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Images of the Nation and Concepts of Europe in French and German History Textbooks, 1871-1914

Abstract

This contribution is a comparative study of crusade portrayals in French and German history textbooks published between 1871 and 1914. It asks to what extent images of Europe are shaped by crusade narratives, or whether they are rather dominated by national and sub-national (denominational, Laicist ...) factors. Although in this nationalist age both of these neighbouring countries had consigned themselves to national history and thus the glorification of one's own nation, the textbooks nevertheless reveal highly varied portrayals of different concepts of the nation, conveyed via crusade narratives.

In a prize-winning book for young people by Gustave Hubault and Émile Marguerin, one that has been praised by the *Académie Française* and, since the 1860s, often awarded as a book prize to particularly bright pupils, we find the following lines:

Crusade! Of what incomparable movement does this very word remind us! Nothing but great feats of battle, acts of selflessness and sacrifice; remembrance of which is, for the most part, the glorious heritage of France. For the chronicles have called the great deeds of the holy war "God's deeds carried out by the French", and two great men of our race, Godfrey of Bouillon and Louis IX, began and ended the era with the same faith, the same devotion and the same courage.¹

This quotation illustrates the central role played by crusade narratives in the construction of the nation and its glorious past. It contains the essential components of such a construct: unusual, selfless acts of war stand for the faith of each individual in and the willingness to sacrifice for the nation. The shared struggle of the 'French' symbolises the community bound together by a common destiny. The terms 'glorious' and 'remembrance' link the past and present of the nation. In such collective memories great moments such as the crusades are nationally appropriated.

Crusade narratives are central features of both French textbooks and their German counterparts that inspire in pupils an emotional connection to their nation's past. On both sides, the crusades were nationalised as deeds in the

¹ Gustave Hubault and Émile Marguerin, *Les grandes époques de la France des origines à la Révolution* (Paris: Delagrave, 1879), 139.

'heritage of memory' (Ernest Renan). This article will therefore address the following questions: Why did an event that had moved practically all of Europe in the Middle Ages become a point of focus in history textbooks for these two *nations*? Which different images of the nation were conveyed via this *European* event? How might the tension between nationalism and concepts of Europe be described using the crusade narratives?

I will begin by outlining the connections between national myths, historical scholarship and crusade discourse, which are of central importance for my study. Secondly, I will present the first results from my analyses of French textbooks, comparing them with some German examples in order to illuminate converging and diverging aspects.

National Myths, Historical Scholarship and Crusade Discourse

In my study I focus on the crusade myths conveyed in textbooks. I understand myths as an aspect of the narrative staging of the nation. They convey a specific memory of the national past and thus constitute an important part of the nation's cultural memory, not only via national holidays, days of remembrance, the dedication of memorials, etc., but also via school textbooks. During the period in question, textbooks were responsible for a significant portion of cultural memory as conveyed by media and were conceived as the „continued work of reconstructed imagination“² of a society.³ History textbooks in particular ensure, via language, images and rituals, the national interpretation of a historical narrative as conveyed to future citizens. As the nation was structured around a broad population stratum, the schools of the Third Republic and Imperial Germany could be regarded as places in which the nation established traditions via education and socialisation.⁴ The national histories of 19th-century France and Germany were thus conveyed via textbooks and collectively renewed there and re-experienced, time and again.

² "[F]ortlaufende Arbeit rekonstruktiver Imagination": Jan Assmann, quoted in Daniel Levy, "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis", in: *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Christian Gudehus, Ariane Eichenberg and Harald Welzer, eds. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 95.

³ Especially from the 1870s onwards, the production of textbooks was increased considerably and they can be considered the most important medium for knowledge transfer for young people in Germany and France. "On German textbooks cf. Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, „Konditionierung von Geschichtsbewusstsein. Schulgeschichtsbücher als nationale Autobiographien“, in: *Historisches Bewusstsein und politisches Handeln in der Geschichte*, Jerzy Topolski, ed. (Poznań: UaM, 1994), 8. On French textbooks, still considered dangerous vehicles of subversive ideas until the Third Republic, cf. Christian Amalvi, *Les héros de l'Histoire de France. Recherche iconographique sur le panthéon scolaire de la troisième République* (Paris: Phot'oeil, 1979), 27-28.

⁴ Rudolf Speth, "Die Funktion von Mythen und Heldenfiguren für die Entstehung des Nationalbewusstseins," in: *Was ist deutsch? Aspekte zum Selbstverständnis einer grübelnden Nation*, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, ed. (Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2006), 34.

