

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE IMPERIAL PAST: “NOSTALGIZING” IN THE GERMAN AND TURKISH MUSEUMS OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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### Abstract

Until 1918, representatives of the Königlische Museen zu Berlin (Royal Museums of Berlin, now State Museums of Berlin) and Istanbul’s Müze-i Hümayun (Imperial Museum, now the Istanbul Archeological Museum) excavated, extracted, and exhibited antiquities as part of their countries’ imperial projects. The material culture of past civilizations was used as a symbol of both empires’ imperial grandeur and territorial power. With the end of World War I, German and Ottoman archaeologists lost access to territories where they formerly acquired objects for their collections while previously transferred artifacts remained in the collections. After the empires collapsed and republics emerged in their place, German and Turkish museums were still managed by directors who had entered the institutions during imperial rule. A longing for the past and specific imaginings of the future emerged in both nations after the war. Nostalgic discourses shaped the development of the museums in the

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interwar period. This article focuses on the activities of museum directors from both countries. It provides a comparative analysis of nostalgizing museum practices in each country marked by examples of longing for a real or imagined past and expectations for the future found in correspondence, publications, and the process of musealization.

**Keywords:** nostalgia; museum studies; colonialism; imperial archeology; Germany; Turkey

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## Introduction

On November 13, 1918, the archaeologist and director of the Department of Antiquities of the Königlische Museen (Royal Museums) of Berlin, Theodor Wiegand, returned from Ukraine to Berlin. He discovered “[r]ed flags (...) flying over the Royal Palace and the Old Museum,” heralding political changes in the decaying German Empire. Four days before Wiegand’s arrival, Prince Max von Baden announced the abdication of Wilhelm II as Emperor and appointed Friedrich Ebert as Chancellor. The collapse of the monarchy left marks on the museums of Berlin: the façade of the Old Museum showed “the traces of about a hundred bullets,” while “red posters with the inscription ‘National Property’ hung on the entrance doors” in silent witness to the ongoing revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Simultaneously, a transformation took place in Istanbul. Allied with Berlin, Vienna, and Sofia during the First World War and for decades the hub of important Prussian-German excavation campaigns in the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish capital was occupied by the Allies on the day Wiegand reached Berlin. Greek, Italian, French, and British flags decorated the streets of Pera (now Beyoğlu). Halil Edhem, director of Istanbul’s Müze-i Hümayun (Imperial Museum), watched as his colleagues from Austria-Hungary and Germany were expelled and replaced by British, French, and Italian archaeologists.<sup>2</sup> Caught up in a vortex of violence between 1912 and 1923, Halil Edhem continued working at the museum and eventually committed himself to the service of the emerging Turkish Republic.

The month of November 1918 was a turning point both in Berlin and Istanbul. Until 1918, representatives of the Königlische Museen and the Müze-i Hümayun excavated, extracted, and exhibited antiquities as part of their imperial

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand. Ein deutscher Archäologe 1864–1936* (München: C. H. Beck, 1944), 342.

<sup>2</sup> Ceren Abi, “Cooperation and Contestation: Cultural Heritage in Occupied Istanbul,” *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 4 (2022), 121–126, here 121, <https://doi.org/10.53979/yillik.2022.10>; Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building. From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris 2014), 191–192.

projects. They appropriated the material culture of past civilizations and made them symbols of their Empires' grandeur.

Consistent with Foucault's idea of heterotopia, the establishment of national museums pursued the ideal of constructing a "general archive of culture."<sup>3</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the institutions collected "objects to infinity" in order to "stop time, or rather deposit it to infinity in a special space." Archaeologists and museum representatives pursued a goal of "creating a space for all times" that would stand outside of time.<sup>4</sup> Museums stored and exhibited the material evidence of ancient cultures in encapsulated spaces. They served as centers of knowledge and became symbols of imperial civilization.

The end of World War I and the collapse of the monarchies in Germany and Turkey challenged those ambitions. The former imperial courts were replaced by republican governments. For German and Turkish scholars, the early 1920s were marked by relative isolation from the international scientific community and the loss of access to large territories supplying them with resources.<sup>5</sup> Objects appropriated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century remained in the collections, transforming the museums into monuments to archaeology's imperial past. For better or worse, the ancient artifacts in their collections reflected past acquisition practices. In the center of Berlin, the unfinished Pergamon Museum (intended to house objects uncovered by German-led excavations at Pergamon in Asia Minor) stood like a memorial to the reach of the former German Empire. It became a place of longing, where "a nostalgia that was widespread even in intellectual circles (...) was contrasted with a critical examination of the empire which aimed to trace the causes of the present catastrophe in the

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Die Heterotopien. Der utopische Körper. Zwei Radiovorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019), 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Theodor Wiegand became an honorary member of the Hungarian Archaeological Society and the Archaeological Institute in Sofia just after the war in the early 1920s. Both Hungary and Bulgaria had been allied with the German Empire during World War I and believed that the Paris Peace Treaties had "mutilated" their territories. This belief was a link that unified German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian scholars in the interwar period. Wiegand did manage to travel to Italy in the early 1920s to re-establish contacts with Italian scholars. In 1925, he reconnected with French colleagues in Tripoli. Regarding Wiegand's and other German scholars' isolation, see Lukas Cladders, "1919 und die Folgen. Europäische Museumsbeziehungen nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Mars & Museum. Europäische Museen im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Christina Kott and Bénédicte Savoy (Köln: Böhlau, 2016), 253–264, here 253. On Wiegand's honorary memberships, see Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 396. On his trip to Italy, see *ibid.*, 358. On meeting French colleagues in Tripoli, see *ibid.*, 404–405.

wrong course-setting of the preceding epoch.”<sup>6</sup> Progressive voices of the republican-democratic milieu criticized museums, their self-perceptions, and nostalgia for imperialism. This involved questioning past networks, relations, and acquisition techniques that came to be perceived as problematic due to power asymmetries between scholars and collectors backed by imperial power and the localities in which their collections originated.

While the appropriation of cultural assets from colonies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has attracted increasing scholarly interest, critical research into the provenance of antiquities collections, revealing the complex and manifold power asymmetries inherent in imperial and colonial archaeology, is still in its infancy.<sup>7</sup> Studying the practices of antiquity museums and their roots in imperial archaeology is a desideratum.

Focusing on German and Turkish museums in the interwar period offers unique perspectives on the issue, especially because the same actors were in charge of them from the 1890s to the 1930s. The museum directors pursued both close cooperation and distinct rivalry with each other before 1918 and were subsequently confronted by two fading empires which turned into republics. In that context, the question arises as to what extent museum directors in Germany and Turkey, who were trained and equipped in the archaeological practices of the imperial era, became reactionary forces. Did they maintain their positions despite the changes in their political systems by relying on nostalgizing museum practices to continue traditions and avoid the external influence of republican governments? Did they evolve a nostalgic mindset that was aimed at preserving the *status quo ante* within the walls of their institutions? Did they wish not only to continue their existing plans for their museums into the future but also to heroize the acquisition and exhibition practices of the past, many of which remain influential today?

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<sup>6</sup> Alexis Joachimides, “Das Museum der Meisterwerke. Karl Scheffler und der ‘Berliner Museumskrieg,’” in *Museumsinszenierungen. Zur Geschichte der Institution des Kunstmuseums. Die Berliner Museumslandschaft 1830–1990*, ed. Alexis Joachimides et al. (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995), 192–205, here 195.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Götz Aly, *Das Prachtboot, Wie Deutsche die Kunstschätze der Südsee raubten* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2021); Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museum: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2021); Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr, *Zurückgeben. Über die Restitution afrikanischer Kulturgüter* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2019); Bénédicte Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst* (München: C. H. Beck, 2021); Sophie Schönbberger, *Was soll zurück? Die Restitution von Kulturgütern im Zeitalter der Nostalgie* (München: C. H. Beck, 2021).

The meaning of the term “nostalgia” has changed since it first appeared in the seventeenth century, transforming “from a spatial longing for a place – homeland – to a longing for a time gone by.”<sup>8</sup> In the German language, nostalgia has taken on a separate meaning since the 1960s. Nostalgia now means longing for the past, while homesickness means missing a place called home.<sup>9</sup> In the Turkish language, the past necessarily implies a loss. Therefore, the concepts of nostalgia and melancholy are closely related in Turkey. *Nostalji* implies “*hasret* (longing, ardent desire), *hüzün* (sadness, grief), and *kasvet* (depression and gloom).”<sup>10</sup> In this context, it seems noteworthy that the term *nostalji* was not used in the contemporary language of the 1920s and 1930s, at least with today’s meaning. I use nostalgia in the context of imperial traditions as a concept for analyzing the attitudes of German and Turkish museum actors toward the transition from imperial to republican rule. This article understands nostalgia to be an attitude in which longing for the past becomes performative and dominates an actor’s language and actions. Zygmunt Baumann has analyzed developments in modern societies in a similar way: what he calls “retrotopias”<sup>11</sup> developed as “[v]isions that, unlike their predecessors, no longer feed on a future that is still to come and therefore nonexistent, but on the lost/robbed/orphaned, in any case, undead past.”<sup>12</sup>

In examining the activities of museum directors, this article discusses their mental anchoring in the past, including a nostalgia that mourned the “distances and disjunctures between times and spaces, never bridging them.”<sup>13</sup> Against this background, the question arises: what position did German and Turkish museum representatives take on the immediate imperial past and republican upheaval? Did nostalgic discourses shape the development of museums and exhibitions in the post-war period, and if yes, to what extent? What turned German and Turkish museum directors into apologists for the imperial era and “retrotopia?” Did museums nostalgize the imperial past? Or were museums “opportunity spaces” for developing and experiencing “novel lifestyles and identities”<sup>14</sup>?

