

Eckert.Dossiers No. 4

Matthias Schwerendt and Ines Guhe

**Describing the Enemy:  
Images of Islam in Narratives of the Crusades**

Schwerendt, Matthias and Ines Guhe. 'Describing the Enemy: Images of Islam in Narratives of the Crusades'. In *European Receptions of the Crusades in the Nineteenth Century. Franco-German Perspectives International Workshop – Research Group 'Myths of the Crusades'*. Eckert.Dossiers 4 (2011). <http://www.edumeres.net/urn/urn:nbn:de:0220-2011-0022-0049>

**edumeres.net**



This publication is distributed under the Creative-Commons License:  
Attribution—NoDerivs 3.0 Unported; <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/deed.uk>

**Matthias Schwerendt and Ines Guhe**

## **Describing the Enemy: Images of Islam in Narratives of the Crusades**

### **Abstract**

The following text will reconstruct a basic outline of images of the ‘other’ or of the ‘enemy’ in crusade narratives from French and German school media, research literature and journalism of the 19th century. As might be expected, the crusade narratives of that period (re)produced images of Muslims as well as descriptions of Greeks or of Eastern Christians. In the crusade narratives analysed in our study, these descriptions of Muslims (Turks and Arabs) as well as of Greeks are compressed into dense dichotomies forming opposites between the ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ in the sense of a European orientalism.

### **Five Introductory Points**

1. The juxtaposition of Europe and Asia, or of the Orient and Occident, is nothing new. It is based on a long geographical, historical and geopolitical tradition that outdates the tension between Europe and Islam.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, some historians claim that in many eras such as that of the crusades, or of the Ottoman rule in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, the tension between East and West or between Europe and Asia took on such proportions that it can be characterised – simply put – as a ‘Battle between Cross and Crescent’. There are many such claims in the crusade narratives we have analysed. This principle becomes less plausible, however, if we bear in mind the close economical and political ties between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean during the crusades era. The thesis of a ‘Battle between Cross and Crescent’ does refer, however, to the production of enemy images in relation to the crusades.<sup>2</sup> ‘What the Crusades and their mythology were to create was a huge market for a comprehensive, integral, entertaining and satisfying image of the enemy’s ideology.’<sup>3</sup>

2. The general dichotomy of the Orient versus the Occident and the specific dichotomy of Europe/Christendom versus Islam as one of its manifestations, as well as the basic and generally binary train of thought associated with it, have highly problematic political consequences for European perceptions of the Ottoman or Arab-Islamic world. One might consider this dichotomy legitimate in the context of an era in which Europe and Christianity were to a great ex-

---

<sup>1</sup> See Franco Cardini, *Europa und der Islam. Geschichte eines Mißverständnisses* (Munich: Beck 2004), 12f.; Michael F. Klinkenberg, *Das Orientbild in der französischen Literatur und Malerei vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum fin de siècle* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), 29.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Thierry Hentsch, *Imaging the Middle East* (Montréal/New York: Black Rose Books, 1992), 33ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

tent one and the same thing; yet this was a severe anachronism with regard to the era in which the Enlightenment began to give way to Romanticism. It rather expresses the backward-looking approach of the German and French Romanticists, who tended to glorify an idealised view of the Middle Ages as a past Utopia.<sup>4</sup>

3. Current historical criticism uses the term *orientalism* to describe projections of Europe onto the history and culture of the Orient. This term is often understood as a discourse on the Orient developed in Europe, which draws an insurmountable boundary between the Orient and Occident using pejorative portrayals. This boundary is seen to be supported by ontological and epistemological differences between both entities. The Orient is considered to convey a fundamental construct of western thought on itself, its history and its traditions.<sup>5</sup> This thesis, of which Edward Said is probably the most prominent proponent, has been vehemently discussed and critiqued. Said and his reception have been accused – to a certain extent, correctly – of producing an explicitly theoretical, post-structurally infused construction that is highly ideological, both in its anti-imperialism and its anti-colonialism.<sup>6</sup> While there is not enough time to go into this debate in detail here, in our analysis we have attempted to defuse this criticism of the idea of orientalism by using a broader concept of the term ‘discourse’ that has been subjected to ideology with recourse to Foucault. Here, ‘discourse’ means a complex system of statements and judgements on the Orient and its actors within the framework of a procedurally argumentative confrontation on the phenomenon of the crusades. Rather, these statements and judgements takes place on different, often connected, levels, and give rise to flexible attributions that are subject to time and context.<sup>7</sup>

4. Crusade narratives describe a central event of Christian or Church history, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century this is done often enough with a Christian panache. The general significance of history for Christianity is not to be overlooked. In Christian narratives we find a basic pattern of a Christian view on life: the destiny of mankind as a long adventure leading from the Fall of Man to Judgement Day. Pilgrimage is to a certain extent a classic example of this perception. It

