

A Laboratory of Modernity—The Ahmadiyya Mission in Inter-war Europe

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Abstract

In this paper, I retrace the history of the Ahmadiyya mission in inter-war Europe as part of the globalisation narrative. Once they gained a footing, missionaries responded and adapted to local experiments with modernity as a means to simultaneously win over Europeans and to modernise Islam. The article first considers the mental map with which Ahmadiyya and other Muslim intellectuals approached Europe. It reconstructs the work of the mission organisation, and illustrates the communication difficulties between the Lahore centre and the mission post in Berlin. Making use of fresh sources, I then sketch out the political context in which the missionaries moved about, and trace their perceptions and adaptations of European ideas. In the larger picture of globalisation, the Berlin mission offers a telling example of local religious adaptation, emphasising the important rapport between the newcomers and the local factor.

Keywords

Ahmadiyya – Muslim Mission – Inter-war Europe – Nazi-Germany – adaptive globalisation

Introduction

The second half of the 19th century witnessed European expansion on a scale hitherto unknown. Superior weapons, communication and transport systems, and improved health care characterised the speed with which Western Europe took the lead. Great Britain, Holland and France occupied substantial

territories on other continents. In combination with the industrialisation of the European heartlands, national economies grew rapidly.

The colonisation of the world accompanied large-scale globalisation. Across the colonies, Western schooling and dress became the standards. Print media, telegraph, trains and steamships transported the latest news across the empires and created a public sphere in which all participated. Christian missionaries took advantage of the new communication structures to spread their faith by aggressive means, considering their work to be a necessary part of the European *mission civilisatrice*.¹

In 1881, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1836-1908), a British-Indian Muslim from rural Qadian in the Punjab, presented himself as the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of the age, prepared to defend Islam against the infamous attacks of the Christian missionaries. At first applauded by other Muslim reformers, the mood changed when Ahmad sought to incorporate the teachings of religious reformers such as Buddha and Jesus, and to become a *Messiah* who had come to save the world. Although Ahmad's mission proposed to strengthen and reform the Muslim faith in a manner that would self-evidently match Christian propositions, his claim to the status of prophet made him the enemy of Sunni Muslims in British India and elsewhere.²

Around 1900, Ahmad's followers began to preach in places as far-flung as Africa, Afghanistan and the Fiji Islands. But apart from a dream in which he saw himself "standing on a pulpit in London and giving a sermon, while white birds flew into his hands,"³ proselytising in Europe, however, seems not to have been among Ahmad's aims. In 1914, the movement split into two branches. One, remaining in Qadian, claimed Ahmad's prophet-hood, whereas the other, retreating to Lahore, stressed his role as a reformer only. The mission gained a footing in England in 1912, when the Indian barrister Kamal-ud-Din

1 Cox, Jeffrey, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (London: Routledge 2008); Hartmann Tyrell, "Weltgesellschaft, Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen," in *Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen*, Artur Bogner et al. (ed.) (Wuerzburg: Ergon 2004), pp. 13-137; Bayly, Christopher, *The Birth of the modern World 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell 2004); Osterhammel, Juergen et al., *Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen. Prozesse. Epochen* (Muenchen: Beck 2003).

2 Valentine, Simon Ross, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at. History, Belief, Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press 2008); Friedmann, Yohanan, *Prophecy Continuous. Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1989); Gualtieri, Antonio R., *Conscience and Coercion: Ahmadi Muslims and Orthodoxy in Pakistan* (Montréal: Guernica, 1989); Lavan, Spencer, *The Ahmadiyah movement; a history and perspective* [Delhi: Manohar Book Service 1974].

3 Sadr-ud-Din, *Muhammad the modern Prophet* (Lahore: AAI, ca. 1950), p. 20.

(1870-1932) discovered a disused mosque in Woking, 30 miles south west of London.⁴ Kamal-ud-Din belonged to the Lahore branch, thus giving the nascent Lahore mission a lead in Europe.

The globalisation of the world was also altering western European society. Not only did the horizon of European knowledge expand, but some countries, notably Great Britain and Germany, also grew extraordinarily rich. A new middle class arose, with enough money and leisure time to take an interest in the world beyond Europe's borders and express dissatisfaction with Western civilisation. Intellectuals and artists contrasted East and West as binary opposites, an equation in which Asia was perceived to incorporate both indolence and the seat of spirituality, whereas Europe was ascribed a vital and dynamic culture that, alas, extolled materialism and at present suffered from a loss of values.

Around 1900, scepticism concerning European culture took hold among the urban middle classes, modernity serving as the catchword to both embrace and criticise the speed with which change had occurred. Modernity was considered "everything that regarded the future and was liable to change in the future,"⁵ including technological progress, politics, and personal wellbeing. Whether in St. Petersburg, Vienna, London or The Hague, young people experimented with alternatives. In Germany, a key player in modernity, the experiment was baptised *Lebensreform* (Life Reform). *Lebensreform* emphasised individual wellbeing. Their aims included health foods (biodynamic farming), body culture (sunbathing, gymnastics, loose dress), life styles (communitarianism, free love, pastoral living), architecture (the Bauhaus) the arts (expressionism, Cubism, Dadaism), and, of course, religion. German modernists were

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- 4 Ansari, Humayun Khizar, "Kamal-ud-Din (1870-1932), Islamic scholar and missionary," (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 2012—www.oxforddnb.com/public/index.html); Ahmad, Nasir, "Al-Hajj Hazrat Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din," in: *Eid Sermons at the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking—England 1931-1940* (Lahore: Aftab-ud-Din Memorial Trust, 2002), XIII-XV; Bohdanowicz, Arslan, "To the Memory of Al-Hajj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (1870-1932). A Pioneer of the Rebirth of Islam," in: *Islamic Revue* 1949/12, pp. 5-10; Germain, Eric, "The first Muslim Missions on a European Scale: Ahmadi-Lahore Networks in the Inter-war Period," in *Islam in Interwar Europe*, Nathalie Clayer et al. (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 89-128. Guillaume sketches the pre-history of Muslim mission in Europe, which prepared for this step.
- 5 Butler, Christoph, *Modernism. A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010); Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, "Modern, modernität, moderne," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Otto Brunner et al. (eds.) (München: Klett 1978), quotation on p. 126.

curious about Eastern philosophies, to which they ascribed the spirituality Europe had, supposedly, lost and which would remedy European materialism.⁶

Experiments with modernity were conducted elsewhere too. In *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914*, Christopher Bayly describes how “poorer and subordinated people around the world thought that they could improve their status and life-chances by adopting badges of this mythical modernity, whether these were fob-watches, umbrellas or new religious texts.”⁷ In its wake, confronted with the British “determination to civilise,” reform movements which, “for themselves and their countries only perceived a future in the British-Western dominated world, when they would come to meet the West at least some steps,” developed their own visions of modernity.⁸ Targeting the oscillation that ensued between “adaption and resistance, admiration and abhorrence,” this process has been labelled in the scholarship ‘adaptive globalisation.’⁹

Although on everybody’s lips, modernity eluded one single definition. Rather, it constituted the perfect field for visions and projections from all parts of the world. “An essential part of being modern,” as Bayly observes, “is thinking that you are modern.”¹⁰ This then was the global framework in which Muslim religious reformers from British India established centres in Europe to share their own approaches to modernity, and to challenge Western ideas of their religion that had been discredited by the accounts of Christian missionaries.