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<sup>8</sup> Tobias Becker, “Nostalgie,” in *Handbuch Historische Authentizität, Wert der Vergangenheit*, ed. Martin Sabrow and Achim Saupe (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022), 320–327, here 321. See also Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 3–18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 321. For a detailed analysis, see Tobias Becker, “The Meanings of Nostalgia: Genealogy and Critique,” *History and Theory* 57, no. 2 (June 2018): 234–250, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12059>.

<sup>10</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197512289.001.0001>.

<sup>11</sup> Zygmunt Baumann, *Retrotopia* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 346.

<sup>14</sup> Yavuz, *Nostalgia*, 3.

This article focuses on discourses about the value of the past in the context of social and political transformation in a case study of archaeological museums in Berlin and Istanbul during the interwar period.<sup>15</sup> It compares and contrasts the nostalgizing practices of the museums, identifying continuities and disruptions in their practices and the valorization of their archaeological collections. After analyzing prewar conditions in Istanbul, the study examines the role archaeological museums played in the Republic of Turkey. Then, it gives examples of nostalgizing the past in the re-establishment of bilateral relations between German and Turkish museum actors. Finally, it analyzes the experiences of German archaeologists at the end of the war and the repercussions on museums in the interwar period.

### Prewar Museum Practices in Istanbul

Kemalist nation-building was based on the suppression of Turkey's Ottoman heritage, but according to Hakan Yavuz, the "imperial ghost" haunted the new state and society. The roots of this specter lay in the transition from empire to republic, which was a "top-down initiative." Consequently, the metamorphosis of the state was based on a form of self-imposed amnesia. "The legacy of the Ottoman Empire, along with its cultural practices, was never fully debated due to the Republic's policy of 'forgetting the Ottoman past' to create a new national and secular (Turkish and Western) identity."<sup>16</sup> Although the secularization process had already begun in the museums of Istanbul during the Ottoman era of the İkinci Meşrutiyet (Second Constitution) after 1908, museum actors nevertheless opposed erasing Ottoman rule from Turkish memory.

Beginning in the 1890s, Halil Edhem expanded his responsibilities from protecting archaeological objects of Greek-Roman origin to preserving Islamic arts. He continuously demanded the enforcement of political and legal measures meant to preserve the heritage of the Islamic eras. In a series of articles entitled "Âsar-ı Âtika" (Antiquities) published in the Ottoman journal *Şehbal* (Swinging Feather, Wing),<sup>17</sup> Halil Edhem condemned the destruction of Islamic

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<sup>15</sup> At this point, it should be noted that perceptions of the interwar period, the end of World War I, and the beginning of World War II were quite different in Germany and Turkey.

<sup>16</sup> Yavuz, *Nostalgia*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Halil Edhem, "Âsar-ı Âtika. Âtika Milliyemiz Nasıl Mahv Oluyor?" *Şehbal* 2, no. 36 (1327/1911): 226–228; Halil Edhem, "Âsar-ı Âtika. Yine Konya," *Şehbal* 4, no. 59 (1328/1912): 212–213; Halil Edhem, "Âsar-ı Âtika: Sinan Paşa Köşkü," *Şehbal* 3, no. 60 (1328/1912): 224–225; Halil Edhem, "Âsar-ı Âtika: Kayıkhane Ocağı," *Şehbal* 4, no. 75 (1329/1913): 147–148.

architecture, monuments, and objects. The subtitle of the first article in the series reflected his proto-nationalist ideas influenced by political power struggles: “How Are Our National Antiquities Being Destroyed?”<sup>18</sup> Apparently, Halil Edhem also desired even more comprehensive protection for Islamic cultural property. Eventually, he turned to the task of constructing a national cultural heritage founded on secularization. Focusing on objects from Central Anatolia, he wrote an inventory of their loss, describing and reporting the destruction of artworks, sacral objects or architecture, and their transportation abroad. Photographs attached to the article showed objects in situ, the destruction process, and, finally, the empty spaces that remained after all parts of an object had been removed.<sup>19</sup>

During the First World War, Halil Edhem cooperated with the Ministry of Education on centralizing Islamic artifacts from regions perceived as Ottoman peripheries in the museums of Istanbul. Archaeological, cultural, and religious assets from Syria and from the Holy Sites of Mecca and Medina were added to the collections of the Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi (Islamic Foundations Museum, now the Museum of Islamic and Turkish Arts) and the Müze-i Hümayun. A systematic reappraisal of Islamic art followed the founding of the Islamic Foundations Museum in 1914, which Halil Edhem perceived as Turkey’s first *national* museum. According to this new perspective, the Müze-i Hümayun, which exhibited ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Art, was demoted in importance but retained as a fading showcase of the pre-Islamic past. An emphasis on preserving Islamic art from specific periods – primarily those of the Seljuks and Ottomans – in the Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi was the first step in nostalgizing those and other historical periods of Islam in Turkey. Through the preservation and musealization of Islamic relics, Halil Edhem emphasized Islamic rule as the predominant and shared past of the Turkish identity. The focus on Islam in the *national* heritage served to construct and justify the power of Turkey’s Sunni elite over the diverse population of the Ottoman Empire’s territorial corpus. This included an increasingly open opposition to European influence in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of World War I.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Halil Edhem, “Âsar-ı Âtika. Âtika Milliyemiz Nasıl Mahv Oluyor?” 226. See also Zeynep Çelik, *About Antiquities. Politics of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 123–124.

<sup>19</sup> Halil Edhem, “Âsar-ı Âtika. Âtika Milliyemiz Nasıl Mahv Oluyor?” 228.

<sup>20</sup> Sebastian Willert, “The Invention of ‘National Antiquities’ in the Late Ottoman Empire: Archaeological Interrelations between Discourses of Appropriation, Preservation and Heritage Construction,” *Diyâr* 2, no. 2 (2021): 304–328, here 317–320.

When Halil Edhem prepared his speech for the opening of the Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi in April 1914, he stated that “Museums are one of the most important symbols of civilizations.”<sup>21</sup> He contended that “[t]he diversity and richness of museums in a country correspond to the level of education and progress in that country.”<sup>22</sup> He continued by saying that the museums of Istanbul would contribute to the importance of the city and drew on European centers such as London, Paris, Munich, or Berlin for comparison. He directly criticized the representatives of Wilhelmine Germany for seizing Islamic art and transporting it out of Ottoman territory.<sup>23</sup> The transfer of objects abroad and the resulting voids in mosques, mausoleums, shrines, and palaces made “the inauguration (...) of the museum founded under the name of ‘Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi’” necessary.<sup>24</sup>

Halil Edhem’s criticism of his German counterparts decried the significant loss of Islamic art and was accompanied by calls for its protection. The director disapproved of malpractice by Prussian-German archaeologists on Ottoman soil. His condemnations indicated a new self-confidence after a German delegation under the guidance of Theodor Wiegand had tried to take advantage of the Sublime Porte’s precarious financial situation during the Balkan wars and acquire the quintessential pieces of the Müze-i Hümayun collection.<sup>25</sup> The negotiations failed but they led to diplomatic intervention to enforce the export of archaeological objects from the ancient Assyrian capital of Ashur to Berlin. Halil Edhem cut off official relations between the Müze-i Hümayun and the Königlische Museen in July 1914, stressing the need for Ottoman archaeology to develop independently and to preserve antiquities on Ottoman territory. He strove for an autonomous future, but he also longed for the acceptance of Ottoman archaeologists and cooperation on an equal footing with their Western counterparts.<sup>26</sup>

The opening of the Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi underlined a new appreciation of the Islamic past and its grandeur, with an emphasis on Turkish-Sunni Islam.

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<sup>21</sup> Halil Edhem’s notes quoted in “Interlude: Halil Edhem on the Museum of Pious Foundations,” in *Scramble for the Past. A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753–1914*, ed. Zainab Bahrani, Zeynep Çelik, and Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: SALT, 2011), 417–421.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Sebastian Willert, “German-Ottoman Negotiations for the Sale of the Müze-i Hümayun, 1913–1914,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 267–273, <https://doi.org/10.2979/tur.2022.a876791>.

<sup>26</sup> Sebastian Willert, *Kulturbesitz. Archäologische Objekte in der deutsch-osmanischen Politik, 1898–1918* (Göttingen: Wallstein, forthcoming 2024), 558.