<sup>4</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalismus* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer), 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See Klinkenberg, 22f.; Reinhard Schulze, “Orientalistik und Orientalismus“, in: *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, eds. (Munich: Beck, 5th revised and extended edition 2005), 763ff.; Jürgen Osterhammel, “Edward W. Said und die ‚Orientalismus‘-Debatte. Ein Rückblick“, in: *Asien-Afrika-Lateinamerika* 25, no. 6 (1997), 597-607; María do Mar Castro Varela/Nikita Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie. Eine kritische Einführung* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2005), 37ff.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the methodological deliberations on the subject by Michael F. Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 11ff.; see also Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Washington D.C.: German Historical Institute., 2009), xxii; Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus. Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 28-38; Jürgen Lütt, Nicole Brevvhmann, Catherina Hinz and Isolde Kurz, “Die Orientalismus-Debatte im Vergleich. Verlauf, Kritik, Schwerpunkte im indischen und arabischen Kontext“, in: *Gesellschaften im Vergleich. Forschungen aus sozial- und Geschichtswissenschaften*, Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Schriewer, eds. (Frankfurt/M./Berlin/Bern: Lang, 1998), 511-567; Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne. Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: M & P, Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung 1996), 17-35.

embodies the experience of a group destiny mirrored in a huge drama centred around sin, martyrdom and salvation. Christian pilgrim literature and historical novels are full of these themes. The narrative framework of martyrdom and salvation in crusade narratives thus carries the basic structures of a Christian narrative.<sup>8</sup>

5. Identical images of the Orient can be found in the crusade narratives of highly different genres of literature. As there is an intertextual relationship between textbooks, historical research literature, books for young people, poetry and travel reports, it seems appropriate to extend our study beyond textbooks and historiographical literature and to include texts that enjoy a wide reception in the fields of education, politics and research (e.g. travel literature and books for young people).<sup>9</sup>

### **Which Images of the Orient are Generated by Crusade Narratives of the 19th Century?**

This overarching question gives rise to further questions: How do they relate to one another? Do they diverge in argument or do they complement one another? Do these images have recourse to older European attributions regarding Islam or Christianity in Byzantium or the Middle East, and do they seek to change these? Does the Orient serve as a political, cultural or aesthetic counterpart to Europe or the Occident?

We would like to begin with a text that is highly relevant for the French perspective on Palestine and the crusades at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It addresses the writings of the French Romantic Chateaubriand, describing a journey that took him through Constantinople, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, all the way to Spain.<sup>10</sup> In his itinerary of the journey from Paris to Jerusalem he founded the new literary genre of the *Voyage en Orient*, which in turn gave rise to a novel and romantic concept of the Orient.<sup>11</sup> We can probably identify two further reasons for the huge popularity of his travel account, initially in France and later in Germany. On the one hand, the revived *question d'Orient* drew an unexpected amount of attention from journalists to Chateaubriand's book within the context of a political colonial discourse. On the other hand, he had already published a successful critique of the French Enlightenment and Revolution with his book of 1802, *Génie du christianisme. Ou beautés de la religion chrétienne*, which had established him as a leading writer of the French Romantic and the pioneer of a restorative Catholicism and aristocratism.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Marc Bloch, *Apologie der Geschichte oder der Beruf des Historiker* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1974), 25f. The historian Jacob Burckhardt speaks of Christianity as a religion of martyrs, see *Historische Fragment* (Stuttgart: Koehler), 1957, 44f.

<sup>9</sup> In the context of this paper, these include a young people's edition of the work on the crusades by Michaud and Poujoulat, which enjoyed great popularity as a *livre de prix* in French schools, and travel reports such as that by Chateaubriand, which was also widely read in schools.

<sup>10</sup> François-René Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris...* (Paris: Le Normant, 1811).

<sup>11</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 351ff.

<sup>12</sup> See the translator's preface to the first German edition of the diary of a journey from Paris to Jerusalem via Greece, and from Jerusalem through Egypt, through the barbaric states and back to Paris via Spain, trans. J.

Which concepts of the Orient are concealed in Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire*, and what reception of the crusades does it render visible? For Chateaubriand the Orient had, above all else, the function of generating images that the author could sketch from the radically subjective experience of the journey in the real Orient, and of Islam in the style of romantic historical awareness. With his montage technique, similar to a collage, Chateaubriand combines fictional elements from lyrical and narrative fragments with those from scientific discourse. Chateaubriand saw himself as a historian and archaeologist on this journey; his goal was to rediscover the glory of Christendom by visiting its origins in the Holy Land.<sup>13</sup> Ironically, the entire Orient only exists as the Holy Land for Chateaubriand; at the same time, he can only perceive Palestine from a Christian viewpoint. For him the spirituality of the Orient results from the birth of Jesus as the saviour of mankind; the Orient is the place of Christian origin and of Christian pilgrimage, of which the crusades are the most glorious form.<sup>14</sup> He thus almost regards the crusade heroes at the graves of Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin as Jesus' disciples.<sup>15</sup>

