

Ottoman Women during World War I

Everyday Experiences, Politics, and Conflict

During war time, the everyday experiences of ordinary people – and especially women – are frequently obscured by elite military and social analysis. In this pioneering study, Elif Mahir Metinsoy focuses on the lives of ordinary Muslim women living in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. It reveals not only their wartime problems, but also those of everyday life on the Ottoman home front. It questions the existing literature's excessive focus on the Ottoman middle-class, using new archive sources such as women's petitions to extend the scope of Ottoman-Turkish women's history. Free from academic jargon, and supported by original illustrations and maps, it will appeal to researchers of gender history, Middle Eastern and social history. By showing women's resistance to war mobilization, wartime work life and the everyday struggles which shaped state politics, Mahir Metinsoy allows readers to draw intriguing comparisons between the past and the current events of today's Middle East.

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Galatasaray University



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Chronology

2 August 1914	Ottoman mobilization for World War I started.
9 September 1914	Ottoman government unilaterally canceled capitulations.
23 March 1915	Landlords forbidden to evict soldiers' families unable to pay rent.
27 March 1915	Law for Encouraging Industry revised.
18 October 1915	Prevention of Spread of Venereal Diseases Regulation introduced.
18 September 1916	Agricultural Obligation Law first introduced as a bylaw and legalized on 2 April 1917.
5 November 1916	The government announced that all civil servants illegitimately delaying the distribution of pensions for the soldiers' families would be punished for the crime of facilitating desertion.
2 April 1917	State Orphanages General Directorate founded.
13 July 1917	Families of lower-ranking officers who died due to dysentery, typhoid fever, relapsing fever, and contagious cerebritis acquired the right to receive a pension.
25 October 1917	Decree on Family Law introduced.
30 October 1918	The Armistice of Mudros signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied powers.
13 November 1918	De facto occupation of Istanbul by Allied powers.
15 May 1919	Occupation of Izmir by the Greek army.
19 May 1919	The National Struggle started in Anatolia.
19 June 1919	Decree on Family Law abolished.
16 March 1920	De jure occupation of Istanbul by Allied powers.
23 April 1920	Grand National Assembly founded in Ankara.
10 August 1920	Ottoman government representatives signed the Treaty of Sèvres.
24 July 1923	World War I ended for the Ottoman Empire with the Peace Treaty of Lausanne.

Glossary

- Aile maaşı* – Family pension paid to the unsupported families of lost soldiers, to the families of war dead, and to disabled war veterans
- Arusane resmi* – Bridal tax
- Atiyye tertibi* – Relief fund
- Babıali* – The Sublime Porte (the central office of the imperial government of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul, comprising the offices of the grand vizier, the foreign affairs minister, and the council of state)
- Baş kadınefendi* – The first wife of the sultan
- Cihad* – Holy war in Islam
- Çarşaf* – Muslim women’s outerwear made up of a combination of skirt and cloak that covers the head and completely hides the body
- Dakik* – Flour
- Darülaceze* – Poorhouse
- Darüleytam* – State orphanage
- Darülfünun* – Istanbul University
- Darülmuallimat* – Women Teachers’ Training College
- Darüşşafaka* – A school for orphans
- Dirhem* – 1/400th of an oke, which is about 3.2 grams
- Dönüm* – A measure of land (940 m²)
- Ekmeğ bedeli* – An additional payment called “cost of bread” to blunt the food crisis of wartime widows and orphans, which started after the enactment of a law on 13 August 1919
- Ekmeğçi* – Domestic workers who only received board and were colloquially called “bread eaters”
- Evlathk* – Foster child
- Harikzedegan ianesi* – Assistance for fire victims
- Hidemat-ı vataniye* – An additional pension from a fund called “national service” that the families of martyred high-ranking officers received if that soldier’s service in war was remarkable
- Irzahane* – A department for unweaned children under the age of four
- İdadiye* – Preparatory school, which roughly corresponds to senior high school