Jan Assmann has described the transformation process from “factual history to remembered history and thus to myth”.⁵ The same can be said of the way in which historians of the 19th century dealt with the ‘facts’ they found in sources. Nineteenth-century historiography is equally conceived as a key medium of cultural memory, as – just like any other memory – it is ‘dependent on epoch and interests’ (Jan Assmann), as well as ‘subject to conscious and subconscious mechanisms of selection’ (Peter Burke).⁶ With their interpretation and conveyance of historical events, historians contributed to the metamorphosis of memory into myths, which in turn were equipped with specific functions and qualities.

Probably the most important function of myths, especially for 19th-century nationalism, was their capacity to refer to the future whilst recounting past events, thus forming a certain continuum. Consequently, a myth depicted the past with the aim of constructing reality, as indeed was a peculiarity of 19th-century national historiography.⁷ These myths could be used to propagate certain concepts of identity, political unity and political values that would imbue the ‘imagined community’ (Benedict Anderson) of the nation with meaning.

Just like the historical scholarship of the time, the textbook authors also had recourse to historical myths. To a certain extent, historical scholarship of the 19th century was assigned a very similar function. As a result, it constructed a tradition built around the nation-state by means of reduction and glorification. The structural idea of the ‘nation’ was to be legitimised by giving it a past, a reconstruction of a long narrative from the origins of the nation up to the present day. Recourse to myths could fulfil the needs of national historiography for clear origins, distinct structures, fixed identities and plausible objectives. The concept of a historical scholarship in the service of the nation-state was a development to be observed in Germany as well as in France, albeit in each case with specific characteristics. France used the mythologised national history in order to overcome societal unease following the upheaval caused by the defeat in the Franco-German War as well as the founding of the Third Republic, transforming disgrace into a good omen of great things to come. In Germany, on the other hand, the empire myth served to trace the new, such as the empire and the united German nation, back to the old, and to legitimise Prussia’s claim to power.

A discursive procedure assigns the narratives of the crusades in the textbooks analysed semantic features (mythemes), which provide the framework for the myths’ interpretations of the present. A crusade narrative could thus be understood as a national myth insofar as it satisfied the need of both France and Germany for a ‘sanctified’ national past in the light of their upheaval-torn pre-

⁵ “[F]aktische Geschichte in erinnerte Geschichte und damit in Mythos”: Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1992), 52.

⁶ Sabine Moller, “Das kollektive Gedächtnis”, in: *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Christian Gudehus, Ariane Eichenberg and Harald Welzer, ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 87.

⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, quoted in Wolfgang Müller-Funk, *Die Kultur und ihre Narrative. Eine Einführung* (Vienna: Springer, 2002), 106.

sent. As the following examples will show, these semantic attributions point towards a 'sanctified' golden age of a national past that was once 'reality' and must be 'brought back to life'.⁸

The attribution of mythemes is particularly striking in portrayals of heroes within the crusade narratives. Heroes often played a key role in the German and French crusade myths. By focusing on these individuals, the narrative is lent certain dynamics, and the personification process allows for an improved national identification. A portrayal of a mythical hero not only fulfils a moral and exemplary function; the hero also embodies a concept of the nation as an homogeneous whole or as 'one person of flesh and blood' to be loved and protected.⁹

The French authors and teachers in particular emphasised that the pupils would learn best from the lives of 'great men'. The opening quotation from 'Les grandes époques' shows that on the French side the entire crusade narrative is centred around two heroes: Godfrey of Bouillon and Saint Louis – Louis IX. There is a close connection between myths and heroes. Heroes are larger, stronger and more courageous than a 'normal person'; their extraordinary characteristics and deeds lend them a mythical component and are ideal threads to be woven into the mythical narrative cloth. Heroic myths are particularly suited for an analysis of images of the nation as they are constructions, much like the nation itself. A hero acts as a collective ideal, yet at the same time offers an individual perspective on the nation's history that he represents. Identifying with the nation via a hero and his deeds for the fatherland was an indispensable means of patriotic education in schools. The pedagogical power of myths thus gained particular influence over heroic narratives.¹⁰

And so, other than because of their emotional potential mentioned above, why is it that the crusade narratives in particular took on such a central position in textbooks? One factor is the generally romanticised enthusiasm of the time for the Middle Ages and the Orient. Secondly, various political and socio-cultural events contributed to a heightened interest in the subject matter, such as Napoleon's Egypt expedition of 1798. Chateaubriand's *Le génie du christianisme* (1802) initially gave rise to a zeal for all things medieval and influenced the invitation by the Institut français (1806), while French historian Joseph-François Michaud decided to write a complete history of the crusades (1812-1822). The German historian Friedrich Wilken had begun his seven-part 'History of the Crusades' a few years earlier, although he only completed it in 1832. The success of the historical novels by Sir Walter Scott (1819-1831), in which crusaders played a significant part, showed that the interest in the Mid-

⁸ Wulf Wülfing, "Mythen und Legenden", in: *Geschichtsdiskurs. Band 3: Die Epoche der Historisierung*, Wolfgang Küttler, Jörn Rüsen and Ernst Schulin, eds. (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1997), 159-160.

