les aiguilles et les fils ont complètement disparu du marché.

Les mesures d'aide sociale contre la faim et les pénuries

Le gouvernement et l'armée ottomane n'étaient pas préparés à affronter l'impact social et économique de la guerre. En conséquence, les mesures d'aide sociale n'étaient pas introduites conformément à un plan mais surtout en raison des plaintes et des demandes des civils, la plupart desquels étaient les femmes.

Les tentatives pour trouver une solution au problème alimentaire à travers différentes institutions

Dans les conditions de guerre et pour toute la durée de la guerre, la distribution de la nourriture a été effectuée par différentes institutions comme la Commission des Biens Indispensables (*Havâic-i Zaruriyye Komisyonu*), la Délégation Commerciale Spéciale (*Hey'et-i Mahsusa-i Ticariyye*), la Corporation Ottomane des Produits Nationaux Anatoliens (*Anadolu Millî Mahsulât Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi*), le Comité de l'Exportation (*İhracat Hey'eti*), le service de police, les municipalités et le Ministère de la Guerre. Les municipalités surtout étaient dotées de l'argent et des nouveaux droits nécessaires. Cependant, elles se sont montrées incapables de trouver une solution effective au problème de la distribution de la nourriture et d'autres biens. Par conséquent, le Comité Central d'Approvisionnement Alimentaire (*Merkez*

İaşe Hey'eti) et les Comités Provinciales d'Approvisionnement Alimentaire (*Taşra İaşe Hey'etleri*) furent fondés au cours de l'été 1916. Bientôt, ces comités furent également annulés et la distribution de la nourriture effectuée par l'armée ottomane qui possédait la plupart des moyens de transport, et pour cela, fut créée le 18 août 1917 la Direction Générale d'Approvisionnement Alimentaire (*İaşe Umûm Müdürlüğü*) qui était attachée au Ministère de la Guerre. Finalement, le Ministère de l'Alimentation (*İaşe Nezareti*) fut fondé le 30 juillet 1918.

Presque toutes les institutions créées pendant la guerre ont été déclarées coupable d'aider les profiteurs de guerre dans une certaine mesure et elles ont perdu leur légitimité aux yeux du peuple. Les lois qui protégeaient les gens les plus pauvres ont été introduites seulement au fur et à mesure que la guerre progressait et le nombre des protestataires augmentaient.

Les soupes populaires, les allocations vestimentaires et les autres formes d'aide sociale pour les personnes défavorisées

La faim omniprésente et les pénuries de la nourriture ont obligé le gouvernement, les municipalités, l'armée et les institutions d'assistance sociale comme le Croissant Rouge et la Société de la Défense Nationale à distribuer de la nourriture et à établir les soupes populaires. À Istanbul, les quartiers dans lesquels ces soupes populaires ont été installées étaient ceux dans lesquels les gens défavorisés vivaient comme Topkapı, Üsküdar, Eyüpsultan, Kasımpaşa, Kumkapı, Fatih, Cibali, Alipaşa et Kartal. Dans le reste du pays, cela concernait surtout les régions dans lesquelles personnes indigentes étaient nombreuses comme Samsun et Trabzon dans le nord-est de l'Anatolie.

Les pauvres recevaient de la nourriture dans ces soupes populaires en payant un peu d'argent ou en montrant leurs cartes de rationnement. Ces cartes de rationnement ont été généralement autorisées selon l'information fournie par les chefs des districts et ses conseillers. Le niveau de protéine de la nourriture qui était servi dans les soupes populaires était très bas. En plus de ces soupes populaires, l'aide alimentaire pour les pauvres venait de pays étrangers comme les Etats-Unis. Outre la nourriture, les femmes défavorisées recevaient des médicaments, du charbon et du bois de chauffage dans certaines soupes populaires. Les femmes pouvaient également obtenir des vêtements gratuits.

La négociation des mesures contre la faim et les pénuries par les femmes défavorisées

Pendant toute la durée de la Première Guerre mondiale et les années qui l'ont suivi le problème principal de femmes ottomanes défavorisées était la faim. Les femmes ont recouru à une série d'actions légales ou illégales pour demander davantage de nourriture. Les mauvaises récoltes à cause du manque du main d'œuvre lié aux conscriptions militaires, les conditions climatiques défavorables et les impôts lourds qui ont été demandés aux paysans ont trouvé une place dans les pétitions ou télégrammes des femmes pour demander l'aide de l'État et dans leurs plaintes ou rebellions.

Les plaintes des femmes au sujet des problèmes relatifs à la distribution de nourriture

La plupart des plaintes des femmes défavorisées portaient sur la mauvaise distribution de nourriture par l'État. Le système des cartes de rationnement ne fonctionnait pas sans fautes dans plusieurs régions. Les femmes se plaignaient aussi de la discrimination et du favoritisme des fonctionnaires des entrepôts d'approvisionnement alimentaires quand elles demandaient de la nourriture. Elles protestaient surtout quand les approvisionnements qui avaient été attribués à leur district ont été envoyés vers d'autres régions. Les femmes indigentes comparaient leur situation avec celle des épouses de fonctionnaires qui vivaient dans des conditions moins difficiles et elles ont utilisé cette différence de situation comme un moyen de négociation pour demander davantage d'assistance sociale dans leurs pétitions. Les problèmes des femmes relatifs à la distribution de nourriture étaient si terribles que même les hommes écrivaient sur la faim des femmes et des enfants en leur nom.

Les inégalités liées à la distribution de nourriture ont été parfois créées en raison des lois et réglementations de guerre. Bien que la plupart des femmes défavorisées n'aient pas eu d'autre choix que de demander de la nourriture fournie par les municipalités et les institutions d'assistance sociale comme le Croissant Rouge, les familles des soldats pouvaient demander de la nourriture fournie par l'armée ottomane qui disposait des meilleurs moyens de transport pour sa distribution. Même cette distribution de nourriture aux familles des soldats n'était pas égalitaire. Les familles des officiers de l'armée ottomane qui étaient en service pouvaient recevoir davantage de nourriture que les familles des soldats prisonniers de guerre ou martyrs. Par ailleurs, les officiers supérieurs pouvaient envoyer charbon ou biens de

consommation durable à leurs familles en se procurant ces biens dans les entrepôts de l'armée en contrepartie d'une partie de leur salaire. Sachant que les familles de ces officiers de l'armée étaient dans une meilleure situation, les familles de soldats qui avaient des problèmes financiers importants faisaient valoir que leur droit d'acheter le pain moins cher n'était pas suffisant pour les aider.

En effet, comparées aux familles des officiers de l'armée en service, les épouses des prisonniers de guerre et les veuves des martyrs étaient plus dépendantes de la bienveillance de l'armée ottomane. Ces femmes, qui étaient plus défavorisées, faisaient souvent pression sur les fonctionnaires dans les bureaux de recrutement pour exiger de nouvelles allocations. Elles écrivaient fréquemment des pétitions et elles rassemblaient des foules qui gémissaient ou criaient devant les portes des fonctionnaires. Les veuves des martyrs qui vivaient dans les conditions misérables envoyaient également des télégrammes aux dirigeants politiques pour demander de la nourriture autres que le pain. Les autres groupes de femmes, surtout les épouses des fonctionnaires pauvres et des soldats indigents, exigeaient aussi les mêmes aides que celles fournies par l'armée ottomane pendant la guerre.

La résistance des femmes à la discrimination concernant la fourniture de l'aide alimentaire

En plus de la distribution inégale du pain et de la nourriture parmi les familles des soldats de différents rangs, les femmes de soldats nécessiteux ont également résisté à la discrimination contre les familles des martyrs des Guerres des Balkans. À l'été 1919, les familles des prisonniers de guerre et des martyrs ont aussi écrit une pétition au gouvernement ottoman pour demander que l'armée ottomane ne cesse pas de leur

distribuer du pain. Le gouvernement ottoman demandait des municipalités, au lieu de l'armée ottomane, de fournir la nourriture pour les familles des soldats en priorité. Cependant, les veuves des martyrs qui étaient une charge financière supplémentaire pour les municipalités n'étaient pas accueillies à bras ouvert par ces institutions. Ces dernières, qui avaient déjà des problèmes financiers, demandaient au gouvernement de leur envoyer davantage d'argent pour fournir de la nourriture aux habitants nécessiteux de leurs villes.

En raison de cette discrimination plusieurs femmes appartenant aux familles défavorisées de soldats luttait fréquemment avec les femmes des soldats du rang supérieur pour obtenir du pain devant les points de distribution. Par conséquent, le pain qui était donné aux familles des officiers de l'armée a été reconsidéré et on a décidé que seulement les épouses, les enfants, les mères et les grand-mères qui étaient veuves ou les sœurs qui étaient orphelines ou veuves et sans soutien de famille de ces officiers pouvaient être destinataires du pain. Les familles des déserteurs perdaient immédiatement leur droit à recevoir du pain.

Les plaintes des femmes au sujet de la faim

Outre la distribution inégale de la nourriture, les femmes défavorisées protestaient aussi contre les profiteurs de guerre qui étaient considérés comme responsables de la faim de leurs familles. Elles demandaient l'aide du gouvernement ottoman concernant ce sujet. De plus, à la campagne, la sécheresse était une autre raison importante de la faim et elle a forcé les paysannes à demander de la nourriture fournie par l'État. Les femmes soulignaient fréquemment leurs statut de familles de soldat sans soutien de famille dans leurs pétitions ; probablement parce qu'elles

voulaient garantir l'allocation de l'aide de nourriture qu'elles pouvaient recevoir de l'État.

Les tentatives des femmes à tromper les autorités pour recevoir plus de nourriture

Comme la nourriture qui était distribué aux gens défavorisés n'était pas suffisante et étant donné les prix prohibitifs des produits alimentaires sur le marché, quelques femmes essayaient d'augmenter le volume de nourriture qu'elles pouvaient recevoir en trompant les fournisseurs de l'aide sociale. Par conséquent, pour décider qui avaient le plus besoin de l'aide de nourriture, les institutions de l'aide sociale consultaient presque toujours les chefs des districts dans lesquels vivaient ces pauvres. Cette situation a rendu les femmes plus dépendantes des chefs des leurs districts et donc ces hommes plus influents sur les femmes défavorisées. Les femmes devaient systématiquement demander leur aide pour obtenir leurs cartes de rationnement de pain ou d'autres aides sociales.

Les femmes trompaient aussi les autorités pour la nourriture rationnée qui était distribuée aux soupes publiques. Quelques administrateurs de ces soupes publiques ont rapporté que les gens nécessiteux ne respectaient pas les règles ; qu'ils essayaient de prendre davantage de nourriture qu'il leur été accordé et qu'ils trompaient le personnel chargé de la distribution. Par ailleurs, comme il y avait plusieurs cas d'escroquerie concernant la distribution de nourriture aux nécessiteux, les dirigeants politiques ont introduit de nouvelles lois pendant la Première Guerre mondiale pour punir les civils qui essayaient de tromper les fournisseurs de l'aide alimentaire.

Les protestations ouvertes des femmes et les émeutes de la faim

Les tentatives des femmes pour recevoir davantage de nourriture se montraient également à travers les protestations et les conflits ouverts. Motivées par la faim, les femmes menaçaient les dirigeants politiques de venir à Istanbul. Les femmes défavorisées ont participé aussi aux émeutes à Istanbul et dans d'autres villes en Anatolie telles que İzmir. Elles ont collaboré aux rebellions et au pillage des entrepôts d'approvisionnement alimentaire de leurs districts, particulièrement vers la fin de la guerre. La plupart de ces rebellions ont eu lieu dans la province de Hüdavendigâr dans laquelle les migrantes et les femmes de la classe ouvrière étaient très nombreuses. Même si la faim était un problème de tous les civils pendant la guerre, les femmes défavorisées, surtout les familles de soldats, ont joué un rôle très important dans les rebellions à la fois symboliquement et en participant activement à des affrontements.

Remarques finales

En bref, pendant la guerre plusieurs gens souffraient de la pénurie alimentaire ou des biens de consommation, mais le principal groupe des civils qui ont succombé à la faim était les femmes défavorisées et leurs enfants. Ces femmes luttait devant les portes des boulangeries pour acheter le pain rationné. Elles souffraient du froid à cause du manque des vêtements et des chaussures ou de charbon et de bois de chauffage. Les travaux ménagers de ces femmes étaient plus difficiles en raison des pénuries.

Pour résoudre le problème de la faim et des pénuries plusieurs institutions ont été fondées. Cependant, elles sont bientôt devenues des établissements corrompus et elles ont créé des profiteurs de guerre. Par ailleurs, les règles de ces institutions ont souvent discriminé parmi les femmes nécessiteuses. Par conséquent, les femmes ont lutté pour leur nourriture en utilisant non seulement les stratégies discursives dans leurs pétitions et leurs télégrammes mais encore leur force physique au travers de manifestations et d'émeutes.