In this paper, I retrace the history of the Ahmadiyya mission in inter-war Europe as part of adaptive globalisation. It is my assumption that Ahmadiyya missionaries selected and adapted aspects of Western religious modernity wherever they went. Once they had set up shop in Berlin, they also tried to make sense of the German approach which, in view of evolving German politics, was soon acquiring threatening characteristics. Faced with both Nazism and smear campaigns from other Muslims, the missionaries nonetheless continued to invite a broad segment of German society to voice their very different visions of the future, including man’s future and his religion. Invitation

6 Radkau, Joachim, “Die Verheissungen der Morgenfruehe. Die Lebensreform in der neuen moderne,” in *Die Lebensreform. Entwuerfe der Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, Kai Buchholz et al. (eds.), (*Darmstadt: Häusser-media 2001*), pp. 55-61; Linse, Ulrich, “Lebensreform und Reformreligionen,” in *Lebensreform* pp. 193-199; Baumann, Martin, “Importierte Religionen: das Beispiel Buddhismus,” in *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880-1933*, Diethart Kerbs (ed.) (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag 1998), pp. 513-523.

7 Bayly, Birth, p. 10.

8 Osterhammel, Geschichte, p. 58.

9 Osterhammel, Geschichte, p. 58.

10 Bayly, Birth, p. 10.

and discussion were the Ahmadiyya ‘weapons’ to simultaneously win over Europeans and to modernise Islam.

The paper is divided into four parts. (1) “Restoring (the image of) Islam in Europe” considers the arguments with which the first generation of Muslim intellectuals set out to convince Europeans of Islam as progressive and able to answer the requirements of the age; (2) “Missionising Europe” reconstructs the work of the Ahmadiyya mission organisation in Lahore, responsible for the European mission, and illustrates the communication difficulties between the centre and its missionary periphery; (3) “The Berlin context” offers a sketch of political turmoil in Germany, and observes the local Muslim organisations responding to the Ahmadiyya competition while positioning themselves politically. Finally, in (4) “Concepts of religious adaptation,” we observe the missionaries at work in Berlin. What signals did they send to which a segment of German society felt compelled to react? The reconstruction of the mosque library will offer some impression as to which directions missionaries searched in order to modernise Islam. Recounting how the pursuit of this aim was conducted, the contribution illuminates on a micro-level the oscillation between Ahmadiyya religious reform and European realities.

1 Restoring (the image of) Islam in Europe

In 1912, Kamal-ud-Din, a distinguished figure with a long pedigree and doubtlessly well situated in his Lahore surroundings, decided to travel to England to “plead the cause of Islam” and launch “Jihad by persuasion.”¹¹ This was a one-man action that initially landed him in Hyde Park Speakers’ Corner.¹² One year later, we find him situated at 158 Fleet Street, where he launched *The Islamic Review* and *Muslim India*, the monthly paper in which in the years ahead the British prejudice against Islam would be analysed and counteracted.¹³ Simultaneously, he took over the Woking mosque. In the long run it became “the leading symbol of the British worldwide Muslim community,”¹⁴ visited and supported by Muslim leaders from across the world, and a centre for interfaith meetings in Britain.¹⁵ Looking back in 1949, his friend Arslan Bohdanowicz, himself a Muslim reformer who in 1931 had tried to set up *Przeglad Islamski*,

11 Ansari, Kamal-ud-Din; Bohdanowicz, *To the Memory*, p. 5.

12 Ansari, Kamal-ud-Din.

13 Ahmad, *Eid Sermons*, XIV.

14 Ansari, Kamal-ud-Din.

15 Ahmad, *Eid Sermons*, photograph section.

the Polish equivalent of the Islamic Revue in Warsaw,¹⁶ summarised Kamal-ud-Din's initiative thus: "what the cause of Islam in 1912 had most need of was a direct link between the Muslim world (..) and Europe."¹⁷ Kamal-ud-Din forged that link.

The barrister was not the only one who counteracted the bad image Islam had acquired in the West, but he was one of the earliest. In 1917, Sheikh Shakib Arslan (1869-1946), a Druze leader from the Lebanon, likewise migrated to continental Europe, moving from Berlin to Lausanne and Geneva, where he participated in Europe's intellectual and public life, simultaneously trying to overturn encrusted European images of Islam and reform the inflexible Islamic tradition.¹⁸ During the inter-war years their endeavour was strengthened by a whole chorus of Muslim voices from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.¹⁹ Muslim leaders from Vilnius, Warsaw, Prague, Belgrade, Sarajevo and Tirana in search of religious reform would later turn up on the pages of the *Moslemische Revue*, the Berlin equivalent of the Islamic Revue. Many also joined in 1935 in the first European Muslim Congress presided over by Arslan and pursuing the same double goal; amelioration of the image and modernisation of the thing itself.²⁰

Conversion of Europeans to Islam was one route to this goal. Muhammad Ali, President of the Ahmadiyya mission organisation in Lahore, who guided Kamal-ud-Din's footsteps, considered the conversion of Europeans an essential building block: "It goes without saying that the success of Islam goes hand-in-hand with its propagation. By its propagation in Europe we can convert the enemies of Islam, who have for centuries been spending all their energies to crush the Muslims, into its servants."²¹ However, dispersing European ignorance vis-à-vis Islam should in the first place be brought about through learning and intellectual exchange: "The conversion of Europe to Islam is only a

16 The Muslim Sunrise 1931, inside cover, reverse.

17 Bohdanowicz, *To the Memory*, p. 6.

18 Raja Adal, "Shakib Arslans' Imagining of Europe: The Coloniser, the Inquisitor, the Islamic, the Virtuous, and the Friend," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, Nathalie Clayer et al. (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press 2008), pp. 156-183.

19 Bougarel, Xavier, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-war Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, Nathalie Clayer et al. (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press 2008), pp. 313-344; Clayer, Nathalie, "Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-war Albania or the search for a 'Modern' and 'European' Islam," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, Nathalie Clayer et al. (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press 2008), pp. 128-156.

20 Adal, Shakib Arslan, p. 171.

21 Ali, Muhammad, *Ahmadiyya Movement as the West sees it* (Lahore: AAII 1937), p. 2.

secondary question; our prime concern is to establish centres of Islamic learning in Europe, and the conversions will follow as a natural sequel. [...] Therefore, when we speak of Islamic missions in Europe we only mean the establishment of centres of Islamic learning there.”²²

It was here, in these centres of Islamic learning set up in London, Berlin, and Vienna, that an important interface was established between European experiments with modernity and Muslim quests to modernise Islam. The exchange of ideas was not a coincidence but a prime target. When launching the *Moslemische Revue*, the Ahmadiyya missionary Sadr-ud-Din (1881-1981) saw a straight line running from the *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* of the French Revolution to the potential of Islam, which he sketched out as “perfect democracy, freedom, total equality and true brotherhood.”²³ The missionary F.K. Khan Durrani (no dates) enlarged upon the theme, stressing the lines running from Islam to Christianity, and describing Islam as “progressive and exemplary.”²⁴ Seen through this lens, it was only natural for Europeans to join this religion, the missionaries argued.²⁵

Their mission approach was met with reciprocity. In the 1930s, the theme of coining Islam to European progress, thereby creating the religious modernity that was to be the breeding ground for ‘new man,’ was taken up by a number of European converts, arguing in favour of Islam from left and liberal to fascist positions.²⁶

2 Missionising Europe

Before recounting the story of how the mission in Europe unfolded, it is necessary to understand the framework in which the missionaries moved around, who paid for their travel and set in train a fund-raising machine to finance the costly enterprise of erecting mosques, publishing journals and spreading literature in Europe.