⁹ Cf. Étienne François, Hagen Schulze, "Das emotionale Fundament der Nationen", in: *Mythen der Nationen. Ein europäisches Panorama*, Monika Flacke, ed. (Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 1998), 20-21.

¹⁰ Cf. George Minois, *Le culte des grands hommes. Des héros homériques au star system* (Paris: Éditions Louis Audibert, 2005), 10-11.

dle Ages and knighthood was constantly spreading, even outside of academia. This development can be followed throughout the century, with regular stimuli such as the inauguration of the 'Salles des Croisades' in the new national museum at Versailles in 1843 by King Louis-Philippe. In the Third Republic and in imperial Germany too, interest in the crusades had by no means subsided. On the contrary, the need for glorious memories of national history was even greater following the new political situation in both countries after 1871.

Textbook Analysis: Initial Results

The entire corpus of textbooks analysed comprises 40 French history textbooks, some for upper secondary level from the period 1871 to 1914, and the rest from a selection of books for young people (including the aforementioned book prize). These were compared with 20 German history textbooks.¹¹

History lessons in France and Germany followed a Eurocentric, usually chronological perspective from antiquity to the present day. The focus, however, was clearly placed on national history and other countries were usually only mentioned when relevant for the national French or German events. Although the different chapters on the Crusades in the various books allocate varying amounts of space to the topic within the context of the medieval era, they nevertheless almost without exception describe the crusades as being amongst the most defining events of the Middle Ages. Despite the large amount of freedom available to authors regarding the structure of their chapters, the majority of books seem to follow the same goal: to portray the prominent part played by one's own nation in the Crusades. Using primarily French sources, the following passages will discuss the images sketched to this purpose, addressing how they depict the Crusades as something that was also a European event.

Two quotations illustrate the overarching narrative particularly clearly and can be considered representative of nearly all French history textbooks:

1. Théodore Bachelet, a history teacher in Rouen, writes in 1876: "The crusade was a universal and spontaneous movement, the union of all Christian Europe in one and the same thought; in one and the same faith."¹²
2. Twenty years later, François Corréard, who taught at the *lycée Charlemagne*, writes: "The Orient, which while civilised was nevertheless di-

¹¹ This study focuses on portrayals in French history textbooks, while the German texts merely provide a European comparison. As a result, fewer German comparative texts are included in the analysis. For an analysis of German textbooks see the contribution by Matthias Schwerendt in this publication as well as his essay "Araber, Türken, Ungläubige. Islamrepräsentationen in Kreuzzugs-narrativen deutscher Geschichtsschulbücher des 19. Jahrhunderts", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 58, no.7/8 (2010), 627-638.

¹² Théodore Bachelet, *Histoire générale. Première partie. Cours de troisième. Comprenant la France et les autres états du moyen-âge de 395 à 1270* (Paris: Courcier, 1876), 371.

vided and already in a state of decline, was attacked by the barbaric Occident, equally divided by kingdoms and petty feudal principalities, yet united by one common faith."¹³

The common message is clear: the Crusades united Europe in the Christian faith against the common enemy in the Orient. Many textbooks name further motives alongside religious zeal that inspired so many people to take the cross, the knights' desire for battle and adventure or the hope held by serfs to be set free of their feudal duties and begin a new life in the 'Holy Land'. The common Christian faith, however, is the sole factor behind the *unity* of Europe. This is astonishing if we consider the battle between '*laïcité*' and 'Catholicism' in the Third Republic. Yet even the authors Darles and Janin, who can be counted amongst the radical writers of Laicist¹⁴ textbook contents, do not deny the significance of the Christian faith but simply name further motives.

Chapters on the Crusades often appear within the context of the reinvigoration of religious faith due to the apocalyptic spirit of the year 1000. This central narrative should not, however, be subjected to an exclusively 'religious' interpretation. Rather, we must place it in the context of the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, as an allusion to the nation that emerges from the turmoil with new strength, looking to the future with an even stronger 'faith' in its community. Concepts of Europe are appropriated *nationally* in a similar fashion. Further on in the same crusade narrative by François Corréard we read the following:

The various nations of Europe isolated and at enmity with one another, became better acquainted by uniting in a common task and fighting shoulder to shoulder.¹⁵

More features of nationalism resonate here than it might seem at first glance. Fighting shoulder to shoulder in the face of a common fate, the solidarity within the community and the willingness to make sacrifices for one another are key values of the nation that are conveyed here via a Europe narrative. The narrative on the unity of Christian Europe is thus merely the ideal framework for the national narrative, serving to highlight France as the chosen nation with a pioneer's role within Europe. I will therefore now address this national narrative as well as the various images of the nation that are shaped by it.

