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Cooperation and Contestation: Cultural Heritage in Occupied Istanbul

Ceren Abi

On December 12, 1922, General Charpy, commander of the French occupying forces in Istanbul, replied to Halil Bey (1861–1937), head of the Ottoman Imperial Museum, who had recently inquired about French excavations in the city:

> [F]ar from having destroyed and sacked [the city] during its stay here, the French Occupational Corps made an effort to contribute to the beautification of your admirable city and not only responded to the charitable needs of your refugees, but also used the means which it had at its disposal for excavations, for the supplementation of the patrimony of art, which constitutes the fame of your capital.[1]

What does this exchange tell us about the archaeological activities in Istanbul under Allied occupation? First, that there were archaeological excavations, obviously. Second, that these were conducted by the French (and as we will see, by the military in collaboration with scholars). Third, that the leading Ottoman archaeological authorities were often uninformed; however, the Ottomans were taking steps to gain control. Fourthly, the French, rather than denying their activities or apologizing to the Ottoman authorities for their unauthorized actions, claimed their excavations contributed to the arts and the study of the past, which simultaneously provided prestige to both the French and the city.[2]

In occupied Istanbul, it was the French who conducted excavations from 1920 onwards, working on two main sites (both Byzantine), in Gülhane (fig. 1) and in Makriköy (present day Bakırköy), respectively. What accounts for the French presence, rather than the British or American? The French have a long history of using scholarly work alongside their military pursuits, going back to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in the end of the eighteenth century. More recently, during the World War I, Maurice Sarrail, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armée d'Orient, established an archaeological service in May 1916 during the Macedonian Campaign.[3] French archaeologists, like their British counterparts, were a part of the war effort in a myriad of ways, from engaging in propaganda to conducting archaeological excavations. The decision to excavate in Istanbul also had to do with the placement of French occupying forces in the city. The British took Pera/Galata and Italians took Üsküdar. The area around the Topkapı Palace was taken by the French as a part of their encampment when the occupation began.[4] Moreover, a search for a place to store wine for the soldiers led to excavations in Gülhane.[5] Similarly, the French forces took over

1 Quoted in Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (University of California Press, 2003), 216. Istanbul Archaeological Museum Archives, Halil Bey's letter to Charpy on January 1, 1922; Charpy's letter to Halil Bey dated December 12, 1922. This is after the Treaty of Sèvres, signed on August 10, 1920, which conditionally left Istanbul to the Ottomans.

2 Some of the themes I discuss in this piece were also explored in Ceren Abi, "Byzantine Archaeology during the First World War and the Allied Occupation (1914–1923): Destruction, Exploration, and Protection / I. Dünya Savaşı ve İşgal Sırasında Bizans Arkeolojisi (1914–1923): Yıkım, Keşif ve Koruma," in *İstanbul'dan Bizans'a: Yeniden Keşfin Yolları, 1800–1955 / From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800–1955*, ed. Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2021), 40–55.

3 For a detailed report on the establishment of the service and its activities until 1918 see Gustave Mendel, "Les travaux du service archéologique de l'armée française d'Orient," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 62, no. 1 (1918): 9–17, https://doi.org/10.3406/crai.1918.73940. For a scholarly examination of their activities see Andrew Shapland and Evangelina Stefani, eds., *Archaeology behind the Battle Lines: The Macedonian Campaign (1915–19) and Its Legacy*, British School at Athens - Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies; Volume Number IV (Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge, 2017).

4 Nilay Özlü, "From Imperial Palace to Museum: The Topkapı Palace during the Long Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2018).

5 For an in-depth exploration of the Gülhane excavations see Ayşe Ercan Kydonakis, "Archaeology between Imperial Imagination and Territorial Sovereignty: The French Occupation Army and the Mangana Excavations in Sarayburnu/Gülhane, 1920–23," in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, ed. Olivier