He considers the contemporary Orient, on the other hand, as a barbaric stronghold represented by both the Turks and the Arabs. The Arabs, he claims, are nothing more than greedy robbers threatening him and all other Christian pilgrims with robbery and blackmail so that he is forced to travel to Jerusalem unrecognised.<sup>16</sup> The Turks, on the other hand, are distinguished by such cruelty and despotism that their description pervades the entire itinerary from his arrival in the Ottoman Empire onwards. The barbarism of the Turks, who, he claims, had violated and destroyed the alleged radiance of the Christian Orient during the Ottoman rule, was obvious, he continued, not only on account of the current decline of the Ottoman Empire, but also as a noted characteristic of the entire history of Islam. Chateaubriand defines Christianity as the heir of Antiquity and the bearer of civilisation as opposed to Islam, the embodiment of Oriental despotism and 'anti-civilisation'. This logic renders the crusades the focal point of the confrontation of civilised Europe with the violent Islamic troops.<sup>17</sup> If we are to follow Chateaubriand's logic, neither the origins nor the consequences of the crusades could be considered foolish. This judgement

---

H. Eichholz, 3 vols, Leipzig 1812; see also Charlotte Lady Blennerhassett, *Chateaubriand* (Mainz: Kirchheim 1903) (Weltgeschichte in Charakterbildern).

<sup>13</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 354f.; Jean-Claude Berchet, *Le voyage en Orient de Chateaubriand* (Houilles: Ed. Manucius, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Francois-René Chateaubriand, *Tagebuch einer Reise von Paris nach Jerusalem durch Griechenland und von Jerusalem durch Egypten, durch die Staaten der Barbarei und durch Spanien zurück nach Paris*, translated and commented by Dr. L. A. Haßler, vol. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1817), 80f.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-93, 113f.

<sup>17</sup> On the paradoxical use of the civilisation paradigm, see for example Jürgen Osterhammel, "'The Great Work of Uplifting Mankind'. Zivilisierungsmission und Moderne," in: *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds. (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2005), esp. 366-376, 383f.; Michael Broers, "Le Fardeau du Franc. Aufklärung zu Pferde – Eine Zivilisierungsmission in Napoleons Europa?," in: *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., 90ff. For the use of the concept of 'oriental despotism' see Hentsch, *Imaging*, 107ff.; for the juxtaposition of Muslim barbarism and Christian-European civilisation see Mary Anne Perkins, *Christendom and European Identity. The Legacy of a Grand Narrative since 1789* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 238ff.

stands in opposition to the views of the crusades held by European Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists.<sup>18</sup> They held that the view of the crusaders as armed pilgrims, who merely avenged the violence of 'Omar's descendents' and liberated Jesus' grave in Palestine, did not satisfactorily address the core of the historical dimension.<sup>19</sup> For Chateaubriand the crusades were a battle that would decide 'which of both religions would rule over the world: Islam, the thwarer of cultural progress, distinguished by fanatic conquest and persecution, ignorance, despotism and slavery, or Christianity with its Gospel of tolerance and peace, which, reawakening the spirit of erudite antiquity in the modern states, had abandoned serfdom.'<sup>20</sup>

It is remarkable that Chateaubriand places himself in the tradition of the French pilgrims and crusaders. The end of his travel report in Palestine reveals only too clearly his expectations and the political and ideological context of the text. Jerusalem may still today be unique in its destiny, yet the murdering of Christians by Muslims still continued, he writes. Yet now all of Asia awaits the liberation from the Turkish yoke by French soldiers: he himself, he continues, was greeted euphorically as representative of the French protective force.<sup>21</sup> Based on writs of protection from several centuries, Chateaubriand creates a hair-raising account of the continued persecution of Christians by Muslims, emphasising the role of France as the Christian protector of the Orient.<sup>22</sup> 'Glory to the land that has come from far-away Europe to the middle of Asia in order to defend unhappy souls and who can protect the weak against the strong! Never did my fatherland appear so gracious and glorious than when I found the evidence of its charity towards Jerusalem in those accounts of the unknown suffering of the oppressed and the incredible cruelty of the oppressors.'<sup>23</sup>

We find a very similar portrayal of France's Christian civilising mission in the book for young people and *livre de prix* by the French historians Michaud and Poujoulat, who between 1838 and the turn of the century together produced a shortened edition for young people of Michaud's multi-volume work on the crusades.<sup>24</sup> In this book too, the idea of a superior Christian and European civilisation is associated with the contemporary colonialist discourse. France, it is claimed, had placed itself at the top of the crusades revolution seven centuries previously, thus crowning itself the defender of modern civilisation against the threat from the 'triumphant barbarians'. In their interpretation of the crusades, Michaud and Poujoulat lend the crusades a mission: it must not be forgotten that this war had the objective of taking the purity (*clarté*) of the Gospel to the barbaric lands and allowing the African peoples to share in the progress and shaping of Christian Europe. Accordingly, they claim that the capture of Algiers

---

<sup>18</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 363.

