CHAPTER 4

Converts in Search of Religious Progress

> When the hope for a victorious end of the war, which had upheld the people, finally was shattered, a great sadness, a hopelessness and despair took hold of the masses. Before my eyes I can still see the people standing in groups in front of the posters proclaiming the conditions of the armistice. They cried out, '*Wir sind kaputt!*' (We are finished).[1]

Shortly after making this observation in Berlin, Emmy Arnold left to create the *Bruderhof*, the Christian youth movement that tried to live according to the Sermon on the Mount.[2] In their desperation, Germans embraced religious alternatives – from visionary Christian youth movements like the *Bruderhof* to theosophy, astrology, metaphysics, yoga, magnetism, Bo Yin Ra, healing, monism, the Germanic Faith Community, Wotan cults, and other mystical *völkische* movements that harked back to real or imagined pre-Christian religious origins.[3] Besides, every wisdom and religion the east could muster had a representative in Berlin or Germany.[4] By the time of the Parliament of Religions, held during the World Fair in Chicago in 1893, Buddhists, Brahmans and Hindus, many of whom were also members of the Indian Theosophical Society, had already conquered the international stage. Missionaries from the Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the Buddhist Propagation Society, the Baha'i movement and universal Sufism had all made their presence felt in London and on the European continent.[5] When after the Great War, Ahmadiyya missionaries

1 Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together* (New York: Plough, 1964), 20.

2 For a more detailed account, see Chapter 1. Emmy was married to Eberhard Arnold and they started the Bruderhof together.

3 Rita Panesar, *Medien religiöser Sinnstiftung. Der 'Volkserzieher.' Die Zeitschriften des 'Deutschen Monistenbundes' und die 'Neue Metaphysische Rundschau' 1897–1936.* Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2006; Helmut Zander, 'Theosophie.' In *Anthropologie in Deutschland.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, (2007), 25–32.

4 Suzanne L. Marchand, 'Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair. Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe,' in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 341–60.

5 World Parliament of Religions: Dorothea Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893. Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002; Indian Theosophy: Marc Bevir, 'Theosophy as a political Movement,' in *Gurus and their Followers. New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, edited by Antony Copley. Oxford: University

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presented themselves in Berlin, a dense net of theosophist and anthroposophist lodges covered the inner-city boroughs, while to the north of the metropolis the Buddhist House was already in the making.[6]

This chapter and the next address Germans who during these turbulent years chose to become Muslims. Starting in 1922, when the first Muslim mission commenced, it ends at the moment Germany entered the next war and the last missionary left the country. Within these limits, the chapters map the different responses to the Muslim missionary activities. Our assumption is that the missionary field and that of modernity created various interfaces in the religious domain in which experimenting with religion played a decisive role. In other words, the interaction of the missionary effort and the energies of modernity created a domain of religious experimentation. Among Muslims in Berlin, this taste for experiment challenged traditional notions to a breaking point.

Mansur Rifat's observation that Ahmadis appealed to both Christians and Jews points to a central feature of the chapters ahead. Not only the Ahmadiyya and their Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft, but also the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin dealt with a range of Jewish and a range of Christian converts, and Muslim *émigré*s in Berlin carefully registered the difference. As for the converts themselves, during the Weimar years, distinctions between their different ethnic and religious roots were of little importance. German intellectuals and artists had been intermarrying for two generations, and many Jews converted to Christianity. The postwar generation was largely the product of interethnic mixtures. What counted for them was contempt of the European traditions and the freedom to choose one's religion, if religion was an option at all. When the Nazis took over and started to 'cleanse' family roots, many Germans were confronted with an unknown 'Jewish grandmother' for the first time in their lives. Others identified with Judaism only after they had been reconfigured a Jew by the Nazi bureaucracy.

For the writing of the chapters ahead, this posed a conceptual difficulty. Some converts composed a conversion narrative that was clearly and explicitly

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Press 2000, 159–180; Buddhism: Brian Bocking et al., 'The First Buddhist Mission to the West: Charles Pfoundes and the London Buddhist mission of 1889–1892.' *Diskus* 16.3 (2014), 1–33; Martin Baumann, 'Importierte Religionen: das Beispiel Buddhismus,' in *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933*, edited by Diethart Kerbs Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag 1998. Hinduism: Hiltrud Rüstau, 'The Ramakrishna Mission: Its Female Aspect,' in *Gurus and their Followers. New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, edited by Antony Copley. Oxford: University Press 2000, 83–107, and Lüddeckens op cit.

6 After a short phase on the island of Sylt, the house opened its doors in 1924 in Berlin – Frohnau. http://das-buddhistische-haus.de/pages/de/geschichte/kurzgeschichte-des-hauses.

rooted in Christian themes. Others employed the specifically Jewish approach to Islam that was developed in the nineteenth century. But many converts counteracted such patterns. Emile Oettinger for instance was of Lutheran descent but a declared atheist when she met her future husband, Friedrich, who for his part happened to be a converted Jew. To their surprise, their two daughters found themselves redefined as Jewish in the 1930s, with frightening consequences. Another example, Hugo Marcus, the main theorist of European Islam, suppressed his Jewish roots. It was his persecution that made him a Jew, in his own eyes and in those of his Muslim friends. A third example is the case of Elsa Schiemann who married Leopold Weiss and together with him converted to Islam. Although it is difficult to trace her roots at all, evidence points in the direction of a Jewish secular background, but she died too young for the Nazis to establish her descent for her.

As a rule of thumb, samples of Christian approaches to Islam are collected in this chapter and samples of Jewish approaches in the next. However, the often obscure complications mentioned above made it difficult at times to discern sharply between the two. As a consequence, Hugo Marcus appears in both chapters, whereas Emilie Oettinger and her daughters receive a collective portrayal in Chapter 4. Should we rip their story apart? As in Bosnia in the 1990s, the ethnic cleansing of the 1930s disrupted a successful track of intercultural cohabitation. If we do not want to fall prey to the perspective of its Nazi executors, we will have to leave some borders blurred.

While introducing the reader to a range of convert biographies, I try to find some common ground between their different ideas of, and searches for, modernity. In the interwar period, experiments with man's progress in the name of modernity were at the heart of the mission and, for very different reasons, converting to Islam was one of these. Germans who opted for Islam came from a wide social and political spectrum, from revolutionaries and avant-garde artists to conservative Orientalists and, after 1933, Nazi sympathizers. Their imaginative conceptions of Islam differed accordingly, ranging from personal progress and global togetherness to a soldier's religion. Apart from two of those actors, Lev Nussimbaum and Leopold Weiss, this group has not yet been subjected to academic research. The two chapters therefore promise to cover a good deal of new ground.

4.1 A Fragile Equilibrium

Just as it began to affect the furthest reaches of the empire, the accelerating process of globalization also altered European society. Not only did the horizon

of European knowledge expand, but also some countries, notably Great Britain and Germany, grew extraordinarily rich. A new middle class arose, with enough money and leisure to take an interest in the world beyond Europe's borders and to express dissatisfaction with Western civilization. Intellectuals and artists contrasted East and West as binary opposites, a duality in which Asia was perceived to incorporate indolence and spirituality, while Europe was ascribed a vital and dynamic culture that had, alas, fallen victim to materialism and a consequent loss of values.

Around 1900, scepticism concerning European culture took hold among the urban middle classes, 'modernity' serving as the catchword both to celebrate and criticize the speed with which change had occurred. Modernity was considered 'everything that regarded the future and was liable to change in the future,'[7] including technological progress, politics and personal well-being. Whether in St Petersburg, Vienna, London or The Hague, young people experimented with alternatives to the established order and looked for stages on which to play out their convictions. In Germany, *Lebensreformer* emphasized individual happiness. Its scope encompassed health foods (biodynamic farming), body culture (sunbathing, gymnastics, loose dress), life styles (communitarianism, free love, pastoral living), architecture (the Bauhaus) the arts (expressionism, Cubism), and, of course, religion. German modernists were curious about Eastern philosophies, to which they ascribed the spirituality Europe had supposedly lost and that would remedy European materialism.[8]

After the Great War, the global conflict that forms the starting point for the following observations, Berlin experienced in exemplary fashion the devastating effects of increasing globalization. It found itself in the aftermath of a war it had not started but for which it nonetheless had to pay the costs. Towards the end of that war, which involved loss of life on a hitherto unknown scale, the Prussian, Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian empires were abolished, creating a political chaos comparable to the current turmoil in the Muslim world. Russia

7 Christoph Butler, *Modernism. A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, 'Modern, Modernitaet, Moderne,' in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch – sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner et al. (München: Klett, 1978), 126.

