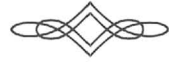


**WOMEN AND THE CITY,
WOMEN IN THE CITY**
**A Gendered Perspective
on Ottoman Urban History**



Edited by
Nazan Maksudyan



berghahn
NEW YORK • OXFORD
www.berghahnbooks.com

Published in 2014 by
Berghahn Books
www.berghahnbooks.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Women and the city, women in the city : a gendered perspective on Ottoman urban history / edited by Nazan Maksudyan. — First Edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-78238-411-3 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-78238-412-0 (ebook)

1. Women—Turkey—Social conditions. 2. Women—Turkey—Economic conditions. 3. Sex role—Religious aspects. 4. Turkey—Social life and customs. 5. Turkey—History—Ottoman Empire, 1288–1918. 6. Turkey—History—20th century. 7. Turkey—History—21st century. I. Maksudyan, Nazan, 1977– editor of compilation.

HQ1726.7.W6296 2014
305.409561—dc23

2014000993

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN: 978-1-78238-411-3 hardback
ISBN: 978-1-78238-412-0 ebook

*To my grandmother, Maryam Maksudyan, and to my city, Istanbul,
two inalienable parts of my life and work.*

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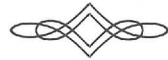
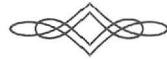


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Chapter 7

**The Urban Experience
in Women's Memoirs
Mediha Kayra's World War I Notebook**

Christoph Herzog



The historian Margeret Strobel, in her essay on “Gender, Sex, and Empire,” remarked that “[f]or substantial time periods, we know little of what indigenous women were doing, much less thinking; the documentary records, be they colonial or indigenous, have left more data about political and economic activity than about the daily domestic lives of individuals. And it is here, in the domestic realm, that much of women’s activity has taken place. . . .”¹ This statement was made almost two decades ago in reference to the female populace of the European colonial empires but it is also true for what we know today about women in the late Ottoman Empire.

In the end, historians depend on sources. As sources for Ottoman women’s history are comparatively scarce, a lot of ingenuity has been invested during the last decades in making indigenous sources like church records, documents, and the architecture of *pious deeds*, court records, *fatawa*, textbooks, popular culture, and oral tradition speak about women’s historical experiences.² This has resulted in a considerable increase in historians’ knowledge about women in the Ottoman domains. Yet despite all this success, the picture lacks details. Even the *cadi* registers that seem to come closest to rendering women’s voices have been stated “to fail to satisfy the historian’s craving for detail, narrative expansiveness and voice.”³

In the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries the genre of the Western travelogue about “adventures in the East” unfolded. Most of

it was written by men who did not normally have access to the women's side of the strongly gendered Ottoman private space, but some of it was by women travelers who sometimes did have such access. However, this type of source attracted particularly harsh criticism, and not just for its factual unreliability. Even if the abovementioned scarcity of sources did not allow for completely doing away with it, the critique of orientalism, i.e., of an fundamentally flawed epistemic Othering of the "Oriental" by Western observers, has contributed to largely discrediting the whole genre of travelogues as potential historical source material. On the other hand, the discussion of whether women travelers shared the complicity of the male Orientalist imperial discourse or whether they reached a different and sometimes more adequate understanding of the "Orient" and "Oriental women" has remained inconclusive.⁴

This leaves us to consider the genre of indigenous autobiographical sources. Autobiographical narratives as a type of source material have often been classified as "soft" as opposed to the supposedly "hard" evidence presented by administrative textual material preserved in archives. While this is not the place to take up the discussion of the problems and pitfalls associated with the uncritical use of archival source material, some considerations of autobiographical texts as sources for late Ottoman history are in order here.

Employing a rather narrow definition of what constitutes a "true autobiography"—a comprehensive narrative retrospective making sense of one's life as an individual—this genre has been assumed to reflect the discovery of the self and the unfolding of individuality within the development of Western modernity. It has been questioned whether this master narrative is more than a Western mythology. In any case, this paradigm has some severe drawbacks in that it tends to establish a canon of autobiographies while ignoring other self-narratives as historical sources. As a result, the historical experience expressed by the authors of that canon is privileged as the single path to modernity at the expense of other voices.⁵ It is evident that this concept of selective reading is not particularly helpful when dealing with non-European and/or gendered perspectives on history. One answer to this problem has been to redefine the genre of autobiographical material and to include practically every text that, in one way or another, refers to the person of the writer including not only autobiographies and memoirs in the classical sense but also documents like last wills, testaments, or protocols of interrogation. For this type of sources the term "ego documents" has come into use.⁶ While this approach promises both broadening considerably the scope of potential source material and avoiding Eurocentric teleologies, one may argue that, on the cost side, the new category of "ego documents"

seems to be a bit of an umbrella term that is in need of being broken down and subcategorized in order to be analytically useful.

Among ego documents covering the last few decades of the Ottoman Empire—which are the focus of our interest here—the Turkish *hatırat* literature forms such a heuristically useful subcategory. It is a literary genre known in Turkish by that word or some closely related terms (*hatıra, anı*). While being roughly the equivalent of “memoirs” (which is the translation I will use here), it is informed by the example of both contemporary European autobiographies and memoirs but merges them into a genre of its own right. It dates from the last decades of the nineteenth century when Ottoman literature underwent a process of rapid change adopting European literary forms and genres. There is a common understanding as to what the category comprises. The simplest definition would describe it as a text in which someone narrates personal memories. It should be stressed that the genre of *hatırat* ignores the classical distinction made between autobiography and memoirs but includes as a subgenre the (published) diary (*günlük*). It comprises also travel memoirs.⁷ On the other hand, the genre clearly excludes nonvoluntary testimonies of self like protocols of interrogation. Texts of the *hatırat* genre often contain the term *hatırat* (or one of its derivatives) in their titles. Almost regularly, even when the words *hatırat*, etc., are missing from the books' titles, the publishing houses classify them into numbered series or subseries titled with one of these terms.⁸

Some of these books are published by the authors themselves; some of them are based on older text edited from manuscripts, translated from published Ottoman books, or collected from serialized articles in periodicals. Interestingly, the editing work seems to be undertaken more by aficionados than by professional academic historians. Although the size of the Turkish book market may be rather limited in absolute numbers, the Ottoman renaissance in the Turkish public during the past decade or two has resulted in the publication of a quite considerable number of these memoirs. It should be remarked that, with the emergence of a Republican nostalgia, the majority of memoirs are by no means limited to the late Ottoman period. On the contrary, with the passing of the time and of the generation who, through their parents and grandparents, had at least indirect access to the Ottoman past, the balance is increasingly tipped in favor of coverage limited to Republican times.