<sup>19</sup> Chateaubriand, *Tagebuch*, 217f.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 218f.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 113f., 228, 241f.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 288-291.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted from *ibid*, 291.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph-François Michaud and Jean-Joseph François Poujoulat, *Histoire des croisades, abrégée à l'usage de la jeunesse* (Tours: Mame, 1899).

in 1830 and the more recent 'expeditions' in Africa were nothing more than crusades. Had the western crusaders succeeded in completing their mission in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, for Europe the Orient would constitute not a world to be conquered, but rather a heritage to be preserved.

Why is Chateaubriand important for our analysis of images of the 'other' or the enemy in portrayals of the crusades? Essentially there are many images in literary form in his texts which, like a burning glass, serve as examples for most of the crusade narratives we have examined in history textbooks and research literature. Chateaubriand has recourse to the conception of oriental despotism that evolved during the Enlightenment. He succeeds in completely eliminating from his argumentation the Enlightenment-inspired criticism of the atrocities of the crusades and of the despotism of the Europeans. This shift in argumentation is complete in the German history textbooks that we have examined by 1816 at the latest. Johann Christian Dolz, for example, in his *Guidelines for Teaching a General History of Humankind*, published in Leipzig in 1803, uses the harsh treatment of indigenous Christians and pilgrims in Palestine at the hands of the 'coarse Turks' and the lack of civility of the European Christians in equal measure to justify the crusades.

In his view, medieval Christians were defined by religious zeal, idolatry of holy places, the superstitious belief in reward for the persecution of infidels, and a mixture of a desire for glory, greed for plunder, love of adventure and the longing for liberation.<sup>25</sup> Even in 1816 a history textbook contests, in an Enlightenment-inspired style, the right of the Christians to attack the 'Mohammedian Peoples' in the crusades only because they owned Palestine, even if Muslim rule did indisputably mean certain difficulties for Christians.<sup>26</sup> After this point, there is no more fundamental criticism of the crusades to be found in the books we examined. Generally, the barbarians are the 'others'; the Christians are only barbaric in their excessive acts of violence that are either justified by being described as necessary for survival, or they are deplored as Christians who had fallen from grace.

A comparison with French history textbooks from the Third Republic shows that this understanding of 'barbarism' cannot be formulated in such a generalising manner. Indeed, the textbook authors include representatives of the Enlightenment-inspired criticism of the medieval Christians. The dichotomy of barbaric Christians versus civilised Arabs becomes particularly clear in the paragraphs on the results of the crusades. Here, the contact to the Arab and Byzantine world is described as essential for the development of the Occident, which up until that point had been rather barbaric, coarse and fanatical. It was thanks to this contact with the East, so it is claimed, that the West saw progress in industry and trade, rediscovered great works of the Roman and Greeks, and deepened its knowledge of the arts and sciences. The Occident rediscovered itself, was revived and awakened to new life thanks to the light

---

<sup>25</sup> Johann Christian Dolz, *Leitfaden zum Unterrichte in der allgemeinen Menschengeschichte für Bürgerschulen* (Leipzig: Barth, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1803), 62f.

<sup>26</sup> Hilmar Curas, Johann Matthias Schroeck and Karl Heinrich Ludwig Poelitz, *Einleitung zur Universalhistorie: zum Gebrauche bey dem ersten Unterrichte der Jugend in der 6. Auflage von 1816*, Berlin: Nicolai 1816), 322f.

cast upon it from the Orient, as Gustave Ducoudray has somewhat dramatically put it.<sup>27</sup>

Some authors also maintain that those 'naïve westerners' should have corrected their view of the 'infidels'. The crusades, they claim, opened up a civilised Muslim world for them that was completely different to how they had imagined it to be.<sup>28</sup> Alfred Rambaud puts it even more clearly in his work on the history of French Civilisation.<sup>29</sup> He clearly describes the perceptions of Greeks and Arabs on the part of the French at the time of the crusades as distorted and stereotypical. The crusaders, he explains, were unable to distinguish between Turks and Arabs, and their religious prejudice led them to despise the Byzantines as schismatics and the Saracens as infidels. They failed to recognise that Arab civilisation was far more developed than that of the Greeks of or 'us'. Even more fierce is the critique by Charles Seignobos, one of the pioneers of historical positivism in the Third Republic, who evaluates the crusades as an invasion of the barbaric Christians into civilised Arabia.<sup>30</sup> In his view there is no doubt that the Muslim and Byzantine world of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was wealthier, more civilised and enlightened than that the Occident. While Seignobos seeks to correct the image of the fanatical, cruel infidels, here too there is no explicit criticism of the crusades. However, the positive picture he paints of the Orient explicitly excludes the barbarian Seljuqs. On the whole, the critical interpretations of the crusades by Rambaud und Seignobos remain ignored by the majority of French works we analysed.

The narrative of an Arab-Turkish net of relations thus appears in the crusade portrayals in a highly varied form. According to Chateaubriand, Arabs as well as Turks typically embody the barbaric Islamic culture, the catalyst of the crusades. Authors such as Rambaud and Seignobos develop contrary positions that ultimately lead to a critique of the 'barbaric Turks'. Many of the German and French textbooks examined oscillate between these two interpretative patterns, which are also visible in the research literature. We shall therefore now analyse the portrayal of these related aspects in the textbooks.