¹³ François Corréard, *Histoire de l'Europe et de la France depuis 395 jusqu'en 1270. Classe de troisième* (Paris: Masson, [1891] 1892), 231.

¹⁴ The often discussed term of *laïcité* is to be distinguished from secularism and considered here a specifically French phenomenon in that it was shaped by societal and historical events peculiar to France. *Laïcité* was first formally defined by the philosopher and politician Ferdinand Buisson in 1881, who stated that 'Laïcité is the result of a process of laïcisation during which the public sphere has become liberated from the power of religion. This results in the laïcist state, neutral towards all religion and free in the face of all priests', in order to ensure the 'equality of all citizens before the law' with 'rights free of religious conditions and complete freedom of religion'. Quoted in Jean Baubérot, "Säkularismus und Laizität", *Transit, Europäische Revue* 39 (2010), 49.

¹⁵ Corréard, *Histoire de l'Europe*, 231.

The narrative of national superiority forms a consistent thread through the chapters on the crusades, and shapes them considerably. Many textbooks contain a separate chapter on 'The Role of France in the Crusades'. Here we find a classification that corresponds to this imaginary thread, for example in the book *Petit cours d'histoire universelle* by Victor Duruy. He was Minister of Education in the Second French Empire and an important textbook author, whose works continued to be published in the Third Republic:

The French played the main part in the crusades. They had carried out the First Crusade. They shared the second (1147) with the Germans, the third (1189) with the English and the fourth (1203) with the Venetians. The fifth (1217) and the sixth (1228) were insignificant. The seventh (1248) and the eighth (1270) were exclusively French. The crusades historian even entitled his book *Gesta Dei per Francos*, - 'Deeds of God carried out by the Franks'. Even today, all Christians in the Orient go by one name, the Franks, regardless of which language they speak.¹⁶

It is clear from this classification of the crusades which aspects of crusade portrayals were especially highly valued in French textbooks. The leading role of the French could be especially clearly depicted for the first, seventh and eighth crusades. The 'Gesta Dei per Francos', the crusades history by Guibert de Nogent, is repeatedly referred to in order to underline the significance of the Franks, portrayed as the predecessors of the French.

The call for the First Crusade is a key event in the structure of a national narrative. For many textbook authors this is the prelude to France's dominant role. A wealth of myths emphasise the special characteristics of the French as the people 'chosen' to initiate the event from all European Christians. The call for the First Crusade is nationalised as a huge French event, both in the individual Pope Urban II with his speech and the location of

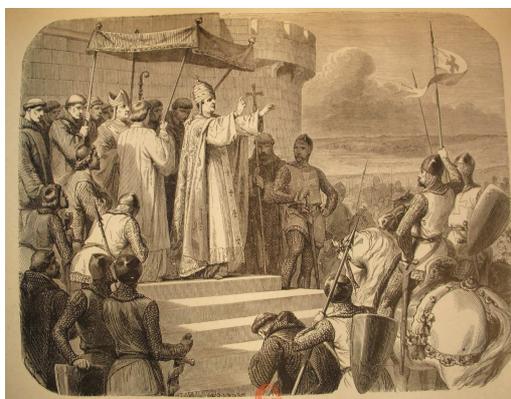


Image 1: Michaud/Poujoulat, *Histoire des Croisades abrégée à l'usage de la jeunesse*, Tours: Mame 1899.

Clermont. France is clearly distinguished from other European nations who were less responsive to the Pope's idea; the Italians, for instance, were less than enthusiastic at the Council of Piacenza. Finally, Urban II turned his hopes to France, where they were not disappointed. The French are distinguished even more clearly from other European peoples, however, by their language, which for the French plays an essential part as a 'lieu de mémoire' at several points during the crusades.

Urban II, who was French (born in Lagery in Champagne), could com-

¹⁶ Victor Duruy, *Petit cours d'histoire universelle. Petite Histoire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Hachette, 1870 and 1906), 136.

municate easily with all those present by speaking to them in their mother tongue.¹⁷

This quotation emphasises that the originator of the crusade itself, Pope Urban II, as well as all participants of the Council of Clermont were French, as they communicated in one and the same mother tongue. Although the textbook does at several points mention the significance of the regionalisation of France at that time, at this point in the crusade narrative different regional dialects are of no consequence. There is no mention of a historical development of the French language. It was the unifying mother tongue of the French nation, both during the crusades and in the Third Republic.