8 Joachim Radkau, 'Die Verheissungen der Morgenfruehe. Die Lebensreform in der neuen moderne,' in *Die Lebensreform. Entwuerfe der Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz et al. (Darmstadt: Häusser Media, 2001), 55–61; Ulrich Linse, 'Lebensreform und Reformreligionen,' in *Die Lebensreform. Entwuerfe der Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz et al. (Darmstadt: Häusser Media, 2001), 193–199; Martin Baumann, 'Importierte Religionen: das Beispiel Buddhismus,' in *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933*, ed. Diethart Kerbs (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag 1998), 513–23.

went through a revolution that changed the political topography of Eastern Europe and inspired dreams of revolution elsewhere; Hungary was occupied and forcibly turned communist. Poland drew new borders, with deadly implications for the border populations; while the former Habsburg Empire was cut down to miniscule proportions. France, the country in which a large part of the war had been fought, came out horribly mutilated.[9]

After armistice was declared, Germany lived through a period of serious political destabilization. Most Germans failed to comprehend why the war had ended with their defeat, and it did not help that the political classes refused to acknowledge this.[10] National pride was at stake. Returning divisions formed paramilitary organizations, terrorizing Germany for at least four years. Between 1918 and 1922 the ultra-right created havoc in the Rhine area, the Baltic countries and Schlesien. In Munich, a communist regime took power. In Kiel, Hamburg and Berlin, socialist uprisings and uncontrolled street fighting created high political tension.[11] From the far right to the far left, the country groped for a return to its 'original' state, inventing as it went along a *Deutschheit* (Germanness) that resulted in visions of 'anti-modern modernity'[12] and vehemently opposed the democratic but feeble Weimar government.

A spiritual vacuum accompanied the political crisis. Official religion, both in its Lutheran and Catholic forms, quickly lost authority. The *Kaiser* had been a symbol for Protestantism and when he left the country the Lutheran church was widely felt to be devoid of meaning. Likewise, the occupation of the Rhineland and the refusal of the victorious powers to unite Germany with Austria contradicted the traditional German Catholic self-understanding as the *Christliches Abendland* (Christian Occident).[13] As a result, many people turned their backs on the German churches and went in search of

9 Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, 'War and Revolution in a World of Empires: 1914–1945,' in *Empires in World History*, ed. Jane Burbank et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 369–413.

10 John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities. A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 327–400; Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

11 Vanessa Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen: Ideen von Europa in Deutschland zwischen Reichstradition und Westorientierung 1920–1970* (Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2005), 25–100.

12 Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, 'Suchbewegungen in der Moderne. Religion im politischen Feld der Weimarer Republik,' in *Religion und Gesellschaft. Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Friedrich Graf et al. (Köln–Weimar–Wien: Böhlau, 2007), 177.

13 Doering-Manteuffel, 'Suchbewegungen,' 179.

spiritual alternatives;[14] the globalization trends of the end of the nineteenth century had already enhanced the level of knowledge and respect for other belief systems. In the age of modernity, the awareness of other religions not only meant enhancement of knowledge, but also implied the freedom to choose between them. Along with the study of religious texts, theosophy especially encouraged the study of religions through encounter, experience and conversion.[15] In the aftermath of the war, all these elements joined to create a fertile ground for religious experiment. Foreign missionaries with a fresh message were welcomed, turning the Weimar Republic into a stage for Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and alternative Christian missions.

After 1922, when a fragile equilibrium came into being, Berlin quickly became the cultural capital of continental Europe. A magnet for artists, writers, filmmakers and actors, it became the avant-garde center of European modernity. Journalists representing the main dailies across Europe and the USA joined ranks to report on revolutionary progress and its backlashes.[16] Some 500,000 refugees from Russia flooded into Berlin on their way to the Americas, among them the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia and revolutionary artists the revolution had betrayed.[17] This amalgam of people created an extraordinarily creative potential. For some time, a floating bohemia inhabited Berlin's big apartment houses and these people were critical of European civilization, sympathized with revolution and wrote the books, produced the films and created the art that today are among the classics of modern European art. Proponents of anti-modern modernity, conservative elites, National Socialists and the right-winged paramilitary despised and hated them.[18] This constellation served as the local setting in which students, writers, missionaries and revolutionaries from Muslim countries, constituting the Muslim community in interwar Berlin, interacted with their host society.

14 Michael Klöckner and Udo Tworuschka, *Religionen in Deutschland. Kirchen, Glaubensgemeinschaften, Sekten* (München: Olzog Verlag, 1994).

15 Linse, 'Lebensreform und Reformreligionen,' 193–9; Helmut Zander, 'Die Theosophie im Kontext weltanschaulicher Pluralisierung im 19. Jahrhundert,' in *Anthroposophie in Deutschland. Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945*, ed. Helmut Zander (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 33–51.

16 Sigrid Bauschinger, 'The Berlin Moderns: Else Lasker-Schüler and ‚Café Culture,' in *Berlin Metropolis*, ed. Emily D. Bilsky (New York: Jewish Museum, 2000), 58–102.

17 Karl Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin. Ostbahnhof Europas* (München: Panthon, 2007); Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan, *Transit und Transformation. Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918–1939* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

18 Werner Maser, *Adolf Hitler. Mein Kampf. Geschichte. Auszüge. Kommentare* (Rastatt: Moewig, 1981); Ernst von Salomon, *Der Fragebogen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1961).

For ten years, from 1922 to January 1933, all these people turned Berlin into a melting pot in which extremes prevailed – extreme financial crises, extreme political instability, extreme outpourings of creativity, and extreme missionary activity. On 30 January 1933, when the fascist National Socialists came to power, the pluralistic society, which the Weimar Republic had produced, was scattered. The new regime forged political stability through the persecution of anybody who did not conform to its idea of Germanness; it targeted communists, socialists, artists, homosexuals, people who ridiculed its politics, gypsies and Jews alike. Any remaining opponents left the country. The rest of the population conformed politically, joining the Nazi Party or becoming active in one of the many Nazi sub-organizations.[19] The influx of migrants was stopped. Foreigners were scrutinized and refused a residence permit unless they fitted the Nazi profile. Alternative religious groups were closed down or at least controlled. Muslim organizations in Berlin faced the same choices as their German neighbours: Muslim communists fled the country; the rest had to be silent or cooperate with the prevailing regime.

4.2 The Attractions of Muslim Missionaries

As I explained in the last chapter, a heady mixture of anti-colonialism, communist sympathy and the breakthrough of pan-Islamism in 1922 was the matrix from which the Kheiris initiated the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin. When the Ahmadiyya founded the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft in 1930, however, the country was quickly moving towards National Socialism, and intellectuals of right and left signalled a new atmosphere of 'no-nonsense';[20] this meant that the chaotic market of ideas was given up in favour of a single solution. While the Gemeinde in the early 1920s had attracted revolutionaries, during the 1930s it did its best to be acknowledged by the Nazi regime as representative of the Muslim nations in Berlin. By contrast, the Ahmadiyya and its Gesellschaft attracted a peculiar segment of Berlin society, among which conservative intellectuals and Nazi sympathizers freely mingled in search of a religious modernity. Judging from their contributions to the *Moslemische Revue*,

19 In 1933, when the NSDAP came to power, this party already counted 2.5 million members. To avoid the influx of members paying lip service, the regime put a stop on new memberships until 1937. Once this was removed, membership mounted to 11.5 million in a total population of 66 million inhabitants. (http://www.bundesarchiv.de/oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/bilder_dokumente/00757/index-11.html.de).

20 Salomon, *Der Fragebogen*, 242.

the search seemed to have been truly open-minded, including Orientalism, the meeting of 'East' and 'West,' pacifism, gestalt psychology, life reform, rational conduct, different outlines for a 'future man,' and sympathy with some Nazi reforms, notably hygiene and body culture (see below). Until 1933, the Gesellschaft also met with a wide public reception. An inter-religious entrepreneur, missionary S. M. Abdullah was repeatedly invited to speak to Buddhist, theosophist and Jewish audiences.[21] As an active pacifist, he visited international peace conferences and drew up questionnaires to investigate the peace potential of the different world religions.[22]

The Kheiri brothers and Ahmadiyya each drew a very different crowd, a difference that deepened as the political constellation changed. Only three of Kheiri's converts (Alfred Seiler-Chan, Khalid Banning and Maria Hesselbach) switched to the Ahmadiyya, while only one new Muslim from the ranks of Ahmadiyya (Georg Konieczny) joined the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin. For the rest, the two circles of converts kept their distance. As we saw, the main distinction between the two missions was in their global vision, each of which had different implications for the modernization of the world and the place of German Muslims in it. To this, converts added their own distinctions. Whereas the Gemeinde attracted the student generation born after 1900, the Ahmadiyya appealed to members of the upper middle class, many of whom were born in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the war, the former age group was branded *Generation 1902* because it had been too young to experience the front line and consequently could not claim heroic deeds; while the latter had fought in the trenches of Northern France and Galicia, an experience that utterly destabilized their lives. In the following pages we shall encounter the two groups at several stages along the line, as we try to understand how they experimented with religion to satisfy their need to accommodate modernity.

To the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin

Among the young who felt attracted to Kheiri's revolutionary message we meet students and artists trying to avoid the isolation that was closing in on Germany; they were critical of western civilization, dared to articulate anti-war views and, to all appearances, were thrilled to join a non-European international movement. From the scant biographies that remain, one gains the impression that for them, joining Islam first of all implied joining the anti-colonial struggle in support of the liberation movements in North Africa and British India. Some 50 students from Middle and Eastern Europe, flanked by a few of the

21 AMA/Interwar, 4.

22 AMA/Interwar, 5; Ib. 12–13.

older generation, first joined the Gemeinde, then regrouped in the student organization Islamia, finally to break away from Kheiri in 1927 by setting up the Islam Institute. Who were they?