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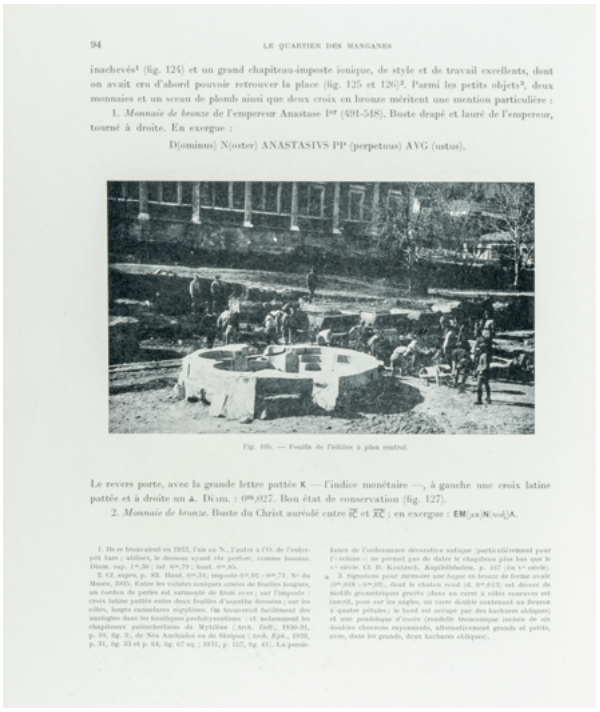
94 LE QUARTIER DES MANGANES

inachevés[1] (fig. 124) et un grand chapiteau-imposte ionique, de style et de travail excellents, dont on avait cru d'abord pouvoir retrouver la place (fig. 125 et 126)[2]. Parmi les petits objets[3], deux monnaies et un sceau de plomb ainsi que deux croix en bronze méritent une mention particulière :

1. *Monnaie de bronze* de l'empereur Anastase Ier (491-518). Buste drapé et lauré de l'empereur, tourné à droite. En exergue :

D(ominus) N(oster) ANASTASIVS PP (perpetuus) AVG (ustus).

Fig. 105. — Fouille de l'édifice à plan central.

Le revers porte, avec la grande lettre pattée K — l'indice monétaire —, à gauche une croix latine pattée et à droite un A. Diam. : 0m,027. Bon état de conservation (fig. 127).

2. *Monnaie de bronze*. Buste du Christ auréolé entre $\overline{IC}$ et $\overline{XC}$; en exergue : $\overline{EM}(\alpha\iota)\overline{N}(\iota\omega\dot{\alpha})A$.

1. Ils se trouvaient en 1933, l'un au N.-l'autre à l'O. de l'entrepôt Sarc ; utilisés, le dessous ayant été portant, comme bassins. Diam. sup. 1m,30 ; inf. 0m,79 ; haut. 0m,85.

2. Cf. supra, p. 83. Haut. 0m,34 ; imposte 0m,92 × 0m,71. N° du Musée, 3925. Entre les volutes ioniques ornées de feuilles longues, un cordon de perles est surmonté de lesbi ovni ; sur l'imposte : croix latine pattée entre deux feuilles d'acanthe dressées ; sur les côtés, larges cannelures régulières. On trouverait facilement des analogies dans les basiliques protobyzantines ; cf. notamment les chapiteaux paléochrétiens de Mytilène (*Arch. Deltion*, 1930-31, p. 95, fig. 3, de Nea Anchialos ou de Skripou (*Arch. Ephe.*, 1929, p. 31, fig. 33 et p. 64, fig. 67 sq. ; 1931, p. 157, fig. 41). La persistance de l'ordonnance décorative antique (particulièrement pour l'« échine ») ne permet pas de dater le chapiteau plus bas que le VIe siècle. Cf. H. Kaufrich, *Kapitellstudien*, p. 167 (fin VIe siècle).

3. Signalons pour mémoire une lampe en bronze de forme ovale (0m,018 × 0m,02), dont le chaton rond (d. 0m,013) est décoré de motifs géométriques gravés ; deux un carré à côtés concaves est inscrit, posé sur les angles, un carré double contenant un flacon à quatre pétales ; le bord est occupé par des hachures obliques ; et une pendeloque d'ivoire (modelle byzantine incisée de six doubles chevrons superposés, alternativement grands et petits, avec, dans les grands, deux hachures obliques).


LE QUARTIER MÉRIDIONAL DE LA PREMIÈRE RÉGION 95

Fig. 106. — Fouille du portique semi-circulaire.

Fig. 107. — Le chantier pendant la fouille. Vue de l'Ouest.

