



## Project Description

### **“Constantinople 1453 – conquest or fall? Constructions of history in the principal sources of late Byzantine historiography”**

Changes of rule and power never happen at a specific point in time. Rather, they are described as events that were long in the making, and as predictable events that would have brought about a fundamental upheaval of established patterns of thought, perception and action. Nevertheless, contemporary authors sometimes seem to be literally struggling for words to verbalise and comprehend what actually happened: on the one hand, the 'vacuum' created by recent events holds innovative potential for writing, as new material is created and alternative narrative strategies become conceivable. On the other hand, namely this writing process also proves to be a destructive act through the selection and linking of individual narrative strands while simultaneously refraining from other elements that are perceived as inappropriate. Writing about the end of rulership – which is also writing about history – means both preserving and destroying memory at the same time. Hardly any other event evoked such a great resonance in late medieval Christianity as the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453: But how did especially Byzantine authors deal with the mixture of disorientation and productive vacuum, forgetting and repressing, and remembering and processing? What specific strategies were developed in order to make sense of the upheaval of the Ottoman conquest? In what form were already established narrative patterns used and what content could be attributed to them in new contexts? And to what extent can these new generated narratives be understood as a discourse that coped with the double conflict of experienced foreign domination on the one hand and the threat of the end of the world on the other in a productive way?