At the height of Jabbar Kheiri's quarrel with Islamia, he released a list of active members in his Gemeinde,[23] accusing German Muslims of communism and 'frequent contacts to Moscow.'[24] The list enumerates 163 members, one-quarter of which have European names. In the ensuing correspondence ten more European Muslims could be established; there must have been more. Some members we know about from other sources, notably the female halves of converted couples, are never mentioned.

In the list, the reader encounters a string of German Muslims – Dr H. Khalid Banning, Ewald Brendel, Helene Bosner, Anton Dybe, Adelheid Cappelle, Albert Fischer, Dr Käthe Göritz, Friedrich Hassan Heinze, Erna Hedije Hoeftmann, Walther Hassan Hoffmann, Bruno Kramer, Hans Ali Knofke, Erwin Hosseyn Neumann, Bruno Richter, Elsa Schiemann-Specht, Hermann Schulz, Alfred Chalid Seiler-Chan, Werner Voigt, Ulla Westermann, and others.[25] Across the sources, we can count at least two artists and painters (Bruno Richter and Elsa Schiemann-Specht), two publishers and art printers (Anton Dybe and Alfred Seiler-Chan) and a string of dissertation students. Käthe Göritz, Werner Voigt and Erwin Neumann deposited their dissertations in the Berlin National Library. Erna Hoeftmann, Alfred Seiler-Chan and Bruno Richter secured placements at the university Institute of Oriental Studies.[26] Some can be traced throughout the records of interwar Islam, notably Walther Hassan Hoffmann, Bruno Richter, Georg Konieczny and Alfred Seiler-Chan, who never tired of novel attempts to reshape Muslim community life. Others, like the Austrian Wilhelm Hintersatz (b. 1886), whose adopted name was Harun al-Rashid, soon disappear from the files, but turn up again in the next world war, where he was liaison officer between the Mufti and the main security office, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), and served as a commander of the East-Turkish SS regiment on the Balkans.[27] Of this circle, only Anton Dybe and Georg Konieczny re-emerge after the war to help restore Muslim life in Germany.[28]

23 VR/IGB, 159–64.

24 AA/2 (17 December 1928).

25 After Kheiri quarrelled with Islamia, he wrote adopted Muslim names in parentheses only.

26 VR/DGI, 53, 57.

27 Roland Pfeiffer, 'Der Osttürkische Waffen-Verband der SS,' *Lexikon der Wehrmacht* (2007), accessed 12 December 2013, http://www.lexikonderwehrmacht.de/.

28 Mohammed A. Hobohm, *Neuanfänge muslimischen Gemeindelebens nach dem Krieg* (2000), accessed 30 May 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20070129062534, http://members.aol.com/dmlbonn/archiv/hobohm2.html.

The list features only two well-known names, that of Leopold Weiss and Lev Nussimbaum (Esad Bey).[29] Raised in very different Jewish milieux – Weiss in a family of rabbis in Lemberg, Nussimbaum in the Jewish revolutionary milieu of Kiev – both had arrived in Berlin with the first waves of Russian refugees. Both embraced Islam, but it seems for very different reasons. Some 30 years later, Weiss describes in his autobiography his conversion experience as an intense moment of rejection of Western civilization.[30] In very different fashion, Nussimbaum experimented with an exotic-sounding name, oriental garb and stories from the *One Thousand and One Nights*, weaving a fable of his oriental origin as he went along.[31] Their biographies will be treated in more detail in the next chapter.

Weiss (Asad) and Nussimbaum (Esad Bey) were Jewish fugitives from Eastern Europe. Scrutinizing Kheiri's list, it seems that other Eastern Europeans accompanied them. The reader meets with Helene Adas, Ewald Brendel, Albert Ceasar Czernikow, Viktor Glikin, Leon Jekelzewitz, Arpad Jerenzz, Diodor Kopinski, Leowar Mirimanian, Melly Podleschewsky, Paul Warkoicz, and Eugenie Woranoff, whose lives, however, could not be reconstructed. A small consolation: many of these family names can be traced to the passenger lists of the steamers that left for the United States every week. A survey of the North and South American Jewish communities suggests that some of the Eastern Europeans on Kheiri's list had Jewish roots as well.

Kheiri's high-flying plans finally came to nothing. Isolated after a nasty dispute over the abolition of the *khalifate*, he discontinued not only the mission journal but also the yearly gatherings of the Gemeinde.[32] In the end, Nafi Tschelebi dethroned him. Tschelebi's idea of Muslim modernization was not world revolution, but the laying of foundations for future Muslim nation-states. Although accused of receiving money from Moscow,[33] he nonetheless acquired the trust and cooperation of important German institutions and, in only a short period of time, created the Islam Institute, the Islam archive, two periodicals and a dense local network. Tschelebi managed to give a different thrust to the development of Muslim modernity in Berlin. In its estimate of the

29 Günther Windhager, *Leopold Weiss* (Wien: Böhlau, 2003); Tom Reiss, *Der Orientalist. Auf den Spuren von Esad Bey* (Berlin: Osburg Verlag, 2008); Gerhard Höpp, *Mohammed Esad Bey: Nur Orient für Europäer?* (unpubl. ms., 1995), accessed 30 May 2014, zmo.de/biblio/nachlass_hoepp_web.pdf; Gerhard Höpp, 'Noussimbaum wird Essad Bey. Annäherung an eine Biographie zwischen den Kulturen,' *Moslemische Revue* (1996) 18–26.

30 Muhammad Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 174–7.

31 Reiss, *Der Orientalist*, 256.

32 See Chapter 3.

33 AA/2 (17 October 1928), 3.

political situation, the Foreign Office judged his circle 'to have completely distanced itself from the 'world revolutionaries' and their political-military illusions, which dominated the war and the postwar period,' deciding that the time had come 'to begin a fruitful cooperation.'[34]

The Islam Institute indeed became an attractive place for many different people. Director of the university Institute of Oriental Studies, Professor Kampffmeier, and MP Julius Bachem sat on the board; Walther Hoffmann, Bruno Richter and Georg Konieczny served as authors, editors and printers of its periodicals. From the Middle East, Weiss (Asad) and Nussimbaum (Esad Bey) contributed articles; Erna Hedije Hoeftmann and Alfred Chalid Seiler-Chan were commissioned to run a register of converts and to 'rethink the relationship between old and new Muslims.'[35] With a view to an influx of converts, this was a novel policy and it pointed towards restriction: 'Inscribed in the register may be those who are able to give proof of exit from their former religious community and proof of entry to Islam.'[36] The phrase dips into the sensitive subject of religious belonging, revealing that many new Muslims did not deem it necessary to exit from their former religious communities. Rather, as will be discussed in the next section, German religious seekers preferred to move from one religious station to the next, without binding themselves.

Nonetheless, whereas many of the Muslim *émigré*s only lasted for the duration of their university studies, German Muslims guaranteed continuity and durability for the community. There is no doubt that the impact of this circle was in anchoring Islam in Germany. Adopting the roles of navigator, cultural translator and interpreter in the local framework, the transfer they enabled was in the field of local knowledge. In contrast to Muslim *émigré*s, local Muslims knew all about the legal requirements and the political and societal expectations surrounding the founding of migrant organizations. Khalid Banning for instance navigated the proceedings, which led to the foundation of the Gemeinde.[37] Hoffmann, his wife Emina Hoffmann, Erna Hoeftmann, and Albert Seiler-Chan supported Nafi Tschelebi in breaking away from it.[38] Hoffmann even took it upon himself to file a complaint against Kheiri.[39]

34 AA/2 (17 October 1928), 1.
35 DIG, 1.
36 DIG, 1.
37 VR/IGB, 8.
38 VR/IGB, 20.
39 VR/IGB, 58, 66–70, 79, 94–5, 104.

In the 1930s, Hoffmann and Konieczny joined the Nazi Party, were active in various Nazi sub-organizations and supported the revival of the Gemeinde.[40] Hoffmann, a former communist, sat on the board. Secretary Konieczny signed his letters with '*Heil Hitler!*'[41] Seiler-Chan, by then head of the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft but equally supportive of the Gemeinde and the Islam Institute, pleaded unification with the Gemeinde, a suggestion the board of the Gesellschaft utterly rejected.[42] When the war began, the Gesellschaft was reduced to a handful of members who during the war met in private homes (see Chapter 7). Choosing a different approach, the Gemeinde twice tried to merge with the Islam Institute. The *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), the war ministry responsible, among others, for the annihilation of the Jews, the concentration camps, Muslim war propaganda and Muslim SS regiments, supported the second attempt, thus creating a platform for Muslim interests in Nazi Germany. At this stage of recognition, however, no German Muslims were invited to participate.[43]

To the Ahmadiyya

How can one recognize a convert? The answer to this question very much depends on how the act of conversion is defined. Over the last hundred years, sociologists of religion came up with many definitions, from 'a radical change of consciousness in which the individual changes both his world view and his identity,' to 'socially embedded happenings which are communicated through group belonging, narrations of the self and demonstrative acts.'[44] For some, conversion is a communicative act, for others, it signals deep psychic change. For scholars who occupy themselves with boundary making, converts are radical transgressors of cultural borders: they quit their traditional (religious) habitat in order to adopt the space of the other.[45] Seen through this lens, bodily signs that broadcast one's new solidarity seem to be a necessity: otherwise, how can the adopted community recognize that the newcomer is one of them?