CHAPITRE CINQ

LA NÉGOCIATION DES AIDES FINANCIÈRES DE L'ÉTAT POUR LES FAMILLES DES SOLDATS PAR LES FEMMES

Plusieurs femmes turques vivaient dans la pauvreté puisque non seulement leurs hommes avaient été envoyés au front, mais aussi car elles avaient peu de chance de trouver un emploi. Dans ce contexte les pensions de l'État ou des fonds spéciaux ainsi que la distribution d'une partie de la solde militaire aux familles des soldats étaient indispensables pour les femmes défavorisées. Ces pensions ont été principalement introduites par l'État pour supporter la mobilisation de guerre. Néanmoins, comme le nombre de bénéficiaires des pensions a augmenté pendant toute la durée de la guerre, la distribution des pensions a créé de graves problèmes financiers et organisationnels. Les femmes ne pouvaient pas recevoir leurs pensions régulièrement et l'argent qu'elles recevaient de l'État ne répondait pas à leurs besoins à cause de l'inflation galopante. Par conséquent, les femmes ont lutté pour être bénéficiaire de plus d'aide financière en écrivant des pétitions, en envoyant les télégrammes et en faisant pression sur les dirigeants locaux.

Le problème des femmes et des enfants à charge

Dans la société ottomane, les femmes et les enfants avaient toujours été dépendants de l'aide des hommes comme soutiens de famille. Cependant, au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale cette situation est aussi devenu un problème à la charge de l'État à cause de la mobilisation de presque 3 millions hommes dans l'armée ottomane. En 1917 il y avait approximativement 1.500.000 femmes et enfants qui recevaient des pensions. Comme ces pensions ont été payées irrégulièrement et

qu'elles étaient insuffisantes, leurs bénéficiaires ont eu des grandes difficultés et cette situation a généré des problèmes sociaux importants. Afin d'atténuer la pauvreté des femmes, des nouvelles institutions ont été fondées pour permettre aux femmes de trouver un emploi. Par ailleurs, les retards de paiement des pensions qui étaient allouées aux familles de soldats et leurs détournements par les fonctionnaires corrompus ont augmenté le nombre des déserteurs.

Les lois et les règlements au sujet des aides financières de l'état pour les familles des
soldats

L'État ottoman avait introduit des mesures d'aide sociale pour la protection des familles des soldats défavorisées à partir du dix-neuvième siècle. Néanmoins, ces aides ont gagné en importance avec le début des Guerres des Balkans et surtout pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Les aides financières les plus connues qui étaient fournies pour les familles des soldats et des officiers de l'armée ottomanes pendant la Première Guerre mondiale étaient : les pensions pour les familles des soldats sans soutien de famille (*muinsiz asker aileleri maaşı*) ; les pensions ou les allocations données aux familles des prisonniers de guerre et aux familles des soldats de l'armée de rangs inférieurs (le paiement sur l'ordonnance : *sipariş maaşı*) ; les pensions pour les familles sans soutien des soldats qui étaient perdus pendant le combat ; les pensions pour les familles des martyrs de guerre et les anciens combattants invalides (pension de famille : *aile maaşı*) ; et l'argent fourni par la Commission pour Aider les Familles des Docteurs Martyrs (*Şehit Etibba Aileleri Muavenet Komisyonu*).

Les familles avaient le droit de recevoir 30 piastres par mois pour chaque membre de la famille jusqu'à la démobilisation de leur soutien de famille. Par ailleurs, les familles des officiers de l'armée, la plupart desquelles étaient aussi les femmes défavorisées, ont demandé qu'une partie des soldes militaires de leurs soutiens de famille leur soit directement versée. Les femmes dont les époux ou les parents de sexe masculin étaient prisonniers de guerre ou perdu sur le champ de bataille pouvaient également recevoir une certaine somme d'argent, soit comme aide financière directe par l'État soit comme partie des soldes des officiers de l'armée ottomane qui étaient prisonniers de guerre et ne pouvaient donc envoyer de l'argent à leurs familles. Pourtant, dans plusieurs cas il était très difficile de connaître le statut de tel ou tel soldat (prisonnier de guerre, perdu ou martyr) et cette situation créait des problèmes légaux supplémentaires pour les familles défavorisées. Il y avait aussi discrimination dans la distribution de pensions aux familles des martyrs de guerre. Seules les familles des soldats qui étaient morts sur le champ de bataille ou des épidémies pouvaient recevoir les pensions pour les familles des martyrs. Comme plusieurs docteurs de l'armée ottomane étaient morts en raison des épidémies, les médecins ont créé leur propre fond d'aide financière pour protéger leurs familles de la pauvreté. La Commission pour Aider les Familles des Docteurs Martyrs a été fondée dans ce but au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale. Par ailleurs, seules les familles des soldats dont le service militaire sur le champ de bataille a été jugé remarquable par les officiers supérieurs obtenaient le droit de recevoir une prime.

Les familles des officiers de l'armée ottomane qui étaient morts comme martyrs juste avant leur promotion à un grade supérieur pouvaient aussi recevoir la pension de famille des soldats d'un niveau supérieur. Néanmoins, les familles des simples soldats n'ont reçu aucune augmentation de leurs pensions pendant toute la

durée de la Première Guerre mondiale. Ce n'est qu'après la signature de l'armistice qu'une réglementation attribuant un paiement supplémentaire nommé « le coût du pain » (*ekmek bedeli*) fut introduite pour aider les veuves et les orphelins.

La négociation des aides financières pour les familles des soldats par les femmes défavorisées

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, plusieurs femmes turques défavorisées appartenant à familles des soldats ont lutté pour recevoir leurs pensions. Même si ces femmes ont très souvent échoué à faire augmenter le taux de l'argent qu'elles pouvaient recevoir, les efforts des femmes contre les inégalités concernant les mesures d'aide sociale ont forcé les dirigeants politiques à concevoir des lois plus égalitaires et plus efficaces.

Les pensions pour les familles des soldats sans soutien de famille

Les femmes qui recevaient les pensions pour les familles des soldats sans soutien de famille constituaient le groupe le plus nombreux des bénéficiaires des pensions. À cause des faiblesses de l'infrastructure administrative liée à la distribution des pensions et puisque les bénéficiaires étaient en grand nombre, même les femmes qui bénéficiaient légalement d'une pension éprouvaient de nombreuses difficultés à percevoir cet argent. Ces femmes réagissaient fréquemment à cette situation. Elles ont d'abord protesté que les pensions dont elles étaient destinataires ne leurs étaient jamais versées. Les femmes défavorisées appartenant à des familles des soldats se plaignaient des tracasseries administratives et de leur mauvais traitement par les

fonctionnaires. Plusieurs femmes ont pétitionné individuellement à destination du gouvernement afin de recevoir, sans retard, les pensions qui leur avaient été légalement attribuées.

Le manque d'argent dans les trésoreries privées des districts a également créé des problèmes concernant le paiement des pensions. Par conséquent, un grand nombre des femmes portaient plainte à propos des retards de perception dont la durée pouvait atteindre plusieurs mois. Les femmes soulignaient aussi dans leurs pétitions qu'elles ne percevaient leurs pensions quelques mois dans l'année. De plus, il y avait les télégrammes de plainte par les femmes défavorisées qui ne pouvaient pas recevoir leurs pensions complètes.

Les pétitions des femmes, leurs télégrammes et leurs actions protestataires étaient surtout efficaces au niveau local. Par conséquent, les gouverneurs des provinces et les gouverneurs des districts écrivaient fréquemment au gouvernement à propos des problèmes financiers concernant les paiements des pensions des familles des soldats. Les gouvernements locaux ne pouvaient pas payer ces pensions régulièrement, surtout dans les provinces dans lesquelles les familles des soldats sans soutien de famille étaient en grand nombre, comme la province d'Aydın.

Le problème des pensions impayées et les protestations des femmes contre cette situation ont continué pendant toute la durée de la guerre. Les lois relatives au paiement des pensions, qui ne tenaient pas compte des réalités économiques de la guerre, ont créé des problèmes supplémentaires concernant ce sujet. Par exemple, les municipalités obligées par le gouvernement de fournir de la nourriture aux familles des soldats ne pouvaient pas accomplir cette tâche puisqu'elles n'avaient pas la somme d'argent nécessaire. Par ailleurs, le gouvernement ottoman a tenté de diminuer le nombre des bénéficiaires de cette pension en distribuant de la nourriture

au lieu des pensions vers la fin de l'année 1917. De plus, quand les femmes ont demandé une augmentation de leurs pensions à cause du déclin de leurs pouvoirs d'achat, le gouvernement a essayé de compenser cette situation en distribuant des produits alimentaires de base aux femmes nécessiteuses.

Dans plusieurs provinces de l'Empire ottoman les pensions des familles des soldats sans soutien de famille n'étaient même pas suffisantes pour permettre d'acheter un pain par jour. Les femmes ont donc averti les gouvernements locaux des diverses provinces sur leur situation tragique et en contrepartie les gouverneurs locaux ont sans cesse demandé au gouvernement ottoman l'augmentation des pensions des familles des soldats. Malgré ces tentatives, le Ministère des Finances n'a jamais augmenté les pensions. Au contraire, le gouvernement ottoman a cherché constamment de nouvelles méthodes afin de diminuer le nombre de bénéficiaires de ces pensions. Les pensions des femmes propriétaires d'un champ, ou celles des parents qu'on croyait d'être riches ont été coupées. En réponse, les femmes qui n'étaient pas acceptées comme bénéficiaires de ces pensions ou les femmes auxquelles on avait coupé la pension ont résisté à cette situation en écrivant des pétitions et en envoyant les télégrammes aux dirigeants politiques.

Par ailleurs, il y avait aussi le cas des femmes qui ne pouvaient pas recevoir l'argent de l'État, et qui pourtant n'étaient pas soutenues par les hommes, qui étaient obligées par les lois d'être le soutien de famille. La complexité des lois et la difficulté de se présenter avec ou sans soutien de famille ont engendré une tension entre les femmes défavorisées qui ne pouvaient pas recevoir d'aide financière et le gouvernement ottoman. Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale les femmes ont fréquemment négocié avec l'État sur leurs statuts et les aides qui leurs étaient attribuées.

En raison des tentatives du gouvernement ottoman d'éliminer les candidatures factices, plusieurs femmes nécessiteuses avaient des difficultés à recevoir les pensions. Il y avait effectivement certaines femmes qui essayaient de tromper les autorités en fournissant de faux documents, en collaboration avec les chefs de leurs district ou les fonctionnaires corrompus. Il y avait aussi les lettres de dénonciation envoyées par le peuple et surtout par les femmes défavorisées qui avertissaient le gouvernement sur ce type d'actions illégales des fonctionnaires. Certaines femmes accusaient également les percepteurs des impôts qui avaient coupé leurs pensions en abusant de leur autorité. Finalement, il existait des femmes dénonçant les fonctionnaires qui les privaient intentionnellement de leurs pensions.

Distribution d'une partie de la solde militaire aux familles des soldats

Le paiement d'une partie de la solde militaire d'un officier de l'armée à sa famille était une autre forme d'aide financière aux familles des soldats. Cependant, la distribution de cette aide exigeait une excellente organisation des affaires financières de l'armée, ce que l'armée ottomane n'avait pas. Les bureaux de recrutement militaires échouaient à aider financièrement les familles. Comme ce paiement 'sur l'ordonnance' n'était pas une pension attribuée par l'État aux familles des soldats mais seulement un pourcentage de la solde militaire, le montant de l'argent qui était donné aux familles des officiers de l'armée changeait conformément en fonction des rangs et des salaires de ces hommes. Par ailleurs, en terme d'organisation des paiements, les familles qui recevaient de l'argent par les branches de l'armée à Istanbul avaient une position plus avantageuse que celles qui vivaient dans les autres

provinces. À cause de ces types de contraintes organisationnelles les paiements à plusieurs familles ont été annulés dans certaines régions.

Les documents des archives nationales turques révèlent que les femmes qui avaient des difficultés à recevoir leurs paiements 'sur l'ordonnance' envoyaient des pétitions collectives aux autorités. Dans ces pétitions elles soulignaient le traitement inégal qu'elles subissaient. Elles ont utilisé un discours patriotique pour demander la reconnaissance de leurs droits économiques. De plus, même les femmes qui n'avaient pas le droit de recevoir ces paiements 'sur l'ordonnance' d'une partie des soldes militaires de leurs soutiens de familles ont exigé de recevoir ces paiements de l'armée ottomane.

