

Cultural Diplomacy and Heritage Management in the Ottoman Empire: Theodor Wiegand's Miletus Excavations (1899–1913)

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Research Article

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Received: 30 April 2026

Accepted: 13 August 2026

Published Online: 12 October 2026

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during the preview process and
before publication.



ABSTRACT

In the 19th century, the German scientific community, backed by the Prussian Academy of Sciences and the Royal Museums of Berlin, carved out a strategic cultural foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean. Among the sites where this presence took shape, Miletus stood out as a focal point for German archaeology, prized for its rational urban plan and rich architectural heritage. The excavations led by Theodor Wiegand between 1899 and 1913 operated under the legal framework of the Ottoman Empire's Antiquities Regulations (Âsâr-ı Atika Nizamnameleri). While the existing literature focuses heavily on technical discoveries, there is a clear need to examine the administrative machinery, property laws, and the underlying inequalities that shaped how archaeological finds were divided. By examining Ottoman archival sources alongside published German excavation reports and scholarly publications, this study argues that this division was not the product of equal negotiation but of a structural asymmetry: Ottoman law asserted full state ownership of antiquities and enforced it through persistent bureaucratic oversight permit renewals, a mandatory on-site commissioner, while the German excavation team's specialized technical expertise gave it near-exclusive authority to determine which finds counted as significant. In this sense, the Ottoman state was not a passive object of German archaeological ambition, but an assertive bureaucratic actor whose regulatory tools nonetheless proved insufficient to counter German technical dominance over classification, a dynamic that illustrates the broader legal and administrative dimensions of late Ottoman sovereignty. The findings show that monumental artifacts frequently classified as "duplicates", a designation that did not always reflect reality, were shipped to Berlin, often facilitated by the Imperial Museum's (Müze-i Hümayun) budget constraints, which made covering shipment costs an attractive trade for artifacts deemed dispensable, most strikingly, in the export and reconstruction in Berlin of Miletus's monumental Market Gate. Ultimately, the Miletus excavations function as a case study in collaboration conducted under Ottoman Empire control, in which the gap between German technical expertise and Ottoman legal-administrative authority was bridged not through equal negotiation but through the German side's structural advantage.

Keywords: Miletus Excavations, Theodor Wiegand, Ottoman Antiquities Regulations, Cultural Diplomacy, Market Gate of Miletus.

Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kültürel Diplomasi ve Kültürel Miras Yönetimi: Theodor Wiegand'ın Milet Kazıları (1899–1913)

ÖZ

19. yüzyılda Alman bilim dünyası, Berlin Kraliyet Müzeleri ve Prusya Bilimler Akademisi'nin desteğiyle Doğu Akdeniz'de stratejik bir kültürel temsil alanı oluşturmıştır. Bu varlığın şekillendiği sahalar arasında Milet antik kenti, ızgara planlı sistematik yapısı ve zengin mimari mirasıyla Alman arkeolojisinin öncelikli araştırma sahalarından biri haline gelmiştir. 1899-1913 yılları arasında Theodor Wiegand başkanlığında yürütülen kazılar, Osmanlı Devleti'nin Âsâr-ı Atika Nizamnameleri'nin hukuki çerçevesi içinde şekillenmiştir. Literatür büyük ölçüde teknik keşiflere odaklanmakla birlikte, arkeolojik buluntuların paylaşımını şekillendiren idari mekanizmayı, mülkiyet hukukunu ve altta yatan eşitsizlikleri incelemeye açık bir ihtiyaç bulunmaktadır. Osmanlı arşiv kaynaklarını yayımlanmış Alman kazı raporları ve bilimsel yayınlarla birlikte inceleyen bu çalışma, bu paylaşımın eşit bir müzakerenin değil, yapısal bir asimetrisinin ürünü olduğunu savunmaktadır: Osmanlı hukuku eski eserler üzerinde tam devlet mülkiyetini öngörmüş ve bunu ısrarlı bir bürokratik denetimle -izin yenilemeleri, sahada daimi bir komiser bulundurulması- uygulamış; buna karşın Alman kazı ekibinin uzmanlaşmış teknik bilgisi, hangi buluntuların önemli sayılacağını belirlemede neredeyse münhasır bir yetki sağlamıştır. Bu anlamda Osmanlı Devleti, Alman arkeolojik hırsların edilgen bir nesnesi değil, düzenleyici araçları Alman tarafının sınıflandırma üzerindeki teknik otoritesi karşısında yine de yetersiz kalan iddialı bir bürokratik aktördür -bu dinamik, geç dönem Osmanlı egemenliğinin daha geniş hukuki ve idari boyutlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, sık sık gerçeği her zaman yansıtmayan bir sınıflandırmayla "mükerrer" sayılan anıtsal eserlerin, çoğunlukla Müze-i Hümayun'un bütçe kısıtlamalarının kolaylaştırmasıyla Berlin'e nakledildiğini göstermektedir; bu kısıtlamalar, nakliye masraflarının karşılanmasını gereksiz görülen eserler karşılığında cazip bir takas haline getirmiştir. En çarpıcı örneği, Milet'in anıtsal Pazar Yeri Kapısı'nın ihraç edilip Berlin'de yeniden inşa edilmesidir. Sonuç olarak Milet kazıları, Alman teknik uzmanlığı ile Osmanlı hukuki-idari otoritesi arasındaki boşluğun eşit bir müzakereye değil, Alman tarafının yapısal üstünlüğü yoluyla doldurulduğu, Osmanlı devlet denetimi altında yürütülen bir işbirliği vaka çalışması işlevi görmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milet Kazıları, Theodor Wiegand, Osmanlı Âsâr-ı Atika Nizamnameleri, Kültürel Diplomasi, Milet Pazar Kapısı

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Geliş: 30 Nisan 2026

Kabul: 13 Ağustos 2026

Online Yayın: 12 Ekim 2026

Bu çalışma ön inceleme sürecinde
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Atıf-Cite:

Kutlu Dilbaz, Burcu. "Cultural
Diplomacy and Heritage Management in
the Ottoman Empire: Theodor
Wiegand's Miletus Excavations (1899–
1913)." *History Studies* 18, no. 3 (2026):
729-757

<https://doi.org/10.9737/historystudies.1941320>

Funding: The author has reported that this study received no financial support.
Conflicts of interest: The author declares that there are no potential conflicts of interest.
Peer Review: External, double-blind
AI Declaration: The author declares that any of AI tools has not been used for this study.

Finansman: Herhangi fon veya maddi destek kullanılmamıştır.
Çıkar Çatışması: Herhangi bir çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Bağımsız, çift-kör hakemlik.
Yapay Zekâ Beyanı: Herhangi bir yapay zekâ aracı kullanılmamıştır.

Introduction

From the mid-19th century onwards, German archaeology started to focus more on the Eastern Mediterranean by seeking to build a stronger institutional base in the region. With the help of the Royal Museums of Berlin and the Prussian Academy of Sciences, archaeological expeditions in the Eastern Mediterranean evolved from primarily scholarly enterprises into instruments through which the German Empire projected cultural prestige and advanced its foreign policy.¹ The Ottoman Empire, in turn, responded to this intensive archaeological activity of European origin by developing an increasingly systematic control mechanism over antiquities, a process that began with the Antiquities Regulations of 1869 and 1874 and was consolidated through the more comprehensive regulations of 1884 and 1906, thereby placing excavations within a legal, financial, and diplomatic framework.² Miletus,³ stood precisely at the intersection of these two imperial visions: on one side, Germany's pursuit of archaeological patronage as a means of gaining cultural prestige and international standing; on the other, the Ottoman Empire's effort to bring these activities under regulatory control and thereby reinforce its legal and territorial sovereignty. It was in this very space that Miletus, with its rational urban plan and rich architectural heritage, became truly significant to the German scholarly world.⁴ Miletus, however, was not an isolated German undertaking, it was one node within a wider network of German archaeological activity across Asia Minor. As the French ambassador Cambon wrote to Paris in 1893, by that date "the Germans had to their credit: Troy, Pergamon, Magnesia on the Maeander, Gölbaşı-Trysa, and Zincirli", a list reflecting the scale of German excavation activity in the region even before systematic work began at Miletus itself.⁵ The Ottoman state's general receptiveness to German archaeological activity rested on the broader military, political, and railway-based alliance developing between the two empires, on the close personal friendship between Sultan Abdülhamid II and Kaiser Wilhelm II, and on the Imperial Museum's chronic budget shortfalls.⁶ The close friendships that the Museum's director, Osman Hamdi Bey, cultivated with German colleagues such as Carl Humann, Alexander Conze, Otto Puchstein, and Theodor Wiegand further eased the flexing of legal restrictions through diplomatic and personal channels.⁷

The initial German activities in the region, which gained momentum in 1894 through the

¹ Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 11–25.

