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In this book, the eminent Cambridge medievalist David Abulafia offers a valuable reassessment of the Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), one of the most complex figures of the Middle Ages. Dubbed *Stupor Mundi*, the Wonder of the World, by his contemporaries, Frederick was the last medieval German emperor to attempt to conquer Italy, the last emperor to hold his own in the centuries-long struggles for primacy between popes and emperors, and the last crusader to take Jerusalem, though by treaty not force. Frederick's reputation has long suffered from the accusations of tyranny, heresy, lasciviousness, and atheism spread by enemies like Pope Innocent IV. Modern scholarship has failed to reach any consensus on him. At one extreme, some historians have accepted his enemies' libels at face value and depict him as a scourge of God. At the other, Frederick sometimes appears as a precursor of the Renaissance, a patron of the arts and sciences, anachronistically tolerant of Jews and Muslims, and justly opposed to the extravagant claims of the theocratic papacy. Many authors have used Frederick as a foil for their own world-views, doing an injustice to their subject. This book largely avoids such traps, whence its importance.

Abulafia attempts a threefold reclamation of Frederick. First and most convincingly, he reclaims Frederick for the Middle Ages from those who see him as a renaissance man born three centuries early. Frederick's fabled affection for Muslims and Jews did not extend far beyond those members of each religion who furnished him support in his southern Italian realms, and his reputation for tolerance among modern writers arises largely from a misreading of libels against him by even less tolerant
adversaries. Abulafia also reassesses Frederick’s patronage of the arts, demonstrating the dearth of architecture and painting at his court and deflating the more extravagant claims made for the Sicilian School of Italian poetry. Likewise in politics, Frederick’s aims and methods resemble those of his father, the Emperor Henry VI, far more than those of a renaissance despot. As Abulafia demonstrates, Frederick was a medieval man in art and governance.

Abulafia attempts a second, more problematic reclamation, arguing that Frederick was essentially an orthodox Christian despite the accusations of heresy and atheism and his multiple excommunications. The papal propaganda machine often used stock accusations of impiety, some centuries old, against him rather than specific charges. The author further argues that Frederick’s stringent edicts against heresy, surpassing papal prescriptions in their severity, offer a warrant of his orthodoxy, and that his break with the Church resulted from his insistence on traditional imperial prerogatives in the face of the unprecedented political claims of the thirteenth-century papacy, not irreligion. Abulafia’s arguments on this point, though strong, will no doubt encounter refutations from many quarters.

Finally, Abulafia tries to reclaim Frederick for Italy from the Germans both medieval and modern. He concentrates on Frederick’s Italian realms and admits (p. 2) that he offers few new insights on Frederick’s role in Germany. Given that Italian affairs consumed the bulk of Frederick’s energies and interest, this focus is justifiable. Less creditably, the text occasionally betrays the author’s dislike of modern Germans, especially in his account of the Waffen SS’s burning of the archives of Naples in 1943, which is coupled with a malicious explanation of Eduard Sthamer’s failure to produce a promised edition of Frederick’s register for 1239-40 (pp.321-24). His grudging acknowledgements elsewhere of the tremendous contributions of German scholars do not atone for this lapse of scholarly courtesy.

In other respects, the book is well-written, with good maps and illustrations. The author’s decision to write the book without notes will draw criticism from some scholars, but as he notes, earlier biographies and the *Jarhbücher* of the German Empire provide exhaustive documentation, and he offers an annotated bibliography (pp. 440-57). The book’s value lies in its provocative interpretation of the grand themes of Frederick’s life. Some points such as the description of Frederick as a
conventional Christian will engender heated rebuttals, but the book as a whole offers a valuable reassessment of a most elusive figure.

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In *Harvest of Violence* Robert Carmack successfully brings together a diverse collection of essays written by anthropologists, a political scientist, and a geographer. All the works deal with the effects of the military repression on indigenous communities during the regimes of Generals Romeo Lucas Garcia, Efrain Rios Montt and Oscar Mejia Victores, which took place from 1978 to 1983. This period has been called one of the bloodiest in recent Guatemalan history. A number of guerrilla groups were operating in the northern highlands at this time. The Guatemalan Army adopted brutal methods of repression against the guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers. Military atrocities fell heaviest on the rural areas, in particular on communities with large indigenous populations.

The book is divided into essays which are categorized into different sections, these divisions are based on the type of violence visited on the communities. The sections are as follows: Generalized Violence, which deal with areas most affected, Selective Violence, which cover areas where political assassinations were usually the case, Indirect Violence, communities where violence came as a result of geographical location and not due to direct military operations, and finally a section dealing with the refugees of said violence.

The book is aimed at the popular audience. As Robert Carmack states

"...We [the essayists] seek to reach out, then, to US citizens and their government to explain what has been going on in the rural areas of Guatemala. We employ informa-"