Les allocations pour les familles défavorisées des soldats captifs de guerre et des soldats perdus

Les femmes des soldats prisonniers de guerre ou perdus sur le champ de bataille avaient davantage de difficulté pour recevoir de l'argent puisqu'il était très difficile d'obtenir de l'information sur la situation des soldats. Il n'était pas possible pour de nombreuses femmes, dont les soutiens de famille avaient été perdus sur le champ de bataille, de convaincre les autorités de leurs situations et par conséquent de forcer les fonctionnaires à leur attribuer une pension. S'il n'existait aucune information sur la situation d'un soldat encore vivant, son épouse ne recevait rien de l'État.

Même après l'armistice, il y avait plusieurs femmes qui n'avaient toujours aucune information sur la situation de leurs époux ou de leurs fils. Ces femmes demandaient à l'État des informations sur leurs bien-aimées et, le cas échéant, de leur fournir des pensions si ces hommes étaient morts. Les femmes dont les pensions

étaient coupées par l'État au motif qu'il n'y avait aucune information concernant leurs époux ou leurs fils étaient aussi parmi les demandeurs et les pétitionnaires. Par ailleurs, plusieurs femmes venaient fréquemment visiter les bâtiments publics pour se plaindre directement de la cessation du paiement de leurs pensions à cause du manque d'information sur leurs époux, fils, pères ou frères soldats.

L'allocation de famille pour les familles des soldats martyrs et la Commission pour aider les familles des médecins martyrs

Le manque des mesures sociales pour protéger les familles des soldats martyrs a aggravé les problèmes des femmes défavorisées. Elles se plaignaient fréquemment auprès du gouvernement du fait que leurs pensions pour les familles des soldats martyrs étaient acquittées avec retard. Après la fin de la mobilisation, la plupart des télégrammes de plaintes qui étaient envoyés des provinces au gouvernement portaient sur les retards de paiement des pensions pour les familles des soldats martyrs. Le paiement de ces pensions est devenu plus difficile après l'occupation de la capitale et de l'Anatolie par les Alliées et l'armée grecque puisque cette situation restreignait la possibilité d'envoyer de l'argent aux provinces. Par ailleurs, la pension pour les familles des soldats martyrs n'était pas suffisante pour aider les femmes défavorisées, principalement à cause de l'inflation comme du fait que cette pension ne dépassait pas 100 piastres pour les familles des simples soldats. Pour les familles nombreuses, qui avaient sept ou huit membres, cette pension devenait négligeable.

Plusieurs femmes nécessiteuses ont pétitionné auprès du parlement ottoman pour demander l'augmentation du montant de leurs pensions. Néanmoins, ces pétitions ont souvent été rejetées au motif qu'une telle augmentation n'était pas

possible selon les lois existantes. Les familles d'officiers martyrs demandaient également une augmentation de leurs pensions, bien que celle-ci aient été relativement bien payées.

Pour les familles des soldats martyrs un autre moyen d'augmenter les pensions qu'ils recevaient était de demander une promotion posthume de ces soldats. Même les femmes dont les époux ou les fils martyrs ne remplissaient pas les conditions requises pour une telle promotion ont fait la demande d'une telle promotion. Les femmes exigeaient aussi la promotion de leurs fils ou leurs époux qui étaient encore vivant et sous les drapeaux. Seules les familles des officiers de haut rang pouvaient recevoir un montant plus élevé, issu d'une pension supplémentaire du fond de pension nommé le « service national » (*Hidemât-ı Vataniyye*) qui était attribuée l'officier martyr s'était fait remarqué. Plusieurs femmes vivant dans des conditions d'extrême précarité ont demandé cette pension supplémentaire, bien que leurs époux ou fils martyrs n'aient eu aucun service militaire extraordinaire.

Les femmes aussi se plaignaient de la discrimination dans l'attribution des pensions de famille en fonction de la façon dont leurs époux ou fils soldat étaient morts. Grâce à leurs efforts, le nombre des morts par épidémies qui ont été considéré légitimes pour rendre les soldats morts comme martyr augmenta sensiblement. Les femmes ont également réagi contre le fait de ne pouvoir recevoir les pensions de famille pour leurs fils martyrs au motif qu'elles avaient un époux encore vivant et recevant un salaire.

Les familles des médecins militaires martyrs ont aussi souffert de la discrimination quand elles voulaient recevoir de l'assistance financière de la Commission pour Aider les Familles des Docteurs Martyrs. Par exemple, certaines de ces familles de médecins militaires morts pendant les Guerres des Balkans n'ont

reçu aucune aide financière. Certaines femmes qui ont exigé l'aide de cette commission, attachée à la Société du Croissant Rouge, n'ont reçu aucun argent ; cependant, on leur a trouvé des emplois rémunérés au sein du Croissant Rouge au lieu des pensions. Les familles des pharmaciens militaires martyrs ont également été exclues de cette pension. Après la fin de la mobilisation, l'importance de cette commission visant à supporter les efforts de guerre de l'État ottoman a diminué. Néanmoins, les femmes qui avaient récemment perdu leurs époux ou leurs parents de sexe masculin, soutiens de famille, ont continué à demander, par de nombreuses pétitions, l'aide financière de cette commission.

Remarques finales

La raison principale du versement des aides financières pour les familles des soldats était de maintenir le moral des soldats, de prévenir les désertions à grande échelle et d'éviter les problèmes sociaux sur le front intérieur. Néanmoins, ces assistances sociales avaient une plus grande importance pour les femmes défavorisées, particulièrement en temps de catastrophe social et économique comme l'a été la Première Guerre mondiale. Les femmes faisaient face à plusieurs problèmes, difficultés et discriminations quand elles voulaient recevoir ce type d'aide. Par conséquent, l'exécution des aides financières comme les pensions, promotions ou primes est devenu un sujet de négociation entre le gouvernement ottoman et les femmes indigentes.

Les femmes nécessiteuses étaient surtout efficaces dans leurs rapports de force avec les gouverneurs locaux. Ces femmes constituaient aussi le principal groupe participant aux rébellions si leurs pensions n'étaient pas payées. C'était l'une

des raisons les plus importantes qui apeurèrent les dirigeants politiques, puisque les plaintes des femmes pouvaient provoquer aussi des désertions dans l'armée ottomane. Malgré leurs graves situations à cause de la guerre, les femmes ont utilisé un discours patriotique pour montrer qu'elles étaient dévouées à la patrie bien que la plupart du temps elles se soient approprié ce discours dans un but subjectif et pour assurer leur survie. En dépit des limites de budget de l'État lié aux énormes dépenses militaires, ces femmes forcèrent le gouvernement à accepter de nombreuses concessions, permettant d'augmenter le nombre des femmes bénéficiaires des pensions.

CHAPITRE SIX

LA CRISE DE LA MATERNITÉ : LES QUESTIONS DU LOGEMENT ET DU SOUTIEN D'ENFANT

La maternité traversa une crise grave dans l'Empire ottoman à cause des guerres successives entre 1911 et 1922. Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale les problèmes démographiques ont forcé l'État ottoman et plusieurs autres institutions à introduire des nouvelles lois et à prendre des nouvelles mesures pour la protection des femmes indigentes qui avaient des enfants à charge. Pourtant, les lois et les mesures pour la protection de ces femmes et de leurs enfants ont souvent discriminé parmi les bénéficiaires et elles n'étaient de toute façon pas suffisantes pour résoudre les problèmes de l'ensemble des personnes concernées.

Dans ce chapitre nous entamons notre analyse avec l'évaluation des raisons de la crise de la maternité sous toutes ses dimensions afin de comprendre l'ampleur du problème. Ensuite, nous discutons des développements concernant les lois et les institutions qui cherchèrent à atténuer les problèmes liés au logement et à la protection des enfants. Finalement, nous abordons la négociation des femmes avec l'État et les autres institutions de l'aide sociale vis à vis des mesures relatives au foyer et aux enfants et les stratégies des femmes pour gérer ces problèmes du logement et de la garde d'enfants.

Les raisons de la crise de la maternité

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale les mères pauvres ont perdu beaucoup de leur capacité à supporter leurs enfants puisque les soutiens de familles traditionnels étaient au front. Même lorsqu'elles recevaient des aides financières, les femmes

avaient des grandes difficultés à trouver suffisamment d'argent pour payer leurs loyers à cause de l'inflation et du développement du marché noir qui avaient provoqué une augmentation des prix des biens de consommations basiques ainsi que les loyers. Par ailleurs, les incendies, les bombardements et les attaques des ennemies étaient parmi les sources de la perte de logements. De nombreuses femmes se sont retrouvées sans-abri et sans aucun soutien dans la rue et ces problèmes ont transformé la maternité en un lourd fardeau. Finalement, un nombre incalculable de femmes sont mortes à cause des épidémies ou d'autres désastres et elles ont laissé des dizaines de milliers des orphelins derrière elles, créant un problème social important sur le front intérieur.

La migration et la pauvreté comme catalyseurs de la crise de la maternité

Le groupe qui souffrait principalement du manque de logement concernait les migrantes et leurs enfants. À cause des guerres successives, les mères migrantes ne purent pas trouver de logement pendant une très longue période, même après la signature de l'armistice. Dans de telles circonstances, la migration est devenue l'une des principales raisons de la difficulté croissante de garder ensemble tous les membres d'une même famille et de s'occuper des enfants.

Autre que le problème du logement et des difficultés concernant les enfants, la migration entraînait la mort d'un grand nombre des personnes. À cet égard, les femmes, les enfants et les personnes âgées étaient parmi les principales victimes de la migration. Par exemple, au cours de leur fuite face à l'avancée de l'armée russe en 1916, 701.166 personnes sur 1.604.031 migrants (43.7 %) sont mortes sur les routes.

À cause de ce taux de mortalité très élevé parmi les migrantes, il existait près de 90.000 orphelins de père et de mère dans les provinces de l'est de l'Empire ottoman.

La migration était extrêmement difficile pour les mères puisque la plupart d'entre elles avaient non seulement quitté leurs maisons rapidement à cause des attaques des ennemies, et donc en emportant très peu de choses, mais aussi car elles avaient souvent à charge de jeunes enfants. Comme elles devaient agir le plus vite possible, plusieurs femmes perdirent leurs enfants dans les tumultes ou durent les abandonner pendant les attaques menées par les forces d'occupation.

Par ailleurs, la pauvreté durant la guerre et la faim ont entravé les efforts des femmes pour élever leurs enfants et elles provoquaient une augmentation sensible du taux de mortalité infantile. Les mères ne pouvaient pas allaiter leurs nouveau-nés puisqu'elles souffraient de la faim elles-mêmes. Les femmes pauvres qui travaillaient à des emplois sous-payés étaient aussi vulnérables et elles ne pouvaient pas trouver la nourriture adéquate pour leurs enfants. Les enfants des migrantes furent ceux qui souffrèrent le plus de la faim.

L'impact des conditions de santé détériorées et des épidémies

La guerre a aussi détérioré les conditions de santé et les principales victimes furent les femmes défavorisées, les migrantes et leurs enfants. Plusieurs migrantes mourraient de froid sur la route ou dans la rue puisqu'elles ne pouvaient pas trouver un logement dans les villes qu'elles atteignaient. Dans ces conditions, les nouveau-nés étaient en grand danger. Les problèmes vécus par les femmes enceintes sans famille et sans soutien sont devenus inquiétants durant les années de guerre et ils amenèrent une augmentation sensible du taux de mortalité infantile. Les épidémies

en temps de guerre ont aussi participé de l'augmentation du nombre de décès d'enfants et de mères.

La malnutrition et le manque des biens de consommations basiques comme, le matériel de nettoyage et les vêtements, ont augmenté le nombre de victimes des épidémies parmi les soldats et les civils pendant la guerre. De plus, en raison de l'augmentation de la prostitution en temps de guerre et du manque de médicaments et de l'aide sanitaire, les maladies vénériennes firent des ravages non seulement à Istanbul mais aussi en Anatolie. Dans les années de guerre presque toutes les provinces de l'Empire ottomane souffraient d'épidémies comme la peste, la tuberculose, le typhus, le choléra, la fièvre récurrente, la fièvre typhoïde, la dysenterie, la typhoïde, la paratyphoïde, la rage, la syphilis et la gonorrhée.

Par suite de la mort de leurs mères à cause de ces maladies ou de la malnutrition, les enfants étaient pour la plupart laissés sans soins. Nombre d'entre eux vivaient dans la rue et mourraient à cause de la faim ou du froid, particulièrement dans les régions attaquées par l'ennemi. Par ailleurs, que leurs mères aient été vivantes ou mortes, un nombre très important d'enfants travaillaient dans la rue et/ou se prostituaient à cause de la pauvreté.