This manifested itself in resistance to foreign appropriation of the country's heritage. Objects were collected and exhibited in the premises of the Imperial Museum at the same time as a shift in Turkish identity occurred. That shift culminated on November 1, 1922, when the Kemalists announced the abolition of the Sultanate and made Ankara the new capital of the Republic of Turkey, proclaimed the next year on October 29, 1923.<sup>27</sup> Turkish nationalists considered the abrogation of the Treaty of Sèvres, which ended World War I for Turkey, a fundamental step toward independence and also celebrated the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne as a national triumph that restored large areas to Turkish control. Following that victory, the reorganization of the state proceeded apace with the musealization of the Ottoman past in Istanbul's museums.

### A Past for the Nation's Future

The nation-state of Turkey emerged in the early 1920s. According to Stéphane Yerasimos, Istanbul fell into "lethargy"<sup>28</sup> as the new capital, Ankara, gained in importance.<sup>29</sup> However, the former Ottoman capital showed a lively vitality in the field of museums that contrasted with the sleepiness diagnosed by Yerasimos. As member of the Müze-i Hümayun's directorate, Halil Edhem had witnessed significant transformations in the way his fatherland was ruled and in geopolitics: the decline of the authoritarian reign of Abdülhamid II after the 1908–09 revolution, the warring period that witnessed the Italian invasion of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911, the First and Second Balkan Wars in 1912–13, World War I, the Allies' occupation of Istanbul, and the Greek-Turkish War of 1919–23.<sup>30</sup> Despite the various changes in political systems, Halil Edhem managed to maintain his position in the Museums and became "a prominent figure for archaeology during the first decades of the Republican era."<sup>31</sup>

The political and geographic framework was transforming, but exhibitions of prestigious objects continued to emphasize the cultural significance of various cities and regions of the former Ottoman Empire. Halil Edhem and his long-time colleague Aziz Ogan maneuvered within the new political landscape to

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<sup>27</sup> Stéphane Yerasimos, *Konstantinopel. Istanbul's historisches Erbe* (Potsdam: Ullmann, 2009), 377.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>29</sup> Mesut Dinler, "The Knife's Edge of the Present: Archaeology in Turkey from the Nineteenth Century to the 1940s," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 22 (2018): 728–745, here 738, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-017-0446-x>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 737.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 738.

maintain their agency. Together with other Turkish scholars and intellectuals, they “embarked on a quest to discover [Turkey’s] ancient history”<sup>32</sup> and raised the profile of Turkish archaeology as a pivotal contributor to the creation and glorification of national history.<sup>33</sup> Although Ankara was in control, these former Ottoman officials submitted to the “socio-political agenda of creating a national identity from the outset”<sup>34</sup> for the Turkish Republic. What Baumann later identified as the aim of nationalism in general<sup>35</sup> was realized in Turkey during the 1920s and 1930s: legitimizing the nation’s claim to territorial political sovereignty with the help of the politics of memory practiced in Turkey’s archaeological museums. In the words of Selahattin Kandemir in the introduction to his work *Etiler* (The Hittites), published in Ankara in 1933, “A tree that does not have its roots deep in the soil cannot grow. The root of national power is national identity. What creates national identity is national history.”<sup>36</sup>

Turkish archaeologists collaborated with scholars from other disciplines and other intellectuals to construct a national history and visualize it. They combined their efforts in the Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish History Society), founded on June 4, 1930.<sup>37</sup> One aim of early republican nationalism was avoiding the exclusion of even one single culture or historical lineage from the national narrative. The publication *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (Outline of Turkish History) (1930) adopted an “inclusive concept” and delineated an extensive territory as the fatherland of all Turks: “The homeland of the Turks is Asia. Asia, from the Aegean Sea to the Japan Sea; it is a vast landmass stretching from the Indian Sea to the Arctic Ocean.”<sup>38</sup> Building on this thesis, the publication addressed the influence of “Turks” on various civilizations of the continent and its neighboring communities.<sup>39</sup>

The archaeologists also contributed to the *Türk Tarih Tezi* (Turkish History Thesis), which found its way into school textbooks. Succinctly summarized,

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<sup>32</sup> Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic,” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 381–393, here 381.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 381; Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 730. For examples of “nationalist archaeology,” see Bruce G. Trigger, “Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist,” *Man* 19, no. 3 (1984), 355–370, here 358–360.

<sup>34</sup> Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 382.

<sup>35</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 80.

<sup>36</sup> Selahattin Kandemir, *Etiler (Hititler)* (Ankara: Köyhocası, 1933), 3. Quoted in Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 382.

<sup>37</sup> Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 382.

<sup>38</sup> *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930), 275.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* For a short discussion of its content, see Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 382.

the Tezi nostalgized and heroized Turkish history, describing the Turks as an ancient people whose actual home region was Central Asia. In a series of migrations, they inhabited various territories between their original location and present-day Turkey. They nurtured the development of civilization in areas from China, India, the Middle East, and North Africa to the Balkans and parts of Europe. The Tezi identified the Turks as direct descendants of the Hittites and Sumerians who had influenced many civilizations and territories, e.g., those of the Aegean.<sup>40</sup> The Outline of Turkish History boasted that “[t]he first inhabitants of the civilization of the Sea of Islands [the Aegean] were the Turks who came from Inner Asia. The civilization of the Turks, who had settled in the basins of Central Russia and the Danube in ancient times, had penetrated as far as Macedonia, Thessaly, and the region of Corinth 3500 years before Christ.”<sup>41</sup>

The Tezi provided a justification for maintaining control over all of Anatolia. In a nostalgizing moment that indicated a longing for a homogenous society, it presented the Turks as the “legitimate heirs (and, indeed practically the progenitors) of all civilizations that had existed on the soil of the new Turkish Republic.”<sup>42</sup> The document was presented in 1932 at the *Birinci Türk Tarihi Kongresi* (First Turkish History Congress), which lasted nine days. The importance of the Congress was enhanced by the presence of *Cumhurbaşkanı* (President of the Republic) Mustafa Kemal at every session.<sup>43</sup> The Tezi was intended to justify Turkey’s rightful place in the changing power constellations of the twentieth century, especially as concerned its territory. “Through the thesis, firstly, it was possible to claim links with the Anatolian heritage covering all layers of the territory (including the prehistoric ages), secondly, it included Islamic heritage without compromising the secularization goal, and thirdly, it has established connections with Central Asia through Turkic precursors.”<sup>44</sup> Turkish archaeologists searched for material evidence to verify the theses. Between 1933 and 1937, several archaeological excavations were conducted on what was defined as Turkish soil, for example, in Göllüdağ, Alacahöyük, Ankara, and Sarayburnu (Istanbul).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 382; Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 739.

<sup>41</sup> *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*, 275.

<sup>42</sup> Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 382.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>44</sup> Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 740.

<sup>45</sup> Tanyeri-Erdemir, “Archaeology as a Source of National Pride,” 384. See also Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 741.

## National Narratives and Nostalgizing the Past

Mesut Dinler says that the transfer of the capital from Istanbul to Ankara not only “helped to gain distance from Ottoman memories” but also enabled the new Turkish Republic “to eliminate the old Ottoman intellectual community from the decision-making process to a certain extent and to form a central community in Ankara.”<sup>46</sup> However, the museums were a decentralized space of opportunity for the elite museum representatives, who were trained and already well-established under the Ottoman Empire, to continue their work under republican rule. Not only did Halil Edhem and Aziz Ogan manage to remain in charge, but they also worked to energize and expand the museum heritage and legacy of the Ottoman Empire, secure a relative autonomy for the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, and create employment possibilities for former colleagues.<sup>47</sup> Museums such as the Müze-i Hümayun in Istanbul were used to preserve ancient objects and material evidence of Turkish influence and civilizational force. In 1922, Halil Edhem entrusted his longtime collaborator Aziz Ogan with managing the Administration of Antiquities in Smyrna (İzmir). One of Aziz Ogan’s tasks was establishing a local archaeological museum, which opened in 1924. One of Halil Edhem’s first projects in Istanbul was the conversion of Topkapı Sarayı, the former palace of the Sultans, into a museum in 1923.<sup>48</sup> This was, according to Mesut Dinler, “the most symbolic act of the republic’s efforts to tear down Ottoman identity.”<sup>49</sup> Tahsin Öz, a colleague of Halil Edhem’s in Ottoman times, became the director of Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi and created a “narrative arrangement of the objects of imperial life by their aesthetic and historical value.”<sup>50</sup> Halil Edhem was interested in Turkey’s Islamic heritage and focused on Seljuk and Ottoman objects and architecture. However, after 1923, as prehistoric periods became

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<sup>46</sup> Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 738.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 737. Correspondence between the refugee scholars Benno Landsberger and Fritz Rudolf Kraus indicates that conflict simmered between Istanbul and Ankara about the Ministry of Culture’s order that Kraus be employed by the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. Letter from Fritz Rudolf Kraus to Benno Landsberger, Istanbul, August 10, 1937, in *Dreizehn Jahre in Istanbul (1937–1949)*, ed. Jan Schmidt (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 65; letter from Benno Landsberger to Fritz Rudolf Kraus, Ankara, May 14, 1942, Ibid. 828.

