**Title:** The Use of Friday Sermons (*Khutbahs*) As Ideological State Tools in the Early Turkish Republic

By Asst. Prof. Akile Zorlu, METU

**Date:** 07 December 2023, Thursday

**Time:** 16.30

**Venue:** AZ-31 Seminar Room

Abstract:

As a successor state to the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic embarked on a comparatively radical journey of westernization from the outset. With the 1930s ideological and cultural dimensions came into play to serve nation-building efforts and collective identity formation attempts. The state operated through the medium of religion as well: using the Turkish language for the delivery of Friday sermons (khutbah) at mosques and prescribing their content were manifest examples of that enterprise.

The Friday sermons presented an especially significant agent in communicating the administration’s vision to the more conservative segments of society that remained rather communal in nature and continued with their habitual mosque attendance practices. Since the General Directorate of Religious Affairs published the texts, the ideological and cultural dimensions that the ruling elite sought to instill found direct echo in the sermons. Additionally, the delivery of the state’s vision in a religious tone and guise made it more credible and acceptable to these social segments.

This talk aspires to uncover what sort of ideals, values, ideas, expectations and views the state wanted to ingrain through the control of the Friday sermons by a detailed content analysis of the first Turkish khutbah books written, published, and distributed by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1927 and 1928 respectively. I hope to unearth and classify the underlying essence defining the state’s views in those texts. Specifically, the major themes and the framework that the state aspired to ingrain through the control of the Friday sermons’ content constitutes the core of the presentation.

*Bio:*

Akile Zorlu received her B.A. degree in Western Languages and Literatures from Boğaziçi University in İstanbul, her M.A. degree in European History from Bilkent University in Ankara, and her Ph.D. degree in Ottoman-Turkish History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Currently she is a member of the Department of History at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. Her research interests include Ottoman-Turkish modernization, identity formation, intellectual history, and nation-building.