Turning the pages of the *Moslemische Revue*, the question becomes acute. Many Germans accepting Islam with the help of the Ahmadiyya missionaries

40 VR/IGB, 134–85.

41 VR/IGB, 183.

42 VR/DMG (September 1938).

43 VR/IGB, 200–17; VR/IIB; VR/IZI.

44 Detlev Pollack, 'Was ist Konversion?' in *Treten Sie ein! Treten Sie aus! Warum Menschen ihre Religion wechseln*, ed. Regina Laudage-Kleeberg et al. (Berlin: Parthas, 2012), 44.

45 Michele Lamont, 'The Study of Boundaries across the Social Sciences,' *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002) 167–95.

FIGURE 5 *'Our Eid-ul-Fitr Festival.' The* DMG *community gathered on the occasion of the festival at the end of Ramadan (1929).*
IN: *MOSLEMISCHE REVUE* 1 (1930) 1. COURTESY AAII LAHORE

published a photograph in this journal, which they labelled with their real or adopted name. Some added a conversion narrative, others a learned article on aspects of Islam, in which autobiographical traces can easily be detected. Some of the portrayed appear alone, others with Sadr-ud-Din. Two newly-wed couples pose in front of the mosque. One photograph shows a whole family. In addition, the journal published photographs of the community, standing in front of the mosque or gathered in prayer on the occasion of the yearly Islamic festivals (Fig. 5).

The remarkable aspect of these photographs is that the portrayed do not stress the transgression made by those portrayed. Rather, they appear to remain as they were. They are neither adorned with Islamic elements, nor do they dress up in any other special way. 'Dr H. Khalid Banning,' for instance, very much looks like the public prosecutor he probably was.[46] Banning posed with 'Muhammed Taufiq Killenger,' a military-looking gentleman whom an undated Ahmadiyya pamphlet from the 1930s describes as an adventurer who

46 MR 1 (1924) 1. There is a Dr H. Banning in the 1924 Berlin address book who lives in Wilmersdorf and practices as a public persecutor. Most visitors of the Wilmersdorfer mosque lived within walking distance.

has served in the different armies of the world – the Hungarian, Austrian, Swiss, Dutch colonial, Venezuelan and Ottoman.[47] In 1938, he will surface again as M. T. Killinger, enthusiastically welcoming the Nazi occupation of Sudetenland.[48] During the Second World War, an old man already, Killinger repeatedly offers his service to the SS, which eventually employs him as director of the SS Mullah-training in Dresden.[49]

In the next issue, we meet very different characters. One, who names himself 'Konrad Giesel,' is holding a book in his hands on which is written 'With Islam, 1.X.1924.' In fact, we identified him as Konrad Algermissen, in ordinary life a Roman-Catholic priest who during the 1920s published a series of sociological studies on different religious 'sects' with *Giesel Verlag*. His photograph evokes the German intellectual; in the accompanying analysis 'Thoughts on Community,' Algermissen enthused about the community potential of Islam.[50] Hanns Lobauer's photograph, by contrast, corroborates his self-description as a tormented Prussian officer who lost his sanity in the trenches.[51]

Alfred Chalid Seiler-Chan's photograph only appeared in his obituary. He died in 1940, and was commemorated in the very last issue of the *Moslemische Revue* under Ahmadiyya editorship.[52] When he died, he had been a Muslim for 17 years. His conversion narrative, which the *Moslemische Revue* published in 1933, is an exemplary account of the religious quest of his generation and for that reason is related here in some detail.[53] Born in 1876 in Berlin to a Lutheran middle-class family, young Alfred discovered his love for other religions through the slide shows on Christian mission, which his Church organization for Christian Young Men organized with great regularity. To satisfy his curiosity, he decided to join the Theosophical Society, where he was encouraged to learn through his own experience, which he did, going through as many religious experiments as the *Kaiserreich* would allow him. In the course of about fifteen years, he partook in Roman Catholic, Greek-Orthodox and Jewish congregations. He prayed with Baptists, Methodists, Mennonites and the Salvation Army; he attended the performances of the 'Jewish–Christian Testimony to Israel,' and listened to the lectures of the Christian Scientists, Serious Bible

47 AA/5.

48 M. T. Killinger, *'Endlich sind wir im Reich!'* (Finally we are in the Reich!), MR 3 (1938) 94.

49 Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, 'The Training of Imams by the Third Reich,' in *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe. Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21sh Century*, ed. Willem B. Drees et al. (Leiden: University Press, 2008), 348–68.

50 MR 1 (1925) 25–8.

51 MR 2 (1926) 34–8.

52 MR 1 (1940) 1.

53 Chalid Albert Seiler-Chan, 'Bekenntnis zum Islam,' MR 1 (1933) 29–39.

Scholars, Buddhists, Mazda Nan, Baha'i, Freethinkers and the Society of Monists. In 1911, he became a member of the newly founded theosophical order Star of the East, which he only left after Krishnamurti declared its dissolution in 1930. In 1912, he also joined the Mormons who proceeded to re-baptize him, a ceremony in which he was submerged in the river Spree three times over. In 1913, he became a member of the German Society for the Knowledge of Islam, where, in future years, he would serve as a link between government institutions and the emerging Muslim community in Berlin.[54]

The Great War sent him to the trenches of Flanders, France and Galicia. What he experienced there he does not report, only that it strengthened him in his decision to become a Muslim. In 1923, in the midst of the commotion that the founding of the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin stirred, he finally converted at the hands of Jabbar Kheiri. Once he had opted for Islam, he put his considerable energies into its service. In the last 17 years of his life, Seiler-Chan would act as a manager of the Gemeinde, support the Islam Institute, sit on the board of the Gesellschaft and also act as its secretary general. In 1937, he will plead for the merging of the Gesellschaft with the Islamische Gemeinde, and in 1939 finally help to revive the Islam Institute. Remaining a bachelor and living with his sister throughout his life, he lived for the community and the community loved him for that. Incidentally, among the men in the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft this seems to have been an accepted way of living. Hugo Marcus, Amin Boosfeld and Hans Ellenberger lived with their mothers. Conservative as they were, remaining a bachelor and living with one's relatives seem to have offered them enough freedom to experiment with religion, ethics and *eros*, yet remain a respected member of German society.

Chalid Alfred Seiler-Chan was the kind of religious activist his time and generation permitted, and a pillar of Muslim life in interwar Berlin. He was an open-minded searcher after truth, and whether that came from east or west did not matter, as long as it satisfied his curiosity and fitted his Prussian-Lutheran perception of what religion should be about. It is telling that he considered Islam to be the 'earliest Protestantism,' a way of being that reduced religious complexity to a simple 'love of God,' a 'love of humankind,' and a few acts of devotion.[55] The final words that Bruno Hiller, the author of his obituary, records for him still breathe the old Prussian spirit: *'Pflichtbewusstsein und treue Kameradschaft'* (Loyalty and sincere comradeship). It shows that for all their longing to break the fetters of the Prussian tradition, these German Muslims were very much bound to their own roots. It took a philosopher of the

54 VR/DGI.

55 Seiler-Chan, 'Bekenntnis zum Islam,' 35.

stature of Hugo Marcus, co-founder and main theorist of the Gesellschaft, to formulate the specificity of that connection.

Hugo Marcus and his Quest for the 'inner child'

In 1931, one year after the foundation of the Gesellschaft, the *Moslemische Revue* featured an oil painting of 'Dr Hugo Hamid Marcus, President of the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft.' We behold him in a typical thinker's posture, outstretched fingers against his temple, books in the background, and a furrow between his brows. Hugo Marcus (1880–1966) was, and perhaps remains, the most important theorist of European Islam; he forged an intellectual construct in which the rationality of the Islamic tradition was blended with European philosophy's most outstanding rational traditions. In the scant remains of the interwar mosque archive his hand-written conversion narrative, dating from 1931, survived, and corroborates his self-conception as 'thinker.'[56] Studies on conversion often stress that the blueprint of any conversion narrative is the transformation from crisis to salvation, followed by the urge to give witness.[57] In a different fashion, but much in line with Ahmadiyya philosophy, Marcus stated that his journey to Islam was neither governed by crisis (like Lohbauer and other front soldiers), nor by a spiritual journey (like Seiler-Chan and others who used theosophy as a vehicle) but by *continuation*. As a philosophy student, he had embraced Kant, Nietzsche and Spinoza and developed a philosophy of mono-pluralism, creating the foundation of a severe kind of monotheism as he progressed.[58] In this self-portrait he could therefore rightly stress that, while encountering Islam in the person of Sadr-ud-Din, he only rediscovered his philosophical roots.