<sup>48</sup> Selvihan Kurt, “Aziz Ogan ve Yabancı Bizantologların Yazışmaları Işığında İstanbul’da Bizans Mirası Tartışmaları,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 308 (2019): 62–69, 63; Selvihan Kurt, “The Founding of the İzmir Museum: A Preliminary Narrative Based on Aziz Ogan’s Archive” (M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2015), 1, 3, 50–65.

<sup>49</sup> Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 738.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 738. See also: Semavi Eyice: “Tahsin Öz (1887–1973),” *Belleten Türk Tarih Kurumu* 38, no. 152 (1974): 709–732.

more important to the nation's retro-utopian national project, he expanded his research in that direction.<sup>51</sup>

Based on the efforts of the Directorate of Culture and its representative Mübarek Galip Eldem, a cousin of both Osman Hamdi and Halil Edhem, a museum was established in the Castle of Ankara in 1921.<sup>52</sup> The foundation of the museum's collection was Roman objects from the region. Later, after Mustafa Kemal's request to create a Hittite museum in the city center, ancient objects related to the Hittite civilization were collected from neighboring provinces and sent to Ankara.<sup>53</sup> Since new exhibition space was needed, Hamit Zübeyir Koşay, Director of Culture, and Saffet Arıkan, Minister of Education, proposed a new museum building in the existing Mahmut Paşa Bazaar in Ankara. This was done under the guidance of Hans Gustav Güterbock, a refugee who was forced out of Nazi-ruled Germany due to his Jewish descent.<sup>54</sup> A small section of this museum, which later became the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Museum of Anatolian Civilizations), opened in 1943.<sup>55</sup> Before that, in 1927, Hamit Zübeyir Koşay had become the director of Ankara's Etnoğrafya Müzesi (Ethnography Museum). The building of the Ethnography Museum was finished that same year and put 1,250 artifacts, mainly secularized religious objects, on display in 1930.<sup>56</sup> In Ankara, the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations served the purpose of creating and defining the "national identity – 'the race' – of the Turkish nation."<sup>57</sup> In Istanbul, the Topkapı Sarayı museum and the deconsecrated Hagia Sophia

<sup>51</sup> Dinler, "The Knife's Edge of the Present," 737.

<sup>52</sup> The family connections between the museum directors in Istanbul and Ankara raise the question of nepotism, which cannot be examined here but which demands further research.

<sup>53</sup> Dinler, "The Knife's Edge of the Present," 739.

<sup>54</sup> Tahsin Özgüç, "Prof. Dr. Hans Gustav Güterbock'un Anısına," *Bellekten Türk Tarih Kurumu* 64 (2000): 671–672, here 671. For further research on refugee scholars in Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s, see Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Haymatloz. Exil in der Türkei, 1933–1945*, ed. Verein Aktives Museum Berlin (Berlin: Verein Aktives Museum, 2000); Azade Seyhan, "Exile in a Translational Mode: Safeguarding German Scholarship in Turkey and the United States during Nazi Reign," in *Academics in Exile. Networks, Knowledge Exchange and New Forms of Internationalization*, ed. Vera Axyonova et al. (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2022), 33–58; Regine Erichsen, "Vom Nationalsozialismus vertriebene Wissenschaftler auf dem Markt. Die Arbeitsvermittlung des englischen Academic Assistance Council am Beispiel von Türkeimigranten," in *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 19 (1996): 219–234; Sebastian Willert, "Geflüchtet und (Vor-)Verurteilt. Die Migration jüdischer Wissenschaftlerinnen in die Türkei in den 1930er und 1940er Jahren," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 64 (2024, forthcoming).

<sup>55</sup> Canan Dural Tasouji, "Bir Hafıza Mekânı Olarak Müze: Ankara Etnoğrafya Müzesi," *Araştırma Makaleleri* 3, no. 1 (2013): 129–143, here 139.

<sup>56</sup> Dinler, "The Knife's Edge of the Present," 738.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 739 and 743.

mosque supported the republican cause by increasing the nation's "distance from Ottoman identity without completely rejecting it."<sup>58</sup>

These events coincided with the emergence of the Turkish Republic during the Turkish-Greek War, the creation of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara in 1920, and the election of Mustafa Kemal as the Republic's first president. Extensive reforms were enacted as part of a project to modernize Turkey. These included the abolishment of the Sultanate in 1922, the Caliphate in 1924, and the religious lodges (*tekke*), shrines (*türbe*), and fraternity meeting places (*zaviye*) in 1925. The Latin alphabet was introduced in 1928, and the Republic granted women the right to vote in 1934. Eventually, Hagia Sophia was deconsecrated and turned into a museum in 1934–35. That step furthered the intent of "a modernist project to create a secular, modern nation-state out of a centuries-old Islamic dynasty."<sup>59</sup> Various publications supported the narrative and the process of constructing a new national identity. News reports, descriptions of archaeological excavations and discoveries, and essays on ancient cultures such as the Hittites, Sumerians, and the Indus civilizations appeared regularly. At the same time, the ideas of the Tezi were promoted by means of the "description of an ancient and distinguished past,"<sup>60</sup> while "[t]he prehistoric civilizations (Hittites and Sumerians) were suggested to be the ancestors of the Turkish nation."<sup>61</sup>

## Synergy Between Past and Present

Halil Edhem essentially perceived museums in the Foucauldian sense of "archives of culture." In a speech to the First Turkish History Congress, he described museums as being "mostly dedicated to the conservation of movable objects."<sup>62</sup> He pointed to museums' role in "public education and knowledge," storing and exhibiting artifacts from different regions to enable visitors to study them without traveling abroad.<sup>63</sup> Referring to European institutions like the Louvre and the British Museum, Halil Edhem returned to a topic he had publicly addressed in 1914: the activities of foreign archaeologists on Turkish soil and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 738.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 738.

<sup>60</sup> Tanyeri-Erdemir, "Archaeology as a Source of National Pride," 384.

<sup>61</sup> Dinler, "The Knife's Edge of the Present," 729.

<sup>62</sup> Halil Edhem, "Müzeler," Birinci Türk Tarihi Kongresi, Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları (Ankara: T.C. Maarif Vekâleti, 2–10 Temmuz 1932), 532–566, quoted from Halil Edhem, *Modern Sanat Müzesinin Tasarımı. Müsecilik Yazıları, İletişim*, ed. Ali Artun (Istanbul: İletişim 2019), 121–159, here 132.

<sup>63</sup> Halil Edhem, "Müzeler," 132.

their compliance with the existing antiquities legislation. The formerly Ottoman and now Turkish museum director introduced his summary of his successful effort to force an equitable division of finds in Ashur with the Germans in 1914 by saying: “I will never forget that under pressure from the government, the *hafir* [foreign archaeologist] was able to keep only half of what he had taken out of Assyria in Mesopotamia.” He added that since then, “our Republic has strongly prevented antiquities abuses,” making it altogether impossible for foreign archaeologists to export antiquities.<sup>64</sup> The museum director presented this success as a purely republican accomplishment, although the antiquities law had already been introduced in 1906.

Next Halil Edhem said, “It’s time to talk about our own museums,” beginning with the Imperial Museum – the Müze-i Hümayun – which he defined as “purely an archaeology museum.”<sup>65</sup> As the Turkish Republic was financially unable to acquire “paintings and medieval foreign artifacts,” it would “therefore [be] necessary to devote all our strength to the archaeological and ethnographic field of our country.”<sup>66</sup> He defined two options for expanding the Museum’s collection: Turkish and Islamic objects or artifacts from the Hittite civilization. Objects from the first group were already on display in the Çinili Köşk (Tiled Pavilion), drawn from the collections of the Müze-i Hümayun and the Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi.<sup>67</sup> Halil Edhem did not lose sight of the objectives he had been pursuing since the 1910s. He again lamented the deterioration and destruction of “many of our national buildings” in Turkey.<sup>68</sup> He described the conversion of Topkapı Sarâyı into a museum as a “gift of the Republic to the nation.”<sup>69</sup> Although his museum administration had taken over the palace in a desolate condition, it initiated restorations and classified the objects transferred to it.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the Istanbul government preserved some compounds in the city, turning them into museums.<sup>71</sup>

In the 1910s, Halil Edhem had referred to Islamic art as the national heritage and he picked up that thread in his speech to the congress. He insisted upon “the preservation and conservation of these national artifacts.”<sup>72</sup> The museum

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 141, 150.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 150–151.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 154–155.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 154.

director emphasized that it was the Imperial Museum that had pioneered collecting and preserving the objects of the Hittite period.<sup>73</sup> He declared that the “world’s largest and most important museum for this period” would be constructed in Ankara, exhibiting artifacts collected from across Central Anatolia, Iraq, and Northern Syria. Noting Mustafa Kemal’s interest in Hittite archaeology, the museum director claimed: “Today, Ankara has already become the research center of the new science called ‘Hittitology,’ confirmed by the whole world.”<sup>74</sup>

Halil Edhem’s rhetoric revealed his commitment to Turkey’s new republican orientation and the objective of constructing a national narrative to serve the national project. In conclusion, he emphasized that museums are a “necessity of today’s civilization,” because they both display and constitute “national wealth.”<sup>75</sup> The museum director ended his speech by stressing the great value of the material remains of past civilizations and admonished his audience that “in the name of our culture and civilization, we are obliged to preserve the artifacts left behind by our predecessors.”<sup>76</sup>

Turkey struggled during the 1920s and 1930s to create a politically independent, sovereign state on its territory. A national narrative had to be devised as a foundation for this project. The Tezi, the musealization of Ottoman heritage, and the recognition of the importance of objects of Hittite and Sumerian origin all supported the republic’s claim to territorial sovereignty. The transformation of palaces into museums confirmed the transition from imperial to republican rule. Solid territorial claims guaranteed a minimum of political stability and, therefore, allowed for self-assurance about the past and the future.<sup>77</sup> This was the beginning of a national process of “selective memory formation” – which, according to Baumann, also includes “selective forgetting.”<sup>78</sup> One example of this process was the introduction of the Latin alphabet, which deprived young Turks who could no longer read Arabic script of the opportunity to learn about their past for themselves. In Turkey as elsewhere, the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose land, his religion), “changed to *cuius regio, eius natio* [whose region, his nation] for practical reasons.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 153–154.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>77</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 81. See also, *ibid.*, 193.