L'augmentation du nombre des orphelins et d'enfants pauvres

Avant la fondation de la République de Turquie il y avait des dizaines de milliers d'orphelins de guerres et d'enfants abandonnés qui devaient vivre dans la rue, puisque seulement 12.000 orphelins de guerre sur 90.000 furent accueillis par les orphelinats d'État. Un grand nombre de ces enfants ont travaillé dans la rue, vivant de la mendicité, de menus larcins ou de la prostitution, à de très jeunes âges.

Les mesures de guerre pour le maintien de la maternité : l'aide au logement et la protection des enfants

L'augmentation du nombre de mères et d'enfants nécessiteux et indigents a forcé l'État et les institutions de l'aide sociale à engendrer de nouvelles mesures pour la protection du foyer et des enfants pendant la guerre. La plupart des gens qui avaient des difficultés relatives au logement ou à la garde d'enfants appartenaient surtout aux familles des soldats ou aux familles immigrés. Par conséquent, elles étaient les principales cibles des mesures de l'aide sociale concernant ces problèmes.

L'aide au logement

Le gouvernement ottoman a d'abord cherché à protéger les migrantes qui avaient besoin de s'installer, les familles des soldats qui avaient difficultés pour payer leurs loyers et les femmes qui avaient perdu leurs maisons à cause des incendies ou des bombardements durant la guerre. Selon la loi du 23 mars 1915 visant à protéger les familles de soldats, surtout les veuves et les orphelins qui avaient difficulté de payer leurs loyers, il était interdit d'expulser les familles des soldats qui n'avaient pas la capacité de payer leurs loyers. Par ailleurs, afin de prévenir l'augmentation des sans-abris au sein des familles des soldats, le Conseil d'État a décidé le 11 juin 1916 que les municipalités n'avaient pas le droit de détruire les maisons des quartiers dans lesquels vivaient ces familles. Pendant la Guerre de l'Indépendance également, le gouvernement d'Ankara a essayé de trouver une solution au problème du logement des familles dont les maisons avaient été détruites durant la guerre.

Les victimes des incendies comme celui du Fatih dans la capitale recevaient également certaines aides du gouvernement à travers la Commission pour les Victimes des Incendies (*Harîkzedegân Komisyonu*) et la Société du Croissant Rouge. De même, les victimes d'attaques ennemies qui étaient obligées de migrer vers d'autres provinces éprouvées beaucoup de difficultés à recevoir une aide en matière de logement. Plusieurs femmes et enfants qui avaient migré à Istanbul à cause des occupations des provinces d'Anatolie vivaient dans des endroits tels que les casernes de Davutpaşa qui leurs avaient été attribuées sur l'ordre du Sultan. Le gouvernement d'Ankara a aussi produit des lois et des réglementations concernant les migrants durant la Guerre de l'Indépendance.

Les mesures concernant les enfants sans-abris et les orphelins

Même si la protection des enfants avait devenu une affaire d'État très importante depuis le dix-neuvième siècle, de nouvelles institutions furent fondées pour prendre soin des orphelins et des enfants abandonnés comme les orphelinat d'État (*Darüleytam*) et la Société de la Protection des Enfants (*Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti*). Certains articles de consommations comme le tabac, les boissons alcoolisées et les services postaux ont été taxés par le gouvernement pour générer l'argent dédié à la protection des orphelins en 1915. À mesure que la guerre a progressé, le nombre des orphelins a augmenté. Par conséquent, on fonda le 2 avril 1917 un Directeurat Général des Orphelinats d'État (*Dârüleytamlar Müdîriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi*). Pourtant, de très nombreux orphelins ne pouvaient pas recevoir l'aide par l'État et au moins 10.000 enfants étaient sur liste d'attente pour être accueillis dans les orphelinats d'État.

Malgré l'urgente nécessité de protéger l'ensemble des enfants, on institua une hiérarchie favorisant les enfants de martyrs de guerre pour leur prise en charge par les orphelinats d'État ou les écoles publiques avec internat. Plusieurs enfants qui étaient nés à Istanbul ont été orientés vers l'Hospice pour les Pauvres (*Darülaceze*). Même les enfants qui avaient été accueillis dans les orphelinats d'État pouvaient souffrir du manque d'éducation, de la faim ou de mauvais traitements. Durant la Guerre de l'Indépendance, le gouvernement d'Ankara et les élites locales des provinces en Anatolie ont également essayé d'aider les orphelins.

La négociation des aides au logement et les mesures pour la protection des enfants
par les femmes défavorisées

Ce sous-chapitre montre comment les femmes ont lutté pour assumer leurs responsabilités en tant que mères pour s'occuper de leurs enfants. Malgré leur statut en tant que victimes de la guerre et leur dépendance aux aides de l'État, en essayant de s'occuper de leurs enfants, les femmes agissaient selon leurs buts et leurs raisons personnelles au lieu d'accepter le rôle de maternité imposée par l'État et la société ottomane.

Les attentes des femmes liées au logement

Pendant les années de guerre de nombreuses femmes pauvres, la plupart desquelles appartenaient à des familles de soldats, ont demandé à l'État de payer leurs loyers, les pensions qu'elles recevaient étant insuffisantes pour assurer même les besoins fondamentaux. Plusieurs femmes défavorisées étaient victimes d'expulsions forcées.

Elles protestaient fréquemment du fait qu'elles étaient évacuées par leur propriétaire du jour au lendemain ou même quand elles n'étaient pas à la maison. Les propriétaires féminines à faible revenu étaient aussi parmi les pétitionnaires qui se plaignaient à l'État et à l'armée ottomane que leurs locataires ne payaient pas leurs loyers ou n'évacuaient pas leurs maisons. Dans certains cas, ces femmes pouvaient devenir les victimes de leurs locataires puisque certaines femmes en tant que locataires utilisaient leurs statuts comme les épouses ou les mères des soldats pour légitimer leurs loyers non payés conformément à la loi qui eut été introduite pour protéger les familles des soldats. Les propriétaires féminines qui avaient loué leur seule maison aux familles des soldats avaient davantage de problèmes puisqu'elles étaient désargentées ou même sans logement pour s'abriter. Plusieurs entre elles ont écrit dans leurs pétitions au gouvernement qu'elles étaient devenu sans-abri et qu'elles vivaient dans la misère, dans la rue ou dans des endroits exposés au danger.

Pour faire face à ces problèmes, l'État ottoman et les institutions semi-officielles comme la Société de la Défense Nationale ont fourni des hébergements à ces familles ou ont payé leurs loyers. Cependant, quand les femmes défavorisées se voyaient offrir de vivre dans un autre quartier, plusieurs d'entre elles refusaient cette aide, craignant qu'elles perdraient ainsi les connections sociales qui leurs avaient permis de survivre pendant les périodes difficiles.

Parmi les pétitionnaires qui demandaient l'aide de l'État pour trouver une solution à leur problème de logement on trouve non seulement les familles des soldats sans soutiens de famille mais aussi les femmes victimes des grands incendies et bombardements et les migrantes. Ces femmes exigeaient de l'argent ou une aide sous forme de don de terrain ou de maisons gratuites.

Même quand ces aides étaient attribuées, les procédures légales en rendaient extrêmement complexe leur perception. Quand les femmes tentaient de construire un nouveau bâtiment sur le terrain de leurs maisons brûlées, elles étaient confrontées à des obstacles bureaucratiques et formalités administratives liés aux restrictions municipales. Plusieurs femmes ont essayé de transcender ces barrières bureaucratiques qui étaient établies par les municipalités. Par ailleurs, les femmes victimes d'incendies étaient souvent placées dans des endroits temporaires, voire même évacuées par les fonctionnaires pour diverses raisons. Les femmes nécessiteuses résistaient à tels pratiques et demandaient des logements sûrs et stables fournis par l'État.

Les femmes qui avaient perdu leur seul soutien de famille après la mort de leurs époux ou de leurs fils au front demandaient surtout les aides au logement du Ministère de Guerre ou exigeaient de l'armée ottomane qu'elle leur fournisse une résidence puisque les pensions de famille qui leur étaient attribuées n'étaient pas suffisantes pour payer leurs loyers. Les migrantes demandaient aussi fréquemment à l'État de leur trouver un logement.

La lutte des femmes pour la maternité

En l'absence des mesures d'aide sociale efficace de l'État et des autres institutions de protection sociale, les femmes ont cherché des sources alternatives pour s'abriter et protéger leurs enfants. À cet égard, d'abord, les relations de voisinage et la solidarité au sein d'un même quartier étaient très importantes pour les femmes à faibles revenus. Parfois, les femmes montraient leurs ressentiments par rapport à ces

problèmes de logement à travers des pétitions, comme cela a été souligné auparavant pour d'autres problèmes.

Il est vrai aussi que la grande majorité des femmes résistaient à abandonner leurs rôles de mère, bien qu'être une bonne mère soit devenu plus difficile dans ces années. Il est possible de citer plusieurs exemples de mères qui occupaient plusieurs emplois pour s'occuper de leurs enfants. En dépit de ces tentatives courageuses et du dévouement remarquable de certaines mères, plusieurs femmes pauvres qui n'étaient pas si fortes ont essayé de se débarrasser d'un tel fardeau en envoyant leurs enfants dans les internats gratuits afin de réduire le nombre d'enfants dont elles avaient la charge.

Certaines femmes étaient parfois dans une situation si désespérée qu'elles devaient abandonner au soin de l'État leurs enfants à de très jeunes âges, en les confiant aux orphelinats d'État, aux internats ou à l'Hospice pour les Pauvres. Vers la fin de la guerre, surtout, un nombre croissant de femmes a commencé à déposer des demandes pour faire accepter leurs enfants aux écoles avec internat gratuit. L'État ottoman n'était pas capable d'accepter toutes ces demandes en raison des capacités réduites de ces écoles. Par conséquent, de nouvelles restrictions ont été introduites pendant la guerre, réglementant l'accès aux écoles publiques (gratuites) avec internat. En 1922, le gouvernement a déclaré que les écoles publiques avec internat ne pouvaient accepter aucun étudiant qui demandait à avoir une éducation gratuitement.

Même si dans la plupart des cas les enfants ont été vus comme des personnes à charge, les garçons étaient souvent considérés comme des fournisseurs d'une certaine sécurité sociale et comme soutien de famille par plusieurs femmes pauvres. Les femmes demandaient l'aide de l'État afin d'obtenir la tutelle de leurs enfants ou

de leurs petits enfants. Par ailleurs, afin d'éviter les mariages non désirés avec les hommes qui voulaient saisir leur argent ou leurs propriétés, plusieurs femmes qui étaient relativement riches se sont mariées avec des garçons orphelins.

Se débarrasser de la maternité en dernier recours : l'abandon, l'infanticide et l'avortement

Les enfants étaient un fardeau particulièrement lourd pour les migrantes. Par conséquent, certaines d'entre elles devaient abandonner leurs enfants pendant les attaques des ennemis. L'abandon des enfants durant la migration était si répandue qu'il était devenu un sujet de la littérature populaire. Dans la région de la Mer Noire, qui était l'une des plus endommagées de l'Anatolie après l'occupation de l'armée russe, des milliers d'enfants ont été abandonnés à leur propre destin par leurs mères. De même, les enfants illégitimes avaient peu de chance de vivre. Le gouvernement suspectait particulièrement les femmes d'infanticide quand un nouveau-né illégitime était mort. Les femmes indigentes qui étaient dans une situation désespérée et les prostituées, qui considéraient les enfants comme un fardeau pour leur profession, étaient surtout prédisposées à tuer leurs enfants. Par ailleurs, la nécessité de trouver un nouvel époux était une des raisons amenant certaines femmes, particulièrement défavorisées, à recourir à l'infanticide.

Même si les élites avaient aussi recours aux avortements, les mères pauvres, qui avaient tué leurs futurs enfants par avortement à cause de la misère, étaient plus facilement punies par les autorités. La situation des mères dans les prisons, dont la plupart était des femmes pauvres, était la pire, forçant ces femmes à abandonner leurs responsabilités maternelles pour leurs propres survies. À cause de la situation

vulnérable de ces mères, et pour prévenir davantage les morts d'enfants qui pouvaient être intentionnelle ou pas, le gouvernement ottoman a ressenti la nécessité d'améliorer la situation des mères emprisonnées par des aides alimentaires ou en leur fournissant une chambre particulière à l'Hospice pour les Pauvres.