The glorified depiction of the crusades is closely tied to the threatening scenarios with which the pilgrims and Syrian and Palestinian Christians were confronted at the hands of Muslims. These scenarios are, however, ambivalent to a certain extent. In most of the texts we analysed, there is the statement that the Arabs were well-disposed towards the Christian pilgrims, even though in many texts their tolerance is explained by material advantage. Of the textbook authors in our German sample, only Friedrich Schiel explains the tolerance shown by the Arab Muslims as a result of their respect for Moses and Christ as

---

<sup>27</sup> Gustave Ducoudray and Alphonse Feillet, *Simple récits d'histoire ancienne, grecque, romaine et du moyen âge. Enseignement secondaire spécial* (Paris: Hachette, 1872).

<sup>28</sup> Adolphe Crémieux and Jean-Joseph Thomas, *Le Moyen Age et le commencement des temps modernes. Classe de cinquième* (Marseille: Ferran Jeune, 1906).

<sup>29</sup> Alfred Rambaud, *Histoire de la civilisation française. Tome premier: Depuis les origines jusqu'à la Fronde* (Paris: Colin, 1885).

<sup>30</sup> Charles Seignobos, *Histoire de la civilisation au Moyen Age et dans les Temps modernes. Des origines de la civilisation au XVIIe siècle inclusivement* (Paris: Masson, 1887).

holy men.<sup>31</sup> In the eyes of most authors, the Turks had initially pursued a regime of cruelty against Christians and pilgrims following the conquest of Palestine, desecrating the holy sites. The acquisition of power by the Muslims in Syria and Palestine in the 7<sup>th</sup> century is thus placed within a dualistic value-system, where the Arabs are 'good' – tolerant – and the Turks are barbaric, cruel and greedy, having maltreated the Holy Land, its churches, the indigenous Christians and the Christian pilgrims since the middle or end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. For many authors, then, it is the Turks – also described as the Seljuqs – who were the cause behind the crusades.

In the dualism of the 'good' Arab and the 'cruel' Turk, the recourse to descriptions of the 'Turkish threat' from the Early Modern Era is obvious.<sup>32</sup> Originally, medieval sources such as the anonymous chronicle from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, *gesta francorum*, assume that the Romans, Franks and Turks all descended together from the Trojans. The Turks were seen as equally courageous and noble warriors, unlike the disloyal and cowardly Byzantines.<sup>33</sup> It was the humanists who changed the European perception of the Turks with lasting effect in their countless reports on the so-called 'Turkish atrocity' following the conquest of Constantinople. Here they painted an enemy-picture of cruel Turks indulging in unimaginable massacres, atrocities and blasphemy.<sup>34</sup> French philosophers of the Enlightenment also held the Turkish conquest responsible for the demise of the Arab world and the rise of oriental despotism. Especially in the work of Voltaire, for instance, this resulted in an assumed antinomy between Arabs and Turks, which was juxtaposed with the stereotype of oriental barbarism and the 'Turkish rejection of art and science' as the antithesis of the idealised Golden Age of the Arabs.<sup>35</sup> This antimony was clearly reproduced in the crusade narratives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

---

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Schiel, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte (Mittelalter und Neuzeit) für die unteren Klassen der Mittelschulen und verwandte Lehranstalten* (Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt): Michaelis, 3<sup>rd</sup> extended edition, 1909), 29.

<sup>32</sup> As representative of the concept of the 'Turkish danger' from the Early Modern Era see Almut Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben: „Türkengefahr“ und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450-1600* (Frankfurt/M./New York: Campus-Verlag, 2003), esp. chapter 2; see also Daniel J. Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe," in: *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press 1999), 207-230; Thomas Kaufmann, *'Türckenbüchlein': Zur christlichen Wahrnehmung "türkischer Religion" in Spätmittelalter und Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2008); The opposition between Turkey and Europe, which at the same time negates the division and hostility between the Latin world and the Greeks, is an 'invention' of the Renaissance see Dieter Mertens, "Claronomani passagii exemplum: Papst Urban II. und der erste Kreuzzug in der Türkenkriegspropaganda des Renaissance-Humanismus", in: *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann, eds. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 65f.

<sup>33</sup> Cardini, *Europa und der Islam*, 191.

<sup>34</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 49; Johannes Helmraht, "Pius II. und die Türken", in: *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann, eds. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 104ff.

<sup>35</sup> Klinkenberg, *Orientbild*, 184; Asli Cirakman, "From Tyranny to Despotism. The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks," in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no 1 (2001), 56ff.; Nina Berman, *Orientalismus*, 118-128; W. Daniel Wilson, *Humanität und Kreuzzugsideologie um 1780. Die „Türkenoper“ im 18. Jahrhundert und das Rettungsmotiv in Wielands ‚Oberon‘, Lessings ‚Nathan‘ und Goethes ‚Iphigenie‘* (New York: 1984), esp. 11-37; 134f.