Turkish archaeologists and museum representatives of the Ottoman period were committed to the new republican project, even though the former museum elite of the Ottoman era still tried to force their old agenda forward. In contrast, longing for the immediate imperial past among German archaeologists determined their vision for the future.

## A Nostalgic Rapprochement

During the Allies' occupation of Istanbul, Theodor Wiegand strengthened his existing ties with former representatives of the Ottoman Empire. In April 1920, a former member of the Ottoman government, Ahmed Cemal, who fled the Ottoman Empire in 1918, spent two weeks in Wiegand's house in Berlin-Dahlem before he continued his journey in exile to Afghanistan via Russia.<sup>80</sup> When Ahmed Cemal was shot dead in Tbilisi two years later, Wiegand, who had worked with the former Ottoman governor of Syria on protecting monuments in 1917, wanted to "erect a special memorial to him, but this intention was soon eclipsed by growing political concerns."<sup>81</sup>

When a period of German-Turkish rapprochement was ushered in in 1924, Wiegand revived his connections with former colleagues on the territory of the Republic of Turkey. He nostalgized their relationship, leaving past conflicts between the museum representatives unmentioned, and constructed a bond of tradition between the two nations' archaeologists. Aziz Ogan, who like Ahmed Cemal had worked with Wiegand on the protection of ancient monuments in Syria in 1917–18, was elected a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute in 1925. Wiegand saluted him at the time, "Not only do we regard you as our valuable official aide, we also esteem and love you as a representative of the glorious tradition of the great Hamdi Bey and as a sincere and enlightened friend, full of zeal for science and the fatherland."<sup>82</sup> For Wiegand,

<sup>80</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 361.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 361. See also Sebastian Willert, "Zwischen deutsch-osmanischen Kriegszielen und Museumsinteressen. Das Deutsch-türkische Denkmalschutz-Kommando im Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Nationalisierung oder Sharing Heritage? Wo steht die Denkmalpflege im Europäischen Kulturerbejahr 2018?* ed. Stephanie Herold, Anneli Randra, and Ingrid Scheurmann (Holzwinden: Jörg Mitzkat, 2019), 42–49, <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.496>; Hasan Kayalı, *Imperial Resilience: The Great War's End, Ottoman Longevity, and Incidental Nations* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 40–43.

<sup>82</sup> Theodor Wiegand to Aziz Ogan, letter, Berlin, May 25, 1925, OGNIZM0400503, n. p., Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi, Aziz Ogan Koleksiyonu (BÜADM-AOK), İstanbul. See also Gerhart Rodenwaldt to Aziz Ogan, letter, Berlin, June 9, 1925, OGNBIO0500102, n. p., Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi, Aziz Ogan Koleksiyonu, İstanbul.

the shackles of international politics had been cast off. He immediately devoted himself to the challenges of excavation projects in Turkey.

However, the political tensions of the past years did have some influence on traditional ties. Relations between Ankara and Berlin differed in one fundamental aspect: on March 3, 1924, a “German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship” was signed, which was ratified on May 16 of the same year. The Treaty stated that both states were “inspired by the desire to establish and strengthen the bonds of sincere friendship between the German and Turkish Republics.”<sup>83</sup> Until the spring of 1924, Sweden had represented Berlin diplomatically in Istanbul while Switzerland represented Ottoman and Turkish interests in Germany.<sup>84</sup> Thereafter, the German and Turkish diplomats’ task was to build their bilateral relations on a new foundation. Article Two of the Treaty stipulated that Berlin and Ankara “shall establish diplomatic relations between the two States based on the principles of international law.”<sup>85</sup> The restoration or continuation of already existing nondiplomatic relations was not mentioned. The treaty’s signing was preceded by complicated negotiations that focused on whether or not it represented a new beginning under international law supplanting former German-Ottoman relations and whether ambassadors should be exchanged.<sup>86</sup> The Kemalist representatives insisted on a symbolic act to emphasize that the new relationship was one between two newly created entities and avoid any impression that past imperial relations were being continued.<sup>87</sup>

There was no such attempt to construct a totally new relationship in museums and archaeology. A positive appraisal of past connections was accompanied by a nostalgic undertone. In early April 1924, Wiegand wrote to Wilhelm von Bode, the former Director General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and

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<sup>83</sup> “Bekanntmachung über den am 3. März 1924 in Angora unterzeichneten deutsch-türkischen Freundschaftsvertrag. Vom 23. Februar 1926,” in *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1926, vol. 2, 175–176, here 175.

<sup>84</sup> Sabine Mangold-Will, “Von der Funktion einer Freundschaft – Die Aufnahme der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und der Türkischen Republik 1924,” *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, 2011, <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1544>, accessed on October 10, 2023. See also: Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame. War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908–1923* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 393–411; Hans Werner Neulen, *Feldgrau in Jerusalem. Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland* (München: Universitas, 2002), 260; Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 188–191.

<sup>85</sup> “Bekanntmachung über den am 3. März 1924 unterzeichneten Freundschaftsvertrag,” 176.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*; Florian Riedler, “Transnationale Akteure und die deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in *Aufbruch ins postkoloniale Zeitalter. Globalisierung und die außereuropäische Welt in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren*, ed. Sönke Künkel and Christoph Meyer (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2012), 251–274, here 261.

the Prussian Minister of Culture, Otto Boelitz, that “diplomatic and economic relations have been resumed, and in scientific relations, Turkey is one of the few countries in the world which has expressed a desire for the closest connection with German science.”<sup>88</sup> German scholars were again present in Asia Minor.<sup>89</sup> According to Wiegand’s biographer, Carl Watzinger, Wiegand kept the “work begun in Turkey firmly in mind”<sup>90</sup> and organized the reopening of a museum office in the building of the German Embassy under the leadership of Martin Schede. Wiegand himself set foot on Asia Minor’s soil for the first time since World War I on August 30, 1924, returning to the site of excavations in Didyma.<sup>91</sup>

When they resumed cooperation on archaeological fieldwork in Turkey, the Turkish and German archaeologists did not overly emphasize a new beginning in bilateral relations. Instead, they nostalgically renewed their traditional bonds from the German and Ottoman imperial pasts. In his reply to a letter from Wiegand, Aziz Ogan referred to the long-lasting relationship between German and Ottoman archaeologists. He reacted to an official notification of his appointment as a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute with the following: “May, moreover, through this election, be added another firm link in the chain by which our two countries have been connected for years in friendly cooperation.”<sup>92</sup> Like Wiegand, Aziz Ogan fondly recalled the friendship between archaeologists of both states since imperial times.<sup>93</sup> In their correspondence, the two archaeologists portrayed their relationship as symbiotic, characterized by mutual respect and willingness to cooperate. Germany’s restitution to Turkey of a statue of a sphinx in 1924 symbolized both the conflicted bilateral past and the archaeologists’ desire to continue their relationship.<sup>94</sup> In that sense, no formal celebration

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<sup>88</sup> Theodor Wiegand to Wilhelm von Bode and Otto Boelitz, letter, Berlin, April 7, 1924, I/ANT 08, fol. 170–171, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Zentralarchiv (SMB-ZA), Berlin.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 396.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>92</sup> Aziz Ogan to Gerhart Rodenwaldt, letter, Didyma, July 28, 1925, OGNBIO0500102, n. p., BÜADM-AOK, Istanbul. For the notification of his election see: Gerhart Rodenwaldt to Aziz Ogan, letter, Berlin, June 9, 1925, OGNBIO0500102., n. p., BÜADM-AOK, Istanbul.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Excavations near the village of Boğazkale, formerly Boğazköy, began in 1906 under Théodore Makridi, representing the Müze-i Hümayun, together with Hugo Winckler, who worked on behalf of the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft). Excavation campaigns in 1907 and 1911–12 led to the discovery of several thousands of cuneiform clay tablet fragments. The fragments were sent to Berlin for restoration during World War I, along with two sphinx statues found in 1907 during the excavation of the “Sphinx Gate” at Hattuša. One sphinx was returned to Turkey as early as 1924. In 1987, a representative of the Turkish government presented the United Nations General Assembly with a progress report on Ankara’s twelve years of negotiations with the German Demo-

of a new beginning was necessary. The archaeologists and museum representatives were continuing the cooperation they had started in Ottoman times.