In the manner in which he positioned himself in the German tradition, Hugo Hamid Marcus was a conservative. He did not embrace Orientalism. He did not study oriental languages; he did not undertake oriental travels. He did not dress up in oriental garb, nor did he let himself be seduced by oriental

56 AMA/Interwar, 7.

57 Andreas B. Kilcher, 'Konversion als Erzählung,' in Treten Sie ein! Treten Sie aus! Warum Menschen ihre Religion wechseln, ed. Regina Laudage-Kleeberg et al. (Berlin: Parthas, 2012), 50–64.

58 The biography of Hugo Marcus still remains to be written. An indepth analysis of his philosophical readings and writings will certainly further our knowledge of the inroads this philosopher forged between the European and Islamic thought traditions. Within the context of this book, we will more fully address his conversion (Chapter 5) and his role in the community during the Nazi period (Chapter 7). On the latter, see also: Marc David Baer, „Muslim Encounters with Nazism and the Holocaust: The Ahmadi of Berlin and Jewish Convert to Islam Hugo Marcus“. The American Historical Review (2015) 120 (1): 140–171.

poetry and Egyptian cigarettes. Quite the contrary, he embraced Kantian philosophy and studied the roots of European rational thought. And when he accepted Islam, it was for its outstanding rationalism alone.

Nonetheless, he was a Romantic. Beginning with his infatuation with the *Wandervögel* movement, his many books and articles revolved around a heady mixture of law and metaphysics, religion and ethics, love of nature and aesthetics, and the cult of the 'inner child': that child in man that safeguards his genius, energy and imagination throughout life.[59] In *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Thought*, Fritz Stern depicts Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn, the deeply conservative forerunners of the *Wandervögel* movement, the German youth movement at the turn of the century.[60] Langbehn especially voiced ideas and images that we can trace to Marcus's early writings.[61] The subjects that Marcus introduced between 1924 and 1933 in the *Moslemische Revue*, among them the origins of Western civilization, the reasons for its decline, the search for heroes, the new generation and its budding promise for a 'Future Man,' even the search for a new religion, were variations on a theme that Lagarde and Langbehn introduced, which gave the *Wandervögel* movement its key words and inspired the conservative revolution that came after it.[62]

Langbehn, as Lagarde before him, was also a staunch anti-Semite, a variety of ethnic hatred, which Marcus of necessity could not follow. But as we shall see in the next chapter, it may have silenced him on the topic of his Jewish roots for the better part of his life. Marcus's biography still remains to be written, but from his many contributions to the *Moslemische Revue* it already becomes clear that this philosopher searched for a modern religious foundation that would supersede the old religions, and from the soil of which could grow up a 'Future Man.'

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59 Amongst others: *Das Frühlingsglück* (1901); *Meditationen* (1904); *Musikästhetische Betrachtungen* (1906).

60 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A study in the Rise of the Germanic Thought*. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1961).

61 Langbehn in Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 166–8 ('child' imagery); 224–6 (back to nature and male bonding); 172f (the decline of civilization).

62 Hugo Marcus, 'Das Wesen der Religion' MR 1 (1924) 79–84; 'Islam und die Philosophie Europas' MR 2 (1924) 84–88; 'Islam und Protestantismus' MR 1 (1925) 17–22; 'Naturgesetz, Rechtsgesetz und Sittengesetz' MR 3 (1925) 13–23; 'Der Begriff der Heiligkeit im Islam' MR 3 (1925) 49–53; 'Nietzsche und Islam' MR 1 (1926) 79–88; 'Spinoza und Islam' MR 1 (1929) 8–25; 'Die Religion und der Mensch der Zukunft' MR 3–4 (1930) 65–75, 94–8; 'Der Gottesbegriff im Islam' MR 1 (1932) 3–10; 'Moslemischer Schicksalglaube' MR 1 (1936) 6–27.

He preferred male company. *Wandervögel* and male bonding often went together and Marcus too had an outspoken preference for young men. A friend of his youth, Romain, kept loyal to him throughout his life. When Marcus turned 75, Romain composed him a hymn, which he subtitled *'Vor Deinem Bilde'* (In front of your image). Addressing a photograph of young Hugo that was taken in 1900, he praised his 'brilliant eyes' and 'intelligent goodness' and thanked him for keeping loyal to the image of his youth.[63] Marcus believed in his own 'inner child' just as he believed in the transcending power of friendship and the innovative potential of the young. 'Where and who are the people for whom it is worth to (re-)shape the world into a paradise? Where are these people to whom belongs the future as we want it?' he asks in 'Religion and Future Man,' to which he answers himself: 'We will not find them, we will have to create them first.'[64]

In the last years of the Weimar Republic, Marcus certainly was not the only one who raised this question. 'New Man,' 'new leadership,' and 'people of the future' were the catchwords that governed the politics of the day; they appeared in a multitude of book titles and stood for visions of the future that ranged from modern to anti-modern, from liberal to conservative, from far left to far right.[65] Creating 'Future Man' was still very much work in progress, its result open-ended. For the moment it led to very different profiles. Returning to the photograph gallery displayed on the pages of the *Moslemische Revue*, two men of that young and up-and-coming generation still need to be highlighted. At the time, they seemed to incorporate the ideal Marcus envisioned.

One year after Marcus's publication, Rolf von Ehrenfels, born in 1901 in Prague, son of the *gestalt* therapist Christian Baron von Ehrenfels and at home in the literary and bohemian circles of Vienna, Prague and Budapest, answered with 'Islam and the Young Generation in Europe.'[66] Portraying himself as a man of the future, Ehrenfels drew a parallel between Islam and certain aspects of the European *Lebensreform* (life reform). Among other things, he addressed erotic relationships, respect for the earth, ways in which people should greet each other, dress themselves, and shape their house interiors, thereby creating a framework in which they could live and communicate in new ways. Islam, he concluded, is modern because it possesses the potential to shape life in ways

63 PA Marcus, Box 1.

64 MR 3 (1930) 66.

65 Friedbert Aspetsberger, *Arnolt Bronnen. Biografie* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 412; Maser, *Adolf Hitler*, 315–16; Kurt Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit. Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969), 218 f.

66 MR 4 (1931) 81–91.

that would be recognized as progressive in Europe. In 1931 Ehrenfels was still to become an anthropologist but the theory behind the article points to the future; it was already his conjecture that material frameworks shape and direct human communication and experience. Typically, Ehrenfels's own encounter, which made him decide to embrace Islam in the first place, was an intensive experience of mosque architecture, resulting in a thick description that betrays the influence of *gestalt* therapy.[67]

Some years later, the editors of the *Moslemische Revue* thought to recognize another 'Future Man' in the popular author Faruq H. Fischer. Invited to present a piece on the occasion of the ten-year celebration, they announced him as 'the well-known author, one of the youngest Europeans to have gladly embraced Islam'[68] The accompanying photograph bears the traits of a sleek and calculating Nazi youth, and his name can be traced to Hans Fischer who, in 1932 and 1933, was one of the up and coming young men of popular Nazi ideology. Born around 1910 and making part of the Nazi youth movement, his many theatre plays, advertised with titles like *Jung Deutschland voran* (Young Germany to the Fore), *Deutschland's Morgenroth entflammt!* (Germany's dawn ignites!), or *Heb' deine Flügel, deutscher Adler…* (Raise your wings, German eagle…) are full of blood-and-earth symbols and ugly instances of anti-Semitism, which he employed for comic effect.

What did this 'Future Man' write for the *Moslemische Revue*? He called his contribution 'Does Islam 'lack modernity'? A parallel between the old religion and Europe of the present.'[69] On its pages, Fischer, like Ehrenfels, sets off to find parallels between Islam and examples of modern Europeanness, but unlike Ehrenfels, in Fischer's world 'modern' is everything that Nazi ideology stands for. Islam forbids alcohol? No problem! 'The *Führer* of the German people does not take one single drop!'[70] Or, does Islam lack progress? Certainly not! 'Europe adopts more and more Islamic thought.'[71] Instead of intellect and liberalism, Fischer writes, Nazism propagates hygiene, sports and attachment to the earth; instead of individualism, it cultivates group experience.[72] To Fischer, this is what Islam is all about. 'Not modern? Never! Not civilized?

67 MR 4 (1930) 98–105.

68 MR 3 (1934) 62. For 1934, we find Fischer's name on the DMG board, proof that for some time at least he was an active member.

69 MR 3 (1934) 62–73.

70 MR 3 (1934) 67.

71 MR 3 (1934) 71.

72 MR 3 (1934) 71.

Never! Otherwise, our statesmen would not act in an Islamic way. Are you not modern? Am I perhaps not modern?'[73]

In *The Aftermath: Reflections on the Culture and Ideology of National Socialism*, Anson Rabinbach reflects on the curious alliance between the educated elite and the mob that National Socialism produced, concluding that it arose from 'the same aesthetic and philosophical concept, from a deep cultural, intellectual, ritual, liturgical, and ceremonial repertoire firmly established in the nineteenth century.'[74] In accordance, Nazis and non-Nazis, German Christians and German Jews, imagined their world-historical mission to be rooted in the embodiment of the 'philosophical nation *par excellence*,' a mixture of intellectual sources and primordial myth, charging the everyday with religious awe. In that sense, Nazism was no antithesis to modernity but its dialectical *'Doppelgänger,'* Rabinbach writes.[75] The Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft did not escape that curious alliance.