Remarques finales

Les femmes défavorisées turques ont souffert d'une grande crise de maternité pendant la Première Guerre mondiale principalement en raison de la crise du logement, de la malnutrition, des épidémies ou des conditions terribles de la migration. L'État ottoman et plusieurs institutions de protection sociale ont essayé d'introduire des nouvelles mesures pour palier à ces problèmes de logement et pour fournir les services de santé ou d'éducation aux enfants. Cependant, ces mesures étaient loin d'être suffisantes, d'autant plus qu'elles discriminaient parmi ces femmes en donnant la priorité aux orphelins des martyrs. Par conséquent, les femmes ont lutté pour recevoir plus d'aide de la part de l'État et des institutions de protection sociale. Par ailleurs, une absence totale d'aide signifiait souvent l'abandon des enfants par leurs mères, comme cela a été fréquemment observé parmi les migrantes, voire même l'assassinat d'enfants illégitimes.

CHAPITRE SEPT

LES FEMMES ET LE TRAVAIL : LES OPPORTUNITÉS, LES RESTRICTIONS ET LES PROBLÈMES

Ce chapitre se concentre sur la vie professionnelle des femmes turques dans l'Empire ottoman au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale. La littérature sur cet époque concernant la vie au travail des femmes a conventionnellement soutenu que l'entrée des femmes turques dans le travail en l'absence de leurs parents de sexe masculin leur rendu la liberté. Cependant, la vie professionnelle a créé des problèmes nouveaux et des fardeaux inédits pour les femmes. Il s'agit ici de souligner les restrictions et les problèmes que celles-ci ont rencontrés dans leur vie professionnelle et leur réaction à ces restrictions et à ces problèmes par la voie de leurs consciences personnelles et de stratégies anonymes. À cet égard, l'idée principale de ce chapitre consiste à montrer que, si les femmes turques défavorisées ont été exploitées comme main-d'œuvre dans la nouvelle « économie nationale » des années de guerre en dehors de tout contrôle et dans des conditions exceptionnelles, elles ont aussi lutté contre ces conditions de travail négatives et elles ont acquis une expérience importante au cours de cette lutte.

La vie professionnelle des femmes dans l'Empire ottoman avant la Première Guerre mondiale

En dépit de l'évolution des possibilités d'éducation pour les femmes au cours du dix-neuvième siècle, plusieurs femmes turques n'avaient jamais quitté la maison pour travailler à l'extérieur avant la Première Guerre mondiale. En 1908, sur environ 250.000 travailleurs dans les industries ottomanes, 70.000 à 75.000 étaient des

travailleuses. Ces femmes jouaient un rôle important dans l'économie ottomane comme main-d'œuvre bon marché. Les travailleuses étaient intensivement employées dans certaines industries comme la filature de la soie, du coton et de la laine, le tissage et la fabrication de tapis. Une importante majorité des femmes turques travaillaient à la campagne dans le secteur de l'agriculture. Au début du vingtième siècle, les femmes travaillaient particulièrement dans la production de textiles, de tabac, de soie, d'aliments en conserve, de savon, d'allumettes, de papier et dans les imprimeries. En dehors de ces activités, les femmes avaient des opportunités limitées de travailler. C'est seulement après les réformes du système éducatif, au cours du dix-neuvième siècle et au début du vingtième siècle, que les femmes turques ont pu avoir accès aux emplois de sages-femmes ou d'enseignantes. Avant 1914, elles ne pouvaient pas suivre les cours à l'université. Cependant, les femmes ont lutté contre ces limitations et ont violé les règles et les principes patriarcaux dans la vie quotidienne. Ainsi, un nombre limité de femmes turques ont commencé à travailler dans des institutions comme la Compagnie de Téléphone et elles ont créé leurs propres entreprises dans les grandes villes comme Istanbul avant la Première Guerre mondiale.

Les opportunités pendant la guerre pour les femmes au travail

Durant la guerre, la situation a offert certaines opportunités aux femmes, qui ont augmenté le nombre ou la diversité des emplois qu'elles pouvaient occuper. Comme la plupart des opportunités de travail étaient liées au manque de main-d'œuvre à cause des conscriptions militaires et des efforts de guerre, même les femmes turques qui étaient victimes des règles patriarcales et ne pouvaient pas sortir de la maison ont

trouvé une raison légitime pour commencer à travailler en dehors de leurs maisons. L'entrée rapide des femmes dans la vie professionnelle a été considérée comme un changement révolutionnaire non seulement par les observateurs contemporains qui ont écrit des livres ou des articles à cette époque, mais aussi par les savantes au cours des décennies suivantes.

Les femmes au travail dans des emplois nouveaux

Afin d'augmenter le nombre des femmes turques susceptibles de travailler, une institution, nommée la Société pour l'Emploi des Femmes Ottomanes Musulmanes (*Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*), a été fondée officiellement le 14 août 1916. Cette association a fourni à des milliers des femmes des emplois de caissières, de contrôleuses de billets sur les bateaux à vapeur du Bosphore, de commis de bureaux de poste, de secrétaires et même de balayeuses de rue. Les femmes ont aussi commencé à travailler comme coiffeuses pour hommes dans les districts de Beyoğlu, Sirkeci et Divanyolu à Istanbul. Plus de 300 jeunes femmes turques travaillaient comme commis au Bureau des Postes et comme fonctionnaires dans les autres départements du gouvernement. Par ailleurs, l'éducation des femmes turques au niveau universitaire a commencé au cours des années de guerre. Elles ont pu suivre les cours des beaux-arts et les cours réservés aux femmes de l'École de Commerce et d'autres cours privés.

Les femmes turques ont également importé, par la route Mudanya-İzmir, des biens d'Anatolie à Istanbul. Elles vendaient ces biens à l'arrière du quai de Galata et ont créé des bazars similaires dans les autres villes d'Anatolie. Certaines femmes turques dotées de l'esprit d'entreprise ont monté leurs propres compagnies. Le taux

des femmes employées comme main-d'œuvre dans l'industrie ottomane est passé de 20 % en 1913 à 30 % en 1915. Les femmes turques ont acquis des connaissances dans la vie professionnelle surtout comme infirmières et couturières pendant les années de guerre. Une autre opportunité d'emploi leur était offerte au cours de cette période par l'armée ottomane, qui les employait comme travailleuses, commis et officiers dans le Premier Bataillon des Travailleuses de la Première Armée de l'Empire ottoman.

Certains problèmes sociaux ont également favorisé la création de nouveaux emplois pour les femmes. À cause des maladies vénériennes, très répandues pendant les années de guerre, il y avait un urgent besoin de femmes médecins. Par conséquent, le 5 octobre 1918, le Conseil des Ministres a autorisé les femmes à faire des études pour devenir médecins, dentistes et pharmaciennes dans l'Empire ottoman. Par ailleurs, afin de prévenir la contrebande d'or et d'argent, le gouvernement ottoman a décidé d'engager des femmes comme policières en civil (*taharri memureleri*) aux postes de douane. Les paysannes ont également acquis de nouvelles expériences, profitant de l'absence de leurs hommes pour apprendre à effectuer des tâches qu'elles n'avaient jamais réalisées.

Gagner un espace social à travers le bénévolat et le travail au sein d'associations

Plusieurs femmes turques appartenant à des familles de l'élite ottomane ont travaillé pour des causes nationalistes pendant la guerre. Elles ont été récompensées par des médailles par l'État ottoman et les institutions semi-officielles pour leurs contributions à la création d'établissements et d'associations dans lesquelles les femmes pauvres ont trouvé des emplois, leur contribution financière à la Société de

Croissant Rouge et leur travail volontaire comme infirmières. Les femmes éduquées et appartenant aux élites ont aussi acquis une grande expérience politique et publique en fondant les institutions pour le bien-être des femmes défavorisées ou en participant aux activités de ces institutions. Autrement dit, en devenant les protectrices des femmes pauvres, ces femmes ont acquis un statut politique important dans la sphère publique ottomane entre 1911 et 1922 en raison des guerres successives.

Les restrictions socioéconomiques à la vie professionnelle des femmes

En dépit des nouvelles opportunités de travail dont les femmes ottomanes ont profité pendant les années de guerre, la grande majorité d'entre elles avaient encore des difficultés pour commencer à travailler hors de leurs maisons à cause des restrictions économiques, sociales et idéologiques. Tout d'abord, les femmes ordinaires avaient des difficultés à gagner leur vie, surtout dans les villes, en raison du faible nombre des emplois qui leur étaient appropriés dans une société qui respectait strictement les normes traditionnelles et dans une économie peu industrialisée.

Les possibilités limitées d'emploi

L'obstacle le plus important à la participation des femmes au travail était le nombre limité des emplois qu'elles pouvaient occuper. Plusieurs femmes aux faibles revenus avaient des difficultés à trouver un emploi. Par conséquent, pendant les années de guerre, il y avait très peu d'institutions dans lesquelles les femmes travaillaient. Surtout, l'accroissement du nombre des migrantes, des veuves de guerre et des

orphelins a aggravé le problème du chômage dans les années de guerre. Dès lors, seuls le gouvernement ou l'armée ottomane étaient capables d'employer un certain nombre de femmes et ils ont parfois utilisé ces femmes défavorisées dans le travail forcé. Les femmes qui vivaient dans les provinces d'Anatolie avaient peu de chance de travailler dans les usines. En effet, malgré l'importance de la production d'armes, toutes les usines d'armement étaient localisées dans les régions européennes de l'Empire ottoman. Par conséquent, contrairement aux travailleuses des pays occidentaux, les femmes ottomanes n'avaient pas la chance d'être employées en grand nombre dans l'industrie d'armement. Plusieurs femmes au chômage ont demandé à être acceptées à l'Hospice pour les Pauvres en déclarant qu'elles étaient pauvres et en disant qu'elles n'avaient personne pour leur venir en aide.

Les problèmes sociaux liés au chômage des femmes musulmanes ont motivé la fondation de plusieurs associations de femmes pour l'éducation et l'emploi des femmes pauvres non seulement dans la capitale mais aussi dans les provinces. Ces institutions étaient principalement destinées à éliminer les problèmes sociaux liés à la pauvreté des veuves de guerre. En embauchant particulièrement des femmes turques, ces associations ont également servi de support à l'économie nationale qui était maintenue par le gouvernement pendant la Première Guerre mondiale.

Les restrictions liées aux structures patriarcales

Une seconde restriction au travail des femmes turques était liée aux attentes patriarcales et à l'approche négative qu'a la société ottomane du travail des femmes. L'éducation des filles destinée à leur permettre de suivre une carrière professionnelle était considérée par certains groupes dans la société ottomane comme une action

contre la religion musulmane ou les normes traditionnelles. Surtout, les femmes de la classe moyenne manquaient d'expérience dans la vie professionnelle. En dépit de leur inexpérience, davantage de femmes bourgeoises et éduquées ont commencé à travailler comme enseignantes, infirmières volontaires et fonctionnaires pendant les années de guerre. Cependant, cette évolution a été critiquée, y compris parmi les femmes elles-mêmes, tandis que les hommes protestaient contre les tentatives des femmes musulmanes de travailler, au motif que le travail des femmes nuit à la maternité. Par suite des pressions sociales, plusieurs femmes anciennement riches d'Istanbul ne pouvaient pas travailler, mais essayaient de survivre en vendant n'importe quoi, comme les mobiliers de leurs maisons.

Les politiciens et les hommes ottomans de la classe moyenne étaient aussi réticents à aider les femmes à travailler pour des raisons politiques ou morales. Même si plusieurs femmes avaient abandonné le voile en dehors de leurs maisons dans la capitale, elles devaient endurer l'opposition du peuple dans la rue. Jusqu'à la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale, les hommes et les femmes devaient être séparés les uns des autres dans les transports publics et dans d'autres endroits publics. Cette séparation existait aussi dans l'université : les étudiantes suivaient leurs cours dans un autre bâtiment dans les premières années. Jusqu'en 1921, les hommes et les femmes ne pouvaient pas assister à une conférence ensemble. Dans les bureaux du gouvernement, les femmes turques aussi travaillaient séparées des hommes. Même les activités humanitaires des femmes étaient jugées suspicieuses. À cause des pressions sociales, elles ont commencé à apprendre la profession d'infirmière dans des cours spéciaux au lieu d'aller dans l'école habituelle. Même si le nombre des travailleuses a augmenté de 1913 à 1915, certains secteurs leur étaient interdits,

probablement parce que les travailleurs craignaient la compétition des femmes comme main-d'œuvre bon marché.

Le travail comme un outil de la discipline morale et du contrôle social

Les restrictions économiques et sociales ont conduit les politiciens et les élites qui encourageaient le travail des femmes à redéfinir le sens du travail des femmes pendant la guerre pour gagner le soutien des groupes conservateurs de la société ottomane. Ainsi, le travail a été valorisé comme un moyen de protéger les femmes de la dégénération morale et de la prostitution. Les restrictions liées au sexe et la ségrégation ont également eu pour conséquence la création d'ateliers pour les femmes dirigés par les femmes des élites turques. Néanmoins, la tentative de la police d'Istanbul de forcer les prostituées musulmanes à travailler dans des ateliers spécialisés a été refusée par le gouvernement ottoman au motif que cette pratique était contre les lois existantes.

