

Emperor Frederick II, »Sultan of Lucera«, »Friend of the Muslims«, Promoter of Cultural Transfer: Controversies and Suggestions

Dorothea Weltecke

Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), who ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1220 to 1250,¹ is one of the central figures of Europe's historical narrations, or rather myths, about its premodern past.² Already in his own time, he aroused responses ranging from profound adoration to vehement rejection. Frederick used different methods of rule in the different regions of his great realm: the German countries, Northern Italy, Sicily, Burgundy and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. While governing firmly and centrally in Sicily and fighting to subordinate the great communes of Lombardy, he conceded privileges and independence to the ecclesiastical and secular princes in the German lands.³ These diverse styles of power and Frederick's ability to adapt to various diplomatic and political situations make it difficult to present his politics, let alone his personality, in a coherent way.

Frederick's dramatic life and reign were affected by many conflicts, notably overshadowed by his long struggle with Popes Gregory IX (1227–1241) and Innocentius IV (1243–1254), primarily concerning rule in Italy. His demand for universal rulership as Christian Roman Emperor collided with the same claim by the popes. This is the time when the papal claim to real power in European politics approached its climax in theory and practice. In 1245 a council in the city of Lyon officially pronounced the emperor deposed.⁴ This struggle

1 Important recent biographies are David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1988); Wolfgang Stürner, *Friedrich II: Gestalten des Mittelalters und der Renaissance; Vol. I Die Königsherrschaft in Sizilien und Deutschland 1194–1220; Vol. II Der Kaiser 1220–1250* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003); Hubert Houben, *Kaiser Friedrich II.: (1194–1250); Herrscher, Mensch und Mythos* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009); Olaf B. Rader, *Friedrich II.: Der Sizilianer auf dem Kaiserthron: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2010) (the latter unfortunately published too recently to be considered in this contribution).

2 Marcus Thomsen, »Ein feuriger Herr des Anfangs ... : Kaiser Friedrich II. in der Auffassung der Nachwelt (Kieler Historische Studien 42), (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2005).

3 For a recent approach see the contributions in: Knut Görich, Theo Broekmann & Jan Ulrich Keupp (eds.), *Herrschaftsräume, Herrschaftspraxis und Kommunikation zur Zeit Kaiser Friedrichs II.* (Münchner Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft 2), (Munich: Utz, 2008).

4 John A. Watt, »Medieval Deposition Theory: A Neglected Canonist Consultation from the First Council of Lyons«, in: *Studies in Church History* 2 (1965), pp. 197–214; Friedrich

between Frederick and the popes produced a wealth of letters, pamphlets and other materials, describing the conflict in drastic terms, even attaining eschatological dimensions. The extravagant images of Frederick produced in this war of words, presenting him as Messiah or Antichrist,⁵ influence all later writing, from medieval chronicles to modern historiography.⁶

It is often said that Frederick's court in Sicily was a centre of exceptional scientific significance and that Frederick had unusually close contacts to the Arab(ic) world of learning. Despite the efforts of David Abulafia, who set out some twenty years ago to destroy what he saw as a German mystification and to present Frederick instead as a »medieval emperor«, a »traditional ruler« and a much overestimated intellectual,⁷ to this day scholars and popular writers disagree. They often represent Frederick as a man who transcended his time, who even shared our values of religious tolerance, rationalism and secularism and thus belongs more to our world than to the past. Few authors refrain from making at least one reference to Frederick as *stupor mundi*, the astonishment of the world. Marcus Thomsen terms this narrative tradition the modernist construction.⁸ It is at the same time strongly influenced by Orientalism,⁹ and it is its Orientalist elements that determine all assessments of Frederick's role as a promoter of scientific transfer from the Arab world.

Kempf, »Die Absetzung Friedrichs II. im Lichte der Kanonistik«, in: *Probleme um Friedrich II.*, ed. by Josef Fleckenstein (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1974), pp. 345–360; Ernst Schubert, *Die Königsabsetzung im deutschen Mittelalter: Eine Studie zum Werden der Reichsverfassung* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl., 3. Folge, 267), (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), pp. 217–228.

5 Norman Cohn, »Friedrich II. als Messias«, in: *Stupor Mundi: Zur Geschichte Friedrichs II. von Hohenstaufen*, ed. by Gunther G. Wolf (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), pp. 268–298; Wolfgang Stürner, »Friedrich II.: Antichrist und Friedenskaiser«, in: *Mythen Europas: Schlüsselfiguren der Imagination; Vol. III Zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. by Almut Schneider & Michael Neumann (Darmstadt: Pustet, 2005), pp. 14–29.

6 Andrea Sommerlechner, *Stupor mundi? Kaiser Friedrich II. und die mittelalterliche Geschichtsschreibung* (Publikationen des Historischen Instituts beim Österreichischen Kulturinstitut in Rom, 1. Abteilung, Abhandlungen 11), (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999).

7 Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 251f.

8 Thomsen, *Feuriger Herr*, op. cit. (note 2); Marcus Thomsen, »Modernität als Topos – Friedrich II. in der deutschen Historiographie«, in: *Herrschaftsräume*, ed. by Görich, Brockmann & Keupp, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 21–39.

9 On the inherent connection between Orientalism and Medievalism see John M. Ganim, »Narrative Studies: Orientalism and Medievalism«, in: *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey J. Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 123–134, and others in that volume.

The Oriental Frederick and Orientalism

The following topoi recur in scholarly literature to characterize Frederick's Oriental cultural imprint:¹⁰ his childhood in Palermo, which at that time still hosted a considerable Muslim population; contact with Muslim culture and Muslim scholars from his early days onwards; the Oriental climate of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily; his granting of freedom of religious practice to the Muslim population of Lucera in Apulia, who had been deported there after a rebellion; and allowing prayer times to be kept among his guards.¹¹

Another important topos is Frederick's long-delayed crusade to the Holy Land and his attitude to crusades in general.¹² Although he had taken the cross after his coronation in 1215, he lingered behind during the ill-fortuned Fifth Crusade against Damietta from 1217 to 1221. Frederick officially renewed his crusade vow, but with his army affected by disease he again postponed his departure. Banned by the Pope for disobedience and infidelity, he nevertheless set forth in 1228. After hard diplomatic bargaining Frederick negotiated the Treaty of Jaffa with the Ayyubid Sultan al-Kāmil (1177/1180–1238), which secured Jerusalem and other holy sites for the Latins but left Muslim rite untouched at the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqṣā Mosque.

The Treaty of Jaffa actually renewed an offer already made to the crusaders by the same sultan in 1218, which was then declined by Pelagius of Abano, the papal

10 With all the classical elements recently presented by Dina Aboul-Forouh Salama, »Kaiser Friedrich II. von Hohenstaufen, ein Sultan über Europa? Die neuere Rezeption der Figur des Stauferkaisers in ausgewählten literarischen Werken«, in: *Trans. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, URL: http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/1-13/1-13_salama17.htm (accessed on 27.04.2011). The topoi are presented as facts, not, as the title suggests, in critical reflection.

11 On this deportation and this complex see also David Abulafia, »Ethnic Variety and Its Implications: Frederick II's Relations with Jews and Muslims«, in: *Intellectual Life at the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen*, ed. by William Tronzo (Studies in the History of Art 44), (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1994), pp. 213–223; Hubert Houben, »Möglichkeiten und Grenzen religiöser Toleranz im normannisch-staufischen Königreich Sizilien«, in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 50 (1994), pp. 159–198, also for bibliographical references and sources.