Particularly remarkable is the vagueness in the portrayals of chronological processes and incriminated misdeeds by the Turks, described by many authors as rough, wild and barbaric. While the Arabs had shown respect for the holy sites, the Turks, it was claimed, would mistreat the indigenous Christians as well as the clergy, and subject Christian pilgrims to grim forms of robbery.<sup>36</sup> On the whole, there is no truly consistent narrative of specific areas of political conflict between pilgrims, the local Christians, the Christian churches and the conquering Turks in our sources. The complaints are centred around the mistreatment of pilgrims, refused access to the holy sites, and the desecration of the latter as well as the disturbance of holy ceremonies. The true conflicts between Christians and Muslims are only suggested in few texts, and their political contexts remain almost invisible.

Yet the image of the tolerant Arab in the textbook portrayals does crumble in places. The picture of an Arab incapable of properly building up a state filters through; this Arab may well demonstrate religious reverence towards the holy sites; yet he still poses a danger to the pilgrims and indigenous Christians. The topos of the predatory and murderous Bedouin, who deviously exploits the naivety of devout pilgrims, also appears in the works of some authors.<sup>37</sup> This topos is also widespread in pilgrim literature from the Early Modern Era and is not reflected upon critically until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Carsten Niebuhr in German literature on pilgrims to Palestine. In the contemporary French and German school literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, we find no trace of this complex perception of the potential for conflict between pilgrims and Bedouins.<sup>38</sup>

If we chronologically compare the organisation of the crusades sections in the textbooks as militant reactions of Latin Christianity to the Turkish and Arab threats to the pilgrims and indigenous Christians, we find a clear tendency. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, many texts – despite a large amount of variety in the narratives – emphasise the necessity of conquering the Holy Land in the crusades through a holy war in order to ‘cleanse’ the Christian sites from the presence of the Muslims.<sup>39</sup> This usually happens in

---

<sup>36</sup> Ernst Kappe, *Geschichten aus der Geschichte, das ist: Denkwürdigkeiten aus der Weltgeschichte, ein Lesebuch fürs Volk und seine Jugend* (Meurs: Rheinische Schul-Buchhandlung, 1837), 49. Here we read, for instance, that during the crusades era, as today, a tax of 30 thalers had to be paid to the avaricious Turks in order to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Auguste Ammann and Ernest-Charles Coutant, *Le Moyen Age et le commencement des temps modernes, Classe de cinquième* (Paris: Nathan, 1904), 192, also maintain that the situation became intolerable for pilgrims after the Seljuq Turks had replaced the Arabs. As representative of the research literature see Wilken, Friedrich, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge nach morgenländischen und abendländischen Berichten: Part I: Gründung des Königreichs Jerusalem* (Leipzig: Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius, 1807), 44-54.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Friedrich Nösselt, *Geschichte des Mittelalters, Weltgeschichte in vier Bänden, Part 2*, (Langensalza: Schulbuchhandlung, (new edition, carefully revised and extended to the present day) 1904), 101.

<sup>38</sup> On this complex issue see Annette Katzer, *Araber in deutschen Augen. Das Araberbild der Deutschen vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008), 208-243, 416ff., 449.

<sup>39</sup> Heinz Gollwitzer has stated that the liberation of the sacred sites from Turkish rule was the favourite topic of the Christian-European world of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. See Heinz Gollwitzer, “Deutsche Palästinafahrten des 19. Jahrhunderts als Glaubens- und Bildungserlebnis”, in: *Lebenskräfte in der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte*, Bernhard Bischoff et al., eds. (Marburg: Simons-Verlag, 1948), 307ff.

the depiction of legends, such as Peter of Amiens or speeches by the Pope, which are reproduced with a great deal of charisma.<sup>40</sup> Many school texts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contain a distinctly fanaticised religious rhetoric. Muslims are either portrayed as the shared enemies of all Christians,<sup>41</sup> as the most dangerous enemy of the faith,<sup>42</sup> or as a force aspiring to destroy the Byzantine as well as the Roman-Catholic Church.<sup>43</sup> The latter portrayal turns the idea of superiority in terms of civilisation into one of a battle between cultures, thus classifying the crusades as an epoch in the 'struggle and opposition of the whole of Christianity against Islam', from the emergence of the Ottoman Empire to its fall, upon which the crusaders sought to prove their superiority over the Arabs and Turks. Some authors add further dynamics to this idea of a fundamental struggle of cultures by justifying the Christian superiority using partially racist arguments.<sup>44</sup>