Figure 1a–1b: French Excavations conducted by the occupation forces in Gülhane (Mamboury and Demangel, *Le quartier des Manganes*, 1939).

the Ottoman barracks in Makriköy (Reşadiye Kışlası to Saint-Arnaud Barracks), where the Ottomans had already been excavating since 1914. The Allies other than French stayed away from excavating in the city probably in order not to attract negative attention to themselves and/or because of their lack of financial or human resources to direct to archaeology.[6]

However, it was not only the French soldiers and archaeologists who were involved in these excavations. Ernest Mamboury (1878–1953), a teacher at Galatasaray High School with skills in technical drawing and an interest in the city's history, especially its Byzantine past, played an important role. Due to his Swiss citizenship, Mamboury was able to stay in Istanbul and assist German archaeological excavations during the war and French ones during the occupation. He co-authored books with the Germans and the French about these excavations.[7] He even returned to the same area with the new British excavation team working there in 1928. Mamboury collaborated with European archaeologists as well as with Ottoman and later Turkish archaeologists. He worked with important figures in the Ottoman Empire and later republican Turkey such as the head of the Ottoman Imperial Museum Halil Edhem Bey, his colleagues Makridi Bey (1872–1940) and Aziz Ogan (1888–1956).[8] After the occupation, he published his celebrated guidebook on Istanbul (first in French and then in Ottoman Turkish), which once was a companion for virtually every traveler to Istanbul.[9]

Mamboury was not alone in working with European archaeologists in Istanbul. When Jean Ebersolt (1879–1933), a Byzantinist and archaeologist, came to Istanbul as a part of the

Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute, 2022), 303–328.

6 This did not mean they completely abstained from cultural heritage-related activities. Americans were involved in archaeological activities in Sardis. See Howard Crosby Butler, *Sardis*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1922). Also, American archaeologist Francis Kelsey went on an expedition in 1919 aiming to "lure Greek, Syriac, Persian or Armenian manuscripts from unappreciative hands' and provide proper preservation. I am very thankful to Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh for sharing this quotation.

7 Ernest Mamboury and Robert Demangel, *Le quartier des Manganes et la première Région de Constantinople* (Paris: de Boccard, 1939); Mamboury and Theodor Wiegand, *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-Meer* (Walter de Gruyter, 1934).

8 Zehra Zeynep Edremit, "Ernest Mamboury ve İstanbul Kent Kimliğine Katkıları" (master's thesis, Kadir Has University, 2019), 29. Edremit refers to Halil Edhem, *Yedikule Hisarı* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1932), 6.

9 Ernest Mamboury, *Constantinople: Guide Touristique* (Istanbul: Rizzo, 1925); Mamboury, *İstanbul: Rehber-i Seyyahin* (Istanbul, 1925).