12 As well as the cited literature on Frederick, see on the crusades Thomas C. Van Cleve, »The Fifth Crusade«, in: *A History of the Crusades*, I–VI, ed. by Kenneth Setton, Vol. II *The Later Crusades 1189–1311*, ed. by Robert Lee Wolff & Harry W. Hazard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 377–428; Thomas C. Van Cleve, »The Crusade of Frederick II«, in: *The Later Crusades*, op. cit. (above), pp. 429–462; Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, Berlin & Cologne: Kohlhammer, 10th ed. 2005), pp. 191–210; Rudolf Hiestand, »Friedrich II. und der Kreuzzug«, in: *Friedrich II.: Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994*, ed. by Arnold Esch & Norbert Kamp (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 493–513; Bodo Hechelhammer, *Kreuzzug und Herrschaft unter Friedrich II.: Handlungsspielräume von Kreuzzugspolitik 1215–1230* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 13), (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2004).

legate leading the crusade in Egypt. The treaty itself and Frederick's short visit to Jerusalem are core elements of the Orientalist construction: The Islamophile Frederick was perhaps never personally eager to pursue a crusade against the Muslims. Instead he preferred to end the war without blood and listening to the muezzin in the holiest city of Christendom. Frederick's representation of power during his itinerary to the German lands with exotic people and animals also frequently invokes Orientalist vocabulary.¹³

His preference for the rare, the sublime and the exotic seems to be congruent with his patronage of philosophy and natural science,¹⁴ which is another important motif in the Orientalist narration. It is noted here that Frederick was proficient in the Arabic language: he conversed with scholars from the East; he used Arabic sources and knowledge for the famous book on falconry that he spent years writing; and scholars at his court translated works of philosophy and natural sciences from Arabic to Hebrew and Latin, including the later notorious commentator of Aristotle named Ibn Rushd/Averroes (1126–1198) who is represented on the cover of the present volume. Thus, at a time when the entire Christian world was apparently hostile to the Muslims, this seems to have been the one exception to the rule.

There is some evidence in the sources for most of these elements, even if the interpretations are not convincing.¹⁵ Only Frederick's proficiency in Arabic is disputed.¹⁶ So none of these motifs are outright nonsense, and they all feature in serious works. What is problematic, however, and methodologically unsound,

13 Martina Giese recently argued against the menageries being an Oriental import or even an innovation by Frederick: Martina Giese, »Die Tierhaltung am Hof Kaiser Friedrichs II. zwischen Tradition und Innovation«, in: *Herrschaftsräume*, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 121–172, in particular p. 153.

14 In a classical form Bernd Rill, *Sizilien im Mittelalter: Das Reich der Araber, Normannen und Staufer* (Stuttgart & Zurich: Belser, 1995), p. 256: »Es ist bekannt, daß Kaiser Friedrich große Sympathie für den islamischen Kulturkreis hatte, denn er war in Palermo ja weitgehend unter Moslems aufgewachsen, hatte Arabisch gelernt und wußte nicht nur mit Haremsdamen, Kamelen und Leoparden, sondern auch mit den geistigen Genüssen der islamischen Kultur mehr anzufangen, als irgendein christlicher Herrscher vor oder nach ihm.«

15 On the Muslim sources see Stefan Leder, »Der Kaiser als Freund der Muslime«, in: *Kaiser Friedrich II. (1194–1250): Welt und Kultur des Mittelmeerraums. Begleitband zur Sonderausstellung im Landesmuseum für Natur und Mensch*, ed. by Mamoun Fansa (Oldenburg & Mainz: von Zabern, 2008), pp. 82–92.

16 Arguing in favour of a knowledge of Arabic: Houben, *Friedrich II.*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 111f; also Leder, »Kaiser als Freund«, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 82–92; Johannes Fried, »In den Netzen der Wissensgesellschaft: Das Beispiel des mittelalterlichen Königs- und Fürstenhofes«, in: *Wissenskulturen: Beiträge zu einem forschungsstrategischen Konzept*, ed. by Johannes Fried & Thomas Kailer (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003), p. 179. Against: Klaus van Eickels & Tanja Brüsch, *Kaiser Friedrich II: Leben und Persönlichkeit in Quellen des Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), p. 296; Stürner, *Friedrich II. (2003)*, vol. II, op. cit. (note 1), p. 112, no. 109.

is the contamination of all of these features with Orientalist conceptions and images.

The underlying image also appears in the popular literature on Frederick, which is far less solidly founded in good sources and current research. One German popular historical bestseller takes the often-quoted epithet, »the Sultan of Lucera« as its title, and such popular constructions certainly receive far more public attention than the scholarly narrations.¹⁷ *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland* (»Allah's Sun over the Occident«) by the extreme right-wing and outspokenly neo-pagan Sigrid Hunke has unfortunately become an important point of reference for German Muslims, as it recognizes the Muslim contribution to European culture which they find represented neither in schoolbooks nor the mainstream media.¹⁸ They have a point here, and this specific historical culture is the reason why the myth of Emperor Frederick produces such a radical contrast to the background against which it is constructed. He is a Christian ruler dressed in what designers of historical re-enactment imagine to be Muslim garments, looking very much like the Sultan from the European dreams of One Thousand and One Nights. This representation often includes not only a renunciation of Christianity by the emperor but also turbaned Saracen guards with formidable scimitars and immense beards, frequent late-night parties, frantic Oriental music and Oriental dancing girls with glittering garb and smouldering eyes.¹⁹

European medievalists have long criticized this popular construction – but,

17 Eberhard Horst, *Der Sultan von Lucera: Friedrich II. und der Islam* (Herder-Spektrum 4453), (Freiburg: Herder, 1997); see also Humbert Fink, *Ich bin der Herr der Welt: Friedrich II. Der Staufer: Eine Biographie* (Munich: List, 1986), p. 119: »Friedrich, den man den modernsten und zugleich merkwürdig zeitlos anmutenden Menschen unter allen Politikern nennen möchte, die diese Geschichte mitgeprägt haben, er war der einzige abendländische Fürst und Monarch, der sich dem Orient und den Arabern nicht mit dem gezogenen Schwert näherte, sondern durch die Kunst der Überredung und damit durch Einfühlungsvermögen und gewiß auch durch feinsinnigen Takt zu erreichen versuchte, was bisher stets Ströme von Blut gekostet hatte.«

18 Sigrid Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland: Unser arabisches Erbe* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), several new editions, numerous translations (first translation into Arabic: Cairo 1964, Beirut 1964; into Turkish: Istanbul 1972; into Persian: Tehran, 1981). The book remains very popular in Islamic countries. The controversial French medievalist Sylvain Gouguenheim makes Hunke an influential figure in the supposed construction of a European debt to Islam: Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Aristote au Mont-Saint-Michel: Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), pp. 203f. I would like to thank Jörg Feuchter and Friedhelm Hoffmann for these references. On Gouguenheim see also Feuchter's introduction to this volume.

19 Michael Gregor, *Sphinx – Geheimnisse der Geschichte: Friedrich II. Ein deutscher Kaiser in Apulien* [VHS] (Berlin: Ufa, 1996). Most interestingly, this film directly quotes Orientalist paintings, for example by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, to illustrate life at the court of Frederick. On the reception in popular media and schoolbooks see Thomsen, »Modernität«, op. cit. (note 8), p. 22.

at the same time, inadvertently continued the tradition. Orientalism permeates every text on Frederick, leaving subtle yet telling traces. In his book on falconry, for example, Frederick tells us that a certain device in falconry, the cap, originated in the East: the Eastern Arabs had been the first to use it. For Frederick there were Eastern and Western Arabs, namely Arabs in the Middle East, the Maghreb and in Spain. But the modern translator of the German version writes that the cap originated in the *Orient* and that the Arabs were the first people of the East to use it. Frederick also explains that his contemporaries, the men of today (*nostrum moderni*) this side of the sea (*citra mare*) practised the Arab elements of falconry and found them very useful. From his perspective Latins lived both this side of the sea and the other – in Outremer, where the Crusader states represented a Latin Middle East until 1291. Frederick II himself was the king of these lands. The translator, however, transferred the use of the cap to the »Occidental falconers« and the word *moderni* is omitted altogether. The translation shifts Frederick's words to a binary construction familiar to modern readers.²⁰

A Brief History of the Orientalist Construction

The Orientalist and Islamophile construction of Frederick originates mainly at the height of European Orientalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Already in the Middle Ages, Frederick had been the subject of highly contested interpretations and judgements. Early modern historians divided into Catholics and Protestants first received two very conflicting Fredericks. For the Catholics he was the heretic, the epicurean and the atheist.²¹ The Protestants responded by constructing Frederick as the witness of truth against papist idolatry and tyranny. He features in one of the first works of Protestant historiography