² In the Ottoman Empire, Antiquities Regulations were enacted in 1869, followed by those of 1874, 1884, and 1906, in order to ensure the legal protection of antiquities. For detailed information, see Ferruh Gerçek, *Türk Müzeciliği* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999); Artemis Papatheodorou, "Ottoman Policy-Making in an Age of Reforms: Unearthing Ottoman Archaeology in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2017); Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası* (İstanbul: Okur Tarih, 2018); Muhammed Raşit Akgün, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Eski Eserler Hukuku* (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2026).

³ Miletus: An ancient port city located within the boundaries of the Söke district of Aydın Province. Although it is known by its ancient Greek form as Miletos or by its Latin equivalent, Miletus, it is commonly referred to in the Turkish literature as Milet. See Mihai Remus Feraru, "The Cult of Goddess Hekate in Miletus and the Milesian Colonies," *Ziridava: Studia Archaeologica* 35, no. 1 (2021): 107–125.

⁴ Fikret Özbay, "Hippodamos Tarzındaki Kent Planı ve Klazomenai MÖ 4. Yüzyıl Yerleşiminin Bu Kent Planı İçindeki Yeri Hakkındaki Düşünceler," in *Seleucia ad Calycadnum V*, ed. Diane Favro et al. (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2015), 101–119.

⁵ Sebastian Willert, *Kulturbesitz: Konflikte um archäologische Objekte in der deutsch-osmanischen Politik, 1898–1918* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2024), 74–75.

⁶ Fatih Rukancı and Hakan Anameriç, "Arşiv Belgeleri ile II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Müzecilik Faaliyetleri," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 38, no. 66 (2019): 394–398.

⁷ Edhem Eldem, *Nazlı'nın Defteri: Osman Hamdi Bey'in Çevresi / Nazlı's Guestbook: Osman Hamdi Bey's Circle* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi ve Yayıncılık, 2014), 56–57, 82–83, 88–90, 120–125.

initiatives of Carl Humann (1839-1896),⁸ a German engineer-turned-archaeologist who had earlier directed the excavations at Pergamon and pioneered German archaeological activity in western Anatolia, (1839-1896), were conducted under the legal oversight of the Ottoman administration.⁹ Following Humann's death in 1896, Theodor Wiegand (1864-1936), a German archaeologist who would go on to serve as director of the Antiquities Department of the Berlin Museums, 'assumed the directorship of the excavations on behalf of the Berlin Museums'.¹⁰

Scholars have proposed different commencement dates for the excavations of Miletus. While Mustafa Cezar cites 1896 as the beginning of the excavations,¹¹ Mustafa Göleç mentions the year 1895.¹² Although the permit issued for the year 1898 envisioned the commencement of excavations during the autumn season,¹³ the seminal work of Hubert Knackfuss containing the excavation findings, official correspondence, and Wiegand's personal records confirms that systematic and scientific labor effectively began in 1899, following a preliminary preparation phase.¹⁴

The interaction between the administrative process and the scientific approach of the excavation team during the Miletus excavations, in light of archival documents, has yet to be examined holistically. In particular, the era of Theodor Wiegand witnessed a process in which the city was addressed within the framework of a systematic research plan. Preceding the institutionalized phase discussed here, Miletus had already been the subject of a preparatory process between 1894 and 1898, initiated by Carl Humann's 1894 permit application, continued after his death in 1896 under Richard Schöne, and renewed by Theodor Wiegand in 1897/98, all conducted under Ottoman administrative and legal oversight rather than as a purely German undertaking. Focusing on the institutionalization phase between 1899 and 1913, this article argues that, beyond being a scientific discovery, the excavations operated through a specific set of bureaucratic mechanisms by which the Ottoman state sought to assert its sovereign rights, with only partial success, given the German side's structural advantage in determining the scientific and material value of the finds: periodic permit renewals subject to Ottoman approval, a mandatory on-site commissioner whose salary the German delegation was required to pay, and formal disputes over the classification of finds as "duplicates." Such disputes were settled not through the excavation permit itself but through imperial decrees (*irade-i seniyye*), typically by ceding the artifacts deemed "worthless" or "duplicates" to the German side in exchange for its coverage of transport costs to the Imperial Museum.

⁸ Carl Humann (1839-1896) was a German engineer and archaeologist who played a pioneering role in the development of German archaeology in the Ottoman Empire. After arriving in Anatolia in the 1860s, he directed the Pergamon excavations on behalf of the Berlin Museums from 1878 onward and later initiated archaeological investigations at Miletus (1894-1896). His work contributed significantly to the institutionalisation of German archaeological research in western Anatolia and to the formation of the Berlin antiquities collections. See Dietrich Nummert, "Pergamon Wurde Seine Passion, Der Ingenieur Carl Humann," *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, no. 2 (1999): 48-53.

⁹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye State Archives, Ottoman Archive (BOA), Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (MF.MKT.), 219/53/16 (29 M. 1312 [2 August 1894]).

¹⁰ Theodor Wiegand (1864-1936) was a German archaeologist and Director of the Department of Antiquities at the Royal Museums of Berlin. He directed the excavations at Priene, Miletus, and Didyma, developed close cooperation with the Ottoman authorities regarding excavation permits and the division of finds, and became one of the principal architects of German archaeological policy in the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War, he also served as Chief Inspector for the Protection of Antiquities of the Fourth Ottoman Army. See Arif Müfid Mansel, review of *Halbmond im letzten Viertel: Archäologische Reiseberichte*, by Theodor Wiegand, ed. Gerhard Wiegand, *Belleten* 36, no. 143 (1972): 389-402.

¹¹ Mustafa Cezar, *Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1995), 304.

¹² Mustafa Göleç, "Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Tarih Politikaları (1876-1931)" (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2010), 259.

¹³ BOA, Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Posta ve Telgraf Nezareti Maruzatı (Y.PRK.PT.), 16/96 (23 N. 1315 [15 February 1898]).

¹⁴ Hubert Knackfuss, *Das Rathaus von Milet*, in *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, vol. 1, no. 2, ed. Theodor Wiegand (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1908), 25(1).

The objective of this study is to analyze the methodological discipline under Wiegand's direction within the context of Ottoman administrative oversight mechanisms and diplomatic negotiations. In this scope, the core research focuses are the processes of permit renewals the financial constraints regarding the allocation of artifacts and preservation policies. The study's fundamental question is how the gap between technical authority in the field and administrative supervision proved decisive in the fate of monumental structures, most notably the Market Gate of Miletus.



Figure 1: Historical Photograph of the Market Gate of Miletus, Unearthed During Theodor Wiegand's Excavations at Miletus and Exhibited in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin.¹⁵

The simultaneous epigraphic and architectural studies conducted within the activities initiated in 1899 established what might be called a historical geography laboratory, in which data on the site was systematically recorded and cross-referenced. In its emphasis on structured documentation and cross-disciplinary data management, this approach bears a modest resemblance to practices later associated with digital humanities. Building on this technical foundation, the study contributes to the literature by examining the relationship between the classification of "duplicate artifacts" (*mükerrer eser*) and the logistical financing arrangement reached between the German and the Ottoman Empires, along with the diplomatic exceptions to the regulations offered during the arrangement's implementation phase.

Duplicate artifacts designated instances in which excavation yielded more than one example of the same object type, with a single specimen retained by the state and the remainder deemed surplus. The determination of genuine equivalence between pieces, however, was rarely a neutral technical judgment and rested largely with the German excavation team.

¹⁵ SALT Research, Ülgen Family Archive, TASUH1525, accessed May 1, 2026, <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/73116>.

The current research adopted a qualitative methodology, grounded in Ottoman archival records, Wiegand's personal notes, and technical reports prepared by experts. These diverse data sets were evaluated through a holistic perspective within the political and scientific atmosphere of the period. The study specifically examines the excavations of Theodor Wiegand, which were briefly mentioned in the author's doctoral thesis, with methodological depth in light of firsthand sources, new archival documents, and original excavation reports not included in the thesis. The process, which was presented in the author's thesis as a brief chronological reference point, is discussed here through Wiegand's holistic urban planning approach and the bureaucratic mechanisms reflected in archival documents, offering an independent and original perspective. Consequently, the study aims to fill this gap in the literature by reconstructing the Miletus excavations as a multilayered historical process in which scientific method, administrative legislation, and diplomatic representation are intertwined. "Cultural sovereignty over antiquities in the late Ottoman Empire rested, in part, on the idea that relics found within Ottoman territory formed part of Ottoman heritage and, by extension, of the state's claim over that territory, rather than being defined primarily through dynastic or religious terms as in earlier periods.¹⁶ Administrative supervision of excavation sites developed gradually: through much of the mid-nineteenth century it remained largely informal, before legal authority was tightened through the Antiquities Regulations, which moved from dividing finds between the state, the landowner, and the excavator toward vesting the state with automatic ownership of everything found beneath the surface.¹⁷ This tightening coincided with a broader period of concern, following the territorial losses of the 1870s, over the empire's continued territorial integrity.¹⁸ Diplomatic compromise operated alongside this legal framework: requests from foreign missions were at times deliberately delayed, and personal gifts from the Sultan continued even after export had been restricted by law.¹⁹ These mechanisms did not amount to a fully coherent or consistently enforced policy; rather, legal authority and administrative supervision functioned as the everyday means through which the Ottoman state sought recognition as a participant in, rather than merely a custodian of, the heritage found on its own soil.²⁰ The Miletus case is examined here with this understanding of cultural sovereignty as its starting point, tracing how it operated at the level of a single excavation.