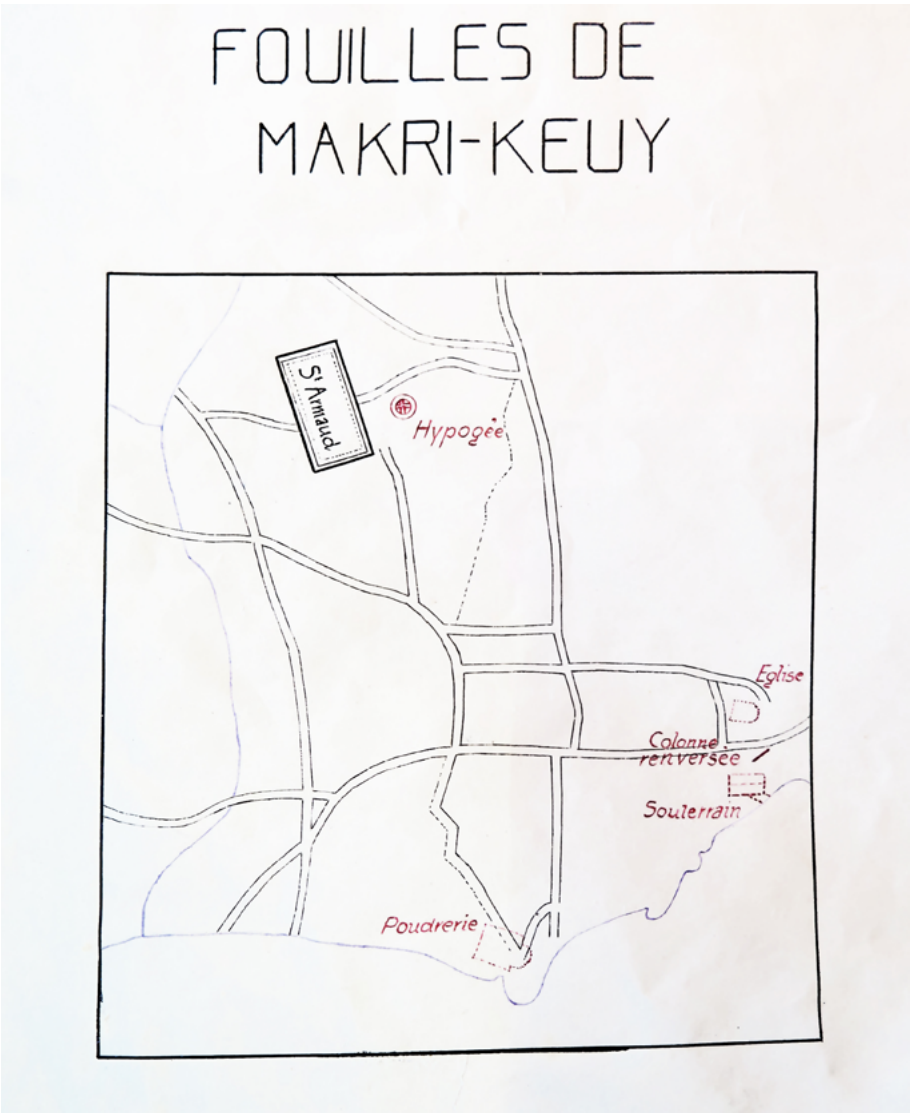

Figure 2: The plan of French excavations in Bakırköy/ Makriköy. CADN, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères 1920-1925 71-IV Fouilles & Recherches Archéologiques.

French scientific mission in 1920, he could conduct research at the Topkapı Palace Library and study at Gülhane and Arap Camii in Galata. He was able to publish his findings next year in a book entitled *Mission Archéologique de Constantinople*.[10] In this book, he discussed his own research and the Imperial Ottoman Museum's archaeological activities during the war, including a segment on the moving of sarcophagi from the Topkapı Palace courtyard to the museum. The fact that Ebersolt was accepted at the palace library and that he had extensive knowledge of the Ottomans' wartime activities suggest a potential collaboration between this French archaeologist and the Ottoman archaeological authorities. Makridi Bey, an international scholar, co-published articles with other French scholars throughout the war and the occupation.[11] It was Makridi Bey and his Austrian colleague Heinrich Glück (1889–1930) who first studied the Byzantine remains unearthed in 1914 during the construction of barracks in Bakırköy. After these initial works, the site was left untouched until the arrival of the French occupying forces in the city after the war ended. In 1921, when

10 Jean Ebersolt, *Mission Archéologique de Constantinople* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921).
11 Th Macridy-Bey and Jean Ebersolt, "Monuments funéraires de Constantinople," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 46, no. 1 (1922): 356–393. Macridy Bey and Charles Picard "Fouilles du Hiéron d'Apollon Clarios, à Colophon. Première campagne," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 39 (1915), 33–52.