20 *Friderici Romanorum Imperatoris Secundi: De arte venandi cum avibus*, ed. by Carl Arnold Willemsen (Leipzig: Insel, 1942), vol. 1, p. 236: »Capellum sumpsit exordium autem ab orientalibus gentibus. Arabes enim orientales prius quam alie gentes, de quibus novimus aliquuid, usi sunt capello circa mansuefactionem [...] exercuimus mansuefactionem falconum cum capello, ut usum capelli sic approbatum a nobis moderni nostri citra mare habuerunt, quare dignum est a posteris non relinqui.« Transl. by id. as: *Friedrich II.: Über die Kunst mit Vögeln zu jagen* (Frankfurt on the Main: Insel, 1964), vol. 1, p. 251: »Die Haube stammt aus dem Orient. Es sind die Araber gewesen, die sich früher als alle anderen Völker des Ostens, von denen wir etwas wissen, ihrer zum Locke-machen der Falken und anderer Raubvögel bedient haben. Die Verwendung der von uns also erprobten Haube haben wir den abendländischen Falknern unserer Tage vermittelt.«

21 Thomsen, *Feuriger Herr*, op. cit. (note 2); Eickels & Brüsche, *Kaiser Friedrich II.*, op. cit. (note 16), p. 364.

published in 1556.²² A third Frederick emerged in the poetic literature of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries: the romantic Frederick. This new construction merges Germanic grandeur, secularity, Orientalism, Epicureanism and rationality. Frederick now appears as the figure who revived the wisdom of both the Hellenistic and the Oriental worlds during an age dominated by the church, literally like the candle in the dark.²³ His alleged sentence of the three impostors (Moses, Jesus and Mohammed are charlatans, who deceived the world), which was ascribed to him by Pope Gregory IX,²⁴ in the eyes of some writers of the nineteenth century (and of the late twentieth century)²⁵ could even seem to be the most enlightened sentence of the entire Middle Ages.²⁶

Until well into the twentieth century leading German scholars of medieval history never quite approved of Frederick and his imperial policies, not least for his lack of interest in the German lands, but historians of philosophy and of culture discovered and constructed him as one of their ancestors. One work that

22 Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis, qui ante nostram aetatem reclamarunt papae* (Basel: Oporinus & Stella, 1556; Leiden, 1597), no. 171.

23 On this Eickels & Brüsche, *Kaiser Friedrich II.*, op. cit. (note 16), p. 13; on the historiography see Thomsen, *Feuriger Herr*, op. cit. (note 2); Thomsen quoted the leading Romanticist Friedrich von Hardenberg, better known as Novalis: »Der Hof sollte eine sehr würdige Erscheinung machen, die Darstellung der besten, größten und wunderbarsten Menschen aus der ganzen Welt versammelt, deren Mittelpunkt der Kaiser selbst ist. Hier erscheint die größte Pracht, und die wahre große Welt. Deutscher Charakter und Deutsche Geschichte werden deutlich gemacht. Heinrich spricht mit dem Kaiser über Regierung, über Kaiserthum, dunkle Reden von Amerika und Ost-Indien. Die Gesinnung eines Fürsten. Mystischer Kaiser. Das Buch »de tribus impostoribus.« Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), »Heinrich von Ofterdingen«, in: Novalis: *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Friedrich von Hardenbergs; Vol. I Das dichterische Werk, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Mähl & Richard Samuel (Vienna: Hanser, 1978), p. 411, see also pp. 389, 392; Thomsen, *Feuriger Herr*, op. cit. (note 2), p. 122.

24 Gregor IX. Papa, »Ascendit de mari«, 1. Juli 1239, in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae*, vol. I, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz & Karl Rodenberg (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883), no. 750, pp. 645–654, in particular p. 653: »Set quia minus bene ab aliquibus credi posset, quod se verbis non illaqueaverit oris sui, probationes in fidei victorias sunt parate, quod iste rex pestilentie a tribus barattatoribus, ut eius verbis utamur, scilicet Christo Iesu, Moyse et Machometo, totum mundum fuisse deceptum, et duobus eorum in gloria mortuis, ipsum Iesum in ligno suspensum manifeste proponens, insuper dilucida voce affirmare vel potius mentiri presumpsit, quod omnes illi sunt fatui, qui credunt nasci de virgine Deum, qui creavit naturam et omnia, potuisse; hanc heresim illo errore confirmans, quod nullus nasci potuit, cuius conceptum viri et mulieris coniunctio non precessit, et homo nichil debet aliud credere, nisi quod potest vi et ratione nature probare.«

25 Friedrich Niewöhner, *Veritas sive Varietas: Lessings Toleranzparabel und das Buch von den drei Betrügnern* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1988), p. 146.

26 Wilhelm Scherer, »Zu Lessings »Nathan«, in: *Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland und Österreich*, ed. by id. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1874), p. 332, »Jetzt ist es zum ersten Mal gesagt, dass die Welt von drei Betrügnern betrogen worden sei, der Tag verdient, festgehalten zu werden: es ist der 21. Mai 1239 [sic]... »Und dass es gesagt wurde [der Satz, DW], ist für uns der hellste Punkt des Mittelalters.«

triggered this tradition was *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, published in 1866 by Ernest Renan, one of the ambivalent figures in Oriental studies at the height of imperialistic Orientalism, who so radically despised Semitic cultures that he may be called an early racist anti-Semite.²⁷ At the same time, Renan was one of the pioneers of Semitic studies in linguistics and history of literature, arguing that it was through the commentaries of Averroes on Aristotle that the Latin world found its own rational potential and soon surpassed the East.²⁸ Renan constructed Latin Averroism as the first enlightened movement in the European world after Antiquity. While criticizing Emperor Frederick for his seemingly uncritical love of the Arabs, Renan at the same time saw Frederick as instrumental in transferring Averroes into the Latin world, and in introducing rational and even sceptical thoughts on religion.²⁹ Other historians of theology and philosophy were to follow. They argued that it was because Frederick knew Christendom, Islam and Judaism and had studied Averroes that he turned away from all religion and became an enlightened sceptic.³⁰ Every author addressing the scientific transfer from Arabic to Latin since then would ponder on this point, either in agreement or in protest.

The famous 1927 biography by Ernst Kantorowicz constructed this Oriental-German combination in its most ambivalent and mystical form.³¹ While the German mandarins of medieval history harshly criticized Kantorowicz, after 1945 they read with interest works by experts in Oriental languages. Yet, the Orientalists themselves also had received the Oriental Frederick. During the twentieth century (especially in the second half) European scholars of Muslim culture often acted as advocates of that culture. Some identified their aims with Frederick's and regarded him as a predecessor.³² Francesco Gabrieli (1904–1996), the famous Italian Orientalist who influenced many generations of students of the history of the crusades,³³ states with the weight of all his authority: »He was a friend of the Muslims, the young Emperor, born among Muslims, as the

27 Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1866).

28 See Ruedi Imbach, »L'Averroïsme latin du XIII^e siècle«, in: *Gli studi di filosofia medievale fra Otto et Novecento: contributo a un bilancio storiografico; atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 21–23 settembre 1989*, ed. by id. & Alfonso Maierù (Storia e letteratura 179), (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1991), pp. 191–208. On Averroes and his role in pictorial representations of cultural transfer see the introduction to this volume by Jörg Feuchter.

29 Renan, *Averroès*, op. cit. (note 27), pp. 286–291.

30 Hermann Reuter, *Geschichte der religiösen Aufklärung im Mittelalter vom Ende des 8. bis zum Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts*, I–II (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1875–77; reprint Aalen: Scientia-Verlag, 1963), II, pp. 251–304.

