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)

Elite Translation Projects in the Tulip Period: Material Evidence and Cultural Context

In the early eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire saw a marked surge in translation, especially in historiography, under the patronage of Grand Vizier Dāmād İbrāhīm Paşa. This lecture examines the aims, processes, and cultural implications of translating major historical works from Arabic and Persian into Ottoman Turkish, including Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī's (d. 855/1451) *ʿIqd al-Jumān* ("The Pearl Necklace") and Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn Muḥammad Khvāndamīr's (d. 942/1535–36) *Ḥabīb al-Siyar* ("Beloved of Careers"). Although the prefaces present these translations as efforts to broaden access to historical knowledge, the involvement of numerous actors and substantial resources suggests wider cultural and political stakes. Drawing on surviving manuscripts, the lecture investigates who translated what and how the texts were adapted for their intended readers. It argues that these undertakings were not isolated, but part of a broader cultural movement characterized by bibliophilic activities and the founding of libraries. They were also shaped by contemporary geopolitics – above all, Ottoman expansion in the Safavid Caucasus and northwestern Iran – which heightened interest in Safavid history and encouraged the translation of Persian works.

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