Communication problems are only mentioned to distinguish France from other European peoples. The unifying French mother tongue is thus at the same time a recognition factor. Germans, Italians, Englishmen and others heard the French call to take the cross and came to France, where they could only communicate in a cumbersome sign language. This depiction marks the other peoples as 'foreigners' and as inferior to the French due to their [alleged] lack of language skills.

Catholic textbook authors in particular use this narrative of the language barrier to emphasise the relevance of the Christian faith, sometimes with a quotation from the chronicler Fulcher of Chartres, for example Pater Gazeau in 1890:

Who has ever heard, exclaims a chronicler, that so many nations, so many different languages, were united in one single army? If a Breton or a Teuton came to speak to me it was impossible to answer him. But although we were divided by so many languages, we all seemed to be brothers and neighbours, united in the same spirit by the love of the Lord.¹⁸

These textbook authors with a clear Catholic and nationalist approach also present a reconstructed speech of Urban II, without naming sources and containing their own embellishments. The fundamental role of France as the 'eldest daughter of the Church' and as a chosen nation is particularly underlined:

'Men of France', he called, 'chosen and loved by God from all peoples, take the path of the Holy Sepulchre and set out on your journey, certain of the eternal glory that will await you in the kingdom of heaven!'¹⁹

¹⁷ Eugène Darsy and Théodore Toussenel, *Histoire de France. Enseignement des jeunes filles* (Paris: Delagrave, 1893), 140.

¹⁸ Le Père François Gazeau, *Histoire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Baltenweck, [1879] 1890), 316.

¹⁹ Désiré Blanchet, *Cours complet d'histoire. Histoire nationale et notions sommaires d'histoire générale depuis les origines jusqu'en 1610. Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles* (Paris: Belin, [1898] 1901), 146.

This catholic narrative can be compared with a narrative that can be considered Laicist and national. It was written by authors who, as followers of the new Laicist law of the Third Republic, were attempting to 'laicise' textbook contents as well; that is, to liberate them from narratives with a strong Catholic influence. Such obvious deviances are, however, usually the exception to the rule. Most textbook authors present a relatively unanimous picture of the role of religious faith, and of the Pope in the call for the First Crusade. The exceptions include textbooks such as that by Alfred Rambaud. Right from the beginning, he structured the crusades not in the context of the strengthening of the Church, but within that of the feudal context of striving for expansion. Palestine, then, was a goal of the French, just as previously England, Portugal and Sicily. Rambaud did not ignore the role of faith in the First Crusade; rather, he depicted religious zeal not as something positive but explained that it could lead to religious fanaticism. Such fanaticism, he explained further, affected every crusader who massacred innocent Jews in the Rhine valley and the inhabitants of entire villages in Palestine. Ultimately, he concludes:

Whether the crusaders were inspired by true Christian piety or by bloodthirsty fanaticism, it cannot be denied that religious sentiment was the primary motive behind the crusades.²⁰

With this provocative wording Rambaud confirms that religious faith was the crucial factor inspiring the crusades. Yet he also makes it clear that it gave rise to a great deal of cruelty. It is by means of such unusual phrasing and modifications of well-known narratives rather than in specifically 'Laicist' myths that the few radically Laicist textbook authors expressed their versions of the story. The Laicist national narratives can therefore be divided into two categories: the larger, more moderate category, in which the textbook narratives recognise the Christian tradition as the fundament of civilisation and part of the national past, and a much smaller category of narratives that, while no less nationalistic, they paint a clearly separatist picture, as in the case of Rambaud, and which clearly reject the role of the Church. For here too, the French nation is portrayed as 'chosen' to lead the crusade, chosen from all other European peoples.

²⁰ Alfred Rambaud, *Histoire de la civilisation française. Tome premier: Depuis les origines jusqu'à la Fronde* (Paris: Colin, 1885), 186.

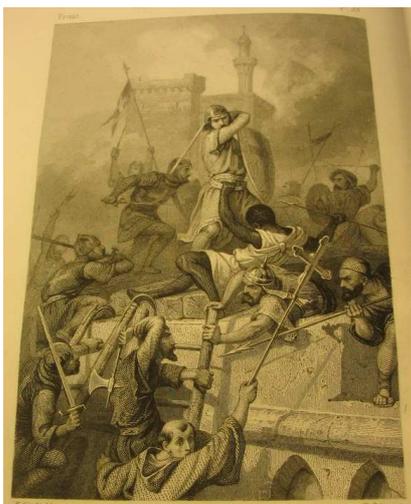


Image 2: Michaud/Poujoulat, *Histoire des Croisades abrégée à l'usage de la jeunesse*, Tours: Mame 1856.