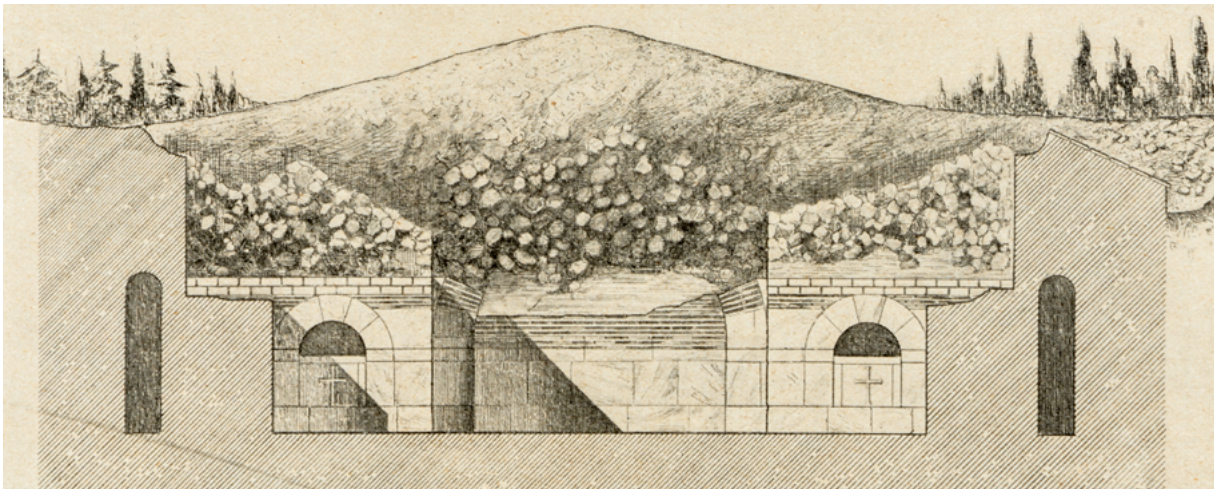

Figure 3: An architectural drawing done by architect Zühtü Bey who worked with Makridy Bey of the Ottoman Imperial Museum and the French Occupation Forces on the underground structure called the hypogeum holding the sarcophagi (Macridy Bey and Ebersolt, "Monuments funéraires de Constantinople," 1922).

the French arrived, French archaeologist Charles Picard (1883–1965), together with Makridi Bey (and others like architect Zühtü Bey who contributed to architectural drawings), started excavating the hypogeum in Makriköy/Hebdemon (fig. 2–3).[12] Scholarly collaboration may have been due both to humanistic devotion to the creation of knowledge and to the exigencies of the occupation.

The Ottoman antiquities laws required foreign archaeologists to obtain permits from the Ottoman government to conduct excavations and forbade them to remove any finds. According to the 1899 Hague Convention, the occupiers had to obey the local laws and were prohibited from seizing historical monuments and works of art and science. The French argued that the excavations were mutually agreed upon by General Charpy and the director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum Halil Edhem via exchange of letters. It appears that Halil Bey was upset that he was not notified and brought the issue to General Charpy, demanding "şifahen izahat ve müsaadesiz icra olan hafriyatın tatilini" (a verbal explanation and the cessation of the unauthorized excavations).[13] But, interestingly, the evidence shows that the French sent the antiquities they excavated in Istanbul to the Imperial Museum—and not to France—as they had illegally done elsewhere in the empire during the occupation and in Greece during the World War I.[14] In Gallipoli, there were two excavations during the occupation, at the prehistoric tumulus (mound) of Protesilas and the necropolis of Eleonte. The finds from the tumulus, or at least a big part of them, were sent to the Louvre, probably because it was outside the reach of the Ottoman Imperial Museum at the time.[15] The Allies wanted to legitimize the expatriation by including archaeological articles in the Sèvres Treaty.[16]

The Ottoman Imperial Museum circles were adamant to protect and preserve antiquities in the Ottoman lands. These efforts were not abandoned during the war or occupation.[17] On

12 Mamboury argues that it was Makridy Bey who initiated the excavation. See Ernest Mamboury, "Les fouilles Byzantines à Istanbul et dans sa banlieue immédiate aux XIX et XXe siècles," *Byzantion* 11 (1936): 229–283; whereas Makridy Bey and Ebersolt argue that it was Charles Picard, the director of the French School of Athens, who obtained the permit to excavate from General Charpy here. Macridy-Bey and Jean Ebersolt, "Monuments funéraires de Constantinople," 1922. See Robert Demangel, *Contribution à la topographie de l' Hebdomon: Recherches Françaises en Turquie* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1945) for further information on this excavation and finds.

13 Quoted in Tuğçe Akbaytogan, "İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesi'ndeki Elaious (Eleonte) kyliksleri" (master's thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2010), 107.

14 CADN, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères 1920–1925 71-IV Fouilles & Recherches Archéologiques (May 25, 1922). I could not find the letters mentioned in the Ottoman archives.