Wiegand had long awaited a political rapprochement between Ankara and Berlin. He immediately began to emphasize the old ties between archaeologists of both nations. The Berlin museum director eagerly looked forward to resuming the German excavation projects in Turkey. For their part, the German archaeologists were happy to move on from the traumatic experiences of their return to Berlin, their loss of professional opportunities at the end of the war, political turmoil, and their isolation from the world scientific community.

## Tempora Verti – Leaving into a New World

“Early in the morning, one last nice dip in the sea,” wrote German archaeologist Georg Karo (1872–1963) in his diary for October 24, 1918. He had just read a telegram from the German Consulate in Smyrna that ordered him and his colleagues back to the city.<sup>95</sup> The group had traveled to Asia Minor during World War I to preserve monuments there.<sup>96</sup> Based on the telegram, Karo anticipated the withdrawal of German troops from Ottoman soil and prepared himself for his departure. A friend joined the archaeologist as he left Bodrum. “Finally, around nine o’clock, we set off, Rifaat Bey accompanying us for another hour on the way to the ridge north of Bodrum. We have a last view of the bay, city, castle, islands, and mountains in the brilliant morning light. Goodbye! When will we

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cratic Republic for the return of the Sphinx that remained in Berlin after 1924, as well as 7,400 of the cuneiform tablets from Boğazköy. Turkey and the GDR had agreed to continue negotiations for the return of the Sphinx, while the cuneiform tablets were restituted by November 15, 1987. After heavy pressure from Ankara, the Federal Republic of Germany finally restituted the second Sphinx in 2011. Provisional Verbatim Record of the 47th Meeting Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 22 October 1987: General Assembly, 42nd session, 1–37, 18, United Nations Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/146483?ln=en>. Regarding the excavation campaign in Boğazköy, see Hugo Winckler, *Nach Boghasköi! Ein nachgelassenes Fragment* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1913); Edhem Eldem: “Theodor Makridi Bey ve 1907 Boğazköy Kazısı,” in *The Discovery of an Anatolian Empire/Bir Anadolu İmparatorluğunun Keşfi*. A Colloquium to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Decipherment of the Hittite Language (November 14th and 15th, Istanbul Archaeological Museum – Library), ed. Meltem Doğan-Alparslan et al., (İstanbul: Bilnet Matbaacılık ve Ambalaj San. A.Ş., 2017), 159–192.

<sup>95</sup> Manuscript by Georg Karo, Folder 2: Stories and Reports, October 24, 1918, fol. 3, Georg Karo Collection, Central Archive of the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin.

<sup>96</sup> Georg Karo, “Deutsche Denkmalpflege im westlichen Kleinasien 1917/18,” in *Kunstschutz im Kriege. Berichte über den Zustand der Kunstdenkmäler auf den verschiedenen Kriegsschauplätzen und über die deutschen und österreichischen Massnahmen zu ihrer Erhaltung, Rettung, Erforschung. Zweiter Band: Die Kriegsschauplätze in Italien, im Osten und Südosten*, ed. Paul Clemen (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1919), 167–173.

return?”<sup>97</sup> Karo’s words expressed his affection for the region and his feelings of uncertainty as he was forced to leave the Ottoman shores of the Aegean. Along with other archaeologists leaving the Ottoman realm, Karo traveled to Istanbul and then to Ukraine by ship, followed by a train journey from Mykolaiv via Kyiv and Warsaw to Berlin. His roundabout route revealed the war and political upheavals to which Central and Southeastern Europe and the Middle East were being subjected.

Between 1916 and 1918, Wiegand had failed to accomplish his aim of acquiring archaeological objects in the Ottoman provinces of Sinai, Palestine, and Syria.<sup>98</sup> Ahmed Cemal had engaged the archaeologists in wartime Syria to establish the Nineteenth Bureau within his headquarters, from which he was to survey ancient sites in the operational area of the Fourth Ottoman Army.<sup>99</sup> Wiegand worked on the protection and accessibility to Ottoman heritage sites. In this period, it became obvious to the German museum representative that his aim to acquire objects for the Berlin Museums from the Ottoman Empire was impossible. The ceasefire with St. Petersburg opened new fields of activity in Ukraine and Georgia. Wiegand traveled to Kyiv in search of new excavation sites and to convince German and Ukrainian representatives to sign an agreement on the partage of archaeological finds.<sup>100</sup> Ukrainian resistance to his efforts and doubts within the German Foreign Office toxified these new relations and they failed. It was impossible for Wiegand to return to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, he left Odessa on a train to Warsaw on November 7, 1918.<sup>101</sup> When Polish troops disarmed German soldiers in Warsaw, he managed to find a hospital train to take him out of the city on November 11. In retrospect, he noted: “Everyone felt that we had lost something irreplaceable and that we were no longer alone in determining our fate.”<sup>102</sup> In his diary, Wiegand described his loss. He defined the expulsion of Germans from Ottoman and Polish territory as a sign of defeat symbolizing Germany’s disappearance of power in those parts. The termination

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<sup>97</sup> Manuscript by Georg Karo, Folder 2: Stories and Reports, October 24, 1918, fol. 3–4, Georg Karo Collection, Central Archive of the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin.

<sup>98</sup> Willert, “Zwischen deutsch-osmanischen Kriegszielen und Museumsinteressen,” 49; Willert, *Kulturbesitz*, 650–713.

<sup>99</sup> Willert, *Kulturbesitz*, 671.

<sup>100</sup> Gabriele Mietke, “‘Die Funde der class[ischen]. Epoche für uns, die slav[ischen]. Epochen den Ukrainern.’ Auf der Suche nach neuen Ausgrabungsstätten für die Antikensammlung 1918,” in *Zum Kriegsdienst einberufen. Die Königlichen Museen zu Berlin und der Erste Weltkrieg*, ed. Petra Winter and Jörn Grabowski (Köln: Böhlau, 2014), 115–131; Willert, *Kulturbesitz*, 685, 718.

<sup>101</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 338.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

of German and Ottoman diplomatic relations meant that the German archaeologists lost their privileged positions on Ottoman soil and their access to excavation sites. For the German archaeological community, leaving Ottoman soil meant a retreat into isolation.

The writings of Karo and Wigand bear witness to the moment when they began to experience a nostalgia provoked by memories of a now lost and longed-for past. Karo anticipated the withdrawal of German troops from the Ottoman Empire and the equally dramatic changes in the geopolitical landscape. The archaeologists were forced to leave Asia Minor without knowing whether they would again see the territory where Prussian and German archaeology had been investing massively for several decades. Returning to isolation and political turmoil, they re-entered a Germany, what was, as Baumann put it, “formerly a natural habitat of hope and legitimate expectations” and became “a horror scenario of impending nightmares.”<sup>103</sup> On October 30, 1918, six days after Karo began his journey home from Asia Minor, the Mudros Armistice ended hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente.<sup>104</sup> Istanbul severed diplomatic relations with Berlin even as the archaeologists worked to maintain good relations with representatives of the fallen Empires, both Ottoman and German. Bilateral relations between the Weimar Republic and the Turkish Republic were established after the Treaty of Lausanne. Wiegand did not expect the change in regimes, but he soon discovered that the red flags on top of Berlin’s Museum Island symbolized the disappearance of the monarchy that had for decades supported Prussian-German archaeological endeavors. Wiegand’s return to Berlin meant he had to deal with an emerging political system that was hostile to previous museum management practices.

## Inheriting the Past

The political upheavals between 1918 and 1924 ended imperial rule in Germany and the Ottoman Empire. While the Müze-i Hümayun and the Königliche Museen zu Berlin stood as symbols of a professionalization of archaeology, their collections of ancient art in Berlin and Istanbul now turned into loci of an imperial past. Both institutions represented hegemonic aspirations in the field of archaeology before 1918.

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<sup>103</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 14.

<sup>104</sup> Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 188–194; Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame. War Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908–1923* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 393–411.

The geopolitical transformations of the post-World War I period challenged the self-image of the directors of Berlin's Royal Museums. The archaeologists came from a bourgeois background. Prior to 1918, they supported the Wilhelmine imperial and nationalist effort to generate the most prestigious collection of cultural assets in the world, in competition with the other colonial powers. Norbert Elias contends that the relative weakness of the small German states vis-à-vis the other European powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was resolved with the unification of Germany in 1871. Germans' profound feeling of humiliation was replaced by the conviction that their national greatness and power was reflected in their determined "struggle for hegemony in Europe, if not in the world."<sup>105</sup> This development affected Germany's domestic politics and society. It increased the power of the military and the nobility at the expense of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the bourgeoisie began to adopt military values. The scientific elite of the Wilhelmine Empire soon desired to contribute to the success of the national project and join the vanguard of the nobility.<sup>106</sup> Scholars of archaeology tried to advance Germany's geopolitical and potentially hegemonic position with their efforts to expand the museums' collections. They formed "collectives" with their colleagues that discussed and devised strategies for the museums and justified the appropriation of objects from abroad.<sup>107</sup> When the war ended in 1918, the archaeologists' self-image began to lose its luster. It did not fit into republican-democratic ideas of good museum practice. Nevertheless, the leading museum officials in Berlin, who had not only begun their careers in the Wilhelmine era but already achieved prominence before 1914, retained their high positions.