The article's structure follows this documentary rhythm rather than a fixed calendar scheme: each section corresponds to a distinct episode in the archival record, a permit renewal, a legal dispute, a diplomatic exchange, or a change in regulation, through which the excavation's institutional relationship with the Ottoman state can be traced in concrete terms.

1.The Commencement of Systematic Excavations in Miletus: Administrative Legislation and Scientific Methodology (1899–1901)

Theodor Wiegand, who initiated the excavations in 1899, conducted systematic research

¹⁶ Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 23.

¹⁷ Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*, 112; Zeynep Çelik, *Asar-ı Atika: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Arkeoloji Siyaseti* (Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 43–45; Akgün, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Eski Eserler Hukuku*, 414–15, 425, 428.

¹⁸ Willert, *Kulturbesitz: Konflikte um archäologische Objekte in der deutsch-osmanischen Politik, 1898–1918*, 51.

¹⁹ Edhem Eldem, "Huzurlu Bir İlgisizlikten Sıkıntılı Bir Kaygıya: Osmanlıların Gözünde Eski Eserler, 1799–1869," in *Geçmişe Hücum: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Arkeolojinin Öyküsü 1753–1914*, ed. Zainab Bahrani, Zeynep Çelik, and Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: SALT, 2011), 289–291.

²⁰ Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*, 119, 212; Papatheodorou, "Ottoman Policy-Making," 188.

that aimed at addressing the city within a holistic plan, not simply uncovering individual structures. Especially during his work on the Bouleuterion, he examined the surrounding architectural fabric alongside the street network and carried out an extensive research program encompassing the city's infrastructure and settlement history.²¹

The principles for the division of artifacts and the extension of the permit duration for the activities initiated in 1899 in Miletus on behalf of the Royal Museums of Berlin and under the auspices of the German Emperor were duly preserved. Accordingly, half of the artifacts unearthed from the excavations were to be granted to the Ottoman Empire, while the remaining half were to be allocated to the Berlin Museums.²² This practice demonstrates that, in the specific case of Miletus, while the Ottoman Empire upheld its legal framework in full, the German institutions had by this point become markedly more effective at securing and sustaining favorable operating terms, permit renewals and artifact-sharing arrangements, than during the more improvised negotiations of the 1894–1898 period. This diplomatic and administrative efficiency should be distinguished from the scientific and technical efficiency of the excavation itself, which is discussed separately below. The excavations under Wiegand's direction transcended monumental discoveries and evolved into a systematic research model encompassing Miletus and its environs. The activities conducted in the region from 1899 onwards, utilizing triangulation and tachymetric methods, reconstructed the city's natural environment and settlement pattern with scientific integrity. This disciplined process, carried out by experts with architectural training, brought about a meticulous documentation model including detailed restitution drawings and a numbering system.²³ The methodological discipline reflected German archaeology's claim to technical integrity within the Ottoman domains and enabled the faithful reconstruction of monumental structures in Berlin.



Figure 2: A View from Theodor Wiegand's Excavations at Miletus, 1899.²⁴

²¹ Knackfuss, *Das Rathaus von Milet*, 25(1)–33(9); Hubert Knackfuss, *Der Südmarkt und die benachbarten Bauanlagen*, in *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, ed. Theodor Wiegand (Berlin: Verlag von Schoetz & Parrhysius, 1924), 45.

²² BOA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı (Y.E.E.), 149/92 (22 C. 1317 [28 October 1899]); BOA, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı (Y.MTV.), 173/56 (13 Ş. 1317 [17 December 1899]). For the deliberations of the Şûrâ-yı Devlet concerning the renewal of the permit, compare BOA, İrade Hususi (İ.HUS.), 77/67 (24 Ca. 1317 [30 September 1899]).

²³ Paul Wilski, *Karte der Milesischen Halbinsel (1:50.000). Mit erläuterndem Text*, in *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, vol. 1, no. 1, ed. Theodor Wiegand (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1906), 1–6..

²⁴ Knackfuss, *Das Rathaus von Milet*, 3.

Although the activities initiated in the autumn of 1899 were interrupted by the plague outbreak in İzmir and the region's harsh climatic conditions, the excavations resumed on 6 September 1900 with a formally organised multidisciplinary research team. This interruption illustrates that the excavation was not governed by antiquities regulations alone: when the Ottoman public health (*hıfzıssıhha*) administration imposed quarantine and travel restrictions in response to the plague, the excavation permit itself became subordinate to these broader public health measures, and fieldwork could not resume until the quarantine was lifted. Dr. Carl Friedrich undertook the epigraphic material, while Fritz Grosse assumed responsibility for the architectural studies. As a result of the mapping activities conducted by Paul Wilski, a 1: 2,000 scale plan of the city and a 1: 50,000 scale topographic map covering an area of approximately 550 km² were completed. These triangulation and tachymetric methods, which can be regarded as an early prototype of today's digital humanities discipline, transferred the city's natural environment and settlement texture onto paper with scientific precision, creating a historical geography laboratory where data was systematically managed. On this technical foundation, the excavations concentrated around the Lion Harbor and the Bouleuterion provided access to critical data illuminating the settlement history, such as the city's Roman period infrastructure systems and Archaic finds.²⁵

The field operations, which expanded following the completion of technical preparations in 1900, entered a new legal phase as the two-year duration of the existing excavation permit expired. On behalf of the Royal Museums of Berlin, Director Richard Schöne submitted an official request for an extension to maintain the activities' legal grounds. This request was meticulously examined by the Sublime Porte (*Bâb-ı Âli*) and the Grand Council of Education (*Meclis-i Kebîr-i Maârif*), the highest decision-making authority of the period regarding education and antiquities. According to this regulation, which was enacted with the Sultan's approval and notified to the Aydın Province through the Grand Vizierate (*Sadaret*), the permit fee of ten Ottoman liras was deposited into the treasury, and Lazaryan Efendi, the assistant dragoman of the German Embassy, was appointed to oversee the diplomatic continuation of the process. The Ottoman Empire did not compromise on its oversight mechanism, stipulating that the permit be issued in full compliance with the provisions of the Antiquities Regulations and prior practices. Within this framework, it was made mandatory to maintain a permanent Ottoman commissioner at the excavation site, with all financial obligations to be met by the German delegation, and to conduct the commission's expenses under the supervision of the

²⁵ Theodor Wiegand, "Zweiter vorläufiger Bericht über die von den Königlichen Museen begonnenen Ausgrabungen in Milet," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, no. 2 (1901): 903–13.

Imperial Museum Directorate.²⁶

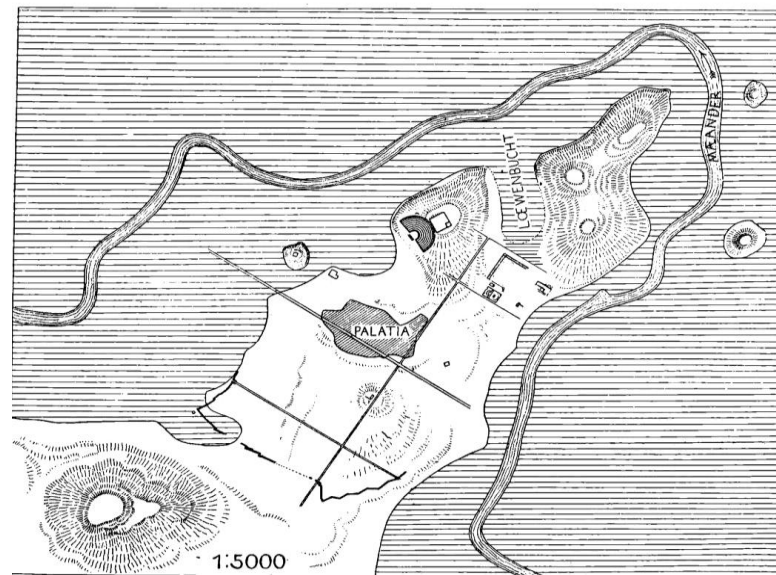


Figure 3: Site Plan of Miletus from the 1901 Excavations.²⁷

This is the earliest reference to the commissioner requirement found for the Miletus excavations specifically; the sources consulted here do not indicate whether the same requirement had already applied during the 1899 permit, nor do they identify the individual who held this post. Ultimately, the administrative procedure exemplifies the Ottoman Empire's resolve in the legal and financial oversight of foreign scientific delegations, while also demonstrating the German delegation's efforts to comply with local legislation. In this respect, the Miletus excavations serve as a case study illustrating how the Ottoman Empire exercised its sovereign rights over foreign archaeological expeditions through legal regulation and bureaucratic oversight. Following the completion of administrative and financial arrangements within the legal framework provided by the renewed permit, the focus of the excavation team in the 1901 season shifted from discovery toward scientific analysis. Rather than opening new excavation sectors, this season was dedicated to the systematic documentation and technical evaluation of previously uncovered architectural monuments. The survey works of the Bouleuterion and the funerary structure were conducted by Hubert Knackfuss, while the detailed architectural analysis of the Nymphaeum was carried out by Julius Hülsen.²⁸ The intensive involvement of expert architects in the process reveals how the excavations of Miletus increasingly evolved from a discovery-oriented activity into a world-class program of planned architectural documentation and restitution. This methodological discipline established the scientific foundation for the large-scale architectural transportations and the reconstruction process in Berlin that would be carried out in the following years.