The difference between Marcus's vision, as laid down in his writings for the *Moslemische Revue*, and the solution that in 1933 forced its way to political power, however, must be sought in the peaceful open-mindedness with which this philosopher tried to bridge not only east and west, Christianity and Islam, but also left- and right-wing ideologies. Marcus believed in the creative powers of a young generation, which had been moulded by a religion that embraced rationality as well as modernity, practical humanitarianism as well as spirituality. For him, this could only be Islam, and he challenged young men to take up the quest.

The Women of the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft

During that same *Eid-ul-Fitr* in 1923, where he noticed Alimcan Idris surrounded by his Uzbek pupils, Sadr-ud-Din also made note of the women participating in the event. But, apart from some female students from Buchara, he only saw two German Muslim women, one of whom was the wife of Abdul Sattar Kheiri,[76] while the other was married to Hadayat Ahmad (*sic*), a gentleman from India like Sattar and himself.[77] With this observation, made a year

73 MR 3 (1934) 73.

74 Anson Rabinbach, 'The Aftermath. Reflections on the Culture and Ideology of National Socialism,' in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 394.

75 Rabinbach, 'The Aftermath,' 396.

76 'Frau Fatima Kheiri' appears only once, in the list of members who seek to exclude Jabbar Kheiri from the Islamische Gemeinde: next to Sattar Kheiri (VR/IGB (1928), 46, Nr. 1 + 2).

77 This is Hidayet Ahmed Khan who figures on the first membership list of the *Islamische Gemeinde* as Nr. 14. (4 November 1922). The address he gave was Berlin N.W., Tile-Wardenbergstrasse 10, and so did the only woman on the list, Adelheid Capelle-Khan

before he himself began preaching, Sadr-ud-Din captured the main difference between male and female converts to Islam. Whereas the men in the Gesellschaft often lived with their mothers, creating a space in which they could realize their individuality yet uphold a conservative appearance, German women who felt attracted to Islam often embodied the 'modern woman.' They were emancipated, attended university or an art school and were ready to cross the cultural divide in ways that went beyond the purely rational approach of the male converts.

Among the earliest photographs in the *Moslemische Revue*, there is a Fräulein Fröhlich, Fräulein Maria Hesselbach and Fräulein Graf Wolf de Georg, three unmarried upper-class young women, each posing as 'a German Moslem lady' as their labels read. Only one has wrapped herself in a kind of oriental cloth: the other two present an upper-middle-class image – short hair, well dressed and wearing pearls.[78] Obviously, among the many functions that the Ahmadiyya meeting served, there was also that of mingling between the sexes. Indian males and German females teamed up in circles of friends. They went to concerts and the theatre, organized Sunday outings, played tennis and went sailing on the Gesellschaft; they also had love affairs, disrupted the romantic entanglements of others and sometimes married. Kris Manjapra notes that in the 1930s, Aligarh University counted at least six professors who ten years earlier had completed their doctorates in Berlin and married German women.[79] Abdul Sattar Kheiri, Babar Mirza and Hidayet Ahmed Khan all returned to India with their German wives. Zakir Husain formed a deep friendship with Gerda Philipsborn, a German-Jewish woman ten years older than him, whom he would shelter after 1933 when she fled from Germany.[80] Assistant imam Azeez Mirza married Lisa Oettinger, and from the photograph albums in her family archive it is clear that there were many more German–Indian couples in the Gesellschaft.

(Nr. 6). She must have been his wife. Khan belonged to the dissenters who in 1927 switched to the Islam Institute, thereby undermining Kheiris's power. In 1926, in a document written for the Foreign Office, the latter insinuates that he is a 'communist' and somebody who 'through his immoral behaviour brought several German ladies in serious trouble.' Jabbar Kheiri, 'Akademisch-Islamische Vereinigung (Islamia) und die Islam-Universität in Deutschland' (unpublished document dated 17 December 1926 in AA/I).

78 MR, photographs preceding the 1924 and 1925 issues.

79 Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement. German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 97.

80 Muhammad Mujeeb, *Dr Zakir Husain* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), 36–9.

The register file of the Gesellschaft lists 24 women who regularly attended the yearly gatherings and were active in the community.[81] Of these, only two women were of non-German descent, namely Mahmuda, wife of Imam S. M. Abdullah, and Lie Mat-Ty-Sen, a Chinese student. The others carry German names. Next to the three *Fräuleins* mentioned above, we know the names of Irma Safiah Göhl, Hildegard Rahel Scharf, Johanna Hudah Schneider, Latifa Roessler, Dorothea Abd-al-Gawad Schumacher, Chadidja Schubert, Fatima Beyer, Countess Margarethe von Stein, Emilie Oettinger and her daughters Lisa Zubaidah and Suse, Tahira Klose, Fatima Ulbrich, Sigrid Heine, Alexandrina Amina Mosler, Miss Jurgeleit, Miss Moerke, Mrs Peter and Mrs Bender. The group portraits taken on the occasion of *Ud-ul-Fitr* in the years 1929, 1930 and 1931 confirm the participation of many young women, looking as if they are having the time of their lives.[82] But, apart from Emilie, Lisa and Suse Oettinger, who marked the group photos with pencil crosses and their own names, we have no way of knowing who is who.

Still, this much can be said. During the 1920s, Johanna Hudah Schneider, Dorothea Abd-al-Gawad Schumacher, Latifa A. Roessler, Hildegard Rahel Scharf and Irma Safiah Göhl completed extensive university studies, during which they met their future Arab husbands.[83] Their conversion narratives stress intellectual equality and friendship between the partners. Johanna Schneider met a man from the Egyptian elite, who first became her 'friend and brother,' then her 'bridge to Islam' and, finally, her husband. She is one who explicitly mentioned the role of Jesus in her conversion narrative – 'understanding Jesus and to follow his example means: to become a Muslim!'[84] Irma Göhl, who commissioned an art photograph in which she poses as a modern German woman, exposing long, elegant hands and a flowery band in her short hair, describes her religious quest as 'a journey,' past Buddha, Zoroaster and Confucius, through the cliffs of Egyptology, oriental studies and Arab literature, until she, too, finally encountered the Egyptian Muhammed Sayyed Abd-Eldal who would become her spiritual mentor and eventually her husband.[85] In 1944, the two of them will direct an inflammatory protest to the League of Nations, describing in detail the 'havoc and ruin' caused by the Italian armies

81 VR/DMG (1930).

82 The photographs preceding the 1929, 1930 and 1931 issues of MR display *c.* 60 women.

83 'Drei Europäerinnen bekennen sich zum Islam,' MR 3 (1931) 53–60.

84 MR 3 (1931) 55.

85 MR 3 (1931) 56–9.

in Tripolis.[86] Of all the German converts, she is one of the few who engaged in resistance to the Nazi regime.

Alexandrina Amina Mosler, who will lead the Gesellschaft through the war and safeguard the mosque, will be given a portrait in Chapter 7. Of necessity, Tahira Klose, Fatima Ulbrich, Sigrid Heine, Miss Jurgeleit, Miss Moerke, Mrs Peter and Mrs Bender have to remain mere names until new sources are discovered. Of course, there were also German women in the Gesellschaft who neither studied nor sought friendship with foreign students, but married upright Germanic men who became Nazi Party members and, in that function, sat on the board of the Gesellschaft. But although they married in the mosque and were honoured with a wedding photograph in the *Moslemische Revue*, Chadidja Schubert and Fatima Beyer remain the exceptions.[87]

Compared with the latter, Emilie Oettinger and her daughters play a role in the history of the Gesellschaft that is at the heart of Ahmadiyya community life in interwar Germany. United in a lifelong friendship with the Abdullah family and connected to the Mirzas and Ahmads through marriage, the Oettinger family mirrors *par excellence* the newly found freedom of German women and their sense of an era of rich cultural interaction. The many photograph albums they left behind tell a story of friendship and marriage across the German–Indian divide. For that reason, we finish our portrait gallery with a glimpse at their collection.[88]

Born in 1876 and in the same age group as Alfred Seiler-Chan and Hugo Marcus, Anne Sophie Emilie Oettinger (born Läwen) grew up in the optimistic atmosphere of the *Kaiserreich*. This was when the economy rapidly expanded, German riches accumulated and politicians were trying to secure a claim for the nation in the Western race for colonial territories. Oettinger belonged to that first generation of German women who gained the right to vote and access to higher education. Blessed with a beautiful voice, her parents sent her to the music academy in Munich where she sang Schubert *Lieder* and dreamt of a concert hall career. Still, in imperial Germany, it was not deemed appropriate for a young woman to seek a life in public and the Läwen family, exhibiting black dresses and rigid northern faces in their photographs, forbade her to

86 AMA/Postwar: 2.

87 See the photographs preceding the 1934 issue (Mr and Mrs Schubert) and the 1935 issue of MR (Mr and Mrs Beyer).

88 PA Oettinger family, with thanks to Mr S. Ahmad and Mrs A. R. Cooper for making the photos and documents available to me. A biography of this family and their transreligious and transnational relationships is in progress and will be published shortly.

proceed. At the beginning of the century, we find her designing *Jugendstil* lampshades instead. This is in the factory of Friedrich Oettinger and shortly after she marries him.