31 Ernst Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, I–II (Berlin: Küpper formerly Bondi, 1927).

32 For a contemporary example see Salama, »Kaiser Friedrich II.«, op. cit. (note 10).

33 Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (originally published as *Storici arabi delle crociate*, Turin: G. Einaudi, 1957), (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

Oriental sources state.«³⁴ Gabrieli even claims that Frederick was attracted to Oriental despotism as a model and preferred the institution of the khalif to that of the pope, adding that: »A real Sultan he was because of his luxury, his despotic cruelty and his self-indulgent way of life, but at the same time like al-Mamun in Baghdad or Abd ar-Rahman in Cordoba through his thirst for knowledge.«³⁵ With his strong images Gabrieli was explicitly criticizing contemporary attempts to deconstruct the Oriental Frederick.³⁶

Thus the Oriental Frederick has assumed different shades and functions during the past two hundred years. In scholarly literature, too, the classical motifs invoke the ambivalent associations the modern world used to connect with the »Orient«. The »Orient« as it had been constructed since the late-eighteenth century was the world of timelessness, wisdom, cruelty, luxury and eroticism. Everything Arabic was religiously connoted with Islam. Most importantly, Occident (Christian, medieval) and Orient (Muslim, exotic) were constructed as a binary opposition of two radically different and hostile worlds. To this day, comprehension, let alone conciliation between them seem as impossible as between fire and ice. Frederick's image as an exceptional intermediary makes sense within this construction. Only a hybrid personality would be able to overcome such an antagonism.

Remarks on the Sources and Recent Controversies

Concerning his transfer of science there are writings by Frederick himself and his court, which mostly consist of translations from Arabic into Hebrew and Latin and Latin summaries and compilations. These manuscripts contain dedications to the emperor by the scholars working at his court and indications of questions he asked and discussions he took part in. There is evidence of scientific contacts with the Middle East, the Maghrebian South, the Iberian West and the Italian North.³⁷ It comes as a surprise that some of this material is not yet available in critical editions. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century scholarly activities at the court have been intensively investigated and philology has

34 Id., »Friedrich II. und die Kultur des Islam«, in: *Stupor Mundi: Zur Geschichte Friedrichs II. von Hohenstaufen*, ed. by Gunther G. Wolf (Wege der Forschung 101), (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), pp. 74–94, in particular p. 78.

35 Ibid., p. 84.

36 Ibid., p. 94, against this view Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London & Beirut: Longman, 1975), pp. 157–164.

37 Stürner, *Friedrich II.* (2003), op. cit. (note 1), pp. 387–397.

secured important material.³⁸ The mass of texts on the struggle between pope and emperor has already been mentioned. It is here that we find the first remarks on Frederick's unreliability in religious matters and sarcastic comments on his overly good relations to the Muslim world.

Frederick was openly accused of being Islamophile and a traitor to the Christian cause by 1229 at the latest, when the Latin Patriarch Gerold of Jerusalem underlined his dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Jaffa with those charges.³⁹ Medieval texts from all over Europe mention Frederick's relations to the Muslims in Sicily and elsewhere, all of them siding with either the pope or the emperor. Frederick continued to feature in narratives and chronicles long after his death.⁴⁰ This corpus of sources has been intensively researched during the last twenty years and their bias, the legends they contain and the intentions they follow are much better known today. All in all, the Latin sources used for the Orientalist construction turn out to be late and unreliable.⁴¹ This is also the case concerning his notorious alleged experiments on living humans in the name of rational science.⁴²

Another corpus that has attracted much attention are Muslim sources on

38 As well as the monographs on Frederick, see Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: O. Harrassowitz, 1893; reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1956); Charles H. Haskins, »Science at the Court of the Emperor Frederick II«, in: *The American Historical Review* 27 (1922), pp. 669–694; id., *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (Harvard Historical Studies 27), (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1924); George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, II (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1931; reprint 1968), pp. 516f, 575–579 with references, and elsewhere; some recent works with bibliographical references, e.g. Gundula Grebner & Johannes Fried (eds.), *Kulturtransfer und Hofgesellschaft im Mittelalter: Wissenskultur am sizilianischen und kastilischen Hof im 13. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008); Anna Akasoy, »Ibn Sab'īn's Sicilian Questions: The Text, Its Sources, and Their Historical Context«, in: *Al-Qantara* 29 (2008) 1, pp. 115–146.

39 Patriarch Gerold, letter to the Pope, in: *Historia diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, Vol. III, ed. by Jean Louis Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmio, 1963), pp. 102–110, here 104: »[...] et quod cum maxima verecundia referimus et rubore, imperatori Soldanus, audiens quod secundum morem sarracenicum se haberet, misit cantatrices [...] et joculatores [...] cum quibus idem princeps hujus mundi vigiliis, potationibus et indumentis et omni more sarracenicis se gerebat.« On the letter see James Powell, »Patriarch Gerold and Frederick II: The Matthew Paris Letter«, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999) 1, pp. 19–26. On the Latin church in the crusader states see Bernard Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church* (Variorum Publication 1), (London: Variorum Publications, 1980).

40 The sources are too numerous to list here. See Sommerlechner, *Stupor mundi*, op. cit. (note 6).

41 For a recent discussion and bibliographic references to sources and research see James Powell, »Frederick II and the Muslims: The Making of a Historiographical Tradition«, in: *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*, ed. by id. (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), pp. 261–269; Klaus van Eickels, »Friedrich II. – Herrscher zwischen den Kulturen?«, in: *Kaiser Friedrich II. (1194–1250)*, ed. by Fansa, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 66–81.

42 Ludovico Gatto, »Federico II nella Cronaca di Salimbene de Adam«, in: *Federico II e le nuove culture: Atti del XXXI Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 9–12 ottobre 1994*, ed. by Centro

correspondence with the emperor, and Muslim chronicles that also comment on the emperor's attitude towards the Muslims in Sicily, on his religious orientation and on the Treaty of Jaffa.⁴³ Thanks to the work of Laila Atrache and others two main tendencies can be ascertained, which are heavily influenced by the struggle between the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt and of Damascus following the death of Sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil I (1143/4 or 1145–1218).⁴⁴ Those who welcome the Treaty of Jaffa describe the emperor's attitude to the Muslims as very respectful and friendly, disburdening the Muslim conscience of the problem that the holy city of Jerusalem had been delivered to an infidel. These writers are closer to the Ayyubids of Egypt and their allies. Another corpus of sources despises the treaty as a shameful act, a betrayal of Islam. Here Frederick is characterized as an unreliable man who does not even adhere to his own religion. The authors are followers of the Ayyubids of Damascus and their affiliates. Generally, the Muslim sources avoid detailed discussion of the treaty, apparently due to the delicacy of the matter.⁴⁵ Whether the authors approved of Frederick or despised him, all the Muslim sources agree with the Latin pro-papal sources that the emperor was tolerant or even sympathetic towards Muslim rite and science. Stefan Leder recently identified a fourteenth-century source quoting rumours that Frederick was a secret Muslim and a personal relative of the Ayyubid Sultan al-Kāmil.⁴⁶

Although the sources and facts are much better known today, Frederick's relations to the Muslims remain highly controversial. As far as the crusades are concerned, one side regards Frederick's respect for Muslim rite in Jerusalem and his good relations to the Ayyubids strictly as rational diplomacy in the tradition of twelfth-century diplomatic relations between the Normans and the Northern

italiano di studi sul basso Medioevo – Accademia Tudertina, Todi (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1995), pp. 507–538.

43 For the most detailed treatment with quoted text and new translations Laila Atrache, *Die Politik der Ayyubiden: Die fränkisch-islamischen Beziehungen in der ersten Hälfte des 7./13. Jahrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Feindbildes* (arabica rhema 1), (Münster: Rhema, 1996). On Ibn Wāṣil, the main Muslim source for the Egyptian side, also Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006). Arabic sources on Frederick are available in the translations by Gabrieli, *Arab Historians*, op. cit. (note 33).

44 Atrache, *Ayyubiden*, op. cit. (note 43), pp. 155–157, among others.

45 Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 221–223.

46 Leder, »Kaiser als Freund«, op. cit. (note 15), p. 90. Ursula and Malcolm C. Lyons (eds. & trans.), *Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders: Selections from the Tārīkh al-Duwal wa'l-Mulūk of Ibn al-Furāt*, I–II, hist. introd. by J. S. C. Riley-Smith (Cambridge: Heffer, 1971), pp. 48 (t.)/39 (v.): »It is said that the Emperor was a secret Muslim and this is indicated by our previous account, but God knows better about his condition and his beliefs. There is a story that he was the maternal uncle of al-Malik al-Kāmil, the ruler of Egypt, but God knows better whether that is true.« Ibn al-Furāt clearly has doubts.