Many of the memoirs, published in one of the countless small publishing houses, have a circulation of between 500 and 2,000 and are limited to a single edition but some of the more prominent authors published in bigger publishing companies may easily reach a considerably higher circulation, typically by issuing a new small edition each time the book is out of print.

It comes as no surprise to find that the vast majority of these books are written by men. Nonetheless, there is a nonnegligible number of highly important memoirs written by women. One might even claim that for historians—if they are not exclusively interested in political history—women’s memoirs, as a rule, are more interesting than those written by males, not so much because they are comparatively rarer but because women were able to depict a more complete picture of their life world than Ottoman men were able to do. As Fanny Davis put it succinctly in her classical study, *The Ottoman Lady*, “The Ottoman did not write about his women. To do so would have been in the worst possible taste on his part.”⁹ Thus, most memoirs written by Ottoman men mention women of their households in a rather perfunctory way, if at all—a practice of writing that did not abruptly vanish with the Ottoman Empire but continued into the Turkish Republic. Ottoman women, on the other hand, did write about their men. Yet, in contrast to novels (containing sometimes autobiographic elements), poetry, and political and other essays written by women like Fatma Aliye, Nigâr Hanım, and Halide Edib, women’s memoirs entered the Turkish print market only in Republican times.¹⁰

On the other hand, the question of marginality of women’s voices in historiography cannot be restricted to the question of gender but has to consider also other axes that determine social status and identity like class and race, ethnicity and age.¹¹ In this respect, the genre of the *hatırat* naturally privileges the voices of educated Muslim women belonging to the upper and middle classes of the Imperial center.

The passage from Empire to Republic brought not only a political but also a cultural revolution. With it, the collective memory of the Ottoman Empire became settled into a different political and cultural context, reformulated in a new language and written in a new alphabet. Therefore, the memoirs written in Republican times dealing with their authors’ memory of the Ottoman time and space need careful contextualization. Despite all efforts, they will almost necessarily suffer from an unrecoverable distortion of perspective. The rare autobiographical writings by women dating from the period before the end of the Empire, therefore, carry with them the promise of being particularly valuable historical sources.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that not only the authors but also the editors of memoirs act in the presence of social pressure and censorship, especially when the memoirs they are editing and publishing are written by a family member or ancestor. This can be illustrated with the fate of the diary of the famous Ottoman writer Nigâr Hanım, who died in 1918. In 1959 her son Salih Keramet Nigâr (1885–1987) published a small selection of her diary under the title *Hayatımın Hikayesi* (the story of my life) and donated

the manuscript to the Aşiyân Müzesi in Istanbul. But it turned out that he had annihilated several of its probably nineteen volumes, obviously because he disapproved of their contents. However, according to Taha Toros, Nigâr Hanım had herself already destroyed those parts of her diary that were particularly critical of the Unionists after they had deposed Sultan Abdülhamid II following the abortive attempt at counter-revolution in April 1909.¹² Even today, this social pressure seems not to have completely subsided. A considerable part of Edadil Açıba's preface to her edition of Leyla Açıba's memoirs consists of an "open letter to the authors who write about the various members of our family," in which she refutes factual errors and offensive allegations concerning several female members of the Ottoman Imperial harem and concludes by demanding that authors exercise special diligence when writing about members of her family.¹³ Another recent example are the memoirs of Pakize Mislimelek Hanım, who was married in 1898 to Sultan Abdülhamid's second son, Şehzade Mehmed Abdülkadir. Her memories, penned in exile in Lebanon during the 1950s, were edited in 2011 by Nemika Deryal Marşanoğlu, who—according to the preface of the book—decided to publish them without several passages dealing with intimate (*mahrem*) memories and without the last part of the memoirs covering the years from 1953 to 1955, in which year Mislimelek Hanım died in Tripoli.¹⁴

In 2005 an unspectacular looking booklet of not more than 150 pages printed on medium quality paper was published in Istanbul by the publishing house of the newspaper *Dünya Gazetesi*. The booklet is entitled: *Hoşgâkal Trabzon* (Goodbye, Trabzon). Its subtitle, "Anatolia During the Time of the First World War as Reflected in a Girl's Diary" is slightly misleading because the text is not a diary in the strict sense of the term but rather a memoir covering the time from summer 1914 to June 1917, written before 1919 by the author Mediha Kayra in her mid teens. However, the book was categorized by the publishing house on the back of the title page as being number 23 in its memoirs series.¹⁵

We owe the publication of this document to Mediha Kayra's youngest brother, Cahit Kayra (b. 1917). He transcribed the text from the Arabic alphabet and made alterations to adapt the wording to modern standard Turkish. Therefore his rendering may be considered a translation. Editor and translator Cahit Kayra provided an introduction ("Önsöz," pp. 9–11), a conclusion ("Sonsöz," pp. 111–113), an annotation consisting of 98 notes (pp. 116–119) and an appendix containing photographs of family members, graphs of family trees, a letter by Mediha's grandmother to her son (Mediha's paternal uncle Naci Bey), and some documents on war events that seemed rather randomly chosen.

In February 2013 Cahit Kayra published a revised and enlarged second edition of the memoirs, this time through the publishing house Tarihçi Kitabevi, where he already had published some of his own books. The new edition had a slightly altered title: *Hoşça Kal Trabzon. Merhaba İstanbul*.¹⁶ In comparison to the first edition the second contained the same material with two immensely valuable additions: some information of Mediha Kayra's life after 1919 largely based on Cahit Kayra's own recollections and some documents in his possession (pp. 147–170),¹⁷ as well as the complete and legible facsimile of the original manuscript (pp. 195–349)—of which the first edition had only provided photographs of the first and the last two pages.

