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Projektbeschreibung

The war of the princes and the suffering of the monks and peasants. Perception of the consequences of war and the conceptualisation of actors and victims of military conflicts in sources from the staufer period

War and feuds were omnipresent in the Middle Ages, and there was hardly an adult who did not come into contact with them during their lifetime. In addition to the combatants in the rather rare open battles, many population groups were affected by military violence. My project is concerned with the historiography of the 12th century Staufer period from the Empire and the (non-)use of violence against the unarmed population described therein.

The aim is to go beyond the topoi and panegyric of war historiography to ask whether and to what extent moral categories can be identified that guided either the authors' depictions and judgements or the motives and actions of the actors and the perception of those affected. Authors such as Otto of Freising or Arnold of Lübeck supposedly wrote consistently positive things about their patrons, but between the lines we can read the ruler's moral scope for action, which probably reflected the catalogue of norms of their respective courts. If rulers and military leaders violated this catalogue of norms, this was sanctioned or criticised by historiographers, sometimes openly, sometimes subtly. It is therefore essential to take a close look at the genesis of the respective work, as this is the only way to determine the author's attitude towards the person using violence and the victims. People of other faiths had an excess of violence against them to blame, while their own brutality was demonised as immoral. When were the victims of violence who shared the same faith protected and when was violence against them justified, and how was it legitimised? Were there ideas of regional or national affiliation that reinforced the use of violence? Was the renunciation of violence recognised within the framework of the courtly catalogue of norms, or was it interpreted as weakness? Did the use of violence differentiate between men and women, believers and non-believers, warriors, clerics and those in need of protection or innocents, or did everyone suffer the same fate? The respective attitudes towards religion and ethics are also presented differently by the authors and play a role in the investigation.

The aim of the work is a comprehensive examination of the available sources in order to compile and discursively conceptualise the depictions of violence in the historiography of the 12th century Staufer period. By keeping the time period narrow, the different contexts in which the authors write are to be pushed into the background in order to be able to work out the commonalities as patterns of representation and judgement in historiography.