²² Ali, *Ahmadiyya*, p. 3.

²³ “The Aim of the Journal,” in: *MR* 1924/1, p. 2.

²⁴ “What is Islam?,” in: *MR* 1926/4, pp. 187-190; quotation on p. 190; the article was reprinted in *MR* 1929.

²⁵ “How to Become a Muslim,” in: *MR* 1926/2, p. 92, see also below.

²⁶ Jonker, Gerdien, “In Search of Religious Modernity. Converts to Islam in Inter-War Berlin,” in *Islam in Inter-war Europe and European Cultural History*, Bekim Agai et al. (eds.) (Leiden: EJ Brill 2013; in preparation).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the mission method presented an accepted form of global communication, although with heavy (and much resented) Christian overtones. But the urge not only to convince but also to convert the Other was gradually adopted by other religionists as well. Hindu and Buddhist reformers made an entry during the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago, and afterwards toured the US and Europe with considerable success.²⁷ In Edinburgh in 1910, during the first World Mission Conference, Protestant missionaries formulated their task as “establishing the world dominance of Christianity.”²⁸ For religious reformers from British India, reaching out to the West was an aim that was beyond their boundaries. But many considered the Christian organisational model as exemplary.

Of the many Muslim reform movements, the Ahmadiyya were the only ones to organise their mission on a model that was copied from the Christian missionary societies with which they had made acquaintance in British India.²⁹ In this section it will be shown how much that organisational model was central to consolidating their mission’s success. Other Muslim organisations in Europe, notably the Muslim Community of Berlin, also undertook attempts to address Europeans but, as the protagonists were neither trained nor financially supported by a mission organisation, they were unable to consolidate the responses.³⁰

In the Annual Report of 1929, the Ahmadiyya aim is described in the following way: “The propagation of Islam is the real work of the *Anjuman* [...] To have a proper view of it, it may be at once subdivided under two headings: (1) Propagation through Missionaries, and (2) Propagation through literature.”³¹ To realise these aims, two offices managed the proceedings: (a) The Secretary’s Office, headed by a General Secretary who, together with his assistants, clerks and cashier were responsible for the correspondence, the publishing and printing of Islamic literature, its dissemination, the collection of books for the

27 Lüddeckens, Dorothea, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893. Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002); Copley, Antony, *Gurus and their Followers. New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000).

28 Tyrell, Weltgesellschaft, p. 30.

29 The founding fathers of the Ahmadiyya reform movement were familiar with Christian mission in the Punjab. Ghulam Ahmad regularly visited the missionaries in Sialkot (Friedman, Prophecy, p. 26); Kamal-ud-Din almost became a Christian (Ansari, Kamal-ud-Din).

30 Jonker, Converts.

31 *Annual Report for the Year 1928-29 of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-isha’at-Islam* (Lahore: AAII 1929), p. 8.

library, and, in general, the control of the mission both in British India and abroad,³² and (b) The Financial Secretary's Office including the Collection of Funds Office. As collecting money was central to the mission enterprise, the office fell under the responsibility of the leader.

The Report enumerates and explains the different funds: "Zakat and Sadqat" collected the usual Islamic charity of 2.5% of the yearly income plus an unspecified amount. "The monthly subscriptions" collected from subscribers who spent a tenth, or even a fifth, of their monthly income. "The Branch Anjumans" organised lectures and information evenings with a view to raising special collections among the Ahmadiyya communities. "The German Mission Subscription" was set up specifically to meet the extraordinary expenditure involved in building a mosque in Berlin. Finally, there existed "emergency subscriptions," a fund that made "special appeals for additional sacrifices" for instance to cover financial failures.³³

The Annual Reports, drawn up between 1928 and 1938, are the main source of information regarding the fund-raising system.³⁴ By their nature, these are true progress reports that are optimistic and present the mission's state of affairs in its best aspect, thanking the donors for their generosity, while simultaneously indicating where money might still be needed. In addition, the names, addresses and professions of the donors were published in the Urdu mission journal *Paigham il-Sulh (Message of Peace)*, together with the amount of money spent. Important donations ranged from 100 and 5,500 Rupees. Mission-building in the West undoubtedly fired the sponsors' imagination and encouraged them to spend extraordinary amounts of money.

The Annual Reports served the aim of convincing the Ahmadiyya community to spend a substantial part of their monthly income on a mission that was often abroad and would never be seen by donors. One might, therefore, expect the readers to have perused the pages in order to find validation of their faith that the furtherance of Islam in the West was really underway. With regard to this publicity, reports accurately accounted for the amount of funds raised, the amount of money spent, the number of converts made, and the scope of media attention achieved. Subjects of equal interest were the production of Islamic literature and its dissemination, the publication of mission journals, and the progress of Quranic translations. Perusing a decade's

32 Administration *Annual Report 1928-29*, pp. 1-5.

33 All references in "Collections," *Annual Report 1928-29*, pp. 6-8.

34 Reports were written in Urdu (65 pp.) and summarised in English (15 pp.): <http://aaail.org/urdu/books/others/aaail/annualreports/ahmadiyyaanjumanishaatislamlahoreannualreports.shtml>. Page numbers refer to the English summaries.

worth of reports, one learns that Islamic literature was translated into thirteen Indian and fourteen European languages. For Europe, the Lahore printing presses produced English, Dutch, German, Albanian, Hungarian, Italian, and French literature.³⁵ The mother organisation also financed four mission journals, two of which were in English (*The Light, Muslim Revival*), one in German (*Moslemische Revue*) and one in Urdu (*Paigham-i-Sulh*).³⁶ English, German, and Dutch Qur'an translations were in progress. The German one was undertaken as early as 1924 but could not appear before summer 1939, just before the Second World War halted the German mission.³⁷

A considerable part of the funds was spent on the erection of mission posts and their maintenance, on educating missionaries and sending them abroad. From the Lahore perspective, one that did not differ substantially from any of the Christian missions, this was also the more uncontrollable part of the mission work.³⁸ Financial planning, under pressure to present donors with success stories, sometimes proved to be too optimistic. Far from their mother organisation, missionaries faced problems entangled in local factors that were difficult to mediate. What seemed like a sound enterprise from a central perspective could appear to be a disaster locally.