2. Administrative Oversight and Diplomatic Representation in Archaeological Activities at Miletus (1901–1902)

²⁶ BOA, Müze-i Hümayun Müdüriyeti Arkeoloji Müzesi Evrakı (MÜZ.ARK.), 32/186 (22 M. 1318 [22 May 1900]).

²⁷ Wiegand, "Zweiter vorläufiger Bericht," 904.

²⁸ Theodor Wiegand, "Dritter vorläufiger Bericht über die von den Königlichen Museen begonnenen Ausgrabungen in Milet," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, no. 3 (1904): 72; Julius Hülsen, *Das Nymphaeum*, in *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, vol. 1, no. 5, ed. Theodor Wiegand (Berlin and Leipzig: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1919), 1–3.

The technical documentation studies conducted at Miletus during the 1901 season laid the groundwork for the excavations to evolve into a comprehensive and strategic phase in a short period. Throughout this process, Ottoman–German relations maintained a delicate balance between favor (*taltif*) and oversight (*nezaret*). While the excavation team’s efforts were appreciated by the Ottoman Empire, the work of Theodor Wiegand was closely monitored due to the institutional caution exercised toward the activities of foreign delegations. Indeed, instructions were issued for Wiegand to be kept under surreptitious surveillance to ensure that no “inappropriate situations” occurred during his photography and measurement activities. It was reported that Wiegand, who was traveling from Istanbul to the region to export photographs and drawings of historical monuments located within the borders of the Bursa-based Hüdavendigâr Province,²⁹ would arrive in April and remain in the province for six months. It was ordered that Wiegand’s activities in the region be “monitored and observed” (*takip ve tarassut*) through civil authorities and the police without his knowledge; he was to be kept under secret surveillance for the duration of his stay, with instructions to report any inappropriate conduct immediately.³⁰ Provided that no excavations were carried out, Wiegand was granted permission exclusively for taking measurements, drawings, and photographs.³¹ Such caution toward foreign scholars was not without precedent: the Ottoman administration routinely restricted survey, photography, and measurement activities in strategically sensitive regions, and permission for purely non-excavatory work was typically granted only under strict conditions. What distinguishes the Wiegand case, however, is the degree of its clandestinity: what is at issue here is not the standard permit-based restrictions typical of the Antiquities Regulations regime, but rather covert monitoring, coordinated through civil and police authorities without the subject’s knowledge, reflecting the Ottoman Empire’s desire to safeguard data security in strategically significant regions such as fortifications, fortresses, and coastlines, and the institutional control mechanism it had developed toward foreign scientific delegations, a concern rendered even more pronounced here by the Hüdavendigâr province’s proximity to the imperial capital. This rigorous oversight and documentation process in fieldwork brought about a far more challenging period of administrative and financial negotiations regarding the sharing and transportation of finds unearthed during the excavations. Following the collection of scientific data, the two states turned their attention to the physical fate of the emerging monumental artifacts and their shipment to the Imperial Museum became a primary concern in their correspondence. Indeed, by 1903, there was intensive correspondence concerning the transfer of a portion of the antiquities unearthed from Miletus to the Berlin Museums.³²

²⁹ Feridun Emecen, “Hüdavendigâr,” in *TDV Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA)*, vol. 18 (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 284–87.

³⁰ BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (DH.MKT.), 2598/76 (25 Za. 1319 [6 March 1902]).

³¹ BOA, DH.MKT., 2598/77 (1 Z. 1319 [11 March 1902]).

³² BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası Evrakı (BEO.), 2215/166101 (18 N. 1321 [8 December 1903]).

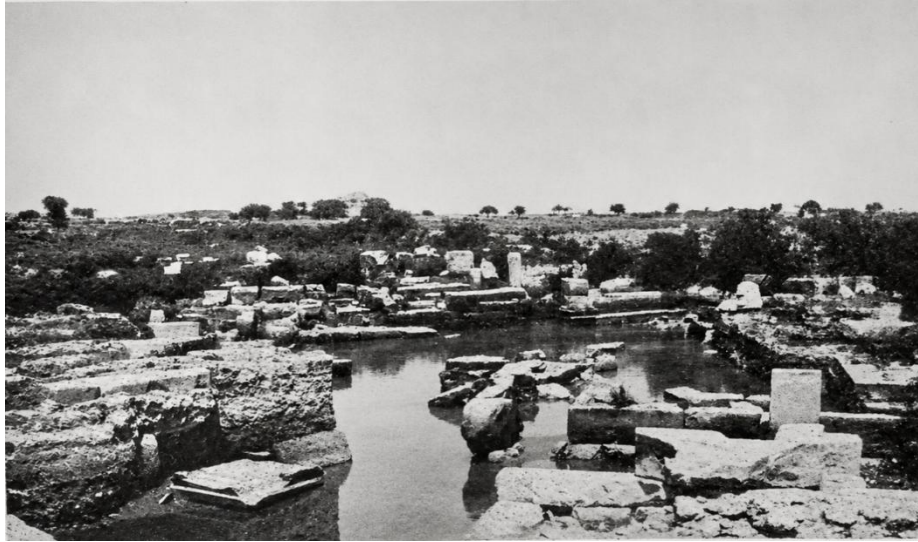


Figure 4: View of the Excavation Area of the Market Gate of Miletus, 1902.³³

3. Financial Constraints in the Division of Artifacts from Miletus and the Preservation Policy of Osman Hamdi Bey (1903)

By 1903, the issue of the preservation and transportation of the artifacts unearthed from 1899 onwards in the excavation activities in Miletus reached a critical turning point. Theodor Wiegand, the head of excavations, requested that a few “duplicate” (*mükerrer*) pairs of primary artifacts to be included in the Imperial Museum inventory be ceded to the Berlin Museums, in exchange for the German side fully covering the shipping costs of the uncovered artifacts to Istanbul. Osman Hamdi Bey, the director of the Imperial Museum at the time,³⁴ and by this point an established figure who had spent two decades building the institution into one capable of claiming scientific parity with its European counterparts, applied to the Tanzimat Department of the Council of State (*Şûrâ-yı Devlet*) to clarify two specific uncertainties: whether artifacts classified as duplicates but legally owned by the state could be ceded to a foreign museum under the Antiquities Regulations, and whether the German delegation's coverage of shipping costs could serve as valid consideration for such a cession, or whether a separate imperial decree (*irade-i seniyye*) was required. He provided an official briefing on the process accordingly.³⁵

In the views he submitted to the Council of State, Osman Hamdi Bey emphasized that there were insufficient funds in the budget of the Imperial Museum and that, due to this constraint, valuable artifacts remained *in situ*, left to decay under natural conditions. He also stated that numerous difficulties were encountered during the process of transportation. Following a detailed examination of the value and significance of the antiquities proposed to be ceded to the excavators in exchange for the shipping costs, the following decisions were reached:

- The exportation of artifacts that were found to be identical and whose removal from the country was deemed not to be detrimental shall be permitted.

³³ Alan J. B. Wace, “Recent Excavations in Asia Minor,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 23 (1903): 354.

³⁴ Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) served as the director of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*) from 1881 until his death. For more information, see Arif Müfid Mansel, “Osman Hamdi Bey,” *Belleten* 24, no. 94 (1960): 291–301; Edhem Eldem, *Osman Hamdi Bey İzlenimleri: 1869–1885* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015), 10–19.

³⁵ BOA, MF.MKT., 735/29 (22 C. 1321 [15 September 1903]).

- The removal of scientifically significant and rare artifacts from Ottoman territories shall be strictly prohibited, and such pieces shall be preserved within the state.