African rulers.⁴⁷ Other scholars to this day believe that Frederick displayed genuine religious open-mindedness and even friendship, pointing out that the surprising consensus between Muslim-Arabic and Christian-Latin sources (despite the evident papal and Muslim propaganda) corroborates this argument.⁴⁸ In their view, Frederick is an outstanding exception.⁴⁹ This overwhelming consensus has been challenged by an intriguing hypothesis proposed by James Powell, suggesting that these writings do not represent two independent perspectives but merely reflect Frederick's own propaganda efforts in the Middle East.⁵⁰ Instead, Powell argues, they reflect the cultural skills he devoted to his diplomatic causes, which nevertheless backfired on him.

The same controversies appear in assessments of Frederick's achievements as a patron of scientific transfer. After investigation of the sources of so-called Latin Averroism, most modern historians agree that Ibn Rushd was not the radical heterodox thinker remembered in the Latin tradition. During the thirteenth century there was probably no Averroist movement as such and it did not produce the sceptical thoughts on religion for which it was notorious.⁵¹ These results also have repercussions for the study of Frederick's role as a patron of rational science and especially his interest in the translation of works by Ibn Rushd.

David Abulafia has been especially adamant in refuting Frederick's accomplishments as a scientist, arguing that Frederick was a traditionalist rather than a scholar or a poet, let alone a great ruler. He might have sustained some interest in philosophy, like other rulers of Europe, but his understanding was certainly modest. »The question is, therefore, whether Frederick II revived and enlarged

47 Atrache, *Ayyubiden*, op. cit. (note 43), pp. 73–152, 161–177, here p. 177: »Machtpolitik, Machterhaltung, Machtgewinn – das waren die tatsächlichen Gründe des Vertragsabschlusses. Weder Friedrich II. noch al-Kāmil waren »fanatische« Anhänger ihrer Religion. Keiner der beiden war bereit, in den Krieg zu ziehen, wenn es sich vermeiden ließ.« Also Eickels, »Herrscher zwischen den Kulturen«, op. cit. (note 41); Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 171–194.

48 Leder, »Kaiser als Freund«, op. cit. (note 15), p. 90.

49 Ibid.: »Damit überragt die Gestalt Friedrichs seine Zeitgenossen und bildet, zumindest aus dem retrospektiven Blick der Geschichte, eine Ausnahmeerscheinung.« Also Salama, »Kaiser Friedrich II.«, op. cit. (note 10).

50 Powell, »Frederick II«, op. cit. (note 41), pp. 261–269. There is no proof for this hypothesis.

51 Imbach, »L'averroïsme«, op. cit. (note 28); Jan A. Aertsen & Andreas Speer (eds.), *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 27), (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2000); Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery & Andreas Speer (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts: Studien und Texte* (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2001). For the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance see however Dag Nikolaus Hasse, »Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance: Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino Nivo, Francesco Vimercato«, in: *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Jan A. Aertsen & Martin Pickavé (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 31), (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 447–473.

upon the cultural interests of his forebears. And the answer has to be no.«⁵² Klaus van Eickels in Germany follows Abulafia in this direction, arguing that neither obliging dedications nor questions sent out to the Muslim world were proof that Frederick was personally interested in the matter.⁵³ Yet leading scholars still vindicate adaptations of the older interpretation.

To criticise the prevailing construction, it seems, is to deny any kind of scientific transfer or at least any particular expertise by Frederick.⁵⁴ One of the sources Abulafia relies on is a famous Muslim text reporting on Frederick sending philosophical questions to the Arab world. These so called *Sicilian Questions* had always been a classical topos in the Orientalist construction. They were regarded as evidence for Frederick's close contacts to Muslim scholars and his interest in intricate philosophical problems. Abulafia turned the text against Frederick: Pointing towards the derogative tone of the answers by Ibn Sab'īn, the Arab philosopher, who slandered Frederick for his philosophical ignorance, Abulafia suggested that Frederick had no real understanding of the matter.

At the time nobody could anticipate that Anna Akasoy would today very convincingly suggest that the *Sicilian Questions* were not authentic: Frederick could not have been acquainted with Ibn Sab'īn because at the time the latter was not a known scholar at all. In fact, Ibn Sab'īn was in his early twenties when he wrote the *Sicilian Questions*, which was his first book. It is therefore highly unlikely that Frederick sent him these philosophical questions and, likewise, that the Arab answered him in this fashion in a personal letter. Instead, Ibn Sab'īn invented the questions himself and probably used the emperor's famous name and anti-Christian slander to sell his book in Morocco.⁵⁵

Read with this new perspective, Ibn Sab'īn's insults ironically prove the opposite of Abulafia's interpretation. Apparently the emperor was famous enough in the Maghreb for his scientific interest to be quoted in this way and to become the target for a philosophical agon of a fierce and hungry young man. Abulafia,

52 Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), p. 252; see already Daniel, *Arabs*, op. cit. (note 36), pp. 161f. »Frederick's patronage of learning does not amount to a great deal, apart from his employment of Michael Scot, and Scot, as Haskins pointed out, is a confused writer, not of the first class [...] It shows amateurishness also, however, even in patronage; the professional patron sets up a school, but Frederick only asked questions that happened to interest him.«

53 Eickels, »Herrscher zwischen den Kulturen«, op. cit. (note 41), p. 75.

54 Especially Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 251–289.

55 Anna Akasoy (ed. and transl.), *Ibn Sab'īn. Die Sizilianischen Fragen. Arabisch-Deutsch* (Herders Bibliothek der Philosophie des Mittelalters 2), (Freiburg, Basel & Vienna: Herder, 2005); Akasoy, »Ibn Sab'īn's Sicilian Questions«, op. cit. (note 38). A different theory was published by Charles Burnett, »The »Sons of Averroes with the Emperor Frederick« and the Transmission of the Philosophical Works by Ibn Rushd«, in: *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)*, ed. by Gerhard Endress & Jan A. Aertsen (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 259–299.

on the other hand, obviously fell into the Orientalist trap too, assuming as a matter of course the wisdom and superior understanding of the Arab.⁵⁶

Some Suggestions on Additional Sources and Methods

Another group of Eastern sources has until now attracted little attention in this context, namely Christian sources. They deserve more consideration as they provide yet another perspective on the propaganda game played by all the parties. The letter by the Melkite (Greek Orthodox) Patriarch Nicolas of Alexandria (before 23 March 1209–1243)⁵⁷ to Pope Honorius III (1216–1227), usually dated to 1223, is a case in point. In the letter the patriarch, archbishops, bishops, clergy and Christians of Egypt urge the pope not to hesitate to send »his son« the emperor to liberate the Christians of Egypt.⁵⁸ Referring to the disaster of Damietta and bemoaning high taxes and subsequent discrimination, the Christians of Egypt now hope for the imminent intervention of the emperor. The letter also gives advice on which route to take and which weak points to attack, in this respect representing nothing less than high treason on the part of its authors.⁵⁹ The letter purports to speak in the name of renegades and those Muslims who ruled Egypt before Saladin, i.e. the Shiite Fatimids.⁶⁰ It promises a warm welcome for the emperor from all the Christians of Egypt, who await him like the people awaited the first advent of Christ.⁶¹ The letter is only preserved in the papal reg-

56 Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), p. 258.

57 See Giorgio Fedalto (ed.), *Hierarchia ecclesiastica orientalis: Series episcoporum ecclesiarum christianorum orientalium*, II (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1988), p. 584.

58 »Nicolaus patriarcha Alexandrinus«, in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae saeculi XIII*, op. cit. (note 24), vol. I, no. 233, pp. 162f, edited on the textual basis of Caesar Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici*, Vol. 20. 1198–1228, ed. by Augustin Theiner (Bar-le-Duc, Paris: Guerin, 1870), p. 467.