15 Robert Demangel, *Le tumulus dit de Protésilas* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1926).

16 Article 421 asked for a new law of antiquities that allowed partition and expatriation.

17 For example, see Mehmet Raif bin Emin, *Sultanahmet Parkı ve Asar-ı Atikası* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Hayriye ve Şürekası, 1332); Mehmet Ziya, *İstanbul ve Bogaziçi: Bizans ve Osmanlı Medeniyetlerinin Âsâr-ı Bâkiyesi* (Istanbul: Dar-üt-tabaat ül-Âmire, 1336). In Syria, Ottomans even formed a monument protection unit together with the Germans. Oliver Stein, "Archaeology and Monument Protection in War: The Collaboration between the German Army and Researchers in the

Figure 4: The propaganda poster showing King Constantine in front of Hagia Sophia. Gizem Tongo Collection.

the contrary, they were very well aware of the damages caused by natural disasters like fires and earthquakes as well as man-made ones like overcrowding, urbanization, and war. The Ottomans expanded their interest beyond ancient Greek and Roman antiquities to include

Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918," in *Militarized Cultural Encounters in the Long Nineteenth Century. War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850.*, ed. Joseph Clarke and John Horne (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan., 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78229-4_1; Sebastian Willert, Zwischen deutsch-osmanischen Kriegszielen und Museumsinteressen. *Das Deutsch-türkische Denkmalschutz-Kommando* im Ersten Weltkrieg (Between German-Ottoman War Goals and Museum Interests. The German-Turkish Monument Protection Command in the First World War)," in *Renationalization or Sharing Heritage? Where Does Monument Preservation Stand in the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018?* (Holzminden: Publications of the Working Group Theory and Teaching of Monument Preservation, 2019), 42–49, https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/reader/download/496/496-17-87707-1-10-20200207.pdf.

Byzantine, Mesopotamian, Islamic, and Ottoman antiquities. Especially under the threat of losing vast territories, even the capital city, the protection of these monuments came to symbolize Ottoman sovereignty over their lands. The occupation exacerbated Ottoman anxieties over losing the city and the desire to protect the city's antiquities and monuments became even more politicized.

Hagia Sophia is perhaps the best known example of this political contestation.[18] Hagia Sophia, and other Byzantine monuments to a lesser extent, were popular tourist sites for soldiers at the time, as seen in their personal photo albums.[19] Hagia Sophia was an important landmark to the European public for religious and historical reasons. The monument, very much like the city, became a contested ground where debates about its belonging and conversion abounded (fig. 4). Allies had to balance the demands of church lobbies and Greek allies while keeping in mind the impact of any such conversion on Muslim public opinion in their colonies. These concerns made the Allies reluctant to make any changes to the building. The Ottoman administration was aware of European public opinion and wanted to not only hold on to Hagia Sophia but to maintain it as a sacred Muslim space.

Since the nineteenth century, the Ottomans had taken active steps to control the outflow of antiquities from the empire and to protect their monuments. With rising European interest, the material remains of the many historical layers of the Ottoman lands became symbols of contention as they were imbued with meanings of belonging, sovereignty, and civilization. The occupation of Istanbul heightened these contestations. The physical and brutal reality of occupying armies was not the only reason for archaelogical excavations. Ottomans cooperated with the French scholars as a part of the tradition of the republic of letters and the desire to create knowledge. This cooperation, however, had its limits. Ottomans claimed ownership of these antiquities and monuments and asserted that they were not only capable of creating impressive monuments but also able and willing to protect and preserve all of the remainders of the pasts of the Ottoman lands. In that way, they challenged French claims to civilize the lands, maintaining that these lands had already been civilized.

18 "À Propos de Sainte-Sophie," *Revue des études byzantines* 118 (1920): 209–37; Erik Goldstein, "Holy Wisdom and British Foreign Policy, 1918-1922: The St. Sophia Redemption Agitation," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 15, no. 1 (1991): 36–65, https://doi.org/10.1179/byz.1991.15.1.36. This article argues that Hagia Sophia symbolized the future victory of the cross over Islam, the greatness of Hellenism, and the Panhellenic union of tomorrow.

19 Ali Serim, ed., *Constantinople 1918 Konstantiniyye* (Istanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2015).