xiv Glossary

- İddet* – According to Islamic canon law, the space of time within which a woman may not remarry
- İlmühaber* – Certificate
- İmam* – Muslim religious leader or priest in a mosque
- İmaret* – Public soup kitchen for the poor
- İrade-i seniyye* – Imperial rescript
- Kadayıf* – A dessert of oven-baked shredded pastry with pistachio filling in thick syrup
- Karagöz* – Name of Turkish shadow-puppet show and its main figure
- Kile* – Bushel (36.5 kg)
- Mazuliyet maaşı* – Salary paid to an official dismissed from his post
- Mecidiye* – 20 piasters
- Medrese* – Muslim theological school
- Muavenet-i Milliye* – The national-assistance fund
- Muhtacın tertibi* – Fund for needy persons
- Muîn* – Financial supporter of a soldier's family during his absence for military service
- Muinsiz asker aileleri maaşı* – Pension of soldiers' families without a financial supporter
- Papara* – A meal made with leftover or fresh bread
- Para* – 1/40th of a piaster
- Régie* – Administration of the Tobacco Monopoly
- Şaykh al-Islam* – Dignitary responsible for all matters connected with canon law, religious schools, and related matters; next to the grand vizier in precedence
- Sipariş maaşı* – Ordered payment in the form of pensions or military allotments given to the families of war captives and lower-ranking officers without a financial supporter
- Sultani* – High school
- Sülüis* – 1/3rd
- Şehit* – One who dies in battle for Islam, a martyr
- Şehremaneti* – The municipal administration
- Turançılık* – Pan-Turanism, a political movement for the union of all Turanian people, which includes not only all Turkic peoples but also all peoples speaking Turanian languages
- Yeldirme* – A light cloak worn by women
- Yemeni* – Colored cotton handkerchief or headkerchief
- Zaviye* – A small Islamic religious school or dervish lodge

Abbreviations and Archive References

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- 1331 MMEMLK, D: 3, İS: 2 – *Meclis-i Mebusan 1331 (1915) Senesi Encümen Mazbataları ve Levâyah-i Kanuniyye*, Vol. 1, Devre: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2. Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992.
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- 1334 MMEMLK, Vol. 2 – *Sene: 1334 Meclis-i Mebusan Encümen Mazbataları ve Levayih-i Kanuniyye*, No: 428–501, Vol. 2. Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1993.

- ATASE – Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi
 BDH – Birinci Dünya Harbi
 BOA – Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
 CUP – Committee of Union and Progress
 DH.EUM.3.Şb – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Üçüncü Şube
 DH.EUM.5.Şb – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Beşinci Şube
 DH.EUM.6.Şb – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Altıncı Şube
 DH.EUM.AYŞ – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Asayiş Kalemi Evrakı
 DH.EUM.KLU – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Kalem-i Umumî
 DH.EUM.LVZ – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Levazım Kalemi
 DH.EUM.MH – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Muhâsebe Kalemi Evrakı
 DH.EUM.SSM – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Seyrüsefer Kalemi

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- DH.EUM.VRK – Dahiliye Nezâreti Emniyet-i Umumiye Evrak Odası
 Kalemi Evrakı
 DH.HMŞ – Dahiliye Nezâreti Hukuk Müşavirliği Evrakı
 DH.İ.UM – Dahiliye Nezâreti İdare-i Umumiye Evrakı
 DH.İ.UM.EK – Dahiliye Nezâreti İdare-i Umumiye Evrakı – Ek
 DH.KMS – Dahiliye Nezâreti Dahiliye Kalem-i Mahsus Evrakı
 DH.MB.HPS – Dahiliye Nezâreti Mebânî-i Emîriye ve
 Hapishâneler Müdüriyeti Evrakı
 DH.MB.HPS.M – Dahiliye Nezâreti Mebânî-i Emîriye ve
 Hapishâneler Müdüriyeti Müteferrik Evrakı
 DH.SN.THR – Dahiliye Nezâreti Sicill-i Nüfus Tahrirat Kalemi
 DH.ŞFR – Dahiliye Nezâreti Şifre Evrakı
 DH.UMVM – Dahiliye Nezâreti Umûr-ı Mahalliye ve Vilâyât Müdürlüğü
 Evrakı
 HR.SYS – Hariciye Nezâreti Siyasî
 İ.DUİT – İrade Dosya Usulü
 MF.MTK – Maarif Nezâreti Mektubi Kalemi
 MV – Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları
 OWEIS – Ottoman Women’s Employment Islamic Society
 TKA – Türk Kızılayı Arşivi