59 Ibid., p. 163: »Hoc non est omittendum, sed semper in corde tenendum, qualiter, cum venerit, facere debeat dominus imperator [...] scilicet galee et naves, quantecunque fuerint, per flumen Rasceti intrent et ad villam, que sita est in insula fluminis, que vocatur Foha, ibi applicent, et sic domino concedente habebunt totam terram Egypti sine perditione. Flumen Rascetum est profundum et altum et latum et dicta insula plena omnibus bonis, sicut lator presentium fidelis et familiaris noster poterit vobis narrare; cognovimus eum prudentem et discretum super hoc et ob hanc causam vobis eum misimus.«

60 Ibid., p. 163: »[...] et non solum nos expectamus hanc gratiam, sed etiam renegati plus quam decem milia, qui dispersi sunt per terras Sarracenorum [...] Sarraceni, qui dicuntur Molene, id est domini, qui ante Saladinum regnum Egypti tenuerunt, vestre sanctitati supplicant et rogant per Deum, ut festineris mittere, quem missuri estis, quia tota terra Egypti vestra est.«

61 Ibid., pp. 162f: »Sicuti sancti ante adventum Christi expectabant redemptionem et liberationem a Christo salvatore, ita expectamus adventum filii vestri imperatoris [...]«

ister of outgoing letters, which is, however, a trustworthy authority.⁶² Its clumsy Latin and some phonetically transcribed Arabic words suggest an Arabic original, which also strongly speaks in favour of its authenticity.

The situation of the Melkites in Egypt has been studied much less than the history of the other ancient Christian denomination of Egypt, the Copts, partly due to a dire lack of sources.⁶³ At the time of the Fifth Crusade most of the Melkite population lived in Cairo, and only few other sites in Lower Egypt are known. A strong Melkite community persisted in Damietta itself, headed by a metropolitan.⁶⁴ When it comes to relations between Egyptian Christians and the West, the focus has again been on the Copts. For example contacts to Western Christianity intensified under Patriarch Cyrill ibn Laqlaq (1235–1243).⁶⁵ This letter, however, indicates contacts existing ten years earlier, and to the Melkites. As such these contacts do not come as a surprise, even if relations between Rome and the See of Constantinople were strained.⁶⁶

In Egypt itself the Christian denominations seem to have cooperated to defend their churches against Muslim threats. The *History of Churches and Monasteries* by the Coptic priest Abū ʾl-Makārim (13th c.) mentions churches used by Melkites and Copts as well as Armenians.⁶⁷ In Alexandria they later also shared churches with Genoese and Pisans.⁶⁸ Abū ʾl-Makārim also refers in passing to Muslim inhabitants in the vicinity of the port of Alexandria who participated in the celebrations in the nights before Easter and before the festival of the cross

62 James Powell, »Honorius III and the Leadership of the Crusade«, in: *The Catholic Historical Review* 63 (1977), pp. 521–536, without mentioning the letter.

63 For a recent overview of sources and literature see Terry Wilfong, »The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities«, in: *The Cambridge History of Egypt; Vol. I Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. by Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 175–197.

64 The most recent work is Youhanna Nessim Youssef, »Melkites in Egypt according to Abū al-Makārim (XII Century)«, in: *Actes du Colloque Melkite (Jounieh, Janvier 2008)*, ed. by Samir Khalil Samir (Parole de l'Orient 34), (Kaslik, Beirut: Université Saint-Esprit, 2009), pp. 251–281, in particular pp. 253, 263.

65 See *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, Known as the History of the Holy Church, acc. to MS Arabe 302, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris foll. 287v–355r*, IV, 2, Cyrill III Ibn Laqlaq (1216–1243), transl. and ann. by Antoine Khater & Oswald H. E. Burmester (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1974), pp. 77–78 (t.), (p. 160 (v.); pp. 84–87 (t.) (175–178 (v)). The Coptic evidence shows that Cyrill's policies were viewed very critically by the bishops and the flock. See Enrico Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestina: Storia della comunità etiopica di Gerusalemme*, I (Collezione scientifica e documentaria 12), (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1943), pp. 62–73; Hamilton, *Latin Church*, op. cit. (note 39), pp. 350f, for further references.

66 Wilhelm de Vries, with the collaboration of Octavian Bârlea, Joseph Gill & Michael Lacko, *Rom und die Patriarchate des Ostens* (Orbis Academicus 4), (Munich: Alber, 1963).

67 Compare the compilation of all the Melkite churches and altars in Youssef, »Melkites in Egypt«, op. cit. (note 64), pp. 272–274. The edition he used was not available to me.

68 Ibid., pp. 267–269.

by lighting candles in their windows. Youssef suggests that these habits were the customs of renegades, who still adhered to their former religious holidays.⁶⁹ Indeed, such relations between former Christians and their Christian neighbours are highly probable and can be seen elsewhere in the Middle East.⁷⁰

The letter was addressed to Honorius III and strongly supports his efforts to urge Frederick to lead a new crusade, especially during the year 1223, suggesting that it may have been preceded by diplomatic probing by the pope, or rather his legate. Promises made by the pope's side must have raised the hopes of the Melkites of Damietta and encouraged them to cooperate with the Latins. Hannes Möhring even connects the letter to the prophecies which arose in the Latin camp of the Fifth Crusade. The prophecies, he suggests, led the Melkites to expect the apocalyptic emperor, who could be identified with Frederick II.⁷¹ This interpretation, however, stretches the evidence too far. In fact, the motivation of the Melkites seems to have been quite pragmatic, especially as the emissary was to deliver additional oral material on sensitive military issues.

On the whole Eastern Christians shared neither the apocalyptic view of Frederick nor the image of the »Sultan of Lucera«. Their matter-of-fact attitude can be seen throughout the correspondence between the popes and the Georgian princes.⁷² Answers to letters from the pope before Frederick's crusade reflect the Georgians' hopes to join the emperor as a military ally and their wish to be informed of the exact date of his arrival.⁷³ Two thirteenth-century Syriac chronicles contribute more to our knowledge. They share the same unemotional perspective. Like the Georgians the chroniclers are also aware of Frederick's title »emperor«, mentioning him with some respect as the »great emperor« or the »father of the Frankish kings«. These terms reflect some contact with Latins

and even with Latin propaganda, as the Syriac word for »emperor«, whether Byzantine or Roman, was invariably »king«, and no difference was usually made between king and emperor.

The first chronicler, the primate of the Eastern branch of the Syriac Orthodox church, polymath and theologian Bar 'Ebrōyō (formerly known as Bar Hebraeus, 1226–1286), is aware of Frederick's religious cause.⁷⁴ The anonymous author of the second chronicle, the chronicle to the year 1234, is aware of the conflict between pope and emperor. He also mentions the hostility between Latins in Outremer and the emperor as well as the friendship between him and the Sultan of Egypt. This personal friendship as such does not worry our author in the least; he is familiar with this kind of association. In his report it is the sultan who sought friendship with the emperor and sent gifts in order to prevent war. Through this cooperation Frederick gained Jerusalem, there was peace, and Frederick returned to his country. Apart from the rather respectful language, in the Syriac narrations the emperor is no exception among the Frankish kings who came over the sea to fight the Muslims during these times.⁷⁵ Outside the papal,

69 Ibid., p. 264.

70 See also Benjamin Z. Kedar, »Convergence of Oriental Christian, Muslim, and Frankish Worshippers: The Case of Saydnaya«, in: *De Sion exiit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 1), (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 59–69.

71 Briefly on this source Hannes Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit: Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), pp. 190, 197.

72 For sources and references concerning the relations between the Pope and the Georgian kingdom see Peter Halfter, »Das Papsttum und das Königreich Georgien in der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts«, in: *Le Muséon* 118 (2005), pp. 109–142.

73 *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, I–II, ed. by Petrus Pressutti (Rome: Loescher, 1888; reprint Hildesheim & New York: Olms, 1978), no. 251, p. 179: »Quia vero modo intelleximus, quod imperator de mandato tuo nunc debet in Syriam transfretare ad liberationem Terre Sancte, plurimum gaudemus. Unde faciatis nos scire, quando transire debuerit imperator, et nos mittemus Iohannem comestabulum nostrum cum toto exercitu nostro in auxilium Christianorum et liberationem sancti sepulcri ad locum, quem mandaveritis ei venire.« See also no. 252, pp. 179f.