In particular, it was decided, in exchange for shipping costs, to cede to the German excavators those antiquities that were deemed unnecessary for the Imperial Museum, of low value, or redundant, as they would otherwise be “left discarded here and there” and could not be brought to the museum due to being identical to existing pieces. In this direction, it is understood that Wiegand requested that a few of the artifacts “of the same nature”, discovered in Miletus, be granted to him in exchange for covering the transportation costs, thereby facilitating additional expenditures outside the budget of the Imperial Museum.³⁶ Consequently, in exchange for the transportation of large and heavy artifacts from Miletus to the Imperial Museum in Istanbul, it was proposed that certain duplicate and low-value pieces, those confirmed to be identical and whose exportation was deemed personally unobjectionable, be granted to the Germans.³⁷ In the document sent from the Grand Vizierate (*Sadaret*) of the Sublime Porte to the Tanzimat Department of the Council of State, it was stated that this proposal was appropriate, and permission was granted as no objections were found.³⁸ Ultimately, this administrative and financial compromise resulted in the transfer of ownership of a significant portion of Miletus’s extensive archaeological heritage. While archival documents and minutes clearly demonstrate that the Imperial Museum’s budget was too limited to cover the transportation of these monumental artifacts, the proposed logistical financing arrangement provided the German archaeological delegation with broad maneuvering room in the application of the classification “duplicate artifacts” in the field.

This episode illustrates a recurring pattern in Osman Hamdi Bey’s directorship: budgetary pragmatism was frequently reconciled with a longer-term institutional strategy aimed at securing the Imperial Museum’s international standing, even where individual concessions appeared, in isolation, as mere administrative accommodations.



Figure 5: Historical Photograph of the Miletus Hall in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Exhibiting the Market Gate of Miletus and Architectural Artifacts Recovered During Theodor Wiegand’s Excavations at Miletus.³⁹

³⁶ BOA, MF.MKT., 701/61 (7 S. 1321 [5 May 1903]).

³⁷ BOA, İrade Maarif (İ.MF.), 9/41 (20 B. 1321 [12 October 1903]); Hamit Zübeyr Koşay et al., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Çağlarında Türk Kazı Tarihi*, vol. 4 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2013), 357–60.

³⁸ BOA, MF.MKT., 714/60 (19 Ş. 1321 [9 November 1903]).

³⁹ SALT Research, Ülgen Family Archive, TASUH4982, accessed May 1, 2026, <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/79749>

The legal and financial foundation established resulted in the transfer of ownership of a significant portion of Miletus's monumental architectural heritage. The Market Gate of Miletus, which is exhibited today in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, is the most prominent work to have been included in this shipment.⁴⁰ This monumental structure, which was found in fragments in Miletus, was reassembled after being transported to Berlin and currently stands among the most magnificent works exhibited at the Pergamon Museum.⁴¹

The process of classifying monumental finds as of secondary importance during the Miletus excavations must be re-evaluated in light of both the asymmetry of information reaching Istanbul from the field and the disparity in specialized archaeological expertise between the two sides. Both the standing official representing the state on site, termed a "söz sahibi memur" under the 1884 Antiquities Regulations then in force, and replaced by a dedicated museum official ("müze memuru") once the 1906 Regulations came into effect, and the inspectors whom the Imperial Museum Directorate periodically dispatched from Istanbul carried out this oversight.⁴² However, neither this official nor these visiting inspectors possessed training comparable to that of the German classical archaeologists. As a result, they depended substantially on the excavation team's own reports and classifications, and the technical authority to determine the scientific nature, historical integrity, and degree of rarity of the artifacts remained largely in the hands of the head of excavations, Theodor Wiegand, and his expert team.



Figure 6: Excavation, Recovery and Transportation of Architectural Remains at Miletus.⁴³

The discovery of architectural blocks and monumental fragments scattered across the excavation field may have created an evaluative difficulty for both the Ottoman and foreign

⁴⁰ For the history and Hadrianic architectural features of the Market Gate of Miletus, see Billur Tekkök Karaöz, "Bergama Müzesi, Berlin," in *BACA 2. Uluslararası Başkentler Sempozyumu: Avrupa Başkentleri Kültür Sanat Mimarlık Bildiri Kitabı* (Ankara: Başkent Üniversitesi, 2025).

⁴¹ M. Aykut Özet and Ümit Yaşar Gözümlü, eds., *Yitik Mirasın Dönüş Öyküsü* (İstanbul: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı-Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 21.

⁴² Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası* (İstanbul: Okur Tarih, 2018), 81–84; Akgün, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Eski Eserler Hukuku*, 451–53.

⁴³ Hubert Knackfuss, *Der Südmarm und die benachbarten Bauanlagen, in Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, ed. Theodor Wiegand (Berlin: Verlag von Schoetz & Parrhysius, 1924), 74–75.

delegations. Given the limited capacity of period archaeological methods to reconstruct a structure's original form graphically and physically from scattered fragments, anticipating the eventual monumental integrity that massive structures like the Market Gate, ultimately reassembled in Berlin from thousands of pieces, would attain was technically extremely demanding for both sides. This is not to suggest that the German delegation deliberately misrepresented the significance of these fragments; rather, the interpretive latitude inherent in this technical uncertainty, combined with the German team's specialized reconstructive expertise, structurally favored classifications aligned with their own institutional objectives. It is in this sense, as a structural incentive rather than a demonstrable act of deception, that fragments approved for export by the Ottoman bureaucracy as "duplicates" may have been assessed by the German delegation as possessing a "different (lower) level of significance. This situation demonstrates that the gap between the administrative oversight mechanism in the field and the technical expertise of the excavation team, rather than any deliberate misrepresentation, was a decisive factor in the final fate of the finds. Considering that scientific publications and reconstruction studies could only be completed years later, the disparity between the "scattered fragmentary state" of the artifacts allocated for export and their eventual "monumental form", reassembled in Berlin using largely, though not entirely, original fragments supplemented with modern restorative material, reflects the structural complexity of institutional and methodological oversight in this phase of archaeological history, rather than intentional deception. The transfer and reconstruction of the Market Gate of Miletus in Berlin has become one of the most debated cases in the field of archaeology regarding "authenticity" and restoration ethics. Although the structure stands as a monumental marble mass in the Pergamon Museum today, it is a composite structure in which original fragments and modern materials have been merged.⁴⁴ The marbles belonging to the structure's upper floor and pediments were largely found during the excavations, while the lack of fragments belonging to the lower floor and the supporting framework compelled Wiegand to fill these gaps with brick, cement, and plaster, ensuring static stability through a steel construction concealed within. Wiegand's methodological honesty in this process lay in leaving the original fragments in dark gray and the modern completions in pure white, thereby visually registering the distinction between them. However, this construction process became the subject of harsh criticism during the 1920s and '30s. Wiegand responded to these criticisms by stating that the duty of a museum was not merely to display fragments, but to allow the visitor to experience the "elementare Kraft" (elemental power) and aesthetic grandeur of the work of art.⁴⁵ Ultimately, this debate embodies how the scattered fragments, which the Ottoman bureaucracy approved for export by deeming them "worthless," were transformed into a modern "construction of antiquity" in Berlin, and exemplifies the ideological intervention in the reconstruction of archaeological heritage.

4. Archaeological Diplomacy in Miletus: The Conferment of Orders and Institutional Collaboration (1903–1904)

Archaeological diplomacy, in this context, meant the use of honors, titles, and ceremonial gestures by the Ottoman state to formally recognize, and, in doing so, draw into its own administrative and symbolic order, the foreign personnel conducting excavations on its soil.

⁴⁴ For the reconstruction projects of the Pergamon Museum and the exhibition process of the Market Gate of Miletus, see Karaöz, "Bergama Müzesi," 6.

⁴⁵ Can Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display: Regimes of the Authentic in Berlin's Pergamon Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 200–206.

The acquisition of the monumental remains unearthed at Miletus by the Berlin Museums was evaluated as both a scientific achievement and a strategic instrument of political and cultural prestige for German Emperor Wilhelm II. In view of this, in 1903, the princes, sons of Wilhelm II, visited Miletus to inspect the ongoing fieldwork and the ancient city personally. Seeing the homeland of the rare artifacts that enriched the collections of the museums in Berlin, thereby increasing their value and visitor numbers, became a major focal point for the German dynasty and public. Reinforced by archaeological diplomacy, the German delegation, which contributed to the excavations and the acquisition of artifacts for the Imperial Museum, was honored by the Ottoman Empire with the “Mecidi (Medjidie) and Osmani (Osmanieh) Orders” (*nişan*).⁴⁶

Name	Title / Position	Order and Class	Reason for Award
Richard Schöne (1840–1922)	General Director of the Berlin Museum	Order of the Medjidie, 2nd Class	Acquisition of artifacts for the Imperial Museum and excavation efforts
Theodor Wiegand (1864–1936)	Excavation Director and Deputy Director	Order of the Medjidie, 2nd Class	Outstanding service in field work
Johann Heinrich Schäfer (1868–1957)	Department Head, Berlin Museum	Order of the Medjidie, 2nd Class	Institutional cooperation and contribution
Otto von Falke (1862–1942)	Department Head, Berlin Museum	Order of the Medjidie, 2nd Class	Institutional cooperation and contribution
Hubert Knackfuss (1866–1948)	Excavation Engineer / Architect	Order of the Medjidie, 3rd Class	Technical work and documentation service
Johann Hans Hermann Schrader (1869–1948)	Berlin Museum Official	Order of the Medjidie, 3rd Class	Support for archaeological activities
Julius Hülsen (1873–1931)	Berlin Museum Official / Architect	Order of the Medjidie, 3rd Class	Technical analysis and documentation
Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann (1852–1932) ⁴⁷	German Consul in Izmir	Order of Osmanieh, 2nd Class	Administrative sponsorship and bureaucratic coordination of the excavation team

Table 1: Decorations Conferred upon the German Archaeological Delegation (1903)

5. Orders Conferred upon Officials from the Berlin Museums and the Miletus Excavation Team in 1903⁴⁸

The individual holding the post of German Consul in İzmir at the time of these developments in 1903 was the German orientalist and diplomat Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann (1852–1932). Mordtmann, who had studied classical languages and ancient history at Berlin University and was renowned as an epigraphist and Byzantinist, had a long-standing diplomatic career in the Ottoman Empire, beginning at the German Embassy in Istanbul in 1882. During his subsequent tenure in İzmir, a position that placed him in geographical and administrative proximity to the major excavation sites of Western Anatolia, he

⁴⁶ BOA, BEO., 2245/168302 (11 L. 1321 [31 December 1903]).