Next to fund-raising, the reports kept minute track of geographical spread. In 1929 and 1930, the mission stations at Woking and Berlin are presented as ready and functioning. Both reports also mention promising contacts in Albania and Holland.³⁹ The 1932 Report adds a mission post in Vienna.⁴⁰ The 1933 Report recounts progress in Woking, Berlin, and Vienna, adding that a Spanish mission was now in the making, a fund of 3,000 Rupees already collected. There is also mention of promising contacts in Poland.⁴¹

The 1935 Report offers more news from Woking, Vienna and Berlin, but the Spanish mission was still in a preparatory phase. Although a fund of 75,000 Rupees was made available, the Civil War left Lahore no opportunity to begin its work. Albania and Poland are not mentioned, neither is Holland. The 1936 Report basically repeats this pattern, with the addition that the mission in

35 Annual Report, 1935-36, p. 4.

36 Annual Report, 1933-34, p. 2.

37 Annual Report 1928-29, pp. 10-11; The AAII Tract Series of 1936, p. 3 mentions their completion.

38 Tyrell, *Weltgesellschaft*, pp. 13-137.

39 Albania: Annual Report 1928-29: p. 13, 1929-30: p. 21; Holland: Annual Report 1928-29: p. 10; 1929-30: p. 21.

40 Annual Report, 1931-32, pp. 9-10.

41 Annual Report, 1932-33, p. 14.

Albania would be arranged “as soon as the Albanian students now being prepared as missionaries by the *Anjuman* are ready for work.”⁴² The report also recounts that the Berlin missionary S.M. Abdullah had travelled to Vienna, Prague, Zagreb, Tuzla and Sarajevo with a view to establishing a network between Berlin and these cities.

Notwithstanding the tenacity with which the mother organisation prepared for further centres, the mission on the Continent did not extend beyond Vienna and Berlin. Albania was the exception. Situated on the threshold between Asia and Europe, Lahore did not consider Albania a mission target but treated this country almost as a future branch. In 1932, and again in 1935, absolutes from the Tirana *Medrese* were offered scholarships to finish their studies in the Lahore mission school. Nevertheless, the actual influence of the *Anjuman* remained very modest.⁴³

In Spain, Poland and Holland, countries that year after year are mentioned in the reports, the mission did not succeed. Between the Civil War and World War II Spain remained inaccessible. Poland was taken by the competing Ahmadiyya movement of Qadian, which, in 1937, was officially received by the Polish Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment to discuss the erection of a central mosque in Warsaw.⁴⁴ As for Holland, in 1939, on the eve of the German invasion, the missionary Wali Beg, who had been active in the Dutch Indies since 1924, set up a mission post in The Hague. He had only a few months to do so. Between 1940 and 1945, Wali Beg was imprisoned in Scheveningen, from which he returned a broken man.⁴⁵

Whereas at the receiving end, local mission posts buzzed with the exchange of ideas, focussing on whatever experiment with religious modernity Europe had to offer, the reports nevertheless remain silent on this topic. President Muhammad Ali regularly toured the European mission field, stressing the

42 “Our Activities,” *The AAI Tract Series* 1939/40, p. 6.

43 Clayer, Nathalie, “The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the Reform of Albanian Islam in the Inter-War Period,” in *From Arabia to the Himalayas. Crossing Paths in honour of Marc Gaborieau*. Véronique Bouillier et al. (eds.) (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose 2004), pp. 1-12.

44 MR 1937/1, pp. 15-18; photographs of the reception were published in the newspapers and have been stored in the Archive of New Acts (Warsaw), the Ministry of Religion and Public Enlightenment: [www. Kościoly i związki wyznaniowe wpisane do rejestru kościoły](http://www.Kościoly i związki wyznaniowe wpisane do rejestru kościoły). The mosque was never erected.

45 O.S.M.A. Shukrula, *De Ahmadiyya in Nederland. Een interpretatie van de belijders van Surinaamse/hindustaanse moslims inzake De Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam ontstaan in 1880 te Kadiyan (India) door Hazrat Mirza Gulam Ahmad* (Amsterdam: UvA 2000), pp. 23-39.

progressive potential of Islam and backing up his missionaries,⁴⁶ but the reports circumvent the topic. Although it is difficult from our perspective to gain a clear picture, it seems that the Ahmadiyya leaders thought it best not to overload their Indian communities with too many novel ideas.

Financial Difficulties

The financing of the Berlin mosque offers a good example of the kind of practical difficulties with which the mission organisation had to contend. In 1923, Muhammad Ali still calculated the cost to be in the region of 40,000 Rupees, or 20,000 *German Reichsmarks* (G.R.). Owing to the crisis facing the G.R., or so he argued, houses and plots in Berlin could be purchased at moderate prices.⁴⁷

What followed was a veritable fund-raising marathon all through British India. Throughout 1924 delegates visited Ahmadiyya communities in various parts of the country. People spent lavishly but in 1925 the organisation was compelled to ask for another 40,000 Rupees: snow and bad weather had delayed the work; local prices were on the rise. Once again, the community gave its support.⁴⁸ But once the shell of the mosque was completed, annual subscriptions dwindled to a mere 4,000 Rupees.⁴⁹

A shell is not a functioning mosque. The Berlin mosque could not yet house the yearly celebrations, let alone the Friday prayers. The building site was left unfinished and in need of practically all facilities. Whereas the mother organisation considered the first part of the mission accomplished and called back the founding missionary, locally, the situation was estimated to be an emergency. In July 1927, Muslim ambassadors in Berlin wrote a letter to the German Foreign Ministry, requesting assistance to finance the mosque's completion.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, they placed a call in *El-Islah* to raise £1,500 for the minarets, the garden and a fence around the plot.⁵¹ Although the Foreign Office assisted by raising G.R. 6000,⁵² the missionary responsible, Khan Durrani, had already lost confidence and taken a loan of G.R.16,000 on the mosque, doubtless to meet the most pressing expenses.⁵³

46 For instance, MR 1929, pp. 45-46.

47 Ali, "Dear Brother," p. 61.

48 Ahmad, *Die Berliner Moschee*, p. 22.

49 Annual Report, 1927-28, p. 7.

50 AA PA R 782.40 (25.07.1927).

51 Register of the *Gesellschaft für Islamische Gottesverehrung e.V.* / Zentral-Archiv des Islam Instituts Deutschland, Soest, p. 7.

52 AA PA R 782.40 (28.12.1927).

53 Ahmad, *Die Berliner Moschee*, p. 29.

The Annual Report of 1928-29 does not mention this, but the seizure seems to have seriously jeopardised the mission. The *Moslemische Revue*, appearing in January 1929 after a hiatus of one and a half years, felt compelled to give an explanation to its Berlin readers, many of whom had become Muslims under the auspices of Sadr-ud-Din. From this we learn that during much of 1927 and 1928 both the quarterly and the monthly lectures had to be discontinued for lack of money. When in September 1928 Muhammad Ali visited Berlin to view the situation, this was played down, apparently because prayer mats were still missing. But the editors confess that during the crisis even the membership lists were lost.⁵⁴

Much later, when the Berlin mission post had become the centre of a promising European mission network, Muhammad Ali brought the total cost of the Berlin mosque up to 300,000 Rupees, with an upkeep of 15,000 Rupees a year.⁵⁵ Contrary to the original calculation, it cost the mother organisation almost fifteen times more than had been planned for.