The mythical figure of Godfrey of Bouillon was appropriated as one of the main characters of the First Crusade and a national hero by several European states during the 19th century. France, German and also Belgium claimed him as a hero of their own national histories. In all three nations he was described as an ideal medieval knight who united all chivalrous virtues, including strength and courage, modesty and piety. The French textbooks of the Third Republic also depicted Godfrey as the ideal medieval hero, as is shown by an excerpt from a textbook for girls by Désiré Blanchet from the year 1901:

The first king of Jerusalem deserved to be the hero of the crusade. Inspired by a burning and naïve piety he was often lost in prayer in the churches; modest and selfless as he was, he had sold all his worldly possessions without a profit; armed with such tremendous strength, he was ultimately dreaded by the Muslims. The heroic exploits carried out by his arm, which could cut a Turk in two with one swoop of his sword, have remained legendary in the Orient. Godfrey of Bouillon was the perfect knight and the perfect Christian.²¹

This excerpt addresses a wealth of myths surrounding the hero Godfrey in textbooks. Godfrey demonstrated his modesty and piety most emphatically by declining the crown following the capture of Jerusalem. This myth reappears in *all* the French textbooks analysed that mention Godfrey. Once the crown had been passed to – logically – the best knight in the army, Godfrey declined the honour. His modest justification was that he didn't want to wear a crown of gold while Jesus had to wear a crown of thorns. Today, research assumes that the crown was in fact first offered to Raimund of Toulouse, who declined it with the same humble reason. Godfrey obviously exploited this and, while he named the same motives for declining the crown, ultimately he did accept the honour of rule, decorating himself simply with the title 'Baron and Protector of the Holy Sepulchre'.

In French textbooks we now find the *national* appropriation of the hero Godfrey, firstly in the myths that surrounded him as the ruler of the newly founded kingdom. The characterisation and mythification of Godfrey to the lawmaker of the new kingdom of Jerusalem can be seen as specifically French, as this myth does not appear in connection with Godfrey in the German textbooks. In a large number of textbooks the new king has a new set of laws written – or

²¹ Blanchet, *Cours complet d'histoire*, 152.

perhaps he wrote them himself – based on French custom and in the French language. The authors also emphasise the pioneering character of the new set of laws, which was at the same time a reflection of French feudality, even if the latter had never possessed such a comprehensive and complete code of order before. Godfrey of Bouillon thus not only created a new set of laws as the ruler of Jerusalem, but even produced an improved version of those already existent in France.

This myth of a French-inspired kingdom of Jerusalem is detailed further in some textbooks and once again language plays a central part. Abbot Courval explains it in his textbook of 1883 as follows:

French was spoken in the whole of Palestine. It was the language of politics, brought by the Normans from one end of the world to the other and established there; in England, in Italy, and in the Orient.²²

The myth of the French language as a kind of official language is used here to emphasise its general significance and distribution as an identifying feature of the nation, not only in Palestine but all over the world. This repeated emphasis of the spread of French must also be considered in the direct context of the Third Republic and the aim to 'universalise' French and to eliminate local dialects via the institution of the school. A textbook of 1876 by Théodore Bachelet phrases it in a particularly striking – and unique – manner:

Palestine was like a new France; the people spoke French and all westerners in the Orient went by the name of the Franks.²³

It is astonishing that both the character of Godfrey and the national features of 'language' and 'feudal law' appear in a similar form in almost all textbooks. It is difficult to filter out a specifically Catholic and national or a Laicist discourse here. In all textbooks, Godfrey of Bouillon stands for the medieval chivalrous ideal, virtuous in battle and a devout Christian. This can probably be traced back to the much older image of Godfrey that we find in the primary sources. John France explains this in terms of the origins and the world view of the chroniclers themselves, who would paint a 'sacralised'²⁴ picture of Godfrey based on their own monastic background, accentuating aspects of faith and piety in the hero's character. In the French textbooks we can generally find more recourse to the primary sources. The French chroniclers and contemporary witnesses of the crusades are drawn upon to justify the superiority of France and to embellish and emphasise the heroic myths. The myths sur-

²² Abbot Courval, *Histoire du Moyen Age. Cours d'histoire à l'usage de la jeunesse* (Paris: Pousielgue, [1862] 1883), 256.