⁴⁷ BOA, Yıldız Sadrazam Kamil Paşa Evrakı (Y.EE.KP.), 18/1772 (9 M. 1321 [7 April 1903]).

⁴⁸ BOA, Şûrâ-yı Devlet (ŞD.), 218/54 (25 Ra. 1321 [21 June 1903]).

assumed the administrative patronage of the Miletus excavation team. Mordtmann was not only a diplomat; he was an expert intimately acquainted with Ottoman museology, to the extent of publishing a comprehensive guidebook on the Imperial Museum, titled *Musée Impérial Ottoman* (1895).⁴⁹ The deep ties he established with the Ottoman archaeological world secured him a pivotal role in the processes of shipping antiquities to Berlin and tracking excavation permits. The case of Mordtmann highlights how the German side conducted its archaeological diplomacy in the region through both political figures and strategic and competent individuals who mastered the disciplines of Orientalism and museology.

As stated in archival documents, the Mecidi and Osmani Orders were generally conferred in recognition of “efforts and services rendered in the acquisition of artifacts for the Imperial Museum and in excavation activities”.⁵⁰ Through this practice, the Ottoman Empire officially rewarded and thereby symbolically acknowledged scientific activities within its territories. The reinforcement of close political relations with Germany specifically through archaeology is a typical reflection of the period’s diplomatic approach. High-level diplomatic events, such as the visit of the German emperor’s sons to Miletus, were crowned with reciprocal conferment of orders, bolstering the emphasis on the alliance between the two empires. The system of orders also functioned as part of a strategy to integrate foreign delegations symbolically into the Ottoman administrative hierarchy and to maintain state oversight over their activities. Honoring the members of the delegation aimed to encourage their loyalty to Ottoman legislation, primarily the 1884 Antiquities Regulation. Taken together, the visit of the Emperor’s sons and the conferment of these orders show two sides of the same event: a ceremonial gesture of alliance from Berlin was met with a ceremonial gesture of recognition from Istanbul, both playing out through the same excavation. In conclusion, the orders conferred upon the excavation team by the Ottoman Empire, beyond individual awards, were also concrete indicators that archaeological studies were viewed as a field of interstate diplomacy and that the relevant activities were institutionalized through the approval of official authorities.

6. Legislative Practices and the Search for Legal Assurance in the Miletus Excavations (1904–1907)

The Miletus excavation permit, renewed in 1904 as a continuation of institutional collaboration, provided the field activities with a new momentum. During this process under the leadership of Director General Schöne, the Berlin Museums submitted an official application through the embassy to extend the permit duration for one more year. The Ottoman Empire approved the request on the condition of full compliance with the provisions of the Antiquities Regulation, and the permit duration was extended for the year 1905. The high-quality scientific data obtained during the 1904 season strengthened the excavations’ administrative legitimacy while also defining the methodological framework for future studies.⁵¹

During the 1905 excavation season, the German delegation requested that the artifacts unearthed during the excavations be kept for scientific examination purposes at the site for a while longer before being shipped to Istanbul. It, thus, becomes clear that the excavation activities were not limited to fieldwork, and that the classification and shipment processes of the finds were also the subject of administrative and diplomatic negotiations. The request to delay the dispatch of artifacts recovered from Miletus and other excavation centers to Istanbul reveals that the procedures regarding the transportation of antiquities were handled within

⁴⁹ Mustafa Aydın, “Mordtmann, Johannes Heinrich,” in *DİA*, vol. 30 (Istanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2020), 287–88.

⁵⁰ See Table 1 for the list of recipients.

⁵¹ BOA, İrade Hususi (İ.HUS.), 130/23 (8 R. 1323 [12 June 1905]).

the framework of a negotiation process conducted between the central administration and the excavation delegation.⁵²

This issue of shipment was, on the one hand, a matter of administrative correspondence, and, on the other, closely related to the way the provisions of the 1884 Antiquities Regulation were implemented. Indeed, the German Embassy requested that Wiegand be exempted from the provision in Article 22 of the regulations which stated, “A person shall not be permitted to conduct excavations in several places simultaneously,” on the grounds that the excavations he conducted were not a personal venture but an official duty.⁵³ The Ottoman Empire accepted this request, notifying that the aforementioned restriction would not be applied to Wiegand and that the extension of the excavation permits for another year was deemed appropriate.⁵⁴ Article 22 of the 1884 Regulations aimed to ensure the centralized oversight of excavations, prevent monopolization, and limit the expansion of foreign delegations over a broad area by prohibiting a single individual from excavating in multiple locations simultaneously. The evaluation of Wiegand as an official representative acting on behalf of the Berlin Royal Museums and the assertion that the excavations were conducted within the framework of a single institutional project allowed for an exception in the implementation of the provision in question. This case demonstrates that the regulations' provisions were interpreted flexibly within the diplomatic and strategic context of Ottoman–German relations, rather than as rigid, immutable norms.

Within this framework, although the permit duration for the excavation activities in Miletus had expired, it was decided to extend the works for another year. Furthermore, permission was granted for the artifacts unearthed during the excavations, which were planned for export, to be examined *in situ* before their shipment.⁵⁵ It becomes evident that the issues of excavation permits and the transportation of finds were handled in tandem, and that the excavations at Miletus were sustained within the framework of legal regulations and diplomatic negotiations.

⁵² According to the 1884 Antiquities Regulation, all discovered artifacts were legally the absolute property of the Ottoman Empire. The regulation required that any finds be promptly inventoried and reported to the Imperial Museum or local authorities to ensure their preservation. Under the standard procedure, artifacts were expected to be classified and prepared for shipment to Istanbul immediately following the conclusion of the excavation season to prevent loss or unauthorized removal. Therefore, the German request to retain the finds at the site for a longer period represented a significant administrative exception to the established legal framework. See BOA, BEO., 2687/201508 (12 Ca. 1323 [15 July 1905]).

⁵³ For the content of Article 22 of the 1884 Antiquities Regulation and its place in Ottoman archaeology policy, see Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası*, 45.

⁵⁴ BOA, BEO., 2685/201339 (29 Ca. 1323 [1 August 1905]).

⁵⁵ For the report dated 4 April 1905, by the Director of the Imperial Museum Osman Hamdi Bey, and its annexes, see BOA, MF.MKT., 864/44 (18 R. 1323 [22 June 1905]).

By 1906, the demands of the German side had evolved into a search for a more explicit legal framework. In a communiqué submitted that year, the German Embassy clarified that it was not requesting an amendment to the newly enacted 1906 Antiquities Regulation; rather, it was requesting an explicit legal guarantee that half of the artifacts unearthed during the Miletus excavations would belong to the Ottoman Empire and the other half to the Berlin Museums..⁵⁶ Under both the 1884 and 1906 Antiquities Regulations, all excavated antiquities belonged to the Ottoman Empire by default. Neither law provided for an automatic division of finds between excavator and state. The 50/50 division granted to the German excavations at Miletus fell outside this general framework: it originated in two imperial decrees issued in 1899, one specific to the Humann-era excavations and one worded more broadly, which the German Embassy came to treat as a standing entitlement.