In the 1928 report, however, the crisis was played down. The report simply states that Khan Durrani was dismissed for disobedience. However, the text continues, the Berlin mission also received a new missionary, S.M. Abdullah, and “work is continued as usual.” Money was still required “for want of a carpet for the mosque floor,” for which some donors already spent generously. But the matter “still needs a helping hand.”⁵⁶ The low-key formulations betray some of the strain under which the mission organisation attempted to turn the European enterprise into the success it had promised.

3 The Berlin context

The Muslim mission in Berlin began amid political chaos. After the end of the First World War, both the right and the left attempted revolutions. The Weimar Republic had a very shaky start indeed. In 1923, the year in which Sadr-ud-Din began a survey to build a mission station, the crisis reached crisis levels. In January, a stock market crash hindered further war reparations to France. In reaction, the French and Belgian armies occupied the Ruhr valley and nationalised the German iron and coal industries. In April, Germany’s charismatic Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walther Rathenau, was killed in the street. Communists and fascists carried out sabotage acts until, in June, a state

54 MR 1929/1, p. 1.

55 Ali, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, p. 7.

56 All references in Annual Report 1928-29, p. 11.

of emergency was declared. Inflation meanwhile had rendered the German Reichsmark worthless. One US dollar was worth a billion marks. Finally, in November, Adolf Hitler attempted the first of his “national revolutions” in a Munich beer cellar.⁵⁷ Gradually, the mood turned apocalyptic. An eye witness recounts that in Berlin redeemers claiming to be sent by God to rescue the world emerged by the hundreds.⁵⁸ Sadr-ud-Din wrote optimistic letters home.⁵⁹

But in 1924, the situation miraculously stabilised. The world economy entered a boom period, and there began what has been extolled as the ‘Golden Years’ of the Weimar Republic. In reality, this lasted only until 1928. In the lull, the German Foreign Office began to observe Muslims in Berlin, documenting Muslim organisations from 1924 to 1939. The files are full of reports about pan-Islamist congresses in Cairo, Calcutta, Mecca, Baghdad, Jerusalem, and Geneva. Muslims in Berlin were perceived to be part of these global movements. Diplomacy therefore aimed at cultivating friendship and also offered to mediate in conflicts between the different Muslim leaders. Across the files, it becomes clear that Germany’s own political and cultural advancement was the driving force.⁶⁰

Adopting the role of mediator created an interface between German diplomats and Muslim leadership. It also placed the former in a position in which it functioned as a mailbox for leadership complaints. The files hold many letters that speak of jealousy and competition among the organisations. Had these letters offered the only source on Muslims in Berlin in this period, the reader would be left with a rather distorted image, leading to the conclusion that the Ahmadiyya was ostracised by the entire Muslim community. However, the local situation was more complex than this.

Of course there were frictions, the reason for which was a lack of places of prayer. Berlin housed a series of Muslim leaders in exile who fought for Muslim liberation from colonial rule. These men did not have a power base and needed

57 Winkler, Heinrich August, “Die Republik am Abgrund. Das Krisenjahr 1923,” in: *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (München: Beck 2002), pp. 416-452; Wehler, Hans-Ulrich, “Inflation and Reparation 1918-1924,” in: *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1914-1945* (München: Beck 2008), pp. 241-252.

58 Haffner, Sebastian, *Geschichte eines Deutschen. Die Erinnerungen 1914-1933* (Stuttgart/München: DVA 2000), p. 64.

59 Jonker, “The Dynamics of Adaptive Globalization. Muslim Missionaries in Weimar Berlin,” in: *Entangled Religions 2014* (accepted).

60 AA PA R 782.41 (July 1928); Eckart Conze et al., *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit. Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Pantheon 2012), pp. 108-110.

regular (re-)consolidation through symbolic acts. For that, they vouched-saved the religious duties and the yearly festivals. Gathering the local community in one mosque presented their key to unity, which in turn would lend access to Muslim unity on a global scale. Of necessity, any attempt to dominate the space that assembled the Berlin community *in toto* brought them into competition with the sole mosque owners, the Ahmadiyya missionaries. But because Arab and Indian nationalist leaders accused Ahmadiyya of siding with the British, political leaders refused to cooperate with them.⁶¹

Initially, the dilemma divided Muslim Berlin into two camps, the politically minded gathering behind the Islamic Community of Berlin (ICB), and the culturally minded behind the Ahmadiyya. But at the height of the pan-Islamic endeavour, after the Islamic World Conference in Jerusalem in 1932, the two reconciled to establish a branch in Berlin which regularly met in the mosque, proving that it was possible to cooperate.⁶² Only at the start of the Berlin Ahmadiyya mission in 1923/1924, and towards the end in 1936/1938, do we meet with political entrepreneurs who, for very different reasons, publicly campaigned against the Ahmadiyya.

In 1923, Rifat M. Mansur, a medical doctor and member of the Radical Egyptian Party, wrote a series of pamphlets against the Ahmadiyya, first against the Qadiani missionary Mubarak Ali who, during the crisis year 1923, undertook to erect his own mosque but failed, and then against the Lahore missionary Sadr-ud-Din. Among the arguments collaboration with the British was prominent, but the reader also encounters twisted presentations of the Ahmadiyya reform proposal. Twice, Mansur personally tried to prevent the mosque builders from laying a building stone, shouting in the street until the police dissolved the ceremony. The doctor proved to be a rioter with whom diplomats had no patience. In 1925, he was refused a residency permit and returned to Egypt.⁶³

After Mansur left, Muslim ambassadors supported the Ahmadiyya mosque, requesting financial support from the Foreign Office and publicly asking the local Muslim community for additional support. Once the relationship was normalised, the mosque became a well-visited place, receiving, like the Woking mosque, leaders from the Muslim world and Muslim reformers with great regularity. One of them, Sheikh Shakib Arslan, repeatedly defended the Ahmadiyya against slander and misconceptions, adopting the viewpoint that

61 Jonker, *The Dynamics*.

62 Islamic World Congress / Branch Berlin, protocol Nr. 1 (12.12.1932), and Nr. 13 (27.03.1933) (copy of register file 94 VR 9828 in *Zentralinstitut des Islam-Archiv*, Soest).

63 Jonker, *The Dynamics*.

the modern Muslim mission should learn from Christian missions, and adapt itself to ameliorate the image of Islam in the West. As far as he could see, however, “the only Muslim group, which cares about the issue of Islamic missionary work and defends the Islamic doctrine is called Ahmadiyya, with headquarters in Lahore, India. (...) This group does not deviate from the correct Muslim doctrine, and tries to spread Islam in every possible way it can.”⁶⁴ According to Arslan, “Ahmadiyya ought to be considered an example to follow.”⁶⁵

The Ahmadiyya mission thrived not only during the ‘Golden Years’ but also after the Nazi party conquered the street and the parliament. Backed up by global Muslim leadership, Muslim ambassadors and German diplomats, supported or left in peace by the local Muslim organisations, between 1924 and 1936 the mosque managed to attract a considerable number of German intellectuals. With the help of lectures and museum outings, the Islamic celebrations and informal tea afternoons, Friday sermons and publications in the *Moslemische Revue*, the organisers encouraged an open-minded search for religious modernity. The agenda combined European and Islamic visions, allowing for a scale that included left, liberal and fascist approaches.

