

ARIT LECTURE

Materialization of Turkish History Thesis: The Exhibition of 1937 Congress of Turkish Historical Society

by Merve Özkılıç

at ANAMED Auditorium and on ZOOM

Tuesday, April 11, 2023, 6:00 pm Istanbul

In person lecture at ANAMED Auditorium, İstiklal Caddesi, 181, Merkez Han, Beyoğlu

For livestreaming on zoom, please register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84451222222>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



Photograph from Türk Tarih Kurumu Arşivi/Archive of Turkish Historical Society. Entrance of 1937 Exhibition of Turkish History; bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by Josef Thorak.

The band above the map on the floor contains a quote from Atatürk: *Tarih yazmak tarih yapmak kadar mühimdir. Yazan yapana sadık kalmazsa değişmeyen hakikat insanlığı şaşirtacak bir mahiyet alır.* [Writing history is as important as making history. If the writer does not remain true to the maker, then the unchangeable reality transforms into a confusing matter for humanity.]

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.