Les problèmes des femmes au travail pendant la guerre

Le travail des femmes s'est développé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale à cause du manque de main-d'œuvre et parce que les femmes demandaient moins d'argent que les hommes pour le même travail. Malheureusement, les travailleuses étaient souvent sujettes aux bas salaires, aux longues journées de travail, à la surexploitation, aux lieux de travail sans hygiène et à l'absence de sécurité sociale, de pension de retraite ou d'aides pour la garde des enfants. Elles étaient forcées de respecter des règles strictes concernant leurs vêtements et la séparation d'avec les hommes. En

dépit de ces pratiques, les femmes sont fréquemment devenues victimes de harcèlement sexuel sur leur lieu de travail.

Le chômage et les salaires bas ou non payés

Plusieurs femmes défavorisées étaient au chômage ou n'avaient accès qu'à des emplois temporaires ou irréguliers. Mais les femmes qui avaient des emplois plus permanents dans les bureaux du gouvernement ou des municipalités avaient aussi des problèmes, notamment des salaires trop bas ou versés irrégulièrement. Les travailleuses de l'industrie ottomane étaient parmi les femmes les plus abusées et recevaient les salaires les plus bas. Pendant les années de guerre, un grand nombre de femmes ne recevaient que la nourriture et le logement.

Les femmes qui avaient obtenu leur emploi grâce à la Société pour l'Emploi des Femmes Ottomanes Musulmanes devaient reverser 10 % de leur salaire à cette institution. Ces femmes et celles qui travaillaient dans l'Atelier des Dames du Centre des Femmes de la Société du Croissant Rouge étaient désavantagées en termes des salaires. Même les femmes et les enfants qui avaient trouvé refuge à l'Hospice pour les Pauvres ont dû travailler dans cette institution, pour son profit économique et pour se soumettre à la discipline et au contrôle social. Les orphelines ont été aussi considérées comme une source de main-d'œuvre bon marché et leur formation professionnelle a été partiellement prise en charge par l'État. Aucune loi n'a été adoptée pour protéger les femmes et les enfants comme main-d'œuvre pendant les années de guerre.

Les filles adoptées qui sont exploitées comme domestiques non rémunérées

Pendant la guerre, les orphelines ont été données comme *evlatlık* (fille adoptée) par l'État aux familles qui étaient considérées comme moralement droites. Ces filles avaient généralement un statut plus bas que celui des autres enfants de ces familles. Elles étaient censées accomplir les tâches ménagères qu'effectuaient les domestiques ou, avant l'abolition de l'esclavage, les esclaves des femmes riches. La plupart de ces filles orphelines ont été maltraitées et négligées, et par conséquent, un grand nombre d'entre elles a été forcé de s'enfuir et de vivre une vie misérable dans la rue.

Le mauvais traitement et le harcèlement des femmes au travail

Les femmes qui travaillaient en dehors de leurs maisons étaient sujettes aux comportements déplacés et aux harcèlements des employeurs, des contremaîtres et des fonctionnaires. Les travailleuses de l'industrie étaient particulièrement harcelées par les contremaîtres masculins ou les directeurs des usines. Les femmes fonctionnaires comme les enseignantes étaient également sujettes au harcèlement sexuel des hommes ordinaires dans la rue ou au harcèlement moral de l'administration des écoles où elles travaillaient.

Les longs horaires de travail, les conditions de travail difficiles et l'absence de sécurité sociale

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, aucune mesure n'a pas été prise pour limiter la durée de la journée de travail des femmes, qui pouvait être de plus de 14 heures. Les

femmes devaient travailler dans des endroits humides, sans air et sombres, qui ressemblaient à une grange et n'étaient pas équipés de dispositifs de nature à protéger la santé des travailleurs. Par conséquent, les travailleuses étaient couramment atteintes de tuberculose. Les infirmières devaient aussi travailler de très longues heures chaque jour pour prodiguer des soins à de nombreux soldats blessés au-delà de leurs possibilités et elles étaient exposées aux attaques des ennemis. Plusieurs travailleuses rencontraient d'importants problèmes concernant la garde de leurs enfants et ne pouvaient pas trouver suffisamment d'aliments pour les nourrir. À cause de la faiblesse de leur sécurité sociale, nombre d'entre elles n'avaient pas de pension de retraite : être accueillies à l'Hospice pour les Pauvres ou se marier étaient les seuls moyens d'éviter la misère dans leur vieillesse.

Le contrôle patriarcal des femmes dans les lieux de travail

Les femmes qui travaillaient dans l'armée ottomane étaient strictement contrôlées quant à leur habillement et leurs comportements. Les fonctionnaires du Ministère des Finances subissaient le même type de contrôle et travaillaient dans un bureau spécial dans lequel les hommes ne pouvaient pas entrer. Les enseignantes qui étaient prises en train de commettre un acte immoral étaient aussitôt licenciées.

Les pertes d'emplois

Finalement, l'un des pires problèmes pour les femmes était la possibilité de perdre leur emploi à cause des occupations militaires, des restrictions budgétaires ou du conservatisme pendant la période d'armistice. Par ailleurs, plusieurs femmes

fonctionnaires ou étudiantes des écoles professionnelles ont été victimes des contraintes budgétaires après la signature de l'armistice.

La réaction des femmes aux conditions de travail négatives

Pendant les années de guerre, les femmes ottomanes de la classe ouvrière ne pouvaient pas montrer leur mécontentement en participant aux grèves à cause des mesures autoritaires du gouvernement ottoman, qui avait limité toutes les activités organisées de la classe ouvrière, et du nombre insuffisant de femmes ottomanes dans les syndicats et le mouvement socialiste. Les restrictions sociales et économiques ont rendu difficile le fait même de trouver un emploi. Plusieurs femmes défavorisées qui n'avaient pas le soutien de leur famille ou un emploi n'avaient d'autre option que d'utiliser les stratégies de survie qui pouvaient être quotidiennes, informelles ou illégales. Néanmoins, les femmes au travail éduquées avaient beaucoup plus de capacité pour demander l'amélioration de leurs conditions de travail par des voies ouvertes et légales en utilisant leurs connaissances, leur alphabétisation ou leur expérience de travail comme un moyen de résistance et de négociation.

Chercher un emploi

Dans les circonstances négatives de la guerre, l'inquiétude principale des femmes était de trouver un emploi pour survivre. Le nombre des femmes qui avaient posé leur candidature à des emplois fournis par la Société pour l'Emploi des Femmes Ottomanes Musulmanes était environ de 15.000 à l'automne 1916 à cause du chômage important qui frappait les femmes défavorisées. Plusieurs ont essayé de

devenir infirmières, puisque cette profession était considérée comme l'emploi le plus approprié pour les femmes appauvries. La formation pour devenir une infirmière a été aussi utilisée comme un moyen de trouver un emploi dans des secteurs autres que la santé. Par ailleurs, plusieurs femmes défavorisées et sans éducation ont posé leur candidature au gouvernement pour des emplois de femme de ménage parmi elles ont demandé à travailler en tant que gardiennes dans les prisons pour femmes.

Les stratégies d'adaptation aux travaux pénibles, aux restrictions et au chômage

Pour faire face à leur difficile vie de travail, aux restrictions pour trouver un emploi et au chômage, les femmes ordinaires avaient plusieurs stratégies différentes. Dans les villes, les stratégies courantes des femmes fonctionnaires ou des travailleuses consistaient à démissionner d'un emploi, à pratiquer l'absentéisme ou à faire montre d'indifférence vis-à-vis de leurs responsabilités. Certaines qui travaillaient dans des conditions très difficiles ont commis des malversations et ont utilisé le ralentissement du travail. Une autre réaction contre les conditions de travail négatives était de quitter un emploi en se résignant volontairement. Les femmes éduquées, quant à elles, utilisaient les stratégies légales comme pétitionner pour l'augmentation de leurs salaires ou écrire des lettres ou des articles dans la presse ottomane pour demander l'amélioration de leurs conditions de travail. Obtenir un diplôme et par conséquent une augmentation de salaire était aussi un des buts de ces femmes, puisqu'un diplôme pouvait garantir, même si ce n'était pas toujours le cas, un salaire plus élevé et un emploi plus permanent.

En guise de stratégies de survie, les femmes ont également utilisé leurs relations sociales, telles que les voisins ou les parents, pour participer aux tâches

ménagères ou s'occuper des enfants pendant les années de guerre. Les bazars des femmes qui ont été fondés durant la Première Guerre mondiale et la période d'armistice dans la capitale et dans d'autres provinces étaient aussi une autre stratégie de survie des femmes défavorisées, souvent d'origines rurales, pour gagner leur vie. Finalement, le chômage et les conditions négatives de travail ont obligé les femmes à compenser ces problèmes en commettant certains actes illégaux tels que la mendicité, le vol ou la prostitution.

La lutte des femmes qui ont perdu leurs emplois dans les régions occupées

Surtout pendant la période d'armistice, les femmes fonctionnaires comme les enseignantes, les directrices des écoles publiques et les sages-femmes qui avaient perdu leur emploi dans les régions occupées de l'Empire ottoman ont demandé leurs salaires cumulés et le remboursement de leurs frais de voyage. Certaines d'entre elles ont lutté pour trouver un nouvel emploi dans d'autres districts sous le règne ottoman. Très souvent, les femmes aux revenus les plus faibles, comme les femmes de ménage qui travaillaient dans les bureaux gouvernementaux ne pouvaient pas recevoir leurs salaires cumulés après l'occupation de leurs districts de travail. Le gouvernement demandait parfois aux femmes fonctionnaires de retourner dans leurs régions de travail qui pouvaient être occupées auparavant ou exposées au risque d'une nouvelle occupation, mais certaines d'entre elles, qui avaient peur de la captivité et de voyager dans des conditions de guerre, ont refusé cette demande. Au contraire, elles ont insisté pour recevoir leurs salaires en restant à Istanbul.

La poursuite des droits

Même les femmes comme les membres du personnel médical, qui recevaient leurs salaires par les municipalités dont les régions n'étaient pas occupées par l'ennemi, avaient des difficultés pour toucher leur argent. Elles essayaient d'obtenir leur salaire de l'État en écrivant des pétitions. Les femmes éduquées ont aussi résisté à leurs licenciements des bureaux gouvernementaux à la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale. Quelques femmes instruites ont également lutté individuellement pour acquérir leur droit à une pension de retraite.

Remarques finales

L'émancipation des femmes par le travail pendant la guerre n'est que partiellement vraie. Les acquis des femmes en temps de guerre furent limités et, dans la plupart des cas, temporaires. La majorité des femmes, qui étaient des femmes ordinaires, n'étaient pas capables de trouver facilement un emploi en dehors de leurs maisons. Le nombre des secteurs qui offraient un emploi convenable aux femmes était limité. La pression sociale et les restrictions patriarcales ont continué à peser sur les femmes pendant cette époque.

Cependant, par réaction au chômage, aux bas salaires, aux conditions de travail négatives ou à la perte de leurs emplois à cause de l'occupation de leur région de travail, les femmes ont cherché de nouveaux emplois et ont réclamé des augmentations de salaires, des soutiens financiers, leurs salaires cumulés ou leurs droits à pension de retraite. Parfois, elles ont commis des délits, comme la mendicité, le vol ou la prostitution, pour survivre. Certaines d'entre elles, qui étaient la plupart

du temps éduquées ou qui avaient une expérience de travail, pouvaient négocier effectivement pour obtenir une promotion ou une augmentation de salaire. En général, en raison du faible sécurité sociale dans la vie professionnelle, plusieurs femmes avaient peu d'options autres que celle de se marier pour garantir leur sécurité financière dans leur vieillesse.

CHAPITRE HUIT

LA RÉSISTANCE DES FEMMES À LA MOBILISATION DE GUERRE

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, les femmes ordinaires avaient une place très importante aux yeux des dirigeants politiques ottomans dans la mobilisation de guerre parce qu'elles constituaient le corps des épouses et des mères de soldats conscrits, parce que l'État déployait de nombreux efforts pour contrôler la vie sexuelle de ces femmes dont les parents masculins étaient au front, parce que ces femmes formaient la principale main d'œuvre agricole et enfin parce qu'elles étaient le groupe le plus nombreux de contribuables. Cependant, les attentes de l'État envers ces femmes ordinaires, particulièrement concernant la mobilisation de guerre, ont engendrés la plupart du temps un lourd fardeau qui a provoqué un appauvrissement plus important de ces femmes. Elles n'étaient pourtant ni passives ni silencieuses et luttèrent contre les effets négatifs des obligations trop lourdes de la mobilisation de guerre. Ce chapitre porte sur le mécontentement des femmes ottomanes turques à faible revenu vis à vis de la mobilisation de guerre et leurs actions pour résister à l'impact négatif des mesures de mobilisation en temps de la guerre.