²³ Bachelet, *Histoire générale*, 405. If we are to believe the oft-cited chronicles of Fulcher von Chartres in the textbooks, the conquests of the Franks by no means led to the formation of a new France, but rather the Franks became 'oriental' and saw themselves as Galileans or Palestinians. Cf. Michael Borgolte, *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt, 1050-1250* (Stuttgart: UTB, 2002), 224-225.

²⁴ John France, "The election and title of Godfrey de Bouillon", *Canadian Journal of History* 18 (1983), 322: "For them [the chroniclers] the spiritual quality of the host, rather than any temporal consideration, had brought about its success as the manifestation of the Divine Will. Devotion and penance were the key qualities of the crusaders, not mere military competence".

rounding Godfrey in the French textbooks thus correspond to the picture of Godfrey painted in the sacralised primary sources.

Godfrey of Bouillon is only nationalised via his function as the writer of laws in line with French custom and in the French language. His depiction as the perfect medieval knight must, however, also be considered in the context of the patriotic education of the Third Republic, which often had recourse to images of war heroes. The majority of textbooks count the development of 'chivalry' amongst the positive effects of the crusades, describing the tasks and personal development of a knight. The pupils are expected to recognise their own tasks, such as devotion and the willingness to make sacrifices for the national community, via the romanticised portrayal of the strong yet also devout and disciplined medieval knight.

As stated above, it was not only in France that the figure of Godfrey was nationally appropriated during the 19th century. If we compare the 'French Godfrey' with the 'German Godfrey', we find that he is mythically glorified in much the same way in the German textbooks too. The German Godfrey constitutes the same perfect knight that we find in the French books. He is described as the 'most noble of the famous heroes' and as a 'splendid example for every knight to follow'.²⁵ His incredible strength is also connected to similar images and myths. Even the myth of the 'sliced enemy knight' reappears, with an even more detailed and bloody description:

His sword flashed up through the air and came swishing down with tremendous force into the left shoulder of the Saracen between the armoured plates; he cut through the latter's entire chest, right through to the right-hand side of his belt. Thus cut into two, the upper half of the Turk fell to the ground while the other half remained in the saddle and, to the horror of everyone watching, the horse, now wild with panic and drenched in its master's blood, raced back to the city.²⁶

The modesty with which he refused to take the crown and royal title is also part of the German textbooks' mythological repertoire. His drawing up of a rule of law – the so-called Assizes of Jerusalem – however, does not appear in the German books. This thus remains a uniquely French characteristic. While it is difficult to identify an equivalent for the German books, we can nevertheless conclude that Godfrey is, here too, subjected to a national appropriation. While most German textbooks do assign particular significance to the French – at least in terms of numbers – with regard to the First Crusade, Godfrey is nevertheless portrayed as a *German* hero, particularly from the turn of the century onwards:

The army of great men did not assemble in Constantinople until the winter

²⁵ Friedrich Nösselt, *Weltgeschichte für Töchter Schulen und zum Privatunterricht heranwachsender Mädchen: Parts 1 and 2* (Stuttgart: Heitz, 1880), 113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

of 1096; while the army consisted mostly of French knights, Godfrey of Bouillon from Germany was of particular importance. He had been Duke of Lower Lorraine since 1088.²⁷

It is particularly interesting and significant that Godfrey is portrayed as a citizen of Lorraine. Both nations, France and Germany, conceive of this region as it existed at the time of the First Crusade, unquestioningly part of one's 'own' nation. One German textbook appropriates the matter as follows:

The army of the cross consisted to a large extent of French knights; of the Germans, only the knights from Lorraine participated, led by Godfrey of Bouillon and his brothers Eustace and Baldwin.²⁸



Image 3: Wilken, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge nach morgenländischen und abendländischen Berichten*. 7 Theile in 8 Bdn, Erster Theil: *Gründung des Königreichs Jerusalem*, Leipzig 1807.

Godfrey still, however, plays a larger part in French textbooks, where more space and more detailed descriptions are dedicated to him. The hero who outdoes all other crusade heroes in the German narratives is the Kaiser Frederick Barbarossa, despite the fact that he died before reaching his goal during the Third Crusade. The crusade is thus, however, directly linked to the Kyffhäuser narrative, a key element of the Barbarossa myth. But the role of Barbarossa does shed light on a further aspect differentiating German crusade narratives from their French counterparts: the myth of the 'Reich' is the framework for the German narrative that nationally appropriates the crusades. The context is the emergence of the imperial German Kaiserreich, which also explains why the crusades are not always depicted in chronological order in the German textbooks, but rather as part of the narratives on the German Kaisers. Especially the German nation, growing in national consciousness, was in pursuit of role models inspiring a sense of identity. Germany primarily had recourse to the history of medieval imperial history, 'which embodied precisely that which the new nation yearned for: greatness, glory and its very own fatherland'.²⁹

In the German textbooks the crusades therefore appear to be not so much a German national event as a great occurrence that provided German Kaisers and thus the German nation as a whole to take a clear stance. The crusades are not associated with national features such as with an important location, institutions or customs as they are on the French side. Rather, as a result of their participation in the crusades, the Germans became more renowned

²⁷ Friedrich Kurze, *Deutsche Geschichte, I. Mittelalter (bis 1519)* (Leipzig: Göschen'sche Verl.-Handlung, 1906), 87.