Cahit Kayra¹⁸ graduated in 1938 from the *Mülkiye* and became a financial inspector (*maliye müfettişi*). In 1948 he was sent for training to London where he stayed a year. He became a leading bureaucrat in the Turkish department of finances. After his retirement in 1972 he became a member of the executive board of the Turkish İş Bank and entered politics. In 1973 he became a member of Parliament for Ankara and in 1974 was appointed minister of energy and natural resources (Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanı) in the coalition cabinet of Bülent Ecevit's CHP and Necmettin Erbakan's MSP. He is the author of more than thirty publications from 1953 to 2008 on topics ranging from economic and financial issues to short stories and historical investigations. He has also published his own memoirs.

Mediha Kayra was born in 1902 in Trabzon and died 2003 in Kadıköy, İstanbul, when she was 101 years old. Her father was the merchant (*tüccar*) Ali Lütfi Dihkanzade (1869–1931).¹⁹ His family originated from Azerbaijan. Her mother, Kadriye Salihoglu, originated from Akhaltsikhe (türk. Ahıska) in southwest Georgia. The families had emigrated to Trabzon following the wars with Russia in 1878 and 1828.

In 1916 Mediha's family emigrated to İstanbul. They rented a sailing vessel which for 35 Lira in gold—and an additional 20 gold Lira which the sailors extorted from their passengers by threatening to return even before having reached Tirebolu—which was barely able to carry the three families of more than twenty people.²⁰ They departed on 18 February 1916 from Trabzon²¹ and sailed to Samsun, where they continued over land to Merzifon. After having stayed there for a while they traveled via Çorum and Yozgat to Ankara and from there they continued by train to İstanbul where they arrived on 31 October 1916. The time in Trabzon starting in the summer of 1914, this voyage and the first year in İstanbul, are described in Mediha Kayra's memoir. Having already attended elementary school in Trabzon, she continued her education in the *Mahfiruz Sultan Rüşdiye* in Kadıköy and finally became enrolled in the teachers' academy *İttihad-i Osmani Darülmuallemi* in Bakırköy, from which she graduated in 1923. After that she worked

as a teacher in various positions until her retirement in 1969.²² She never married. Instead, after the death of her father and uncle and the loss of the family's fortune in the Great Depression of 1929, she became the family's sole breadwinner. Her brother Cahit characterizes her as follows.

They sent Mediha with five years to the local school (*sıbyan mektebi*) and made her a *hafıza* (who knows the whole Qur'an by heart). When Mediha came to Istanbul she was a young girl who wore the *çarşaf*, (women's black outdoor overgarment) did the prayer five times a day, on religious holidays recited the Qur'an and blamed the women with uncovered faces in the streets of Istanbul. But at school she was always the best. Her maternal uncle Hasan Naci Yamaç (1881–1937),²³ who was member of parliament for Trabzon, enrolled her as an internal (*yatılı olarak*) to the teachers' academy *İttihad-ı Osmani*. Mediha finishes this school too as the best of her cohort. ...

The war ends. The Republic of Turkey is founded. ... The *Feyziâti* secondary schools are founded. Mediha is 22 years old and starts her career as the director of the girls' part of the *Fayziati liseleri*. In Turkey begins the era of Mustafa Kemal's revolutions. Mediha leaves the *çarşaf*. She cuts her hair, takes piano lessons and starts to learn French and classical Western music.

The Great Depression of 1929... Mediha's paternal uncle Zihni Efendi, her father Ali Lütfi, her maternal uncle Naci lose their fortunes during the crisis. Not only their fortunes but also their lives. The husband of her elder sister Sadiye,²⁴ the pharmacist Ruhi Bey who had worked in Egypt, dies there and Sadiye returns to Turkey with four little children and re-affiliates to the family.

At home there is a grandmother, an aunt, a young girl named Cemile who lives with them [probably taking care of them (C.H.)], her siblings Cahit and Sadiye and the latter's children. Of the other siblings Hamit,²⁵ who had been unemployed, went to Ankara in search of employment. Macit attends the *Mülkiye* as an internal (*yatılı*). Cahit attends secondary school. Sadiye's children are still very young.

Mediha shoulders the burden of the whole family; both small and big ones live off her income. Mediha is the head of the family. Everyone needs her, everyone is nurtured by her.²⁶

Mediha, as explicitly acknowledged by her brother, was a strong women, "a different person of a strength that the other members of the numerous Dihkan family were unable to attain. ... She spent her life that promised great success for keeping alive her next of kin and relatives."²⁷ One might speculate that had she been not a woman her career could have made a difference despite her being occupied with financing her relatives.

The reader wants to know more of her by her own writing. But there is no more than the memoir she wrote when she was about sixteen years

of age. A second volume she wrote about the time of the Turkish war of independence was obviously lost in the fire of the wooden buildings of the *Feyziati* secondary schools in Çağaloğlu in 1930.²⁸

The text provides an ego document of the *hatırat* genre that bears considerable historical interest as it was written before Republican times, in all probability during adolescence, reviewing a time not more distant than three or four years, and was written by a young woman who did not belong to the elite circles of the Imperial center but originated from a provincial middle-class family and told her story of migration and displacement.