Friedrich (b. 1873) was a converted Jew. He was baptized in 1889, left the Jewish community in 1901, and married Emilie in 1907, out of which bond two daughters were born – Anne Sophie Louise (Lisa) in 1908 and Susannah Adelheid (Suse) in 1910. His business thrived and they lived accordingly. One of the earliest photographs depicts the young couple in their new home behind the breakfast table, well dressed, surrounded by heavy furniture and leather bound books. Other snapshots show the girls growing up, Sunday outings in the *Grunewald* and playing the piano. All goes well until, in 1922, Friedrich loses his business in the bank crash. Some years later he also contracts an incurable nervous disease; he spends his remaining years in a psychiatric clinic, where he dies in 1934. At home, Emilie has to reorganize the family. Lisa, blessed with creativity, is sent to art school to become a painter, while Suse, who has her father's talent for business, leaves school to teach German to foreign students and to find a job as a stenotypist. She soon follows in the footsteps of her father and becomes the family breadwinner. Emilie refurnishes one room in the apartment with a view to accepting boarders. And who knocks on the door? Sheikh Muhammed Abdullah freshly arrived from India to become imam of the Wilmersdorfer mosque. His arrival upsets their routines. Abdullah is a good-looking man and the daughters, 20 and 18 years old, are clearly infatuated. We perceive them sitting on the couch together, beaming at the camera. When he organizes his first *Eid-ul-Fitr* in Berlin, the Oettinger women are in the audience. When Abdullah proceeds to found the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft in 1930, Emilie is a founding member. In the years to come, they will assist in every festival and every gathering; the Gesellschaft becomes their lodestar and a second home.

In the mosque, a band of young people quickly comes together, with Lisa, Suse, Abdullah, his wife Mahmuda and assistant imam Azeez Mirza at the core. We see them having picnics in the Grunewald, Suse with a boomerang, Mahmuda freezing in her fur coat, Azeez playing the clown, Lisa distant, with mother Emilie watchful in the background. Other German – Indian couples join their picnics, boat tours, visits to historical buildings, or whatever Berlin's immediate surroundings have to offer. In 1934, Lisa and Azeez declare their official engagement. A year previously, she has already embraced Islam and become Lisa Zubaida. Her mother and sister, however, although active in the mosque community (Suse does the bookkeeping and Emilie runs for the board) prefer to remain without religion.

Rather than Jewish women, the Oettingers present the case of modern, emancipated individuals. Of Jewish and Christian descent, but adhering to neither religion, the Gesellschaft offered them a stage on which to act out a novel dimension, in which their mixed descent was allowed to blend with Islam. Lisa was an independent painter, Suse the family breadwinner; both felt free to experiment, not only with religion but also with relationships across the cultural divide and they were ready to live with the consequences. In his memoire *Two Lives*, the Indian writer Vikram Seth asks himself why his great uncle Shanti, one of the many who came to study in Berlin in the 1920s, got along so well with his wife Henny, a German Jewish woman whom he wooed while lodging with her family. What they shared, Seth concludes, was 'something in common between the bourgeois middle-class Indian ethos and that of middle-class Germany, perhaps more particularly middle-class Jewish Germany, in respect for the professions, for education, for savings, for house and home.'[89] In other words, in the midst of a labyrinth of religions, wisdoms, schools of thought and cultures, in the midst also of friendships, love affairs, marriages and break-ups, there existed a global middle class that recognized one another across the cultural divide. It lent the experiment the stability it needed and when National Socialism set an end to the creative confusion, there was enough stability left in the system for the former Muslim students to help their former Berlin friends when the latter came as fugitives to Lahore, Bombay and Tehran.[90]

The growing persecution of German Jews threatened their existence in ways we can only fathom. With a Jewish father, Lisa cannot marry Azeez; and Azeez, who is not a Semite but a 'Hamit' according to the Nazi book, is forbidden to marry a German woman. Abdullah finds a solution. He sends the couple on a lecturing tour of the Muslim communities of Southeast Europe. When they arrive in Sarajevo, they marry in the great mosque. Issued by the Bosnian muftiate, the German consulate cannot but confirm the marriage document, after which she is inscribed in his British passport and becomes Mrs Lisa Zubaida Mirza.

Suse is not that lucky. When she falls pregnant, her Indian fiancé abandons her, leaving her and her mother with the consequences. The desertion adds another dimension to her fragile existence in Nazi Germany. Apart from the danger of having a Jewish father, she is now stigmatized as unmarried with an illegitimate child. Again, Abdullah helps. We see the families getting together, sunbathing in the garden of the mosque, their children romping around. Also,

89 Vikram Seth, *Two Lives* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 401.

90 See Chapter 8.

the Sunday outings continue. However, when the war begins, the Abdullah family must leave the country. For three whole years, Abdullah, writing to him from Lahore, asks Marcus to find out how the Oettinger women are faring,[91] but Marcus has fled to Basel and at some point their correspondence too is discontinued (see Chapter 7).

The survival of Emilie, Suse and her little girl in wartime Germany is a story that in its wretchedness mirrors thousands of other survival stories, except that it encapsulates an ongoing Jewish–Muslim relationship. We do not know how Suse managed to keep up the family apartment, whether she hid her Jewish descent or was forced to work in the war industry, whether she remained in contact with her diminishing circle of Muslim friends in the Gesellschaft, or whether Abdullah's enquiries ever reached her. Of this period, only the memories of a little child remain. From her we know that Suse sent her mother and daughter to the countryside, that she visited them regularly, that Lisa in faraway India sent Red Cross parcels, that somehow the relationship was maintained. Then, in 1947, with Lisa as his secretary, Abdullah returned to Berlin to claim them from the Russians – another religious leader reclaiming his war-scattered parish. It marks the moment when Emilie, Suse and the child adopt Islam as their future religion.

The photograph that documents their reunion displays the deep changes the war forced on them.[92] We see Abdullah, an elderly gentleman with a stoop and religious headgear, surrounded by the Oettinger women: Emilie now shrunken, hollow-eyed, emaciated, an old woman holding onto her lost daughter Lisa, the lady in the Indian dress. The child has grown. Dark hair braided, legs sticking out, she keeps close to her beloved aunt, whereas Suse, the secret heroine of this story, stands bold upright against Abdullah's shoulder. Life can begin again, but the happy experiment that was the Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft definitely belongs to the past.

4.3 The Campaign against the Ahmadiyya

From our visit to the photograph gallery it becomes clear that new Muslims did not adopt any visible Islamic attributes because, to them, entry to this religion necessitated a whole range of further changes, not only for themselves but for Islam as well. For the circle of Sunni Muslims who gathered in the Islamische

91 PA Marcus, Box 11 and 12.

92 The photograph was reprinted in Backhausen, *Die Lahore – Ahmadiyya-Bewegung in Europa* (Lahore: AAII, 2008), 91, with a wrong date and subscription.

Gemeinde Berlin and the Islam Institute, the German enthusiasm to join Islam acquired an uncomfortable edge. In their view, the way converts in the Gesellschaft communicated about Islam and their suggestions about how to proceed were not only unrecognizable to Muslims but also ought to be downright rejected.

Once established, the Nazi regime set the scene for a very different kind of Muslim leadership, although some years passed before the face of Islam in Berlin started to change. Between 1928 and 1936, the Ahmadiyya missionary Abdullah dominated mission activity; Jabbar Kheiri left the city in 1930 and Tschelebi drowned in the summer of 1933 while swimming in a nearby lake. January 1933 saw the Nazi takeover, but that summer Muhammed Ali, then president of the Ahmadiyya movement in Lahore, assessing the political landslide in Germany, still came up with a positive result:

> We welcome the new regime in Germany as it favours the simpler principles of life which Islam inculcates. Islam's great contribution to the civilization of the world is its solution of the wealth problem and the sex problem. … So far we can see, Germany under the new regime is tackling both the wealth and the sex problem in an Islamic spirit, and there is every hope that in the future the whole of Europe would follow in its wake.[93]

Thus fortified, the Gesellschaft continued to study and to single out aspects of European modernity. On the surface, nothing changed.

However, in 1935, with Nazism gathering strength, the Gesellschaft shed the last of its liberal and pacifist members, among them the philosopher Marcus who had played a major role in shaping the intellectual exchange. Having repeatedly received accusations from members of the Islamische Gemeinde Berlin that his Gesellschaft would 'shelter communists and Jews,' Abdullah wrote to the Foreign Office to introduce a new board. His enumeration of party memberships reads like a directory of the main Nazi organizations: 'Our president Mr Boosfeld is member in the *Opfer-Kreis für die National-socialistische Partei*; our second secretary Dr Klopp vom Hofe is member of the *NSDAP* and the *SS*; the treasurer Mr Schubert is member of the *Arbeitsfront*, and the first assessor, Mr Beier is member of the *NSDAP*.'[94]

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93 AMA/Interwar, 5.