²⁸ Paul Wessel, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die Prima höherer Lehranstalten. Part I. Das Mittelalter* (Gotha: Perthes, 1889), 123.

²⁹ Camilla G. Kaul, *Friedrich Barbarossa im Kyffhäuser. Bilder eines nationalen Mythos im 19. Jahrhundert* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2007), 15.

within Europe and Christendom, as demonstrates this last example from a chapter on the great German crusade hero Barbarossa:

The name of Germany had never been more respected and feared as during the time of the Crusades. Friedrich set off as a seventy year-old man to seize Jerusalem back from the infidels. [...] A wail of grief was to be heard when the news of his death reached Europe. The German people have treasured the memory of Barbarossa in their hearts until this very day.³⁰

This excerpt does not mention the participation of the French and English kings in the Third Crusade. Rather, the German Kaiser Barbarossa is portrayed as the initiator of the Third Crusade, who, despite his old age, intended to enter into battle once again with the 'infidels'. Accordingly, the whole of Europe grieved at the death of the German Kaiser who had become so famous on account of his heroic deeds, and indeed not only during the crusades.

In conclusion, three main points can be ascertained. Firstly, there is a kind of 'basic narrative' to be found in the crusade narratives of all French textbooks. The First Crusade is placed within a European and Christian context in order to emphasise the superiority of France. While concepts of Europe may be used to differentiate from the external enemy, at the same time they transport national values. Concepts of Europe have a different standing in French textbooks than in the German books: while France allegedly became the 'grande nation' of medieval Europe during the crusades, the union of all of European or western Christendom via the crusades is given less significance in the German textbooks. Rather, the central context here is the myth of the 'Reich'. That means that the role of Germany in the crusades is embedded in the concept of German imperialism and not in that of Europe. The last quotation from a German textbook reveals how the staging of the German nation might have taken place via crusade myths in textbooks of Imperial Germany. The German nation is constructed in its portrayal at the particularly glorious time of the crusades and in the embodiment of an especially glorious Kaiser, who defended the nation and Christendom until he drew his last breath. Emotion is built up primarily in the depiction of his tragic death and the remembrance of him. The 'imagined community' of the nation is rendered directly tangible in this picture of a glorious age and a national hero, who might have been associated with the current Kaiser, William II.

Secondly, it has probably become clear that heroic figures play a central part in conveying concepts of national identity. In doing so, the textbooks from both nations even have recourse to the same heroes and myths, which are, however, differently – nationally – appropriated and related to the contemporary situation. Godfrey, who as Duke of Lower Lorraine is claimed by both sides and adopted as the personification of a current conflict, is significant in this regard. He appears in French textbooks as the initiator of French law in

³⁰ Carl A. Krüger, *Geschichtsbilder für Volksschulen. Erzählungen aus dem Altertum, der deutschen und brandenburgisch-preußischen Geschichte. Ausgabe für Schulen beider Konfessionen* (Danzig: Gruhn'sche Verlagshandlung, 1889), 47.

the newly founded kingdom of Jerusalem by means of mythical elements; in the German books, however, rather the depiction of Lorraine as German territory is the striking aspect of the Godfrey myths.

Thirdly and finally, different images of the French nation were shaped using the national basic narrative. Catholic authors emphasise, for instance, the power of the Church and the role of the Pope in the crusades, thus portraying France as the most, indeed the only, suitable country for initiating the call for the crusade. Some Laicist authors, on the other hand, would attempt to free the crusade narrative from its religious context by associating it with feudalism and the pursuit of expansion. These two different images must be placed within the context of the 'deux France', the two Frances. In this disagreement two images of history and the nation confronted one another, one upholding a view of France as the 'eldest daughter of the Church'; the other celebrating France as the source of civilisation and human rights.

This brief glance at the textbook analysis has shown that concepts of the nation occupy a much larger space than concepts of Europe in the crusade narratives of French and German textbooks. Equally, it has become clear that depictions of the crusades prove to be highly variable, both within a nation and in transnational comparison. The individual national narratives harbour various interpretative patterns that in turn inspire different concepts of identity and often refer to contemporary contexts.