Only in 1936, after the Nazi regime had consolidated its power and coursed towards war, was a new smear campaign triggered. Recognition as the sole Muslim representative in Nazi Germany hovered in the background of crude and defamatory attacks, which the Secretary General of the ICB, Habibur Rahman (no dates available) launched against missionary S.M. Abdullah. In a range of letters, sent to the Foreign Office and Muslim dailies from Tunis to Delhi, sometimes accompanied by clandestine photographs, Rahman accused Abdullah of committing all the sins Muslims should avoid, from selling pork, to playing tennis with his wife, to touching a German woman in public, to communicating with “Jews, communists and criminals.”⁶⁶ He also insinuated that the mission organisation was not the legitimate owner of the mosque at all. Like others before him, Rahman wanted to obtain the power of the keys, but what he reaped was failure. To Nazi politicians he was insignificant. The Foreign Office treated him with disdain and declared that the fight over the mosque was not in their interest.⁶⁷ The Gestapo investigated the “Jews, communists, and criminals” accusation, but seeing that the convert organisation

64 Shakib Arslan in: *Al Fath* / 161, *Dar Al-Matbaa Al-Salafiya* (ed.), (Cairo 22.08.1929), p. 3, with thanks to Mehdi Mejib for bringing this text to my attention.

65 Arslan, *Al Fath*, p. 4.

66 AA PA 104.801 (21.08.1936) offers a summary and copies of the photographs.

67 AA PA 104.801 (06.02.1938).

Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft (DMG) had an all-Nazi board, could find no fault.⁶⁸

The above panorama presents the background for the work of the missionaries in inter-war Europe. What strategies did they develop to pursue the double aim of ameliorating the image of Islam and simultaneously reforming that religion? What did they say and do to attract the attention of the German public? The liberal democracy which initially received them, after 1930 gave way to the authoritarian, persecutory Nazi regime. What politics did the mission organisation adopt to cope with this development?

4 Concepts of religious adaptation

In this last section, I shall pass in revue the three missionaries who manned the Berlin mission post between 1924 and 1939, focusing on their main ideas and the measures they took towards the modernisation of Islam. The review recounts their different approaches to European productions of modernity while situating them in the missionaries' global endeavour, the world mission and world-wide reform of Islam.

Sadr-ud-Din (1881-1981)

The man who was sent ahead to establish a mission station in Berlin and to attract the attention of the German public wrote Islam in large letters on the public stage. Sadr-ud-Din undertook to draw a huge picture of what Islam is or should be about. In his texts, the vision prevails. When launching the *Moslemische Revue*, he presented himself linking arms with German converts, while the subtext proclaimed: "East and West united in Islam." It is his programme in a nutshell. Between April 1924, when the first issue appeared, and May 1926, when he left Berlin again, Sadr-ud-Din unfolded his vision in four steps. Taking the ideals of the French Revolution as a point of departure, he claimed that the time was ripe for one universal religion to unite the world ("The International Religion"). Since the founders of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were brothers, he argued, it was only logical that the worldwide faith should be Islam ("Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are brothers"). At this moment, he stressed, what humanity really needed was a common bond that would enable mankind to have the same rights, the same duties, and the same options ("What did Islam bring to humanity?"). Finally, addressing Europeans directly, he argued that, whereas Europe was still pursuing the petty and

68 AA PA 104.801 (11.02.1939). s. Jonker, Converts, for a more detailed account.

small-minded aim of nationalism, Islam offered a model of universal mankind that allowed for brotherhood, justice, equality and democracy ("The World Mission of Islam").⁶⁹

Against the many salvationist promises of his day, Sadr-ud-Din undertook to re-unite religion and politics on a world-wide scale, thereby inserting Islam as part of modernity. Against the Christian missionaries striving for religious world dominance, he replaced world religions with one world government. Against European nationalism he urged Europeans to embrace Islam. His promise of equality in the framework of Islam served as an alternative to world communism. As with all the contemporary salvationist missions, the Islam he envisaged was yet to be created. He invited all Europeans to join in this venture.

F.K. Khan Durrani (no dates available)

After Sadr-ud-Din left, F.K. Khan Durrani took his place. This missionary may have been an unlucky bookkeeper, in his articles he nevertheless proves to have been a clear-sighted man. Cautiously moving away from Sadr-ud-Din's high ideals, Durrani undertook to adhere to the European reality, indicating the steps that the mission would need to make the necessary connection. His argument targeted intellectual adaptation. How did he do that?

Writing for an Indian public, Khan Durrani first cleared away two common mistakes. One was the image his readers had of Europe: "We in the East always describe Europe as the continent destined to dominate other continents. But there is no such thing as one united Europe. Instead, there are different races and nations."⁷⁰

The other mistake was the common image of Christianity: "It is true, European nations are firmly anchored in Christianity. But likewise they are convinced that the Gospel is not authentic and churches are irrational. In its stead, they clothe Christianity in delicate examples and high ideals, an approach in which Germany is leading."⁷¹

From this Khan Durrani concluded that the Muslim mission in Europe needed an intellectual approach, in which missionaries should try to learn from their opposites: "German research and knowledge transfer will soon be leading in the world. To meet this challenge, we will have to familiarise ourselves with German thought and German perspectives."⁷²

69 MR 1924/1, pp. 1-2, pp. 3-11, pp. 14-22; MR 1925/1, pp. 2-11; 1925/2, pp. 2-17.

70 F. Khan Durrani, "The legitimization of Islam in Europe," quoted in Backhausen, Manfred, *Die Ahmadiyya-Lahore-Bewegung in Europa* (Lahore: AAIIJ 2008), quote on p. 74.

71 Backhausen, Ahmadiyya, quote on p. 75.

72 Backhausen, Ahmadiyya, quote on p. 75.

What Sadr-ud-Din had performed in an implicit way—borrowing from and adapting to the salvation theories of his age in order to place Islam on the modern map—Khan Durrani handled explicitly. Rather than concentrating on visions, however, he focused on the instruments, suggesting his co-workers study European intellectual approaches to religion, and adapt to it. With a view to the cycle of erecting costly mosques and the high-level fundraising this needed, it was also a very daring suggestion, one which not every sponsor appreciated.

Khan Durrani had little time to put his ideas into practice. The 1926 volume of the *Moslemische Revue* carries the (often reprinted) article in which he explains Islam to be a collection of universal values, and declares that becoming a Muslim is a wholly unobtrusive step: “To become a Muslim, a ceremony is not required. Islam is not only a rational, widely spread and practical religion, it is also in full harmony with the natural human disposition. Every child is born with it. This is why becoming a Muslim does not require a transformation. One can be a Muslim without telling anybody. To confess to Islam is only a matter of form for the organisation. The basic creed of Islamic belief runs: There is no God but God, Muhammad is His messenger.”⁷³

Downplaying the religious differences between Christianity and Islam, and downplaying the entry rules, Khan Durrani turned conversion into a matter of private consciousness, with no need to be expressed. The many self-biographies of German converts give witness that this appealed to them.⁷⁴ Through adapting European thought, Khan Durrani found a key that fitted the lock. It became the task of his successor to consolidate the result.