After losing his access to Ottoman territory, Wiegand tried to gain control of museum science in the Weimar Republic. In the spring of 1921, he was appointed to chair the Special Committee for Art Science (Vorsitz für den Fachausschuß Kunstwissenschaft) of the Emergency Association of German Science (Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft).<sup>108</sup> Besides holding advisory positions in Bonn and Trier, the director joined the board of the Roman-Germanic Central Museum (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum) in Mainz. He continued to support excavations in Asia Minor through intermediaries.<sup>109</sup> His biographer

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<sup>105</sup> Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 233.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 82–83, 114, 119, 123–124, 233–238, 271–273.

<sup>107</sup> Willert, *Kulturbesitz*, 30–31.

<sup>108</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 356–357.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 357–358.

Watzinger says, “Just as he had finally supervised all German archaeological work in Turkey from Constantinople, so he now saw it as his main task to get archaeological undertakings that had been endangered or interrupted by the hardships of the time back on track.”<sup>110</sup> To assist him in this task, he called on prewar structures for support, among them the Association of Friends of Ancient Art (Vereinigung der Freunde antiker Kunst) that Wiegand himself had founded in 1913 to fund and support the extension of the antiquity collections in Berlin.

One of the projects Wiegand pursued was the completion of the Pergamon Museum building, planned by architect Alfred Messel. Wiegand was one of the most impassioned advocates for its completion. The building would provide exhibition space for the objects excavated in Bergama in the 1870s and 1880s and display other objects from the Berlin museums’ collections. Before 1914, only part of the building had been completed. Construction work on Museum Island had been suspended during the war and still had not been resumed in the early 1920s. Inflation hampered its progress, and the Weimar Republic’s precarious financial situation made funding the museum operations difficult.<sup>111</sup> As early as June 1, 1919, Wiegand and his fellow museum directors, Otto Weber and Heinrich Schäfer, petitioned the government to expand the south wing of the Pergamon. That attempt failed, but the shell of the museum building provoked further discussion of how to deal with that relic of the Wilhelmine era. Negotiations in the Reichstag on the project’s future failed, despite criticism of Berlin’s cultural policy by the still influential Wilhelm von Bode.<sup>112</sup> Eventually, the Ministry of Finance provided the necessary funds for completing the Pergamon Museum. Nevertheless, public opposition to further construction increased and progressive voices called for a general change in museum practices. For example, the art critic and publicist Karl Scheffler criticized the plans for the Pergamon. He perceived the project as evidence of “Wilhelmine *Großmannssucht* [boastfulness]” and an unnecessary concession to nostalgia for the imperial past.<sup>113</sup>

From Wiegand’s point of view, abandoning the building project would have reduced the imagined heroic imperial past to a phantom, whereas its completion would materialize its presence in the future. Nevertheless, Wiegand left the ultimate decision up to Berliners, asking the “judgment of the public” to

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 351–352.

<sup>113</sup> Theodor Wiegand, “Die Denkmäler in Syrien,” *Der Sammler. Wochenschrift für alte und neue Kunst* 1, no. 38 (Sonderheft: Anlässlich des 14. Tages für Denkmalpflege in Münster i.W., 21.–24. September 1921) (1921): 181–183, here 183.



decide the building's fate.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Wiegand's predecessor Carl Humann's death, he stressed the importance of "Humann's precious inheritance, the sculptures of the Pergamenian altar, [which] had been on public display for only five years in the forty-four years since they had been in Berlin."<sup>115</sup>

On January 9, 1922, on behalf of the Association of Friends of Ancient Art, Wiegand submitted a request to the Minister of Culture, Otto Boelitz, asking "not only to support the implementation of the reconstruction but later also to advocate in the same way for the internal arrangement of the Pergamon Museum."<sup>116</sup> Wiegand referred to a memorandum written by Wilhelm von Bode in 1910, in which the latter had stated "that the Pergamon altar, as one of the most important monuments of Greek art and as the most imposing work of art that our museums have so far possessed and will probably ever possess, must form the prominent center not only of the new museum but of the entire complex of museum buildings."<sup>117</sup> Seconded by newspaper articles, Wiegand urged the Central Directorate of the Imperial Archaeological Institute and the Minister to "oppose all attempts to postpone the completion of the Pergamon Museum."<sup>118</sup>

On November 11, 1923, Wiegand celebrated the Association of Friends of Ancient Art in a ceremony attended by an audience of 500 persons in the Academy's ballroom. The steady increase in the association's membership to about 800 people in 1932 brought joy to the museum director's heart. He interpreted the growth of the association as a sign of resistance to the "new artistic movements with their excesses and extravagances." Wiegand considered ancient art to be a salvation that had a calming effect on society and condemned art forms he called "explosion painting."<sup>119</sup> To support his demand for completion of the Pergamon Museum, Wiegand organized a special exhibition of the Collection of Classical Antiquities in 1923, which underlined "the importance of the museum's office in Constantinople (...) because most of the acquisitions were due to the collecting activities carried out there."<sup>120</sup> Politically, however, perceptions of the museums and their role in a democratic society were changing.

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>115</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 354.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 362–363.

## From Storehouses of Imperial Archaeology to Places of Republican Edification

In response to Wiegand, Otto Boelitz wrote a “Memorandum on the Planned External Design of Berlin’s Museum System” (*Denkschrift über die geplante äußere Gestaltung des Berliner Museumswesens*) dated January 30, 1922.<sup>121</sup> Addressing the President of the Prussian Parliament, he recapitulated the task assigned to the *Königliche Museen* in the past. “The Museum Island was to unite the collections of the Fine Arts of Europe and the Mediterranean area, starting with the works of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians and ending with the creations of our own time.”<sup>122</sup> The old museum buildings had simply become too small for the collections. Boelitz said, “The great Pergamenian altar” together with the “other finds from the great German excavations in Asia Minor (...) first established the world reputation of the Antiquities Department of our museums.” They “required a decent accommodation.”<sup>123</sup>

Boelitz agreed with Wiegand that the archaeological finds housed in Berlin justified the collection’s importance and world reputation. However, he warned that the “yard-like halls” that were planned to house the objects were no longer viable. Although the external framework had already been created before the war, “[t]he upheaval of our political, social, and economic situation brought about by the lost war (...) could not remain without decisive influence on the further shaping of our museum system.”<sup>124</sup> Before he set about proposing changes, however, Boelitz recognized the achievements of key figures in the past of German archaeology: “The nation will always gratefully remember men like Richard Schöne, Alexander Conze, Wilhelm von Bode and their numerous collaborators who brought about this extraordinary achievement. The nineteenth century was a period of great collecting activity.”<sup>125</sup> Boelitz thought of the past as a time when museum collections expanded with the generous support of the state and ultimately, the emperor. He subtly rued the end of that support. In doing so, he struck a chord with the archaeological guild. In his memorandum, Boelitz addressed future challenges:

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<sup>121</sup> Otto Boelitz to Robert Leinert, Memorandum, Berlin, January 30, 1922, I. HA Rep. 90, Nr. 2402, fol. 156–158, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156.

Further growth, continued increase at the same pace, is neither possible nor desirable. Our generation, in which many eyes from a new, promising strata of the population want to investigate the museums, not with the eye of a trained connoisseur but with a desire for [public] improvement and instruction, demands that the accumulated treasures now also take root in the consciousness of larger strata of the population. In any case, the focus of our inner attitude toward our future work will have to be sought here: the collections should grow less in breadth than in depth.<sup>126</sup>

To popularize the museum collections, Boelitz called for better exhibits as well as a “clear separation of the immediately visible from the merely instructive [and] frequent stimulation by changing exhibitions and guided tours.”<sup>127</sup> Although Boelitz emphasized that more frequent exhibits and guided tours were being provided, he still perceived a core problem: many archaeologists continued to dream of moving objects from excavation campaigns abroad into Berlin. Boelitz felt that “prewar plans were partly based on completely different premises than those that are valid today and in the future.” He observed before the war, “[t]he major new buildings (...) were designed in dimensions that assumed further very substantial growth of the collections in the coming decades.”<sup>128</sup> However, in the 1920s this growth was not expected. Consequently, Boelitz considered the “unrestricted continuation of the great building plans of the prewar period” to be unjustified. Finally, he said, the state’s spending on museums “should meet a real need.”<sup>129</sup> Boelitz did not foresee any damage to or restriction of the existing collections, he simply urged the government to refrain from constructing more buildings. If needed, additional space could be achieved by roofing over a courtyard in the Neues Museum and remodeling some halls in the south wing of the Pergamon.<sup>130</sup>

Wiegand continued to demand completion of the Pergamon Museum building, deeming it necessary “not only out of respect for the great heritage of antiquity but also out of the deepest reverence for the memory of the subtle master [Alfred Messel].”<sup>131</sup> In the summer of 1926, the museum battle seemed to have been won at last in favor of Messel’s plans. Wiegand “could (...) finally return to Alexander Conze’s legacy and bring the excavation of Pergamon to

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 156v.–157.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 157.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 157.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 157–157v.