The manuscript is a notebook, perhaps an exercise book, written in fluent *rik'a*-style handwriting. The last page is concluded with the date Cumartesi, 21 Kanun-ı evvel 1334, corresponding to Saturday, 21 December 1918.²⁹ As mentioned above, the text is clearly not a diary but a memoir originally entitled “Harb-i umumi içerisinde bir ailenin sergüzeşt-i hayati” (The Adventures of a Family During the World War), translated by Cahit Kayra as “Cihan savaşı içinde bir ailenin yaşam serüveni.”³⁰

A contemplation about the timing of the booklet’s first publication is in order here. The boom of memoirs in the Turkish book market during the last decade or two has often been observed. However, in December 2004 Fethiye Çetin’s book *Anneannem*, about her grandmother’s lost Armenian identity, was published. It made a huge impression and—together with the memoirs of the İzmir-located medical doctor İrfan Palalı, *Tehçir Çocukları* (2005), which were written in the form of a novel—was considered the trigger for the breaking of a wall of silence. Cahit Kaya’s book was published in August 2005. It might be regarded as a kind of response, not necessarily in the sense of a direct reaction to Fethiye Çetin’s book—in reminding its readers that Ottoman Muslim civilians, too, suffered dislocation and hardship during that war—but rather as a contribution to the wave of remembering the now distant past of World War I, which has reached the utmost end of what Jan Assman has termed “communicative memory.” One cornerstone of this recent revival of late Ottoman memory is the fact that it gave a boost to what Fatma Müge Göçek has called the “postnationalist critical narrative on reading genocide.”³¹ This narrative does not only involve the Armenian tragedy but also the acknowledgment of ethnic difference at the historical roots of the Republic of Turkey in general. Although this postnationalist discourse might not be endorsed by Cahit Kayra, it is reflected in his afterword when he observes that Mediha does not write of the Greeks and Armenians present in Trabzon except on two occasions when she mentions Greek girls in Trabzon using the general confusion created by the attack of Russian warships to steal apples and the famous last words said by the Ottoman governor (*vali*) and the member of parliament, Naci Yamaç, when

evacuating Trabzon in face of the approaching Russian army to the Greek metropolitan: "We leave the land (*memleket*) temporarily in your hands. But we will return within some months."³² It is interesting to note that Mediha comments on the theft of apples committed by the infidel girls by writing that it "aroused a feeling of revenge" in them (*intikam damarımızı büsbütün kızıştırıyordu*)³³—which is the only occasion where feelings of open ethnic hatred become tangible in the text.

There are actually some more mentions of local non-Muslims that escaped the editor's notice: in the context of the imminent outbreak of war at the end of the summer of 1914 she briefly mentions that the "Kabayanidi and other Christians who were living [in the village] Soğuk Su had been organizing cock fights and told from the results that in this war the Ottomans would emerge victorious"³⁴ without giving further details. On another occasion, referring to a date when she was still in Trabzon, Mediha Kayra writes: "The 29th of Kanun-i sani 1330, a Monday, brought up the washerwoman Popi Abla, whom we made wash our laundry."³⁵ It is only her name that indicates this woman's being Greek. On yet another occasion, not long before the family's flight, she mentions that her uncle was drained of money because he had paid back a considerable amount he had owed to a certain "Kostoropol."³⁶ No further explanation is given and again we can only conclude by his name that the money lender must have been Greek. There is yet another revealing passage: when on board of the sailing vessel after having left Tirebolu, they continue their way along the coastline the sight of which, with its "emerald green creeks" and wooded mountains, is described as beautiful. Then they pass a township or a village called Ebiye, "which I didn't like because its inhabitants were mostly Greek (*ahalisinin eskserisi Urum olduğundan hiç de hoşuma gitmedi*)."³⁷ When they land in Giresun there is no hotel room because of the multitude of Muslim refugees. They approach the police, which leads them to an empty Armenian house for the night. No comment is made by the author. One can assume that she knew about the forced deportation of the Armenians but it is rather improbable that she had heard about the horrifying circumstances. Finally, when describing their stay in Merzifon, she complains about their being hosted for another time in a Christian quarter: "Because the quarter where we resided was the Armenian quarter we were deprived of the Muslim call to prayer. In our immediate neighborhood there was a huge Greek Church whose bells caused us headaches every Sunday. Look at the bad luck: wherever we arrive we stay either in the Armenian or the Greek quarter and most of the time have a church in our neighborhood. Since we have left Trabzon we have never heard the *ezan*."³⁸

Judging from Mediha's memoirs, one gets the impression that the Ottoman intercommunal relations between Muslims and Christians, at least in

Trabzon at the eve of the war, were characterized both by distance and cultural demarcation, a situation that was certainly aggravated by the trauma of war. Interestingly, any mention of Christians is missing from the memoirs once the family reaches Istanbul.

Contrary to what may be expected, and regardless of her young age, Mediha, in her notes, is highly politicized and keeps following the political and military news about the war. Her memoirs open with the following words:

“In the year 1330 we went to our summerhouse in Soğuksu. There were rumors that there would be a World War. But we didn’t attach any importance to these words because we were interested in something else. Yes! We waited for the return of Captain Rauf and his colleagues who were to bring our dreadnoughts Sultan Osman and Reşadiye from England. But alas! All our hopes were frustrated. Not only ours. Our dreadnoughts that were so impatiently awaited by all Ottomans, all Muslims, were confiscated by the English government and not given back to us.”³⁹

Her notebook presents its author as informed and emotionally deeply involved in many of the ongoing political issues. It is very probable that these were discussed in the family and one can assume that her uncle Naci Bey, being an active politician, had a big share in it. It seems plausible that Mediha’s emotional interest arose when politics and war became part of her life world with the repeated bombardments of Trabzon by Russian war vessels and her family’s resulting displacement. But one can also assume that the state schools she was attending in Trabzon and Istanbul must have played a major role in indoctrinating the children with patriotic fervor. Yet it is far from clear whether her political concerns did occupy her then (as she seems to indicate) or whether they were more of an accommodation to what she might have believed to be an requirement of the literary genre of memoirs, i.e., a concept of political memoirs written by males. As has been argued, such an accommodation need not to be the result of a conscious adaptation of the memory to currently felt requirements but may well be the outcome of a sincerely felt belief in how things had been.⁴⁰

From a spatial perspective, her memoirs may be divided into three main parts: Trabzon and its hinterland, the long voyage from Trabzon to Istanbul along the Black Sea coast, and through Anatolia and finally Istanbul, or rather what were then the city’s suburbs on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus.

On top of that geographical base layer, another layer may be cast that contains all of Mediha’s movements within the larger geographic contexts: e.g., while in Trabzon, she goes to school, to the *hamam*, or flees to one of the villages near the town when Trabzon is bombarded by Russian warships. During the voyage to Istanbul she walks about in townships like Giresun or

Merzifon where her family is staying for some days or weeks, and once in Istanbul she goes to school or crosses the Bosphorus to visit Istanbul. But wherever she goes, she almost never moves around on her own; she is always accompanied by at least one member of her family.