SM Abdullah (1898-1956)

Khan Durrani was soon replaced by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, still a young man at the time of his arrival. He manned the mission post until the outbreak of war in 1939 forced him to leave. Of the three missionaries, his service lasted the longest, giving him the opportunity to get adjusted to the country, the quickly changing politics and the interests of his parish.

Abdullah was not a visionary like Sadr-ud-Din, nor was he an intellectual like his predecessor. Rather, he seems to have been a hard worker and meticulous organiser. In the mosque archive there is a small self-description, attached to a lecture he delivered in 1932: “I am an Indian, 34 years old. From 1923 to 1928 I was professor at Punjab University in Lahore (India). I came to Germany in 1928 to do duty as “Imam of the mosque.” I publish a quarterly “*Die Moslemische*

73 MR 1926/2, p. 92.

74 Jonker, *Converts*.

Revue." I am Secretary General of the *Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft e.V.* (German-Muslim Society) in Berlin."⁷⁵ The text is written in slightly faulty German and bespeaks of an émigré who has just learned the language and is determined to use it. It sums up this missionary very well.

A range of sources enable us to reconstruct Abdullah's Berlin years. There is the *Moslemische Revue*, the remains of the mosque library, and a smattering of texts and letters both in the mosque archive and the archive of the Foreign Office. They give us important indications as to how he realised the double mission of improving the image of Islam while simultaneously reforming this religion.

Let us first look at his attempts to improve the image of Islam. When Abdullah took over the mission post, he established an attractive community life. Although the mosque was not yet ready, he managed to lend the yearly celebrations public visibility. The *Moslemische Revue* regularly reports on public conversions during those celebrations,⁷⁶ on truly international programmes with recitations in Urdu, Farsi, Turkish and Arabic,⁷⁷ full houses and guests sitting at long festive tables in the mosque garden.⁷⁸ Starting in 1930, he read his sermons from German translations. In 1931 they were aired on the radio and reproduced on gramophone records.⁷⁹

Abdullah was also a regular contributor to European peace conferences, for which he drew up the questionnaire "Peace potentials of Religions."⁸⁰ In Berlin, he addressed different religious audiences and engaged in inter-religious debate.⁸¹

He was not a prolific writer. In print were only the sermons he spoke on celebration days, and some of his lectures.⁸² Only twice did he pen a larger text.⁸³ Abdullah's focus was on the community, for which he organised prayer, sermons, Sunday classes and Arabic lessons.⁸⁴ Two years after his arrival, the

75 AMA / Inter-war 49.

76 MR 1931/3, p. 1.

77 MR 1930/1; 1931/2.

78 MR 1933/4, p. 95, and below.

79 MR 1931/2, p. 35; "Das Echo unserer Arbeit," cf. MR 1934/4, pp. 89-98; MR 1935/1, pp. 42-45.

80 AMA / Inter-war 5, 55, 56, 57 (Questionnaire).

81 The Jewish Reform Community (AMA / Inter-war 4); The Buddhist House, the Theosophical lodge (MR 1931, 1933, 1934, s. "Jahresberichte").

82 MR 1929/2, p. 1; 1929/3, p. 1; 1931/1, p. 1; 1931/3, p. 51.

83 *Die Stellung der Frau im Islam* (The Position of Woman in Islam) (MR 1929/4) and *Der Islam und das Schwert* (Islam and the Sword) (MR 1932/3).

84 MR 1929/1, p. 1; 1931/2, p. 1.

Ahmadiyya mission in Berlin had carved a respectable niche in the public life of the Weimar Republic.

Scrutiny of modern religion came about through the convert group, serving both as contact zone and navigator through the intricacies of German intellectual thought. In April 1930, it adopted its own legal form: *Die Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft e. V.* (German-Muslim Association, or DMG). Membership was open to “every Muslim in Germany” and “non-Muslims who are sympathetic to Islam,” its aim was formulated as “furthering the understanding of Islam through education and intensive communal life.”⁸⁵

Intensive it was. The DMG organised many lectures and social evenings during which different religious alternatives were discussed. As we saw, Abdullah was its Secretary General, but the President was a Kantian philosopher, Hugo Hamid Marcus (1880-1964), who under the aegis of Sadr-ud-Din already started to augment European with Qur’anic thought. As long as Marcus was in charge, between 1930 and 1936, he organised a veritable firework that hyphenated Islam with whatever new, interesting, or problematic ethos Europe had to offer. Originally, Marcus had been a Jew, and when Habibur Rahman began his smear campaign against everything connected with the Ahmadiyya mosque, insinuating the presence of “Jews, communists and criminals,” he was forced to withdraw. But until then, Marcus managed to amass a very diverse intellectual public. Before 1933 he included communists, after the Nazis had come to power he also attracted National Socialists. Their common ground was Islam, for which they sought a contemporary form that befit their idea of modernity. Between the members, however, modernity adopted very different faces.

A look at the agenda corroborates this. In 1930 we come across “War and Islam”; “Pathways and Aims of Muslim Man”; “Renaissance of Islam”; “Islam as Expression of True Christianity,” and others.⁸⁶ The year 1933 witnesses the entry of Kazemzadeh Iranshär, a former revolutionary who during the crisis embraced Theosophy, producing a cross between Sufism and Christian mysticism.⁸⁷ Through Abdullah’s personal invitation, he spoke to the DMG on

85 “Satzung,” MR 1930/2, all quotations on p. 53. How many converts were made remains difficult to establish. In 1931, the DMG report makes mention of a 50% increase, although it does not stipulate a starting figure. In 1932, another 100 Germans seem to have accepted Islam. Estimates run between 300 and 400 in total, but since the DMG strove to make the borders between Muslims and non-Muslims non-existent, the public which regularly attended lectures was much larger.

86 MR 1931/4, p. 111.

87 Behnam, Jamshid, “Iranshär” and “Iranshär, Hosayn Kazemzada,” in: *Encyclopedia Iranica* vol. XIII (2006), pp. 535-536 and pp. 537-539.

several occasions. The 1934 agenda features the popular Nazi writer Faruq Fischer speaking on “Future Man” next to a first generation expert on Theosophy, the Countess Margarethe von Stein. There is also a lecture on “Islam and National Socialism” and one entitled “Does Islam have a Future?”⁸⁸ But after Marcus left, the agenda becomes more conservative and shallow. There are still guided tours in the Museum of Islamic Art, some historical lectures, something on “The Relationship between Orient and Occident.” During the immediate pre-war years, the lectures seem to have been discontinued altogether.

In line with the lectures, the mosque library collected books on religion and reform. This seems to have been mainly the work of Abdullah, as we find his handwriting and stamp in many of the books. Printed between 1916 and 1938, the titles suggest that, apart from Qur’an editions and commentaries, the library collected books on modern Muslim thought and modern manifestations of religion.⁸⁹ These last two sections, which originally contained some 360 titles, assembled very different subjects. As many of the books bear handwritten dedications, they seem to mirror the scope of interest of the DMG members.

