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Project Description

Depiction and Interpretations of War in Early Modern Travelogues to the Ottoman Empire

The conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453 not only set the Byzantine Empire to a final end, it also triggered a mental shock among the intellectual elites in West Europe. For more than two centuries, the Ottoman expansion had a lasting impact on religious and political discourse in Europe. The continual military conflicts with the Ottoman Empire in Southeastern and Central Europe (in German often referred as *Türkenkriege*) favoured the emergence of a specific alterity discourse called *Turkish menace* or *Türkengefahr* that postulated a threat to the entire western Christianity by the Islamic 'Turks'. The invention of the printing press enabled the mass reproduction of so-called *Turcica* in which the 'atrocities' and 'profanity' by the Turks were depicted in detail. A more differential image was delivered by authors who travelled to Constantinople in person and recorded their observations in travelogues, a very popular literary genre in those times.

The aim of this PhD project is to examine in detail the depiction and interpretations of war in travelogues to the Ottoman Empire. Following the focus of the Research Training Group 2304, these travelogues appear to be of particular interest. On the one hand, the authors often encounter ancient antiquities during their travels, as well as Christian-Orthodox populations and let them refer to the gone Byzantium repeatedly. On the other hand, the authors devoted a great deal of attention to their reports of the Ottoman state and especially to its military system, as well as to war in general. Travelogues can thus be read as sources for expressions of culture of war, but also as sources of European concepts of war. Considering the concept of the linguistic turn, the project will analyze how 'war' is a theme in these travelogues, starting with the depiction of warfare and the impact of war in society, continuing the legitimization of war, and finally leading to the religious interpretation of the ottoman superiority. A focus of the research project will lie on the change in discourse of the *Turkish menace* up to the 'triumph' over the Turks at the beginning of the 18th century. The text corpora is based on reports of travellers who reached Constantinople over land via the Balkan Peninsula, which applies mostly to authors from Central Europe. The authors should be diverse in national, confessional, and biographical character in order to provide different perspectives. Most of the travelogues are by authors from the Holy Roman Empire. For comparison, travelogues by authors from other European Countries (such as Dutch or English) should also be exemplary evaluated. Since only European sources are used, it is crucial to consider the results of the Edward Saids *Orientalism*. Therefore, the findings will be used as interpretation in the broader context of the *Turkish menace*. Previous research, mostly in German, has shown that this approach is quite perceptive in setting up the *Türkengefahr* as an image of enemy in the 15th century and its impact until the middle of the 16th century. Such research approaches are unfortunately rare for the late 16th as well as the 17th century.