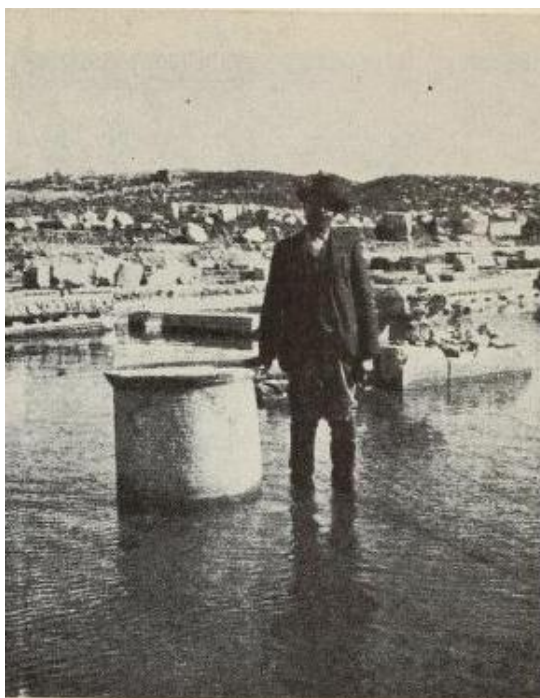


Figure 7: The Round Base (Rundbasis) in the Courtyard of the Delphinion Sanctuary at Miletus and A View of the Flooded Courtyard, 1906.⁵⁷

When the 1906 Regulation came into force, the German Embassy claimed that a secret agreement on this division had been concluded with the Ottoman Empire in 1899, and that the new law could not dissolve it. The Sublime Porte rejected this claim, insisting that no such permanent arrangement existed and that only a one-time imperial favor limited to Miletus had been granted.⁵⁸ The German Embassy was, therefore, not seeking exemption from the 1906 Regulation itself; it was seeking written confirmation that this pre-existing, Miletus-specific exception would remain valid under the new law. In this way, a technical matter, the division of excavated artifacts, was settled not through general legislation but through direct diplomatic negotiation between the two states.

⁵⁶ The document states that “it was not a matter of amending the new Antiquities Regulation (Âsar-ı Âtika Nizamnâmesi), but rather providing a legal guarantee regarding the ownership of half of the antiquities by the Ottoman Empire (Devlet-i Aliyye) and the other half by the Berlin Museum...” (BOA, BEO., 2947/220951 (1 L. 1324 [18 November 1906])).

⁵⁷ Although the person shown in the photograph is presumed to be the excavation director Theodor Wiegand, no explicit information confirming this identification is provided in the published work. See Georg Kawerau and Albert Rehm, *Das Delphinion in Milet, in Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1914), 1.

⁵⁸ Akgün, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Eski Eserler Hukuku*, 422–23.

7. Institutional Maturity and the Scientific Conclusion of the Miletus Excavations (1908–1913)

The delegation led by Theodor Wiegand, which conducted the excavation activities in Miletus, obtained a new two-year excavation permit in 1907, on the condition of adhering to the regulations.⁵⁹ By this point, the Ottoman central bureaucracy's vigilance was no longer a matter of generic institutional caution: it was informed by an accumulated record of prior friction with the German side, the covert surveillance ordered around Wiegand in 1900–1902, the 1903 dispute over the classification of "duplicate" finds, and the German Embassy's 1906 claim of a secret agreement overriding the new Antiquities Regulation. Against this background, the Grand Vizierate ordered that any situation contrary to the regulations be reported immediately to the center via ciphered telegram. Under this strict oversight, the works in Miletus continued uninterrupted until 1909.⁶⁰

As a result of the three-year intensive activities conducted between 1908 and 1910, the Miletus excavations, which spanned eleven years, were brought to the stage of practical completion. After this date, on-site scientific examinations continued for a few more years. From time to time, small complementary investigations focused on topics such as clarifying the street fabric.⁶¹ This transformation process in the field proceeded simultaneously with a high-level restructuring of duties within the Ottoman museum administration. Following the death of Osman Hamdi Bey in 1910, his brother Halil Edhem Bey (1861–1938) took over the directorship of the Imperial Museum, continuing many of the institutional policies his brother had established while adapting them to the increasingly unstable conditions of the empire's final years. Halil Edhem Bey maintained a negotiated but asymmetrical partnership between German museums and Ottoman authorities during the final years of the Empire, and with Turkish authorities after the proclamation of the Republic.⁶²

The institutional stability in administrative and technical fields also bore fruit in terms of scientific outputs. The report presented by Wiegand in 1911 constitutes a significant turning point documenting the scientific maturity attained by the Miletus and Didyma⁶³ excavations. Wiegand's report envisaged that after a period of eleven years, the large-scale excavations were practically concluded, yet scientific studies and small incomplete investigations, such as street layouts, were to continue for a few more years. Under Wiegand's leadership, the team reached a high level of institutional organization by 1911 through its specialized staffing structure, a striking departure from the prevailing excavation practice of the period, in which

⁵⁹ BOA, MF.MKT., 1010/10 (20 C. 1325 [31 July 1907]); BOA, BEO., 225009/3001 (11 M. 1325 [25 February 1907]); BOA, BEO., 229903/3066 (16 R. 1325 [29 May 1907]); BOA, Hariciye Nezâreti, Tahrirât-ı Hariciye Odası (HR.TH.), 347/116 (16 R. 1325 [29 May 1907]); BOA, Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Baş Kitabet Dairesi Maruzatı (Y.PRK.BŞK.), 77/99 (19 S. 1325 [3 April 1907]).

⁶⁰ BOA, DH.MKT., 1171/17 (16 R. 1325 [29 May 1907]).

⁶¹ Theodor Wiegand, *Siebenter vorläufiger Bericht über die von den Königlichen Museen in Milet und Didyma unternommenen Ausgrabungen*, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Anhang, Abh. I (Berlin, 1911), 3–4.

⁶² Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display*, 200.

⁶³ Didyma: Located in the present-day Didim district of Aydın and named after this ancient site, it was one of the most important prophecy and temple centers of the period, connected to the ancient city of Miletus by the "Sacred Way." See Bilge Umar, *Türkiye'deki Tarihsel Adlar* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1993), 213. The Berlin Museums had initially sought the excavation concession for the Apollo sanctuary at Didyma: in 1893–1894, the director of the Antiquarium, Reinhard Kekulé von Stradonitz, attempted to secure this concession, but the French government had already obtained it for the archaeologist Bernard Haussoullier. As a result, in Wilhelm II's own words, so as "not to let this region, rich in art-historical treasures, be seized by the French government before us," German efforts were redirected toward the neighboring site of ancient Miletus, where Carl Humann's 1894 concession request met with partial success. Following the abandonment of the unproductive French excavations at Didyma, German excavations there began in 1905. See Willert, *Kulturbesitz: Konflikte um archäologische Objekte in der deutsch-osmanischen Politik, 1898–1918*, 75–76.

a single excavator, typically self-taught, directed a body of laborers with the primary aim of recovering artifacts, and any accompanying documentation was incidental to that goal. At this date, excavation activities were no longer limited solely to the recovery of finds and had evolved into an interdisciplinary research model where architectural measurement, restitution studies, epigraphic recording, and topographic mapping were conducted simultaneously. As a concrete reflection of this organization, the team included competent figures in their respective fields, such as Hubert Knackfus and Fritz Krischen, who conducted architectural arrangements; engineer Armin von Gerkan, who carried out city planning and stadium measurements; Erich Pernice, who managed necropolis studies; epigraphist Martin Schede, who undertook the copying of inscriptions;⁶⁴ Karl Lyncker, who completed the mapping of the region; and Manfred Bühlmann, who continued architectural studies.⁶⁵ This approach transformed the Miletus excavations into an interdisciplinary research model that required coordination, aiming to conduct an archaeological excavation, on the one hand, and, on the other, to document the city's different historical layers systematically. The 1911 team constitutes a concrete example of this interdisciplinary research framework and is particularly significant in terms of demonstrating the scientific and technical capacity attained by the excavations.

According to Wiegand's report, no new large-scale excavations were conducted within the boundaries of the city of Miletus during the period between December 12, 1910, and December 16, 1913. The works during this period focused primarily on the evaluation of findings obtained in previous years, mapping procedures, and preparations for scientific publications. In short, the years 1910–1913 were an inventory and documentation phase that can be defined as the “reconstruction of Miletus on paper.”⁶⁶

At the end of the process, with the shifting of regional balances and international relations toward the close of the First World War, excavation activities assumed a predominantly diplomatic character. By this stage, formal Ottoman-German relations had been disrupted, and German interests in Istanbul appear to have come under the representation of the Swedish Embassy, acting in the customary capacity of a neutral protecting power. During this period, Martin Schede, the deputy director of the Berlin Museums, who had been conducting epigraphic studies within the excavation team since 1910, took a significant diplomatic initiative before leaving the country. Schede applied to the Swedish Embassy for the secure preservation of the excavation sites in Priene, Miletus, and Didyma, along with the equipment therein and his personal residence, requesting the protection of the excavation heritage.⁶⁷ The application reveals the diplomatic sensitivity maintained even under the shadow of the First World War, and, more specifically, in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's surrender under the Armistice of Mudros, for the sake of preserving scientific heritage and institutional property.

⁶⁴ For a detailed biography of classical archaeologist Martin Schede, his period as an assistant in the Miletus excavations, his role in excavation methodology, and his active involvement in the establishment of the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul in later years, see Arif Müfid Mansel, “Martin Schede (1883–1947),” *Belleten* 16, no. 63 (1952): 407–18.