Three minor collections within the collection stick out: books on Theosophy, Jewish thought, and the Baha’i movement. Others occupy themselves with the existence of God, the ABC of the peace movement, and other pacifist literature, books on health and miraculous healing, school reform and modern education, mother right, ‘New Man,’ Goethe’s complete works, and two volumes of Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege (On War)*. With the exception of Mussolini’s *Fascism*, we do not find Nazi literature, but this could be a result of a thorough ideological cleansing of the mosque after the war.

In the Theosophy section, there are some titles of Iranshär, but also periodicals and Krishnamurti’s writings, Theosophy being an important path by which the converts could tour the world religions. The Jewish section is more of a secret. There is a bibliographical journal on Jewish scholarship in Hebrew lettering, which the mosque seems to have received on a regular basis. There is some new research on Hasidic and modern Jewish thought, and, for 1936, contemporary travelogues of German Jews visiting Palestine. Their presence

88 AMA / Inter-War 17-40.

89 Incoming books were stamped with a library seal, and catalogued in the following order: (I) Koran and Tafsir; (II) Tradition; (III) Life of Muhammad and Islamic policy models; (IV) Modern Muslim policies; (V) Dictionaries; (VI) Periodicals; (VII) Modern Muslim Thought; (VIII) Modern religious manifestations. Around 35% of the titles were recovered.

suggests that at least some of the members read Hebrew and took an interest in the fate of the Jewish community.

The Baha'i section contains everything the Baha'i society in Stuttgart printed in German. An appropriate lecture did not seem to be available, but a diversity of sources makes clear that the Ahmadiyya took great interest in this religious reformer.

The mosque library is by no means a haphazard collection. Quite the contrary, even the most superficial of comparisons with other mosque libraries underlines its uniqueness.⁹⁰ Rather, it is a sharpened lens on the world outside from which it picked and chose examples of religious modernisation, making consonant Muslim and Jewish with Nazi approaches to modernisation. It shows us that, whereas Sadr-ud-Din articulated a modern vision, and Khan Durrani urged adaption to European intellectual thought, the missionary Abdullah, with the help of Marcus and the DMG, made an effort to put their ideas in practice.

Conclusions

The war agenda of the Third Reich put an end to the experiment. Since the Nazis came to power, they had been dangerous neighbours. From the very start the regime brutally persecuted Jews, socialists, the disabled and the socially weak. What happened in the streets of Berlin was not a secret that somehow remained hidden for the Ahmadiyya mission organisation. Still, like so many others around them, the missionaries initially thought this to be an unpleasant but necessary turn towards the betterment of European society. In 1933, President Muhammad Ali could still write: "We welcome the new regime in Germany as it favours the simpler principles in life which Islam inculcates."⁹¹ After initial despair,⁹² the DMG began to include members who sympathised with the regime. As a result, for some years at least, former Jews and fresh

90 Neither are there any titles by the founder Ghulam Ahmad. For comparison: any contemporary mosque library of the Ahmadiyya Qadiani collects Ghulam Ahmad under Section II, directly after the Koran editions and commentaries, and *in lieu of* the tradition.

91 Muhammad Ali, "Islam's Contribution to Civilization," AMA / Inter-war 67.

92 MR 1933/1, pp. 8-11: "How long will this misery last? (..) We are full of fear, doubt and faint-heartedness. How long still?" (Hugo Hamid Marcus); as well as pp. 27-29: "In the face of this gigantic will to eradicate (..), it is as if everything has lost its meaning" (Johanna Hudah Scheider).

regime supporters sat together and open-mindedly discussed aspects of Nazi ideology.

Slowly but gradually Nazi ideology pervaded the mosque. By 1936 all the board members were either in the party or active in one of its branches. That year was a turning point in pre-war Nazi Germany. The regime had gained enough power to draft the Nuremberg Laws, meaning that Jews were robbed of their citizenship and their possessions and would be systematically excluded from society. Preparations for a new war were underway. We saw how a man like Habibur Rahman, eager to become sole representative in Germany, tried to profit from the changing mood.

But in 1937, Sadr-ud-Din, by now vice-president of the mission organisation, saying farewell to the Berlin mosque community after a prolonged visit, could still find words to thank the Germans. In his view, "Germans are honest. Honest people strive for the truth. That may sometimes be a bit harsh, but an occasional harsh word does not hurt." Not only did he love the Germans, he said, but all the Indians did.⁹³

This paper began by recounting how, at the start of the 20th century, the Ahmadiyya reform movement modernised the Islamic tradition and established Islamic centres in London and Berlin to promote its approach. Ahmadiyya were explicitly against war, as they were against political involvement. Theirs was a religious quest for change in both East and West. Like other Muslim reformers around them, it was their aim to ameliorate the image of Islam in Europe while simultaneously reforming this religion, a combined aim which they sought to conduct through discussion, conversion, and intellectual exchange.

Notwithstanding the many peculiarities of their movement, the Ahmadiyya voice became part of a global chorus of voices, each promoting a solution for the future of the world. What Christian missionaries, Arab nationalists, communists, and Muslim reformers had in common with each other was the fact that, for the first time in recent history, they envisioned one single world, proposing one single salvation for all. The amazing aspect of this truly global endeavour was that across the globe, people began to borrow and adapt from one another. Ghulam Ahmad and Kamal-ud-Din looked over the shoulders of Christian missionaries; Shekib Arslan even openly admired their mission organisation; Khan Durrani urged adaption to European intellectual thought; Abdullah and his DMG set in train a laboratory in which a range of very different proposals were presented and discussed.

93 MR 937, p. 73.

Not only did the Muslims in this story seek to learn. Converts to Islam (not the subject of this contribution) sought to learn too and to bridge East and West. On the pages of the *Moslemische Revue*, the word 'bridge' significantly recurs. It tells us that adaptive globalisation cut both ways.

This contribution further recounted how the Ahmadiyya mission, when gaining their footing in Berlin, met with political instability, but also with other Muslims busy propagating their solution to global questions through the pan-Islamic endeavour. Muslim nationalists disliked the Ahmadiyya cultural approach. Also, there were tensions over the possession of the only mosque, which the Ahmadiyya missionaries were able to erect thanks to a well-oiled fund-raising apparatus, whereas other Muslim bodies did not have such an organisation behind them. Notwithstanding such difficulties, the Islamic Community of Berlin managed to cooperate with the DMG. The influential intellectual Shekib Arslan wrote in defence of the Ahmadiyya reform proposals. The mosque was backed up by local Muslim ambassadors, whereas Muslim leaders from across the world paid visits. In fact, and this is another significant outcome of this research, there was more harmony between the Ahmadiyya and the Muslim world than there is today.

Finally, the tragedy of the Ahmadiyya reform movement was that Nazi aspirations to conquer the world by force and unite it under one dictatorship wiped out any attempt to solve differences through honest conversation. With a view to the catastrophic course the world would soon embark upon, however, this has been the lesser tragedy.