La résistance à l'obligation du service agricole et aux impôts de guerre

Tout au long de la Première Guerre mondiale la conscription des hommes a provoqué une importante baisse du niveau de production agricole. Néanmoins, l'État devait augmenter les impôts de guerre pour approvisionner l'armée ottomane et subvenir aux besoins des civils. En plus de la dîme, les paysans ont été également obligés de payer l'impôt d'approvisionnement de l'armée. Le parlement ottoman a aussi

promulgué la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire (*Mükellefiyyet-i Ziraiyye Kanunu*) qui a forcé les paysannes à fournir du travail agricole supplémentaire. Par ailleurs, les femmes ont du donner leurs animaux et leurs véhicules à l'armée. Tous ces facteurs ont augmenté le fardeau des paysannes et ils ont provoqué leur résistance à la mobilisation de guerre.

La baisse de la production agricole et la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire

À cause de la baisse de la production agricole, le gouvernement ottoman et les gouverneurs locaux ont essayé plusieurs méthodes afin d'augmenter la production. Parmi ces méthodes il y avait les impôts de guerre payée pour le service agricole ou l'utilisation des machines plus intensivement dans l'agriculture. Pourtant, il n'était pas possible de compenser le grand manque de main d'œuvre par l'utilisation d'un nombre limité des machines importées. Par conséquent, parallèlement à la mécanisation, la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire a été promulgué le 18 septembre 1916. Même si cette loi visait principalement à augmenter la production agricole dans les champs des familles défavorisées des soldats, l'utilisation de la force physique contre les paysans qui ne souhaitaient pas participer au travail agricole a transformé cette loi en une forme de travail forcé. En effet, en l'absence des paysans, les paysannes, que le gouvernement visait à protéger avec cette loi, sont devenu les principales victimes du travail forcé induit par l'application de cette nouvelle réglementation. En dépit de la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire, la production agricole ne pouvait pas atteindre le niveau d'avant la guerre et elle a même continué à décroître pendant toute la durée de la guerre et au cours des années qui suivirent l'armistice.

Les lourds impôts de guerre

Le fardeau qui pesait le plus lourdement sur les paysannes était les impôts de guerre. Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, dans les premiers mois de la mobilisation, les Commissions de la Fiscalité Militaire (*Tekâlif-i Harbiye Komisyonları*) ont saisi 25% des ressources des paysans : moutons, pommes de terre, haricots secs, pois chiches, oignons, beurre et blé afin de réapprovisionner l'armée ottomane. Par ailleurs, à côté de la dîme de 12.5%, un autre impôt de 25% fut introduit : l'Impôt pour l'Approvisionnement de l'Armée (*Ordu İaşe Hissesi*), qui déportait sur l'ensemble de la production agricole.

Ces lourds impôts de guerre ont provoqué l'évasion fiscale. Les paysans cachaient leurs récoltes et ils soudoyaient les percepteurs d'impôts. Les paysannes pauvres constituaient le groupe le plus important parmi les gens qui résistaient aux taxes agricoles. Elles ont pétitionné ou envoyé des télégrammes au gouvernement pour l'avertir qu'elles étaient incapables de payer leurs impôts de guerre, surtout pendant les années de 1917 et 1918 qui ont été marquées par des famines particulièrement difficiles.

La faim en milieu rural et les dettes impayées à cause de la mobilisation de guerre

La faim était si courante parmi les paysans pendant la Première Guerre mondiale que cette situation a également entravé les activités de production agricole dans certaines régions, les paysans n'ayant pas les semences nécessaires à la mise en culture. Au début de l'année 1916, le gouvernement a décidé d'aider ces paysans qui souffraient du manque des semences lié à la sécheresse, aux invasions de criquets, aux

inondations, à la grêle et d'autres raisons liées à la guerre. En dépit de tentatives similaires dans certaines régions, plusieurs paysans n'ont pas reçu cette aide de semences et ils ont protesté contre cette situation. Les paysannes ont aussi protesté du fait qu'elles n'avaient ni nourriture ni semences après avoir payé leurs impôts de guerre. Les paysannes qui ne pouvaient produire suffisamment de récolte pour payer leurs dettes aux créditeurs tels que la Banque Agricole (*Ziraat Bankası*) ont aussi pétitionné auprès du gouvernement afin d'obtenir l'ajournement de leurs dettes.

L'impact négatif des officiers corrompus

Un autre problème rencontré par les paysannes concernait les officiers de l'armée corrompus, qui pouvaient confisquer leurs animaux ou leurs biens sans en payer le prix. Le gouvernement ottoman était conscient de ce problème et déployé des sévères représailles envers les officiers corrompus. En dépit des lois contre la corruption des officiers, la gendarmerie et les officiers dans les bureaux de recrutement ont accumulé énormément d'argent en exploitant les opportunités de la guerre comme être soudoyé par les gens qui voulaient cacher des déserteurs et accepter de l'argent pendant le processus de perception des impôts de guerre. Pendant la Guerre d'Indépendance aussi, quelques officiers de l'armée corrompus ont confisqué les biens, les provisions et les véhicules des paysans, tout en faisant travailler ces derniers de manière illégale.

Les paysannes, principales victimes de la taxation ou de la confiscation de leurs animaux, ont envoyé les télégrammes collectifs aux politiciens pendant la Première Guerre mondiale pour demander la protection de leurs droits économiques. Quand leurs droits avaient été violés, certaines femmes pouvaient même oser

discuter ou lutter avec les soldats. En raison des plaintes de certaines paysannes courageuses quelques officiers corrompus ont été poursuivis et punis par les autorités.

Le travail obligatoire et le travail forcé

Finalement, les femmes étaient victimes de violence quand elles refusaient le travail forcé, les impôts de guerre ou les réquisitions. Qu'il s'agisse des gouverneurs des sous-districts chargés de la mise en application la Loi du Service Agricole Obligatoire, ou des commissions responsable de la perception des impôts nationales pendant la Guerre de l'Indépendance, il étaient légitime d'user de la force envers les paysans quand c'était nécessaire pour percevoir des impôts.

Les femmes ont envoyé des télégrammes collectifs pour se plaindre au gouvernement de la violence dont elles étaient victimes quand elles contestaient le travail forcé durant la Première Guerre mondiale. Ces femmes dévoilaient, au travers de chansons populaires, leurs émotions face aux responsabilités obligatoires de la mobilisation de guerre. Il y avait même quelques mères paysannes qui durent abandonner leurs bébés, ayant été déportées de force vers d'autres villages sans avoir eu le temps d'emporter leurs bébés.

Les obligations de la mobilisation de guerre envers les paysannes se sont multipliées pendant la Guerre d'Indépendance puisque les impôts furent beaucoup plus lourds pour ce conflit. La cinquième loi concernant les impôts nationaux de la Guerre d'Indépendance a forcé les peuples d'Anatolie à transporter des munitions pour l'armée jusqu'à une distance de 100 kilomètres par mois. Les paysannes pauvres étaient largement utilisées pour le transport des munitions tout en ayant à

subir des impôts nationaux. Quelques femmes parmi ces paysannes étaient enceintes et elles ont accouché sur les routes difficilement praticables même par les hommes très robustes. Ces femmes ont été généralement considérées comme les « amazones » de la Guerre d'Indépendance dans l'historiographie turque et leurs efforts pendant la guerre ont été acceptés comme l'une des principales raisons qui amenèrent l'émancipation politique des femmes après la fondation de la République de Turquie. Cependant, leurs expériences réelles des obligations de guerre sont encore inconnues par les historiens.

Le mécontentement face aux conscriptions des hommes pour la guerre

À cause de leur pauvreté ou du chômage pendant les années de guerre, plusieurs femmes ont résisté contre les conscriptions de leurs soutiens de famille en utilisant diverses stratégies. Directement ou indirectement, les femmes ont joué un rôle important derrière les désertions des soldats ottomans. Par conséquent, elles sont devenu l'un des raisons le plus importantes des pertes de l'armée ottomanes en termes de soldats.

Le mécontentement face au besoin de l'armée pour plus de soldats

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale le gouvernement ottoman a sans cesse essayé d'augmenter le nombre de soldats et cette situation a créé des mécontentements importants sur le front intérieur. Les femmes ont résisté à la conscription des adolescents et des hommes âgés de plus de 45 ans. En dépit des efforts de l'État pour mobiliser de plus en plus des hommes, le nombre de déserteurs n'a cessé

d'augmenter au cours de la guerre. En 1917, on a estimé qu'il y avait presque 300.000 déserteurs dans l'armée ottomane. Ce nombre est monté à 500.000 en 1918. Même si presque 3 millions d'hommes ont été enrôlés pendant la guerre, le nombre maximum de soldats dans l'armée ottomane n'a jamais dépassé 800.000. Par conséquent, cette situation a diminué la puissance de l'armée ottomane d'une mesure importante.

Bien qu'il y ait eu d'autres raisons qui ont joué un rôle important dans les désertions, une des raisons principales poussant les soldats à la désertion concerne ceux qui s'inquiétaient de la situation de leurs familles. Les dirigeants politiques de cette époque aussi étaient conscients de cette inquiétude des soldats et essayaient de punir les fonctionnaires corrompus qui refusaient de payer les pensions des familles des soldats sous des faux prétextes.

Les manifestations publiques des femmes contre la guerre et leur résistance aux conscriptions

Les femmes ont joué un rôle important dans les décisions du gouvernement visant à améliorer la situation sur le front intérieur, notamment en pétitionnant sans cesse sur les problèmes concernant le paiement de leurs pensions en tant que familles de soldats sans soutien de famille. De plus, il y avait même quelques femmes qui déclaraient vivre dans la misère et demandaient la démobilisation immédiate de leurs époux. Les femmes ont tenté d'éviter la conscription de leurs hommes par tous les moyens qui leur étaient disponibles, de la supplique aux pleurs. Par ailleurs, plutôt que d'être silencieuses ou de montrer leurs mécontentements à l'égard des conscriptions dans une manière plus discrète, certaines femmes ont participé aux

manifestations publiques contre la guerre. Quelques autres femmes ont également refusé la propagande de guerre et elles n'ont pas pris l'assistance de l'État aux familles des soldats.

Un autre groupe des femmes qui s'opposait fermement aux conscriptions des hommes était les migrantes. En tant qu'épouses, mères ou filles de migrants qui voulaient éviter leurs conscriptions, les femmes aussi ne s'installaient pas dans les bourgs mais préféraient de vivre dans les zones marécageuses pour échapper aux conscriptions de leurs parents de sexe masculin. En conséquence de ces résistances, les gouverneurs locaux ont demandé du gouvernement l'ajournement du service militaire des migrants pour quelques mois supplémentaires, surtout dans la région de la Mer Noire et dans l'Est de l'Anatolie.

Le rôle des femmes dans les désertions des soldats et la punition des familles des déserteurs

Les femmes avaient aussi un rôle actif dans les désertions et elles ont fréquemment soudoyé les autorités locales afin de cacher les déserteurs membres de leur famille. Un des moyens de rétorsions utilisé par les autorités pour lutter contre ce fléau consistait à punir les familles des déserteurs, même lorsque celles-ci n'avaient pas directement participé à l'aide à la désertion. Par conséquent, les femmes sont devenu une cible importante de la lutte contre les désertions pendant la Première Guerre mondiale.

Ainsi, des raids étaient menés afin de trouver ces soldats et les maisons des familles des déserteurs étaient couramment fouillées par des attaques surprises et nocturnes. Les femmes résistaient à ces attaques en se plaignant de la violence

exercée contre elles. Pour dissuader les soldats de la désertion, l'État et l'armée ottomane punissaient les familles des déserteurs de plusieurs façons, de la suppression des pensions à la confiscation de leurs propriétés ou à l'exil des femmes et des enfants de déserteurs vers un autre district. Les femmes pétitionnaient surtout contre les exils et certaines d'entre elles utilisaient des stratégies discursives pour échapper à cette punition. Pendant la Guerre d'Indépendance également, une loi a été proposée à la Grande Assemblée Nationale à Ankara pour punir les familles des déserteurs par l'exil, en novembre 1921. Ce n'est qu'après décembre 1922 que les familles de déserteurs ont été pardonnées et leurs punitions annulées.