⁶⁵ Wiegand, *Siebenter vorläufiger Bericht*, 3–6.

⁶⁶ Theodor Wiegand, “Achter vorläufiger Bericht über die von den Staatlichen Museen in Milet und Didyma unternommenen Ausgrabungen,” *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, no. 1 (1924): 4–8.

⁶⁷ BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti İdare-i Umumiye Evrakı (DH.İ.UM.), 5/2 (5 Ra. 1337 [9 December 1918]).



Figure 8: The Market Gate of Miletus, Unearthed During Theodor Wiegand's Excavations at Miletus and Exhibited in the Miletus Hall of the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, 26 July 2023 (Photograph by Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz).



Figure 9: The Architectural Elements Opposite the Market Gate of Miletus, Exhibited in the Miletus Hall of the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, 18 June 2011 (From the Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz Archive).

8. The War Period and the Fate of the Excavation Heritage

Although fieldwork at Miletus had effectively concluded by 1913, the First World War did not immediately sever German archaeological engagement with the Ottoman Empire. Wiegand himself joined the German army as an artillery captain and, with the support of Fourth Army commander Cemal Pasha, established the German-Turkish Squad for the Protection of Monuments (Deutsch-Türkische Denkmalschutzkommando), which conducted archaeological and aerial-photographic work in Syria and Palestine between 1916 and 1918, a continuation, in wartime guise, of the same Ottoman-German archaeological collaboration

examined throughout this article.⁶⁸

By 1918, despite the extraordinary conditions created by the war, it is understood that certain limited activities were still carried out at Milet by the German team.⁶⁹ During this period, the protection of antiquities scattered across the excavation areas and trenches became a primary concern. Administrative measures were taken to collect these artefacts and place them in suitable enclosed spaces for safekeeping.⁷⁰ This situation documents the bureaucratic efforts undertaken to protect movable cultural heritage from looting and destruction, even under the adverse conditions of wartime.

The condition of the numerous collapsed architectural blocks uncovered during the excavations and dispersed across the site was also closely monitored during this period. The preservation in situ of elements such as portions of the foundations, the ground floor of the niche wall, and components of the water system provided a solid basis for future restoration processes. However, such an extensive programme of restoration, restitution, and documentation required nearly nine years of sustained work.⁷¹ Ultimately, the occupation movements in Western Anatolia severely undermined the security of the excavation areas. Prior to the occupation of Söke, the fate of a number of antiquities located among the ruins at Akköy (Milet), along with four crates of finds, became one of the final and most tragic records reflecting the chaotic conditions of the period.⁷²

This continuity ended abruptly with the collapse of the Ottoman-German alliance: following the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, Istanbul severed diplomatic relations with Germany and ordered all German military and civilian nationals to leave within one month, a measure that explicitly included German archaeological personnel; formal diplomatic relations between the two states would not be restored until 1924.⁷³

The application reveals the diplomatic sensitivity maintained even under the shadow of the First World War, and, more specifically, in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's surrender under the Armistice of Mudros, for the sake of preserving scientific heritage and institutional property. Across the whole of this history, the same three institutions kept reappearing in different combinations: the Foreign Ministry, which handled permits and diplomatic requests; the interior administration, which carried out day-to-day oversight through its provincial officials; and the Imperial Museum, which held technical and legal authority over the finds. No single one of these bodies controlled the excavation on its own. Sovereignty over Miletus was exercised through the constant back-and-forth between them — sometimes coordinated, sometimes strained. Schede's final request is a case in point: addressed not to the Foreign Ministry but to the Interior Ministry, it followed the same administrative path the excavation had followed since its earliest years, right up to the moment it ended.

⁶⁸ Edhem Eldem, *Nazlı'nın Defteri: Osman Hamdi Bey'in Çevresi*, 120.

⁶⁹ BOA, MÜZ.ARK., 89/89.

⁷⁰ BOA, MÜZ.ARK., 95/1.

⁷¹ Hülsen, *Das Nymphaeum*, 1–3.

⁷² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA), 180.9.0.0. 29, 160-7.

⁷³ Willert, *Kulturbesitz*, 11, 777–78.



Figure 10: The gallery displaying artifacts brought from Miletus was exhibited in the Miletus, Didyma and Samos Hall of the Altes Museum in Berlin, 29 June 2011 (Photograph by Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz).



Figure 11: The Lion of Miletus, unearthed during Theodor Wiegand's excavations at Miletus and exhibited at the Altes Museum in Berlin, 26 July 2023 (Photography by Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz).

Conclusion

The Miletus excavations demonstrate a multilayered process of institutionalization, in which the technical expertise of German archaeology intersected, from 1899 to 1913, with the bureaucratic oversight mechanisms of the Ottoman state. Within this period, archaeology became increasingly entangled with diplomacy from the late nineteenth century onward, evolving into a field in which the cultural representation and sovereign rights of the two empires were articulated and negotiated.

The excavation team under Theodor Wiegand did not limit itself to uncovering

monumental structures; it developed an interdisciplinary model of documentation, combining architectural measurement, epigraphy, and topographic mapping, that, as this article has argued, bears a modest resemblance to later digital humanities practices. This technical capacity was matched, at every stage, by Ottoman administrative and financial oversight under the Antiquities Regulations. The renewal of excavation permits and the requirement of a resident commissioner reflect a sustained Ottoman effort to assert sovereign control over archaeological activity in the field; the surveillance of Wiegand himself in Hüdavendigâr province, though a more isolated episode, points to a similar institutional caution extending even to individual foreign scholars.

The study's central contribution lies in tracing how the classification of "duplicate artifacts" became entangled with the logistical financing arrangement reached between the German and Ottoman states. The Imperial Museum's limited budget made covering transportation costs an attractive basis for releasing pieces judged dispensable, a classification that, as this article has shown, was rarely a neutral technical matter and rested largely with the German excavation team itself.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Ottoman sovereignty over antiquities was neither simply asserted nor simply lost. It was exercised, unevenly and often under financial constraint, through the everyday coordination of permits, oversight, and classification disputes examined here. Future research extending this framework to other German-led excavations in the late Ottoman Empire would help establish whether the pattern observed at Miletus reflects a broader administrative logic or the particular circumstances of a single, well-documented case.

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Summary

This study examines the archaeological excavations conducted at Miletus under Theodor Wiegand between 1899 and 1913, focusing on cultural diplomacy, archaeological research, and heritage management in the late Ottoman Empire. During the nineteenth century, German archaeological institutions expanded their activities in western Anatolia with the support of the Royal Museums of Berlin and the Prussian Academy of Sciences. Miletus became an important centre of German archaeological research, while the Ottoman administration sought to regulate foreign excavations through legal and bureaucratic mechanisms.

Drawing on Ottoman archival documents, German excavation reports, and scholarly publications, the study investigates the administrative procedures, diplomatic negotiations, and financial arrangements shaping the Miletus excavations. Particular attention is given to excavation permits, archaeological supervision, artifact division, and the Ottoman Antiquities Regulations (*Âsâr-ı Atîka Nizamnâmeleri*). The research demonstrates that archaeological cooperation involved competing institutional interests and unequal technical capacities.

Following Carl Humann's initiatives in 1894, systematic excavations began under Wiegand in 1899. These activities introduced architectural documentation, topographical surveys, and interdisciplinary research methods. However, the excavations remained subject to Ottoman supervision. Permit renewals, the appointment of an Ottoman commissioner, and the monitoring of Wiegand's activities illustrate the state's determination to maintain authority over foreign archaeological missions.

A central issue concerns the division and transportation of archaeological finds. In 1903, financial difficulties prevented the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*) from transporting certain monumental artifacts to Istanbul. Consequently, arrangements permitted objects classified as duplicates or considered of limited importance to be transferred to German institutions in exchange for transportation expenses. Osman Hamdi Bey evaluated the legal implications of these arrangements. Nevertheless, artifact classification depended substantially on German expertise, creating an imbalance between Ottoman legal authority and German scientific influence. The transfer and reconstruction of the Market Gate of Miletus in Berlin exemplify this relationship.

The 1906 Antiquities Regulations further highlighted tensions between Ottoman sovereignty and German archaeological interests. While Ottoman authorities sought to preserve state ownership and administrative oversight, German representatives attempted to maintain previously negotiated privileges. These disputes demonstrate that archaeological cooperation depended on continuing diplomatic negotiations rather than unrestricted foreign access.

The study concludes that the Ottoman Empire was not a passive participant in German archaeological activities. It exercised legal and bureaucratic authority over excavation permits, artifact ownership, and preservation policies. Nevertheless, financial limitations and disparities in technical expertise restricted the effectiveness of these mechanisms. The Miletus excavations therefore illustrate a structural asymmetry between Ottoman administrative sovereignty and German scientific authority, offering a perspective on cultural diplomacy and heritage management in the late Ottoman Empire.