At this point we must ask which images of Byzantium and/or the Greeks are to be found in the portrayals of the crusades designed for school and research. Across the entire period of study, we have been able to identify two diametrically opposed depictions of Byzantium, its historical development during the crusades era, and its relationship with Muslims or Western European crusaders. Here, the political disputes between the Arab or Turkish powers and Byzantium almost always fades into the background of the textbook crusade narratives, despite the fact that it was in and with the Byzantine Empire (alongside the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily) that significant confrontations between Christians and Muslims took place before the First Crusade. It is obvious that many of the depictions in the school and research texts are shaped by the work of Edward Gibbon in their anti-Byzantine arguments. Gibbon overestimated Western Europe's part in the military confrontations between Muslims and Christians because he considered the Byzantine Empire, or the Greeks, to be too decadent for such battles.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Robert Gohr, *Elementarbuch der Weltgeschichte: In zwei Cursen für den ersten Geschichtsunterricht in Schulen* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1868), 35; August Mauer, *Geschichts-Bilder: Darstellung der wichtigsten Begebenheiten und berühmtesten Personen aus der Alten Geschichte, dem Mittelalter, der neuen und neuesten Zeit* (Langensalza: Schulbuchhandlung Greßler, 1878), 172; Friedrich Nösselt, *Weltgeschichte für Töchterschulen und zum Privatunterricht heranwachsender Mädchen*, Parts 1 and 2 (Stuttgart: Heitz, 16<sup>th</sup> edition 1880), 107.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Wessel, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte für die Prima höherer Lehranstalten, Part I: Das Mittelalter* (Gotha: Perthes, 1889), 122.

<sup>42</sup> Hubert Cremans and Wilhelm Pütz, *Grundriss der Geographie und Geschichte der alten, mittlern und neuern Zeit, Part 2: Das Mittelalter und die Zeit der Reformation (476 - 1648)* (Leipzig: Baedeker, 18<sup>th</sup> revised edition 1894), 65.

<sup>43</sup> Gottlob Egelhaaf, *Grundzüge der Geschichte, Part II: Das Mittelalter, including a time-line* (Leipzig: Reissland, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1892), 31-120, esp. 91 and 100.

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Zurbonsen, *Geschichtliche Repetitionsfragen und Ausführungen. Ein Hilfsmittel für Unterricht und Studium: Part II: Das Mittelalter* (Berlin: Nicolai, second revised edition 1892), 21f.; Wessel, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte*, 42 and 46; also see Matthias Schwerendt, "Araber, Türken, Ungläubige. Islamrepräsentationen in Kreuzzugsnarrativen deutscher Geschichtsschulbücher des 19. Jahrhunderts", in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 58, no. 7/8 (2010), 635f.

<sup>45</sup> Cardini, *Europa und der Islam*, 13ff.

Particularly striking from a quantitative point of view is the assumption that the Greeks were cowardly and weak, which we discover in many textbook crusade portrayals, usually in the absence of any narrative inspiring a specific meaning. This picture of the Greeks is extended in selected narratives to include the characteristics of guile, hypocrisy and deceit. The Greeks, it is suggested, would on account of their fear, weakness, moral corruptness or political failure find themselves permanently entangled in conflicts with the glorious crusaders, who in turn had achieved the capture of Constantinople in 1204.<sup>46</sup> An argumentative thread that seeks to legitimise the catastrophe of 1204 works with the reproach of the Byzantine Emperor's betrayal of the European armies by refusing them supplies, misleading their troops, cooperating with the Turks and calling for the murder of the European crusaders. This betrayal had already been related in the medieval accounts of the crusades. All these shameful acts, it was claimed, could have led to the failure of several crusades.<sup>47</sup> Only few historians – those writing from a more scholarly perspective – point with moderation towards the complex political conflicts of interests with which Byzantium found itself confronted during the crusades era. Misunderstandings or antagonistic conflicts of interest regarding the crusaders are hardly mentioned.<sup>48</sup>

There is another anti-Byzantine topos that is assimilated by the crusade narratives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It hardly appears in the textbooks but is clearly visible in the research literature.<sup>49</sup> It is the topos of an effeminate or feminised and at the same time despotic Orient, expressed in Byzantine greed, pomp and circumstance, and flattery.<sup>50</sup> In the eyes of many historians, even the Palestinian Christians have thus become 'degenerate' and only capable of functioning as a group with the support of the western Christians. In his description, Friedrich Wilken even expresses doubt as to whether the Byzantine Church can still be referred to as 'Christian' at all. In his writings, Byzantium and its Muslim allies are melted down to form a collective evil. From this perspective, medieval Byzantium becomes the true enemy of the Western European Christian armies, without whose surrender the much striven-for rule of the Orient would not have been achievable.<sup>51</sup> Particularly remarkable are Wilken's projections connected with this interpretation: while in his view the Greeks only have themselves to blame for their decline,

---

<sup>46</sup> See as representative of the German textbooks: Karl Friedrich Becker, *Die Weltgeschichte für die Jugend: Part 4* (Berlin: Heinrich Frölich, second improved edition 1806), 532ff., 554ff., and for the French textbooks: Le père François Gazeau, *Histoire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Baltenweck, 1890), 349.

<sup>47</sup> On this complex issue see Savvas Neocleous, "Byzantine-Muslim conspiracies against the crusades: history and myth," in: *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010), 253-274; Ludwig Schmutge, *Die Kreuzzüge aus der Sicht humanistischer Geschichtsschreiber* (Basel/Frankfurt/M.: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1987), 32.