The network of her extended family forms the third spatial layer of the text. It has the dimension of a social space in which all her own movements but also the movements of her family members are embedded. This social space finds its expression also in the emotional concern Mediha expresses throughout the text for family members and family affairs: the marriage of her uncle, the health of her grandmother, of her father, and of her aunts, the birth of her youngest brother. The social space is extended beyond those who are physically present by the telegraph. The family sends or receives numerous telegrams providing communication with family members being temporarily or permanently absent. Although it is not closed, the social space emerging from the text of her memoirs remains largely limited to the extended network of her family, except when her school friend Nuriye spends some time with her in the summer retreat. The social space in which Mediha moves may therefore be imagined like a web (with her family members being the nodes) that is cast over the first and second layers of space.

While memory tends to have its own temporal logic that may differ from chronology, its claim of factuality—a part of Lejeune's famous autobiographic pact—depends on its corresponding to the measurable calendar chronology. Although Mediha's memoirs are here mostly plausible, they present their readers occasionally with chronological mismatches, especially between dates and corresponding weekdays. As there are several occurrences of weekdays in the text without the accompanying date, one is led to believe that weekdays were important for Mediha's personal memory for structuring events in time. The first exact date mentioned in the memoirs is the day of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, which is given correctly as Sunday, 28 June in the original, i.e., according to the Gregorian calendar.⁴¹ The next date she gives is the arrival in Trabzon of her maternal uncle Hasan Naci, who came from Istanbul: Thursday, 6 August. This again has to be according to the Gregorian calendar, because if it was according to the Ottoman Maliye calendar, it would have to be Wednesday, 19 August 1914. At that time Mediha was not in Trabzon but spending the summer in the nearby village Soğuksu, where her uncle arrived on Thursday, 11 August. This, again, has to be a Gregorian date. The next few dates she presents refer to certain declarations of war, all of them given correctly and according to the Gregorian calendar. The same is true for her description of the solar eclipse of 21 August 1914. But after that she switches to the Ottoman Maliye calendar, and—with one or two exceptions⁴²—all dates given

later in the book refer to that calendar system.⁴³ The festivities in Trabzon at the occasion of the unilateral abolishment of the Ottoman capitulations on 7 September cannot have been held on 27 August (27 *Ağustos*). The latter date, therefore, must be read according to the *Maliye* calendar, making it correspond to 9 September 1914 of the Gregorian calendar.⁴⁴ According to Mediha Kayra, the first Russian bombardment of Trabzon happened on Monday, 3 *Teşrin-i sani*, which would correspond to 16 November 1914.⁴⁵ However, she claims that news of the Russian declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire reached Trabzon on the day after 2 *Teşrin-i sani*, which would correspond to 15 November 1914.⁴⁶ As Russia actually declared war on Turkey on 2 November 1914, corresponding to Monday, 20 *Tişrin-i evvel* (*Maliye* calendar) and news came to Trabzon by telegraph, this appears rather implausible. Perhaps, here again, we may assume that she actually referred to the Georgian calendar.

The memoirs describe the “big bombardment of Trabzon” by Russian warships on 29 *Kanun-i sani*, corresponding to 11 February 1915.⁴⁷ As a consequence of this daunting experience, her father ordered his family to retreat to a village (probably meaning *Soğuksu*) near Trabzon, where they seem to have remained until August 1915. As “in September the schools were opening and we had to go back down,”⁴⁸ they seem to have returned to Trabzon only sometime at the end of August 1915. Interestingly she is exclusively describing the summertime during *Ramazān* in this village; spring and early summer of 1915 are missing from her record. It is therefore possible that they actually moved back and forth between Trabzon and the village several times after February 1915. It is also possible that she mixed up the times of *Ramazān* that they spent at their summer resort in the respective years of 1915 and 1916. After all, she was then between twelve and thirteen years of age. In any case, spring and early summer 1915, up to *Ramazān* (began 13 July 1915) are completely missing from the memoirs. The fall of 1915 she seems to have spent in Trabzon. She wrote that she learned of the Ottoman victory in the Dardanelles Campaign in the third week of *Kanun-i sani*, which would correspond to the end of January 1916.⁴⁹ In the winter of 1916 Russian forces moved quickly forward in Anatolia, capturing Erzurum and Muş on 16 February, Bitlis on 3 March, and Rize on 8 March.⁵⁰ According to Mediha Kayra’s memoirs, after the fall of Erzurum the governor of Trabzon ordered the town to be evacuated within twenty-four hours. The vivid description of her father’s difficulties in finding a boat is certainly not exaggerated. According to Ottoman documentation, about sixty thousand Muslims of the province of Trabzon fled from Russian occupation.⁵¹ Mediha remembers the precise date of the moment of her family’s departure: “On Friday, 5 *Şubat* 1331 [= 18 February 1916] at the time of the afternoon prayer.”⁵²

Dates during the voyage to Istanbul, which lasted more than eight months, are scarce and frequently broken (only the plausible ones are presented here): Wednesday, 1 March 1916: departure from Giresun;⁵³ Thursday, 16 March 1916: departure from Ünye;⁵⁴ during April, travel from Samsun to Merzifon,⁵⁵ where they stayed for almost half a year.⁵⁶ On Saturday, 21 October they moved on.

The date of the family's arrival in Ankara is given by Mediha as "Thursday, 13 Teşrin-i evvel,"⁵⁷ which corresponds to 26 October [1916]. As the day was not a Thursday but a Tuesday, either the date or the day of the week must be erroneous. A few days later they boarded the Anatolian railway and arrived at Haydarpaşa terminal near Istanbul in the afternoon of 31 October 1916. For two days they stayed with her maternal uncle before they moved to the house of a relative in Bostancı on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, at that time a village.