74 *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. by Paul Bedjan (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1890), p. 456 (t.); *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus Being the First Part of His Political History of the World*, I–II, trans. & ed. by Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Oxford & London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 391 (v.): »And in the year six hundred and twenty-five Mālik Kāmil sallied out from Egypt to come and take Damascus from his brother's son. And when he came to Shāmīn, the 'An-prōr (i.e. Emperor) the great king of the 'Armnāyē (i.e. 'Alimānāyē) went forth to Joppa, and Kāmil was prevented in the matter of Damascus. And his brother 'Ashrāf came to him, and Mālik Mūjāhid, the lord of Emesa, and they went and encamped against Tellā Dh-Eghlē; and they sent ambassadors to the Emperor and they learned the reason of his coming forth. And the Emperor replied that he had gone forth through zeal for the house of the Lord, Jerusalem. And the Arabs surrendered Jerusalem to the Franks, but only the city, without the surrounding country, and there was peace.«

75 *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, ed. & trans. by Jean-Baptiste Chabot (Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium [CSCO] 81, Scriptores Syri [SS] 36 [Syriac], CSCO 82, SS 37 [Syriac] & CSCO 109, SS 56 [Latin on the basis of CSCO 81, SS 36]), (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1952–1953); *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad a. C. 1234 pertinens*, II, trans. by Albert Abouina, introd. notes and index by Jean Maurice Fiey (CSCO 354, SS 154 [French on the basis of CSCO 82, SS 37]), (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium, 1974), II, p. 233 (t); II, p. 175 (v.): »Expédition du roi empereur, c'est-à-dire du père des rois des Francs; prise de Jérusalem à Malik al-Kāmil par le roi empereur. – L'année 1538 des Grecs, le grand roi des Francs s'embarqua avec une puissante armée (et vint) à la ville d'Acre, irrité contre le grand pape de Rome. Il saisit le roi d'Acre et l'envoya à l'intérieur par voie de mer. Les Francs du bord de la mer s'effrayèrent de lui; alors les Musulmans envoyèrent par voie de mer prévenir Malik al-Kāmil, roi d'Égypte, pour le mettre en garde contre l'empereur, le grand roi et maître-en-ruses [mōrē-pūrsē, perhaps better: master of diplomacy, DW]. Mais Malik al-Kāmil commença à montrer de l'amour envers le roi empereur et à lui envoyer dons et présents; il y eut entre eux une grande amitié. Il donna aussi Jérusalem à l'empereur, roi des Francs, et il y eut entre eux la paix pour des années convenues. Les Francs occupèrent donc Jérusalem, ensuite le roi retourna en son pays.« See also Anneliese

imperial, Ayyubid and anti-Ayyubid circles less extravagant images of Frederick reflect both the perspectives of the interested parties and also a third rather detached and pragmatic attitude.

It is true that Frederick had an Arab personal physician, who also translated material on falconry and created horoscopes for the emperor. But Theodore of Antioch was an Arabic-speaking *Christian*, a Syriac Orthodox by denomination, and was also a trained philosopher and mathematician.⁷⁶ Unlike the much-quoted Jewish and Muslim scholars at Frederick's court, Theodore never features as an important motif in narratives on Frederick. Although he probably served the emperor for some twenty years he is usually mentioned only briefly.⁷⁷ His life, typical for a learned Eastern Christian of his time, wandering pragmatically between religions, languages and cultures in search of a career in the secular world, thwarts both the Orientalist and the medievalist narrative. These Christian scholars were in close contact with Muslims and part of the same scientific world (which they themselves had helped to shape). They shared scientific interests in mathematics, medicine and philosophy, and had personal friends among Muslims, although these close contacts did not generally make them friends of Islam.

They might help to revise our interpretation. The underlying assumption of the Islamophile Frederick construct is that Frederick's contacts with Muslims prove him to be a friend of Islam. In order to fit into this same framework, a figure like Saladin (1137/8–1193) in turn, who was to some extent admired in the Latin world for his diplomacy with the crusaders, occasionally appears as a Christian in Latin sources.⁷⁸ Frederick on the other hand was Islamized in some Muslim sources for the same reasons. Critics like David Abulafia and Klaus van Eickels do not dispute the assumption that inter-religious contacts prove the spiritual openness to another religion. It is often connected to a second idea that

Lüders, *Die Kreuzzüge im Urteil syrischer und armenischer Quellen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964).

76 Benjamin Z. Kedar & Etan Kohlberg, 'The Intercultural Career of Theodore of Antioch', in: *The Mediterranean Historical Review* 10 (1995), pp. 164–176; Charles S. F. Burnett, 'Magister Theodore, Frederick II's Philosopher', in: *Federico II e le nuove culture: Atti del XXXI Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 9–12 ottobre 1994*, ed. by Centro italiano di studi sul basso Medioevo – Accademia Tudertina, Todi (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1995), pp. 225–285.

77 Abulafia, *Medieval Emperor*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 263, 337, questions Theodore's academic abilities, on doubtful grounds.

78 Hannes Möhring, 'Der andere Islam: Zum Bild vom toleranten Sultan Saladin und neuen Propheten Schah Ismail', in: *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten: Kongressakten des 4. Symposions des Mediävistenverbandes in Köln aus Anlaß des 1000. Todesjahres der Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. by Odilo Engels & Peter Schreiner (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993), pp. 131–155; Hannes Möhring: *Saladin: Der Sultan und seine Zeit 1138–1193* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), and other works by the same author on the Latin reception of Saladin.

inter-religious friendship implicates estrangement from one's own belief, because its absolute truth becomes relativized through the contact. This position is used as a strategic argument both by the ultra-orthodox in the Middle Ages and by atheist scholars today.

But in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries these attitudes were not a necessary precondition. Instead, scientific knowledge crossed religious boundaries between Jews, Christians and Muslims. In the practice of scientific transfer contemporaries pragmatically distinguished between religion and science. Frederick himself was primarily concerned with the liberal arts. For decades Latin scholars had been flocking south to Spain or Sicily to find books in Arabic on mathematics, astrology, medicine and philosophy. They worked together with Muslims and Jews to understand the texts, interpret difficult words or learn the language.⁷⁹ Spanish and English bishops engaged in the process of transferring astrological tables from Arabic sources during the twelfth century, believing astrology to be a useful science in the hands of the powerful.⁸⁰

These bishops, however, were no friends of the Muslims. It might be said that much of the scientific transfer of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was an unfriendly takeover in a situation of rivalry. In the thirteenth century Roger Bacon was quite convinced that in order to stand up to the Muslims, one needed to catch up with them in science first.⁸¹ Religious competition with the Muslims and a wish to retain an independent identity and rational integrity equally inspired Jews of that age like Maimonides (1135–1204) and Jacob ben Anatoli (1194–1256; he served at Frederick's court), to study Arabic works.⁸²

On the other hand there was a genuine reverence of Arab philosophers and scientists in the Latin worlds. The word 'Arab learning' (*doctrina arabum*) ap-

79 Charles Burnett devoted his scholarly life to securing the extant texts in the Latin world. See Charles Burnett, *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England* (London: British Library, 1997). A very fine example is also Keiji Yamamoto & Charles Burnett (eds.), *On Historical Astrology: The Book of Religions and Dynasties (On Great Conjunctions)*; Vol. I *The Arabic Original – Kitāb al-milal wa-d-duwal (The Book of Religions and Dynasties)*; Vol. II *The Latin Versions – De magnis coniunctionibus (On the Great Conjunctions)* (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science 33–34), (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000).

80 Apart from works already cited: Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–1953), in particular vol. II, 1923; Hermann Grauert, 'Meister Johann von Toledo', in: *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 1901* (Munich: Franz on commission, 1902), pp. 111–325; Gerd Mentgen, *Astrologie und Öffentlichkeit im Mittelalter* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 53), (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2005).

81 On sources and references see Jeremiah Hackett, *Roger Bacon and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57), (Leiden, New York & Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1997).

