

Maria Rukavichnikova

Hegelstraße 59, Raum 05-309 | 55122 Mainz |
mrukavic@uni-mainz.de



Project Description

War Discourse in Times of Crisis: Authorial Strategies in Byzantine Historical Literature of the 14th century

Maria proposes to study the Byzantine war discourse of the 14th century. In particular, she plans on examining the abovementioned imagery and its development as presented in the texts of Nikephoros Gregoras and John Kantakouzenos as well as in rhetoric and hagiography of the period. Maria's work will include case studies of the images of emperors, namely the images of Andronikos II, Andronikos III Palaiologos, and the imperial self-portrayal of Kantakouzenos, as well as military textual discourse surrounding these rulers. Among other things, Maria intends to focus on the authorial strategies Kantakouzenos used to portray the emperors during the times of war within the framework of his Histories.

Maria intends to conduct a close reading of the aforementioned body of important but understudied texts. Anthony Kaldellis suggests that to study text closely on its own terms is the way towards deeper understanding of Byzantine history. Maria's aim, therefore, is to establish rules according to which every text functions, employing, among others, the narratological methodological approach, i. e. analysing the discursive presentation of the narration of events. Once the researcher starts to read historical as well as rhetorical and hagiographical texts closely, a number of similarities but also differences in authors' writing styles reveal themselves. The phenomenon can be explained if one were to look at the reasons behind the usage of every topos in the text. It is vital to understand what idea the author was trying to convey and how their usage differs from the other Byzantine authors. Maria believes that topoi, especially military ones, should be looked at without any limitations in scope not only as literary motifs with genre specific connotations but also as symbols in a wider social context.