Ringvorlesung Turkologie Wintersemester 2025/2026 | Beyond the Codex: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Manuscript Cultures, October 8, 2025 – January 21, 2025, 5PM-6:30PM, Hybrid Event, University of Vienna, Department of Near Eastern Studies (Hörsaal)

Tracing the oral-written interface: Vernacular crafts' codices in Central Asia (18th-early 21st centuries)

Abstract

Crafts' codices (*risāla-yi kasb, kasb risālasi, kasbnāma*) were popular, vernacular texts that disseminated essential religious knowledge, narratives about saints and aspects of a pious way to earn a living from crafts and service professions. Thus, they are a rare window into the cultural worlds of the (mostly urban) working population of Central Asia and beyond before the advent of various hues of socialism, modernism and Islamic puritanism during the 20th century. Today, the *risāla* survives only in vestiges and leads a niche existence, predominantly in museums and archives. A particular feature of the *risāla* is their oscillation between written and oral forms of transmission; they rely on performative elements, have multiple variations of a core text or topic, code-switching, and are difficult to grasp with traditional methods of edition philology. This presentation will discuss interdisciplinary approaches to these texts that take their multilingualism, variability and performative faculties seriously, and show in how far these enable a new understanding of the *risāla* but also of vernacular genres more generally.

Bio

Jeanine Dağyeli is assistant professor at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Vienna and research associate at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences. She holds an MA and PhD in Central Asian Studies from Humboldt University, Berlin. Her research focuses on modern Central Asia (18th century – today) with an interest in human-environment relations, labour, vernacular textual records and heritage. The presentation is based on material collected for her PhD and a later project funded by Volkswagen Foundation, and is part of an ongoing research collaboration with Uzbek colleagues to edit and comment these texts.