On 1 Teşrin-i sani 1332 (14 November 1916) her brother started school in Istanbul as a boarding student in the *Galata sultanisi*. From then on, he came only once a week on Thursdays to see his family. Naturally, he was therefore a bit unhappy in the beginning, Mediha remarked. Sometime in late fall or in the winter of 1916–17 their house in Bostancı was burglarized while they were visiting relatives in nearby Kadıköy, whereupon they moved to a flat in Kadıköy. She herself started attending a newly opened school in Kadıköy on 12 February 1917. A month later, on 11 March 1917, her brother Cahit (the editor of the memoirs) was born.⁵⁸ On Friday, 8 June 1917 the family moved back to Bostancı; on 11 June her maternal aunt went to the hospital in Haydarpaşa for a small operation, and returned on 18 June. On Wednesday, 20 June 1917 Mediha Kayra received her school report which turned out to be excellent. With it, she moved from the fourth to the fifth class at school. While this is the last entry of the memoirs, the last date that is given at the bottom of her notebook's last written page is one and a half years later: Saturday, 21 December 1918, which is probably the day she concluded the record of the first volume her memoirs, then being sixteen years old.

As it is today, at the time of Mediha's youth Istanbul was *the* metropolis and its attractions were known all over the country. After her arrival at the Haydarpaşa terminal, Mediha and those members of her family who had never been to Istanbul were naturally eager to see the city. The bridge of Galata spanning the Golden Horn, especially, seems to have been famous. We have to remember that in those days the Asian side of the Bosphorus where Mediha's family lived was not considered to be part of Istanbul proper although in many respects it already formed a part of it. Judging from the memoirs, Istanbul—with the exceptions of the bridge of Galata

and the Kapalı Carşı—made only a limited impression on Mediha and her brother Hamit, who she reports to have remarked: “I cannot see something special with Istanbul.” The late season and its heavy weather with rain and storms made the city look rather inhospitable when Mediha and her family arrived. On her first trip to the city she expressed her dislike of the passage by steamship. However, she enjoyed going by tramway, which she described as “moving like a fish.”⁵⁹ Apart from these attractions, no general positive “urban experience” is reflected in her memoirs except for a visit to an exhibition of the Red Crescent that was shown in a part of the building of the school that her brother Hamit was attending.

Although Mediha does not explicitly mention whether she had difficulties in accommodating herself to her new life in a big city like Istanbul, the text gives several indications that she in fact must have experienced such problems. She repeatedly expresses her indignation about the shamelessness of the unveiled faces of women.⁶⁰ The experience of burglary in winter 1916–17 was certainly unpleasant. Because of the war, food was expensive and scarce; yet she praises the government for its provision of supplies. This probably reflects the influence that her maternal uncle, Hasan Naci, a Unionist member of Parliament since 1914, had on her political ideas.⁶¹

Apart from politics, Mediha’s attention was more directed toward nature than toward the city, but in a way that reflects a thoroughly urban perspective. Thus, in Samsun, while still on the way to Istanbul, the family was informed of the occupation of Trabzon by Russian forces, which caused Mediha to dedicate the most emotional passage of her memoirs to the loss of her hometown:

Ah, the fall of Trabzon...ah. ... My heart is in pain. Ah, what a bitter day. My God. It means the this holy fatherland (*mukaddes anavatan*), these blessed soil where we were born and raised will be trampled under the boots of the enemy. From the minarets, instead of the Muhammedan call to prayer (*ezan-i muhammadi*) that used to fill our souls with awe and to refresh our belief, the bells of the enemy will ring. We had hoped that this would never happen. But now our ears have heard that the enemy has entered the town, that our beloved barracks that resembled that red flag and our *Sultani* school had been set on fire by our soldiers. I tried to close my ears to avoid hearing but I did not manage. Suddenly all power left me and I became completely debilitated. I leaned against something and started to think. Now the sweet minutes I had spent in Trabzon came to life before my inner eyes. When I remembered those nights, my heart seemed not to fit in my breast anymore and became like exploding. I wanted to cry but was not able to. My heart felt like dead. My mouth refused to say anything but “ah.” Staring to nowhere I sat motionless for one or two hours. Now my fatherland was growing before my eyes, and only now I understood

its value. I remembered its countless woods, its emerald green creeks, its shady forests, its shadowy pine groves, its melancholic waterfalls. Really my homeland (*memleket*) was beautiful.⁶²

It seems striking that—apart from a few symbolic places like the barracks and the school—it is the beauty of nature she is associating with her hometown. Although in 1890 the population of the town Trabzon was estimated to be only thirty-five thousand (of whom nearly twenty thousand were Muslims)⁶³ the town can safely be regarded to have formed an urban space. It is not clear whether her remembering Trabzon as the embodiment of the beauty of nature was in reaction to her experience of the larger and more distinctively urban space of Istanbul or whether it was an expression of adherence to literary convention of style—or for that matter to a discursive formation that identified romantic longings and the memory of a lost home with beautiful nature.

Interestingly, the most emotional and positive description in the Istanbul portion of her memoirs is dedicated to the experience of two mild spring nights in the garden of her uncle's house in Bostancı.

"The garden did not resemble the garden that I had seen in fall. The trees that during fall had been consisting of dead-dry branches were now adorned with fresh and green leaves and flowers in many colors. The place before the house was decorated with flowerbeds framed with grass and full of various flowers, the vines had grown, the graveled paths had been raked, the weeds round the house had been pulled out—in short, the garden had become beautiful."⁶⁴

Shortly after that, she, her brother, her sister, and her aunt visited the garden another time. They sat on the balcony after sunset.

"The scenery was extremely beautiful. The newly risen moon illuminated the nature, the lights of the princes islands opposite of us—especially those of the naval academy on Heybeli Ada—were reflected in the water. The quiet sea whispered with its small waves touching the beach. The nightingales sang. A mild spring-wind stroked gently our hair. The phonograph in the house with its sometimes sweet and sometimes sad and mournful sound added to this beauty of the nature."⁶⁵

This enjoyment of the famous spring and summer nights in the garden of one of the legendary waterside residences along the shores of the Bosphorus has been a constant theme in literature as in memoirs and it certainly constitutes an "urban experience" specific to Istanbul.

As Cahit Kayra underlines, Mediha certainly was extraordinary among the girls of her generation in many respects, e.g., in the interest she took in politics. On the other hand, in many other respects she probably was not.