<sup>48</sup> See Gustav Friedrich Hertzberg, *Geschichte Griechenlands seit dem Absterben des antiken Lebens bis zur Gegenwart: Part I. Von Kaiser Arcadius bis zum lateinischen Kreuzzuge* (Gotha: Perthes, 1876), 360ff.; Albert Gruhn, *Die byzantinische Politik zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge. Beilage zum Jahresbericht der 13. Realschule zu Berlin* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1904).

<sup>49</sup> For the school literature see Friedrich Nösselt, *Weltgeschichte*, 113f.

<sup>50</sup> Ludwig Streit, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des 4. Kreuzzuges: I. Venedig und die Wendung des vierten Kreuzzuges gegen Konstantinopel* (Anklam: Poettke, 1877), 7-19; Wilken, vol. I, 134; vol. II, 305ff.; vol. III, 105-155.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 139ff.

at the same time they would perhaps only be freed from their slavery by the ancestors of those they had so shamefully betrayed.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

In our paper we have attempted to outline the fundamental images of the Orient. Due to the huge number of sources only an outline has been possible here. We have nevertheless been able to ascertain that fundamental descriptions of a 'non-European other' are generated by the crusade narratives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all of which have recourse to very different traditions. Explicit images of Arabs, Turks and Greeks are negotiated, some of which was part of the cultural repertoire of the Middle Ages; some of which can be traced back to debates from the Renaissance or Enlightenment. In doing so, we find parallel descriptions of the Orient in the crusade depictions that conceptualise 'the Orient' and its actors as dangerous or degenerate, partly culturally superior or morally depraved, violent, bloodthirsty and despotic, or weak, effeminate and cowardly.

To sum up, the sources examined show a tendency towards radicalisation in the German textbooks from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many textbooks anticipate with Christian enthusiasm a holy war against the 'Barbarians from the Orient'. It is particularly remarkable that in the research literature we analysed there are to a certain extent opposing tendencies. Here, value statements regarding Muslims and the Orient can be – tentatively put – interpreted as attempts to judge the cultural significance of Islam for Mediterranean societies more appropriately than the crusade historians of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had done. The portrayals in the French textbooks are on the whole less permeated by radically Christian narratives. There are strong voices that can only be read as moderate criticism of the image of the 'barbarian Orient'.

In this regard, the images of Byzantium can be seen equally critically. The pejorative attributions to the Greeks become more intensive – chronologically speaking – in the history textbooks, while vaguely differentiated attributions are visible in the research literature. One phenomenon is especially noteworthy: Many of the anti-Byzantine and anti-Turkish stereotypes from the crusade narratives are clearly defined – quite isolated from the history of the crusades – by the racially inspired radically nationalist discourses of the *voelkish* movement (*Völkische Bewegung*) regarding the 'Southwest Asian Race' ('*vorderasiatische Rasse*') at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We can therefore assume that the crusade narratives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed considerably to the anticipation of centuries-old concepts of the Orient, to their incorporation in nationalist discourses, and to a reorganisation of the stereotypes associated with them.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>53</sup> This insight touches upon the question of the relationship between orientalism and anti-Semitism, currently under heated debate within the field of anti-Semitism research, and unfortunately cannot be explored in depth here.

An analysis of images, especially images of a perceived 'enemy', is ultimately an inquiry into mentalities. This question possesses both an emotional and a rational dimension. Emotions associated with certain moral values go hand in hand with complex views on the world and actions based on both. This framework contains a potential for mobilisation that points towards 'meaningful action'. This potential for mobilisation based on action can be seen as pre-political, as it allows for no direct statements on social or power relations. By juxtaposing images of self and other in the crusade narratives we can reconstruct how the nationalist conceptions of enemies and heroes that we find in the narratives can be instrumentalised. For the purposes of our study, however, the ideology concept does not aim for political instrumentalisation but rather for the cultural incorporation of certain attitudes and meanings. Here, ideology is understood with recourse to Clifford Geertz as a complex structure of interwoven meanings, by which political action only becomes possible when the ideas and patterns of meaning associated with it are meaningfully and empirically experienced via narratives.<sup>54</sup> In this regard, the crusade portrayals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as highly fruitful sources for historians. They provide insights as to how conceptions and patterns of meaning were reproduced and/or incorporated into European orientalist narratives in order to historically and politically legitimise contemporary events of European colonialism from a Christian perspective.

*This essay is a result of the international workshop "European Receptions of the Crusades in the Nineteenth Century. Franco-German Perspectives", Braunschweig 16 and 17 February 2011. We would like to thank Jonathan Phillips, Stefan Berger, Kristin Skottki and Felix Hinz for their helpful advice and constructive critique. We would also like to thank Wendy Anne Kopsisch for her translation of this article from the original German, including the textbook quotations from the original French*

---

<sup>54</sup> See Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System (1964)", in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays* (London: Basic Books, 1973), 193-233.