<sup>131</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 383.

a conclusion.”<sup>132</sup> Republican elements in the government bowed to the nostalgia of the museum directors. In reaction, Scheffler, the art critic, derided the plan to complete the museum as a concession to “the archaeologists’ expansionist urges.”<sup>133</sup> Simultaneously, the Berlin museums began planning larger excavation projects in the former territory of the Ottoman Empire. On March 31, 1927, Wiegand and his wife restarted excavation work at Pergamon.<sup>134</sup> The work was completed in 1934. Carl Watzinger writes in Wiegand’s biography that Wiegand finished the excavation plans that Alexander Conze had held in his heart until the last years of his life, “thus setting up a permanent monument to his attachment and inner bond with the master of excavation, whom he revered.”<sup>135</sup>

Karl Marx said, “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”<sup>136</sup> As German imperial rule declined, archaeologists like Wiegand invoked the “spirits of the past”<sup>137</sup> against progressive ideas for reforming museum practice. The archaeologist’s anti-democratic attitudes found expression outside the museum. After a festival of his Corps Suevia fraternity in Munich in July 1923, Wiegand joined his young students to listen to a speech by Adolf Hitler. Wiegand not only expressed admiration for Hitler but expressed hope for the future based on the “national attitude” of the young men around him.<sup>138</sup> The archaeologist supported the antidemocratic and antisemitic German National People’s Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei) and before that, advocated for the Freikorps, which opposed the communists in Berlin. However, Wiegand refused an opportunity to work as a diplomat for the Weimar Republic.<sup>139</sup> When Hitler and his Nazi party seized power in 1933, he welcomed the opportunity “to work for the new organization of his homeland with all his strength.”<sup>140</sup> This was the first indication that the museum directors were willing to subordinate themselves to National Socialist guidance.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 412.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 413–414.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>136</sup> Karl Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte,” in *Werke* (=MEW), ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz 1972 [1872]), 115. Quoted in Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 74.

<sup>137</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 74.

<sup>138</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 365.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 343–345.

<sup>140</sup> Theodor Wiegand to Aziz Ogan, letter, Berlin, August 7, 1934, n. p., OGNIST0301503, Aziz Ogan Koleksiyonu, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi, İstanbul.

## Conclusion

According to the French historian and archaeologist Alain Schnapp, “The world empire needs ruins, but not half-ruined monuments that point back to the most ancient times, rather an imaginary topography based on a memory that contrasts with the present.”<sup>141</sup> The immediate post-World War I period was a time of ruptures and dissonances in the fading German and Ottoman Empires. Artist and writer Svetlana Boym says that “outbreaks of nostalgia often occur after revolutions.”<sup>142</sup> The attitude of the German and Turkish museum directors toward the changes in regimes between 1918 and 1939 is of particular interest. After the collapse of imperial rule, museums in the Weimar and Turkish Republics were run by directors who had entered the institutions before the imperial dusk. Many of the directors succeeded in holding on to their positions through a period of intense geopolitical transformation, regime change, and the disintegration of transcontinental empires. The process of adapting museum institutions established during imperial rule to the new republics reflected the directors’ nostalgic entanglement with the imperial past in the republican present. While archaeology and the exhibition of archaeological objects helped to define the two national identities, the role of museums in the interwar period differed in Berlin and Istanbul.<sup>143</sup> Both nations worked on constructing new archaeological museums to exhibit their inherited relics of ancient civilizations. Ideas rooted in the imperial past dominated museum practices in the republics that emerged from the ashes of the two empires and influenced various ways in which nostalgia and retrotopia were expressed.

Baumann says that retrograde tendencies contribute to the retrotopian idea that an original and uncorrupted national identity is a “sine-qua-non condition for a civilizational order.”<sup>144</sup> In Turkey, the national territory came to be essential to the Turkish Republic’s identity. Archaeology provided and nourished an ideological basis for seizing and maintaining the soil on which the new republic was to be built. Scholars drew on “different pasts”<sup>145</sup> to construct a Turkish cultural heritage. Simultaneously, the material relics of past civilizations that constituted that heritage were an “integral element for enacting the change” to the new

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<sup>141</sup> Alain Schnapp, *Was ist eine Ruine? Entwurf einer vergleichenden Perspektive* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014), 75–76.

<sup>142</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi. Quoted also in Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 18.

<sup>143</sup> Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 740.

<sup>144</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 18.

<sup>145</sup> Dinler, “The Knife’s Edge of the Present,” 741.

order.<sup>146</sup> The musealization of sites of Ottoman rule and magnificence, such as the palace of the Sultans and Hagia Sophia, deconstructed the symbols of imperial power and transferred the legitimacy they represented onto the republican Turkish state. At the same time, the museums and other actors reconstructed parts of Turkish history<sup>147</sup> by inventing narratives and traditions.<sup>148</sup> Museums were important instruments for constructing the “collective consciousness” of a common identity based on the myth of a homogenous Turkey. The museum representatives worked to promote belonging and coherence among the Turkish inhabitants of Turkey with a narrative of a shared, common history so that past, present, and future came together in support of the national project. Consciously entangling current and past rulers stimulated a perception of cultural continuity. In the words of Alain Schnapp, “It is necessary to recover the traces of the ancient temples and palaces to construct new buildings that are at the same time identical and yet different.”<sup>149</sup> Schnapp identifies various strategies of memorializing ancient civilizations to provide “remedies for trepidation and the danger of loss of continuity” in society.<sup>150</sup> A paradox arose in interwar Turkey: while attempts were made to secularize the material cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire through musealization of its palaces, the museums already established in Istanbul represented a form of continuity with empire themselves. The exhibitions of archaeological collections, including those of Islamic art, were based in Ottoman-era archaeology. Ankara did not renounce the continuity of Turkish civilization altogether. The new political leadership preserved important spaces and objects as nostalgic loci for their imperial heritage. As for Halil Edhem and Aziz Ogan, they devoted their professional lives to the new national cause despite their wariness of Ankara’s influence. Both of them frequently employed Kemalist rhetoric in their public pronouncements.

In Germany, the reaction of the Berlin Museum’s directors to an order to decorate the museum buildings with flags to celebrate the return of front-line troops in December 1918 was symbolic of their orientation. “When the Ebert-Scheidemann government ordered that flags be flown in honor of the returning front formations, the university and museums used the opportunity to replace the red flags [of the Revolutionaries] with white Prussian flags with

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 743.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 743.

<sup>148</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>149</sup> Schnapp, *Was ist eine Ruine?* 32–33.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 117.

the black eagle.”<sup>151</sup> The museum directors sought to continue their practice of exploiting the imperial heritage in the time of intense geopolitical and domestic political transformation that was the interwar period. Archaeologists and museum staff who had begun their careers in the period of transcontinental empires still played a leading role after World War I. “Retrotopia” dominated the mindset of the directors managing the museums in Berlin, like Theodor Wiegand. They feared that the disintegration of the German empire threatened the loss and theft of its undead past, which they desired to preserve in the public memory or even actively recover. To them, the Weimar Republic represented a future that they found difficult to endure. In their nostalgic approach to the Berlin museums, they critiqued the deficiencies of the present and created a superior imagined past.<sup>152</sup> In the new Weimar Republic, the representatives of Wilhelmine archaeology heroized the appropriation of foreign patrimony and the museum practices of the past. They displayed an anti-republican attitude marked by their longing for the imperial era. This was the retrotopia of Wiegand and his colleagues: “Instead of investing in an uncertain and all too untrustworthy future, all hopes for social improvements were now invested in a (...) yesterday whose imagined stability, and consequently its trustworthiness, were valued above all.”<sup>153</sup>

Contrasting Turkish and German museum practices and their imperial archaeological traditions in the context of the new republics formed in each country illuminates how the museum elites used their different positions to promote their views of the value of preserving their respective “national” pasts. Nostalgizing museum practices were “memory aids (...) [and] tools of forgetting and remembering.”<sup>154</sup> The museum directors commemorated lost imperial grandeur, but their nostalgia for it allowed them to ignore, if not altogether forget, conflict-laden relationships, questionable means of appropriating objects for their collections, and asymmetries of power. Their refusal to critically reflect on their archaeological traditions still has impact on museum narratives today and influences the reluctance to take a critical look at the origins of their collections.

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<sup>151</sup> Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand*, 342–343.

<sup>152</sup> Becker, “Nostalgie,” 320.

<sup>153</sup> Baumann, *Retrotopia*, 14.

<sup>154</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 346.