However, that does not diminish the historical value of her memoirs, on the contrary. They do not offer a grand literary scheme of the self, perhaps because she was too young or because she had not read enough novels. We do not know what or if she read in her leisure time. We do not learn about any tensions in the family, nor is this something to be expected. But what we do learn is something about the comparative ease with which a Muslim girl could move in the urban space during the last years of the Empire as well as a treasure of details about the history of everyday life. The history of Ottoman women is kind of jigsaw puzzle that needs a lot of consideration and the memoirs of Mediha form an interesting part in it.

APPENDIX: COMPARATIVE TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE LATINIZED TEXT AND THE FACSIMILE

As neither the text nor the facsimile of the memoirs provide page references to each other, the following comparative table of contents was created. It references the subtitles of the memoirs as provided by their editor, Cahit Kayra. The first two pages' numbers refer to the latinized and simplified version of the text in the first and second editions; the third indicates the page number of the facsimile in the second edition. Page numbers of subtitles that were inserted into the latinized version by the editor without having an equivalent in the original manuscript are in square brackets.

Subtitle	<i>Kayra</i> ¹	<i>Kayra</i> ²	<i>Kayra</i> ² , <i>facsimile</i>
Savaşın Arifisinde	13	21	[197]
Kapitülasyonların Kaldırılması	15	24	200
Dayıbeyimin Mebusluğu ve İstanbul'a Gidişi	16	25	201
1330, Rusya'nın Türkiye'ye Savaş İlanı	16	25	201
Trabzon'un İlk Bombardımanı	17	26	202
Kentten Köylere Kaçış	19	28	[204]
Yine Bombardıman	20	30	[207]
Büyük Bombardıman	22	33	210
Yine Köyde	27	39	[218]
Gerçek Köy Yaşamı	30	43	224
Yine Bombardıman	32	45	227
Trabzon'a Dönüş	33	46	[228]
Fena Haberler	37	50	[234]
Çanakkale'nin Kurtulması	37	51	235

Karanlık Günler, Uğursuz Haberler	38	52	237
Göç Hazırlıkları	40	54	[239]
Erzurum Düştü!	42	57	[243]
Karadan mı, Denizden mi?	44	58	[245]
Portakal Adlı Bir İnek	51	68	[257]
Kayık Tutuldu	52	69	[258]
Otuz Beş Sarı Altın Lira	34	71	[262]
Denizde	57	75	[265]
Çavuşlu Köyü	58	76	[267]
Tirebolu	60	79	[271]
Tehlike	61	80	[272]
Karada	63	83	[276]
Yine Deniz ve Müthiş Dalgalar	66	87	[281]
Giresun	68	89	[284]
Motorda	70	91	[287]
Ünye'de	71	93	[289]
Sis ve Büyükannenmin Kiblenüması	73	95	[291]
Samsun	74	96	[293]
Trabzon'un Düşüşü	78	101	[298]
Gidiyoruz Ama Yine Geleceğiz	79	103	[301]
Merzifon Yollarında	80	103	[302]
Merzifon	82	106	[307]
Merzifon'dan Ayrılış Hazırlıkları	86	111	[313]
Sündüs Nine ve Sarınca Köyü	87	112	[314]
Hoşça Kal Merzifon	89	114	[317]
Çorum, Alaca, Sungurlu	89	115	[318]
Yağlı Köyü	91	117	[321]
Kızılırmak	92	118	[323]
Kılıçlar	93	119	[324]
Asi Yozgat	94	120	[325]
Ankara	95	121	[327]
Tren ve İstanbul Yolu	97	123	[328]
İstanbul	99	125	[331]
Ömer Cahit'in Doğumu	104	132	340
Günlük Yaşam	105	133	[341]
Hilaliahmer Sergisini Ziyaret	105	134	342
Bostancı'da Bahar	106	135	[343]
Mahfirûz Sultan Okulu	108	137	[346]
Sınıfın Birincisi	110	139	[349]

NOTES

1. Margaret Strobel, "Gender, Sex, and Empire," in *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order*, ed. Michael Adas (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 345.
2. E.g., the volume edited by Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).
3. Madeleine Zilfi, "Thoughts on Women and Slavery in the Ottoman Era and Historical Sources," in *Beyond the Exotic*, ed. Amira El-Azhary Sonbol (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 135.
4. Cf. Thomas J. Prasch, "Orientalism's Other, Other Orientalisms: Women in the Scheme of Empire," *Journal of Women's History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 177–179.
5. Cf. Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, "Vom Individuum zur Person. Neue Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von Autobiographietheorie und Selbstzeugnisforschung," *Querelles. Jahrbuch für Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* 10 (2005): 7–27. This introductory text emerged from the context of a research cluster in Germany on "Testimonies of the self in trans-cultural perspective" (*DFG Forschergruppe 530: Selbstzeugnisse in transkultureller Perspektive*, Berlin, 2004–11). For details of its research, see <http://www.cms.fu-berlin.de/dfg-fg/fg530/index.html>, accessed 1 August 2013.
6. See Winfried Schulze, "Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen für die Tagung 'Ego-Dokumente,'" in *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, ed. Winfried Schulze (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 11–30.
7. For the latter, see, e.g., Şerafeddin Mağmumi, *Anadolu ve Suriye'de seyahat hatıraları* (Cairo: 1327/1909). The term overlaps with the term *seyahatname* (travelogue) which, however, could also denote a purely geographical description of a region without any personal travel narrative; see Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika, "Orientalism 'alla turca': Late 19th / Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim 'Outback,'" *Welt des Islams* 40, no. 2 (2000): 162–164. For a cross between a diary and a travel memoir, see Osmanzâde Hüseyin Vassaf's *Hatırat-ı Hicaziyye*, available in modern print as *Hicaz Hatıratı*, ed. Cemil Çiftçi (Istanbul: Kurtuba, 2011). Both the author and his editor have classified the work as *hatırat*.
8. To give a random example for illustration: the fourth edition of the memoirs of Leyla Açıba, a member of the Imperial harem, has been printed as vol., no. 19 of the *Hatırat Kitaplığı* (memoirs series) of the Istanbul-based publishing house *Timaş Yayınları*: Leyla Açıba, *Bir Çerkes Prensesinin Harem Hatıraları*, 4th ed. (Istanbul: Timaş, 2010).
9. Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), xi.
10. There were certainly exceptions, e.g., the harem memoirs of Leyla Saz, that were first serialized in the paper *Vakit* in Istanbul in 1921. See Börte Sagaster,

