The “Exhibition of Turkish History” was organized in parallel to the Second Congress of Turkish History held on September 20-26, 1937, by the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) at Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul. The exhibition was planned to accompany and materialize the papers of the congress where different aspects of the Turkish History Thesis were to be shared with an international audience for the first time.

Developed in early 1930’s, the Turkish History Thesis regarded all cultures of Anatolia from prehistory to Republic of Turkey as of Turkish origin (albeit in varying degrees). Thus, the displays at Dolmabahçe Palace encompassed various archaeological and historical cultural layers from Anatolia and its surrounding regions. Beginning with human evolution and continuing in chronological sequences of different cultures (Sumerian, Egyptian, Hittite, Minoan, Etruscan, Uyghur, Avar, Seljuk, Mamluk, Ottoman etc.), the exhibition ended with displays on the young republic’s achievements. In total, the exhibition contained more than 600 objects that were supported by photographs, artefact copies, models, and maps.

This talk aims to present an overview of the exhibition’s contents with brief comments on the era’s perceptions of history and archaeology.

Merve Özkılıç received her B.A. degree in archaeology from Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts and M.Sc. degree in history of architecture from Istanbul Technical University where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate (preparing her dissertation on “Perception and Heritage Value of Classical Antiquity in Art and Architecture of Early Turkish Republic”). She has worked in different projects as an archaeologist, translator/editor, and exhibition content editor/developer. She works as project coordinator at Koç University’s Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (GABAM) since 2017.