82 Robert S. Cohen & Hillel Levine (eds.), *Maimonides and the Sciences* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000); Y. Tzvi Langermann, *The Jews and Science in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1999).

pears in twelfth-century Christian Latin texts as code for superior learning.⁸³ In contrast to the nineteenth century, however, in the Latin Middle Ages neither learning nor other cultural elements were conceived in terms of Orientalness, and they did not imply reverence for Islam as a religion. Perfume flacons and jewellery boxes were not kept as »Muslim« or »Oriental« items when they were used as reliquiaries. Middle Eastern objects made of steel, ivory, glass, silk or brass were admired for their craftsmanship and their aesthetic value. Accordingly, the Kufic writings and iconography on the Norman coronation mantle and many other silk textiles used for liturgical purposes throughout the Latin world were not valued as »Muslim art«.⁸⁴ Christian frescos and church architecture in the Middle East would also include features of Muslim or Mongol art,⁸⁵ just as twelfth-century Iranian artists would copy Chinese motifs without admiring Confucianism.⁸⁶

During the thirteenth century some contemporaries even distinguished pragmatically between religious truth and doctrine. Religious ideas were incorporated into teachings without the transmitters accepting the donor's dogmatic system. A case in point is the aforementioned Bar 'Ebröyö, who translated works by the Muslim scholar al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) into Syriac and used his writings, because he considered his spiritual ideas useful.⁸⁷ And there was of course Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–1274), who quoted Maimonides and Muslim philosophers in his *Quinque Viae*, his logical demonstration of the existence of

83 For sources see the works by Charles Burnett: *Introduction*, op. cit. (note 79) and id. (ed.), *Adelard of Bath: An English Scientist and Arabist of the Early Twelfth Century* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1987).

84 A multitude of »Islamic« items used as European reliquiaries and for liturgical purposes are documented in Gereon Sievernich & Hendrik Budde (eds.), *Europa und der Orient 800–1900*, 28. Mai–27. August 1989 (Gütersloh & Munich: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989), cat. nos. 4/1–4/144, pp. 543–624.

85 Bas Snelders & Mar Immerzeel, »The Thirteenth-Century Flabellum from Deir al-Surian in the Musée Royal de Mariemont (Morlanwelz, Belgium)«, in: *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004), pp. 113–139; Bas Snelders & Adeline Jeudy, »Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia«, in: *Eastern Christian Art* 3 (2006), pp. 105–142, and other works by these authors.

86 See for example Sheila Blair & Jonathan Bloom, »Dekorative Künste der Großseldschuken«, in: *Islam: Kunst und Architektur*, ed. by Markus Hattstein & Peter Delius (Cologne: Könemann, 2nd ed. 2005), pp. 382–384, here p. 382.

87 Herman G. B. Teule, »Barhebraeus' Ethicon, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sina«, in: *Islamochristiana* 18 (1992), pp. 73–86; id., »A Christian-Muslim Discussion: The Importance of Bodily and Spiritual Purity. A Chapter from the Second Mēmro of Barhebraeus' Ethicon on »The Right Conduct Regarding the Sustenance of the Body«, in: *Syriac Polemics: Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink*, ed. by Wout J. van Bekkum, Jan W. Drijvers & Alex C. Klugkist (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 170), (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), pp. 193–204, and other works by the same author. Herman Teule is currently also editing Bar 'Ebröyö's Book on Ethics; for the moment the only complete edition remains Paul Bedjan, *The Book of Ethics of Bar Hebraeus* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1898; reprint Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007).

God.⁸⁸ The channels and limits of exchange in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did not follow the logic of Orientalist concepts.

Conclusion

Denying Frederick's activities or competence will not give us a better understanding of his skills as a diplomat in the Muslim world and his achievements as a promoter of science. Categories like »traditionalism« (a term connected with all sorts of unspecified medievalist connotations) and »rational diplomacy« versus »friendship« and »cultural open-mindedness« turn out to be of limited analytical value here. The example of the Eastern Christians, in particular, shows that the world of the thirteenth century was much more complex than the Orientalist or medievalist narratives suggest. As there was no binary opposition, a hybrid personality was not necessary in order to travel between the cultures and to make the best of them.

Frederick's biography, and even more so the narrative of the age need to be revised. Instead of contrasting Frederick against a Christian culture invariably hostile to the Muslims we must remember that it is not even surprising that Christian forces within the Latin states negotiated with Muslims against Frederick at the same time as Frederick strove for cooperation with the Sultan.⁸⁹ Christians and Muslims both sought cooperation and played on pre-existing enmities during this period of complex and shifting alliances.⁹⁰

Already in 1936, Martin Grabmann suggested that glorification of Frederick's achievements in scientific transfer was due to an underestimation of the

88 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–III (Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia 4–12), (Rome: s.n., 1888–1906), I–I, qu. 2, art. iii; Norbert Samuelson & John Clayton, »Gottesbeweise«, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 13, ed. by Gerhard Müller (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 708–78; Denys Turner, »On Denying the Right God: Aquinas on Atheism and Idolatry«, in: *Modern Theology* 20 (2004), pp. 141–161; David B. Burrell, »Thomas Aquinas and Islam«, in: *Modern Theology* 20 (2004), pp. 71–90.

89 Michael A. Köhler, *Allianzen und Verträge zwischen fränkischen und islamischen Herrschern im Vorderen Orient: Eine Studie über das zwischenstaatliche Zusammenleben vom 12. bis ins 13. Jahrhundert* (Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients 12), (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1991), p. 362. For another indication see also Henry R. Luard (ed.), *Matthaei Parisiensis: Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica maiora*, I–VII (Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores 57, 1–7, 3), (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1872–1883), III: A. D. 1216–A. D. 1239 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1876; reprint Nendeln: Kraus Reprints, 1964), in particular pp. 177–179.

90 Köhler, *Allianzen und Verträge*, op. cit. (note 89), see the commentary by Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, op. cit. (note 45), pp. 248–250, 391–404.

period,⁹¹ when secular and ecclesiastical courts in general actually became increasingly involved in science.⁹² Frederick's foundation of the school of Naples in 1224 and his support for the medical school of Salerno followed, among others, the foundation by King Alfons IX of León (1188–1230) of a school in Salamanca in 1218–1219. Kings and popes supported *studia* and were instrumental in the emergence of the universities in the thirteenth century.⁹³ During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the promotion of science was always closely connected with the Arabic-Latin transfer, and bishops and theologians were actively involved in this project.⁹⁴

Only against a construction of the era as an age of Christian fanaticism and intellectual aridity (i.e. scholasticism), could the myth of Emperor Frederick the enlightened, the friend of the Muslims, produce such a stark and distorted contrast. The underestimation and misrepresentation of relations between East and West in the Middle Ages led to anachronistic and erroneous conclusions. The equation of »Arabic« with »Islamic« and »Oriental« is not helpful for analysing relations during this period. Its motivation of transfer differs radically from the nineteenth-century world of erotic longing, Turqueries and Orientalist painters. Instead, the manifold inter-religious relations in various fields of learning, arts and even religion during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries should be taken more strongly into account. We might lose »our man« in the Middle Ages, but we could gain a better understanding of Frederick's active participation in a movement of innovation and transfer.

91 Martin Grabmann, »Kaiser Friedrich II. und sein Verhältnis zur aristotelischen und arabischen Philosophie«, in: *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben: Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*, I–II, ed. by id. (Munich: Hueber, 1936), vol. II, pp. 103–137, in particular p. 105: »Es steht mir nicht zu, an den anderen Teilen dieses aus dem Stefan-George-Kreis stammenden, so eindrucksvoll und fesselnd geschriebenen Werkes [i.e. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich*, op. cit. (note 31), DW] irgendwie etwas auszusetzen, aber der Abschnitt, welcher über die Stellung Friedrichs II. zur Wissenschaft handelt, weist eine solche Fülle von tatsächlichen Unrichtigkeiten und von unbegründeten Urteilen auf, dass eine erneute Behandlung des Gegenstandes nicht als überflüssig erscheinen dürfte.«

92 Fried, »In den Netzen«, op. cit. (note 16), pp. 141–193.

93 Paolo Nardi, »Die Hochschulträger«, in: *Geschichte der Universität; Vol. I Mittelalter*, ed. by Walter Rüegg (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), pp. 83–108.

94 Robert Louis Benson, Giles Constable & Carol Dana Lanham (eds.), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1982); Andreas Speer & Lydia Wegener, *Wissen über Grenzen: Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 33), (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2006).