- Im Harem von Istanbul. Osmanisch-türkische Frauenkultur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Rissen, Hamburg: E.B.-Verlag, 1989).
11. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 215–244.
 12. Nazan Bekiroğlu, *Şâir Nigâr Hanım* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1998), 17–21.
 13. Açba, *Bir Çerkes Prensesinin Harem Hatıraları*, 16–21.
 14. Nemika Deryal Marşanoğlu, ed., *Haremden Sürgüne. Bir Osmanlı Prensesi* (Istanbul: İnkılâp, 2011), 9–10.
 15. Mediha Kayra, *Hoşça Kal Trabzon. Bir Kız Çocuğun Günlüğünden Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Anadolu*. Günümüz Türkçesine çeviren: Cahit Kayra (Istanbul: Dünya, 2005). The book was printed in August; the subtitle given above is missing from the title page inside the book. This remained unaltered in the second edition.
 16. Henceforth, the first edition will be referred to as Kayra¹, the second as Kayra². The editor's introduction in Kayra² is on pp. 13–17; the conclusion of the first edition appears on pp. 141–144.
 17. Some additional photographs are included in these pages.
 18. See his biography at <http://www.mmd.org.tr/memberdetail.aspx?memberid=142>, accessed 25 May 2010.
 19. Kayra¹, 116, n. 8; Kayra², 198, n. 8.
 20. Kayra¹, 54, 60, 68; Kayra², 71f, 79, 89.
 21. Kayra¹, 55; Kayra², 73.
 22. More details about her life after 1919 are available in Kayra², 147–170.
 23. Kayra¹, 116, n. 5; Kayra², 191, n. 5.
 24. Lived 1897–1989; see Kayra¹, 24 and 116, n. 16; Kayra², 191, n. 16.
 25. Lived 1903–1965; see Kayra¹, 116, n. 6; Kayra², 191, n. 6.
 26. Kayra¹, 10f; Kayra², 14f.
 27. Kayra¹, 10; Kayra², 14.
 28. Kayra¹, 11; Kayra², 15.
 29. The corresponding date “Aralık 1916” given in Kayra¹, 119, n. 98 / Kayra², 194, n. 98 is obviously erroneous.
 30. Cf. Kayra¹, 13, 123; Kayra², 21, facs. 197.
 31. Fatma Müge Göçek, “Reading Genocide. Turkish Historiography on the Armenians: Deportations and Massacres 1915,” in *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century*, ed. Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer, Y. Hakan Erdem (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 121–123.
 32. See Kayra¹, 53, 79, 113; Kayra², 71, 103, 143, facs. 261, 302.
 33. Kayra¹, 53; Kayra², 71, facs. 261.
 34. Kayra¹, 16; Kayra², 24, facs. 200.
 35. Kayra¹, 22; Kayra², 33, facs. 210. Either the day of the week or the date seems to be erroneous here.
 36. Kayra¹, 44, Kayra², 59, facs. 246.
 37. Kayra¹, 61; Kayra², 80, facs. 272.
 38. Kayra¹, 83, Kayra², 108, facs. 308f.

39. Kayra¹, 13, Kayra², 21, facs. 197.
40. Cf. Harald Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis. Eine Theorie der Erinnerung*, 2nd ed. (München: CH Beck, 2008).
41. Kayra¹, 13, Kayra², 21, facs. 197.
42. The day of the Romanian declaration of war against Austria on 27 August 1916; see Kayra¹, 103; Kayra², 130, facs. 337. For the other exception, see below.
43. After 15 February 1917 the difference of thirteen days between the Maliye and the Gregorian calendar was abolished by a change to the Maliye calendar, which was adapted to the Gregorian but kept its counting of the years starting with the hijra.
44. Kayra¹, 15; Kayra², 24, facs. 200.
45. Goloğlu, *Trabzon Tarihi* (2nd ed. Trabzon: Serander, 2013), 217 gives 17 November 1914 as the date of the first Russian bombardment of Trabzon.
46. Kayra¹, 16, Kayra², 25f, facs. 201f.
47. Kayra¹, 22–27, Kayra², 33–38, facs. 210–218.
48. Kayra¹, 33, Kayra², 46, facs. 229.
49. Kayra¹, 37; Kayra², 51, facs. 235.
50. Stanford Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 2 (Ankara: TTK, 2008): 984–985.
51. *Ibid.*, 999.
52. Kayra¹, 55; Kayra², 73, facs. 264.
53. Kayra¹, 70; Kayra², 92, facs. 287.
54. Kayra¹, 73, Kayra², 95, facs. 291. In the latinized version the year 1333 is given, in the facsimile it is 1332.
55. There are several precise dates of their journey given for April 1916 but they are all problematic; see Kayra¹, 78–83; Kayra², 101–197, facs. 298–308.
56. Kayra¹, 89; Kayra², 114, facs. 317 gives precisely a duration of five months and twenty days for their residence in Merzifon. In that case they would have arrived there on 1 May 1916 (= 18 Nisan 1332).
57. Kayra¹, 95; Kayra², 121; facs. 327.
58. For the preceding four dates the days of the week given in the text do not match their corresponding dates; see Kayra¹, 99, 102, 104; Kayra², 125, 130, 132, facs. 332, 337, 340. E.g., 11 March 1917 was not a Saturday as indicated in the memoirs but a Sunday.
59. Kayra¹, 99–101; Kayra², 125–129, facs. 331–335.
60. Kayra¹, 99, 101; Kayra², 125, 129, facs. 331, 335.
61. This is also proposed by Cahit Kayra; Kayra¹, 118, n. 89; Kayra², 194, n. 89.
62. Kayra¹, 78; Kayra², 101, facs. 298ff.
63. Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890), 43.
64. Kayra¹, 107f; Kayra², 135, facs. 344.
65. Kayra¹, 107; Kayra², 135, facs. 344f.