La résistance envers le contrôle par l'État de la moralité des femmes et de la vie conjugale pour la mobilisation de guerre

L'effort de guerre de l'Empire ottoman nécessitait de contrôler la sexualité des femmes puisque certains soldats étaient éloignés de leurs maisons pendant une décennie à cause des guerres successives à partir de 1911. Le gouvernement ottoman visait à garantir l'ordre social et voulait éviter les bouleversements au front intérieur qui pouvait entraîner la démoralisation des troupes. Néanmoins, les femmes ont résisté au contrôle par l'État de leurs sexualités et de leurs vies conjugales pendant la guerre de diverses manières.

Les mesures contre les maladies vénériennes comme moyen du contrôle de la moralité des femmes

Pour contrôler la moralité des femmes sur le front intérieur et pour protéger la santé des soldats, le gouvernement a promulgué un règlement le 18 octobre 1915 qui visait à lutter contre les maladies vénériennes et surtout contre la prostitution clandestine. À Istanbul, où les maisons closes étaient les plus organisées, les prostituées ont été particulièrement contrôlées. En dépit de ces contrôles, la prostitution clandestine était très répandue à cause de la pauvreté des femmes pendant la guerre. Toutefois, le nombre de femmes musulmanes qui avaient recours à la prostitution clandestine, à cause de la perte de leurs soutien de famille enrôlé dans l'armée, a été censuré par l'État pour des raisons liées à la guerre et pour ne pas démoraliser les soldats.

Par ailleurs, l'adultère ou la prostitution des femmes et les mariages temporaires des femmes pour des raisons économiques étaient aussi monnaie courante dans les provinces. Les intellectuels conservateurs critiquaient surtout l'échec de l'État à contrôler les comportements des femmes. Ils soutenaient que plutôt que de fournir du pain aux femmes pauvres, le gouvernement leur permettait de gagner leurs vies par la prostitution.

Les tentatives de l'État pour contrôler la vie conjugale des femmes pendant la guerre et la résistance des femmes

Une deuxième tentative de l'État pour contrôler la sexualité des femmes a été la promulgation des nouvelles lois, y compris la Loi de Famille (*Hukuk-ı Aile Karârnamesi*) de 1917, qui a donné à l'État davantage d'autorité sur les questions du

mariage et du divorce. Néanmoins, les musulmans conservateurs comme les communautés non musulmanes de l'Empire ottoman ont résisté à la mise en œuvre de cette loi qui fut annulée en 1919.

La population musulmane défavorisée de l'Empire ottoman était surtout contre l'examen médical des femmes et des hommes selon la Loi de Famille à cause des raisons économiques et à cause du conservatisme. Il n'était pas possible de trouver les médecins pour mener gratuitement cet examen dans plusieurs régions de l'Empire ottoman et les pauvres hommes ou femmes qui voulaient se marier n'avaient très souvent pas assez d'argent pour le payer. Par ailleurs, plusieurs hommes musulmans refusaient que l'examen médical de leurs futures épouses soit mené par un médecin de sexe masculin.

Les femmes non plus n'ont pas apprécié la Loi de Famille, car elle leur a limité leurs droits à demander un divorce ou un remariage après la mort de leurs anciens époux, soldats tombés au front. Malgré les demandes des femmes des soldats pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, les revendications des femmes pour le divorce ou le remariage, souvent liés à des raisons économiques, ont été généralement refusées par l'État, par peur de la démoralisation des troupes du front. Plusieurs veuves de guerre ou plusieurs femmes défavorisées qui avaient divorcé devaient absolument se remarier, et demandaient en conséquence que leurs registres soient réécrits. Elles rencontraient souvent des problèmes bureaucratiques importants. Pour les mêmes raisons, l'État ottoman a également essayé de retarder les mariages de fiancées des soldats avec d'autres hommes jusqu'à la fin de la guerre.

En dépit des restrictions légales, de nombreuses femmes défavorisées furent mariées grâce à l'aide des chefs de leurs districts ou d'autres autorités locales, tandis que leurs époux ou leurs fiancés soldats se battaient encore au front. Par conséquent,

l'armée ottomane et le gouvernement ont reçu de nombreuses plaintes des soldats ou de leurs familles. Beaucoup de soldats ont déclaré que leurs épouses ou leurs fiancées avaient été forcées à se marier. Cependant, il est possible de concevoir que certaines femmes de ce groupe souhaitaient ces mariages à cause de leurs problèmes économiques.

Remarques finales

La contribution des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre était une étape importante pour l'obtention de leurs droits de citoyenneté pendant la période républicaine. Les efforts des femmes concernant la guerre ont ouvert la voie à leur entrée dans la sphère politique. Cependant, la désobéissance, la résistance, l'évitement, la non-coopération et le mécontentement des femmes à l'égard des efforts de mobilisation ont également révélé l'importance cachée du travail des femmes ordinaires, de leurs contributions économiques et de leurs coopérations avec l'État.

Les femmes constituaient l'une des raisons les plus importantes derrière les désertions. Comme certaines manifestations publiques de femmes contre la guerre le montrent, beaucoup d'entre elles ne voulaient pas envoyer leur seul soutien de famille ou leurs bien-aimés au front, et certaines encourageaient même leurs hommes à échapper aux conscriptions. Par ailleurs, plusieurs femmes contestaient ou essayaient d'échapper au contrôle de leur sexualité par l'État et en conséquence rendaient difficile les efforts du gouvernement pour la mobilisation de guerre. Néanmoins, l'une des résistances la plus forte et la plus répandue à la mobilisation de guerre est venue des paysannes, qui portaient le plus lourd fardeau de la mobilisation de guerre. À court terme, la résistance des femmes a réduit la capacité de l'État à

continuer la guerre. À long terme, il est possible de penser que le potentiel économique et politique des femmes, caché jusqu'à cette guerre totale, a forcé les dirigeants politiques de l'après guerre à obtenir le consentement et la coopération des femmes, bien que de façon limitée.

CHAPITRE NEUF

CONCLUSION

La Première Guerre mondiale a éclaté en 1914 et s'est terminée en 1918 pour la plupart des belligérants. Cependant, pour l'Empire ottoman le début de la guerre fut le déclenchement des guerres des Balkans en 1912 et la fin du conflit intervint après la victoire de la Guerre d'Indépendance turque et la signature du Traité de paix de Lausanne en 1923. La guerre a provoqué le déclin de l'Empire ottoman, elle a introduit des changements socioéconomiques, politiques et diplomatiques incommensurables sur les anciens territoires de l'Empire ottoman, des Balkans à l'Afrique du Nord et au Proche Orient, et a finalement jeté les bases de la Turquie moderne. Néanmoins, dans l'historiographie ottomane turque sur la Première Guerre mondiale les problèmes sociaux comme la perception et l'opinion publique des populations défavorisées concernant la guerre, la mobilisation, les mesures d'État et les développements socioéconomiques au cours du conflit ont été peu explorés jusqu'à maintenant. En ce qui concerne les femmes, les savants se sont limités aux activités associatives, patriotiques et intellectuelles des femmes appartenant à l'élite ou à la classe moyenne. Cette thèse de doctorat tente de combler cette lacune en étudiant les femmes ottomanes turques défavorisées.

Cette étude souligne d'abord que malgré l'accent remarquable des études sur l'émancipation des femmes avec la Première Guerre mondiale dans la littérature existante sur cette époque, celles-ci ont perçu la guerre comme source de pauvreté incroyable et de difficultés profondes comme la faim, les épidémies, la migration, l'exploitation, le harcèlement sexuelle et la violence dans l'Empire ottoman et dans tous les autres pays combattants à des degrés divers. En revanche, les femmes

éduquées qui appartenaient à des familles de l'élite ou membres du Comité de l'Union et du Progrès étaient trop avantagées pendant la guerre, alors que les ouvrières urbaines étaient durement exploitées. Les paysannes dans les campagnes étaient également soumises à des travaux additionnels ou du travail forcé sur le terrain et obligées de payer des impôts lourds et multipliés afin de supporter la mobilisation de guerre. La majorité de ces femmes pauvres étaient les épouses ou les mères des paysans turcs de l'Anatolie qui ne pouvaient pas payer l'argent pour être exemptés du service militaire. Bien que le gouvernement ottoman ait donné des pensions à ces femmes, on annonçait dans diverses provinces ottomanes que les familles des soldats recevant ces pensions mouraient à cause de la faim et de la pauvreté.

Deuxièmement, cette thèse de doctorat montre que le mouvement des femmes avant la fondation de la République de Turquie et l'introduction du « féminisme d'État » kémaliste ne peut pas être réduit aux activités organisées des femmes de la classe moyenne, éduquées et appartenant à l'élite. Les efforts inorganisés des femmes défavorisées pour survivre et leur résistance légale ou illégale aux conditions difficiles, à la mobilisation et aux politiques d'État étaient cependant également importants et influents puisqu'ils forcèrent les politiciens à prendre des mesures nécessaires. Troisièmement, en examinant les réactions diverses des femmes pauvres à la guerre, cette étude révèle que non seulement la participation des femmes à la mobilisation de guerre mais aussi leur résistance les transformaient en actrices politiques importantes de l'État pendant la guerre. Quatrièmement, cette thèse de doctorat utilisant une lecture critique des documents officiels démontre que l'aide évidente des femmes défavorisées à la mobilisation de guerre ou l'utilisation qu'elles firent du discours nationaliste, religieux ou patriarcal pouvaient avoir quelques

raisons pragmatiques. Finalement, cette étude confirme que dans diverses régions de l'Empire ottoman les femmes pauvres turques avaient eu une expérience plus difficile et brutale de guerre que les femmes de la plupart des pays combattants de l'Occident.

D'autres sujets, tout aussi importants, pourraient être examinés dans de futures études comme l'expérience de guerre des femmes ottomanes des différents groupes ethniques ou religieux, la violence contre les femmes pendant la guerre et l'analyse approfondie des conditions des femmes dans chacune des provinces d'Anatolie.

Ikbal Elif MAHIR METINSOY
**Les femmes défavorisées
ottomanes turques pendant la
Première Guerre mondiale**

Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat examine l'impact social de la Première Guerre mondiale dans l'Empire ottoman sur les femmes turques défavorisées et la réaction quotidienne de ces femmes aux conditions négatives de la guerre et aux mesures de l'État concernant les femmes. Elle utilise l'approche de l'histoire populaire et des nouvelles sources des archives ottomanes pour démontrer les voix et les expériences des femmes ordinaires, surtout leur lutte contre l'appauvrissement à cause de la guerre et les politiques sociales insuffisantes. Par conséquent, elle contribue à combler une grande lacune dans l'historiographie sur l'Empire ottoman et les études sur les femmes qui examinent rarement les femmes turques ordinaires. Elle renforce l'idée que les femmes ottomanes ont eu des grandes difficultés à cause de la guerre contrairement aux comptes de modernisation soulignant seulement les développements positifs concernant les libertés et les droits des femmes après la guerre. Elle réfute les comptes acceptant la guerre comme une période pendant laquelle toutes les femmes turques ont vécu une « émancipation. » D'ailleurs, elle met en lumière les formes et les aspects des points de vue critiques des femmes et de la politique quotidienne des femmes pour survivre les conditions négatives de la guerre, pour faire entendre leurs voix, pour protéger leurs droits et pour recevoir des aides sociales.

Mots-clés : La Première Guerre mondiale, l'histoire des femmes, les femmes ottomanes, les femmes défavorisées, les femmes ordinaires, l'impact social de la guerre, le front intérieur, la politique quotidienne des femmes, la politique sociale.

Résumé en anglais

This dissertation examines the social impact of World War I in the Ottoman Empire on ordinary poor Turkish women and their everyday response to the adverse wartime conditions and the state policies concerning them. Based on new archival sources giving detailed information about the voice, experience and agency of these women and based on the history from below approach, this study focuses on poor, underprivileged and working Turkish women's everyday experiences, especially their struggle against and perception of wartime conditions, mobilization and state policies about them. By doing so, it contributes to filling the great gap in late Ottoman historiography and women's studies, which rarely examine ordinary women and their everyday problems and struggles for survival and rights. First, it scrutinizes how ordinary women experienced the war and argues that, in contrast to the modernization accounts that overlook women's sufferings at the cost of post-war developments in women's rights and liberties, ordinary Turkish women had great difficulties during the war years. It presents a major caveat to the accounts accepting the war years as a period during which Turkish women monolithically experienced a gradual liberty and « emancipation. » Second, it brings the unexamined forms and aspects of women's critical and subjective views, their everyday politics to circumvent the adverse conditions and state policies, to make their voices heard, to pursue their rights, and to receive government support into the light.

Keywords : World War I, women's history, Ottoman women, poor women, ordinary women, social impact of the war, home front, women's everyday politics, social policy.