94 AA/3 (31 August 1936). *Opfer-Kreis für die National–Sozialistische Deutsche Partei* = 'Circle of Victims of the National–Socialist German Party.' The NSDAP was founded in 1920, engaged in anti-Semitism and street terror, and soon attempted a coup under the leader-

About the same time, Habibur Rahman claimed the Ahmadiyya mosque for his Gemeinde. Profiting from a political atmosphere that encouraged denunciation, Rahman made ample use of it to reach his goals. To voice his claims he wrote hundreds of letters to Arabic and Indian journals against the Ahmadiyya and its community of converts in Berlin. Rahman also wrote letters and reports to the Foreign Office, the ministry of propaganda and the Gestapo, the secret police, accusing the Gesellschaft of 'Jewish and communist agitation.'[95] On several occasions he discredited Imam Abdullah in person, implying he would take 'Jewish money,' sell pork and entertain an illicit relationship with a German woman. The 'Islam' file of the foreign office covering the years 1936 to 1939 is filled with his writings and their echoes.[96]

The Nazi regime reacted to Habibur Rahman's accusations with various voices. Diplomats repeatedly professed their antipathy, judging the Gemeinde 'a trouble maker' and Rahman 'a schemer.'[97] The Orient-Verein, a government-subsidized organization until the outbreak of war in charge of economic and cultural relations between Germany and the Muslim world,[98] repeatedly backed the Gemeinde, claiming it had a right to the mosque and should receive financial support.[99] These letters too are invariably signed with *'Heil Hitler!'* reminding us that not only the Gemeinde but also its German friends stood in the camp of Nazi sympathizers. Notwithstanding, after an extensive investigation lasting from 1936 to 1939, the Gestapo wrote to the Foreign Office that none of the accusations against the Gesellschaft could be sustained. The only Jew, Hugo Marcus, had retreated in 1936, it stated, and the communist members, in their majority foreign Muslims, had already left the country in 1933. Moreover, in this letter, German members of the Gesellschaft were described as 'politically harmless.'[100] Thus it came to pass that the Ahmadiyya mosque, although a British–Indian enterprise and so enemy property and the Gesellschaft, though smeared on innumerable occasions, were both left in peace, whereas the Gemeinde, ostensibly professing sympathy with the regime, found itself in a corner.

ship of Adolf Hitler. Members who were imprisoned on account of this coup later acquired the status of victim; SS = *Schutzstaffel der NSDAP* = 'Protective Arm of the NSDAP'; (*Deutsche*) *Arbeitsfront* = 'German Work Front.' The latter was founded in 1933, a few days after the annihilation of the trade unions.

95 AA/3 (22 March 1937).

96 AA/3 (1936, 1937).

97 AA/3 (10 July 1936), AA/5 'Indien' (16 October 1942).

98 AA/6 'Deutscher Orient-Verein' (1937, 1939).

99 AA/3 (25 September 1936, 28 August 1937).

100 AA/3 (11 February 1939).

Habibur Rahman strove for possession of the Ahmadiyya mosque and acknowledgement as the main Muslim representative in Germany, but in this he was unsuccessful. The Nazi Party and the Foreign Office knew him as a trouble maker and after the war began he was forced to leave the floor to the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini. His own role in the war remained minor.[101] Politically, Rahman seems to have embraced a mix of nationalist and pan-Islamist positions, swapping, like so many others around him, communism for fascism in response to the Nazi regime.

In early 1937, Habibur Rahman sent a ten-page paper to the foreign office in which he again summarized his grievances against the Ahmadiyya.[102] He accused the movement of causing a serious disturbance in Berlin not only because it owned the only mosque but also because its interpretation of Islam forced the Gemeinde to preclude Muslims from praying there. 'Disturbing,' he writes, is the 'shameless, indiscriminate mission activity,' attracting 'criminal elements such as Jewish and communist agitators.'[103] By way of a solution, Rahman suggested placing severe controls over the converts, the rules for which had already been laid down in the Gemeinde's renewed founding protocol.[104] This document stipulated that converts should not only give written proof of their departure from their former community and their entry into the Muslim one, as Tschelebi had already decreed, but that they should also have to prove 'flawless conduct for a period of two years,' give 'written consent to adopt a Muslim name' and show that they had made 'serious attempts to acquire one of the oriental languages.'[105]

Why did Rahman bear down on new Muslims in a manner that seems designed to prevent them from becoming one at all? Despite the hate tirade with which the author attacked his opponent, despite his obvious greed to obtain the mosque, there is an element in this text that touches on the very nature of religious renewal itself. In an article headed 'We Require a Mosque in Berlin,' appearing some weeks later in *The Star of India*, he or one of his circle explained the rationale behind his statement. Becoming explicit, the author deplores a feeling of foreignness when visiting the discussion circle of the

101 In 1936, Hafiz Abdul Rahman Peshawari, leader of the Afghan pan-Islamist movement, warned the Foreign Office against him, stating that Rahman was 'a Luna park dancer and a communist' (AA/4: 20 March 1936). Spotting him as a troublemaker and denunciator, the Foreign Office kept its distance (AA/4: 1936, *passim*). He ended up working in the war propaganda department.

102 AA/4 (22 March 1937), 1.

103 AA/4 (22 March 1937), 7–8.

104 AA/4 (10 July 1936, protocol in attachment).

105 Ibid.

Deutsch–Moslemische Gesellschaft, and when participating in prayer even detects something decidedly un-Islamic:

> If…a Muslim pays a visit to one of the conferences which are held on Friday evening in the mosque or in the house of the Imam, he will probably find there a Christian lady or gentleman delivering a speech about beautiful landscapes in foreign countries, about the political situation in India, about Persian Poets and all sorts and kinds of subjects of more or less general interest. Real Islamic instructions and information are hardly ever given and if so, the subject will mostly serve to cover up the difference between Islam and Christianity.[106]

Back in 1932, the prospect of street shoes on prayer mats had enraged the IWC branch's participants. Now, in 1937, the anger addressed the ritual behaviour of the converts themselves. Participation in the Friday prayer, the writer continues, presents orthodox Muslims with a shock. 'To take part at the congregational Friday-Prayer is impossible for an orthodox Muslim. … The few Muslims see themselves, during the prayer, surrounded by a crowd of non-Muslims, sitting on benches and watching "the performance".'[107] This, the author concludes, cannot be true Islam. These performances give a very wrong impression of what real Islam is about: 'Under those circumstances, the Berlin mosque… can never be the centre of the Muslim community.'[108]

Whoever wrote this article certainly had been an intimate observer of the comings and goings in the Ahmadiyya mosque and mission house. However, against the move toward modernization, which both Europe *and* the Muslim world overwhelmingly wanted, Habibur Rahman and those around him seem to have held up a frozen, timeless image of Islam, which they 'knew' by right of birth. Acting along lines of *purity and danger* (Mary Douglas), this circle set out to redraw its borders without as much as putting their views forward for discussion. At least, among the many lectures held in the mosque we do not find any offers in that direction. Rahman's rhetoric of hate, of which many instances survive, was his main form of communication. Unfortunately, the times were propitious for him. Muslim *émigré*s in Berlin who suspected converts of eroding 'their' religion expected Nazis to support them. Their wilful cooperation during the war will be treated in Chapter 7.

106 AA/4 (21 April 1937, newspaper clipping in attachment).

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

FIGURE 6 *Watching the performance? The* DMG *community gathered to listen to Azeez Mirza on the occasion of the festival at the end of Ramadan (1936).*
IN: *MOSLEMISCHE REVUE* 1 (1930) 1. COURTESY AAII LAHORE

There is a group photograph in the *Moslemische Revue* dating from 1936 in which we see the convert community of the Gesellschaft listening to a sermon in the mosque. What the viewer beholds are European men and women sitting on wooden chairs in close proximity to one another. Although it seems to be cold and the congregation huddles in winter coats, many of the women are bare headed, as are the men. In front of the pulpit one catches a glimpse of two men in Arab headgear sitting on the floor. Is this what our author is talking about? On close inspection, the congregation creates a vaguely Lutheran impression but there is also no doubt that these are Muslims celebrating the annual *Eid* festival (Fig. 6).

What we see here is an example of modern Muslim ritual communication. It is but one instance of the social creativity with which Ahmadiyya tried to connect East and West, Christianity and Islam, building between the need for modernization in the Muslim world and European visions of progress and of the 'Future Man.' Sociologists of religion like to say that religion is not a primordial entity thrown into the world from outer space. In the eyes of its adherents it may be inspired, even ruled by divine power, but the ways in which this

inspiration takes form is entirely a matter of human creativity. In the framework of this book, I argue that the knife of adaptive globalization cuts both ways. Once Islam found a footing in the specific social setting of interwar Germany, Germans in return started to leave their very own imprint.

The interaction between Muslim missionaries and their host society engendered fresh ideas and knowledge transfers in many different directions. Modernization and progress were the key words around which communication circulated; converts who had surmounted cultural borders simply continued to pursue these central notions on their own track towards salvation. Muslims like Habibur Rahman, who clung to a primordial image of religion, probably never noticed the momentum and urgency of their quest.