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Overviewing a Century. The Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque Archive in Berlin

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Abstract

In 1923, *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat ve Islam* with headquarters in Lahore (hereafter: Lahore-Ahmadiyya) sent the pedagogue Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din to Berlin commissioned to erect a mosque, create a mission and enter in conversation with the Europeans. The European mission was a comprehensive answer to the challenge that the British Empire presented to Muslims. In their hometown, Lahore, Lahore-Ahmadiyya aimed at comparing religions in order to push back British missionaries and disprove Christian claims to superiority. Adapting to the German setting, which in the years to come would swiftly move from democratic to nationalistic politics, the mission in Berlin created many variations on that theme. Today, the mosque registry, holding records of almost 100 years of administration, bears witness to the efforts of the missionaries to explain to various German audiences their view of Islam. An important source for Muslim history in Germany, the archive highlights such different research subjects as Muslim modernity at work, the language of secular Islam, Indian-German approximations, conversion, and mixed marriage. In 2018, it was donated to the National Archive in Berlin, where the approximately 70,000 documents and 5,000 photographs were made available for research. This contribution offers an analysis of the contents.

Keywords

mosque archive – Lahore-Ahmadiyya – Berlin – Ahmadiyya history – history of Islam in Germany

1 Introduction

In 1923, the Ahmadiyya mission centre in Lahore sent the pedagogue and university teacher Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din (1881–1981) to Berlin commissioned to erect a mosque, attract a community and enter in conversation with the Europeans (Jonker, 2016). As part of the numerous Muslim reform movements in India (Metcalf, 2007), the Ahmadiyya focused on ‘Jihad of the pen’, a sophisticated polemics aimed at countering British missionaries and delegitimising British superiority claims from within (Walter, 1918; Friedmann, 1989; Copley, 2000). The founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1843–1908), was still engaging in prolonged public debates with Christian missionaries and representatives of other religions. After his death, his followers split in two competing movements, named after their hometowns Qadian and Lahore, both of which translated the Qur’an in foreign languages and sent missionaries across the globe (Muneer, 1957; Fischer, 1963; Haddad and Idleman-Smith, 1993; Clayer, 2004; Burhani, 2020). Sadr-ud-Din set up the first Muslim mission in continental Europe, creating a popular and widely visible community. When he arrived in Berlin, Germany happened to be going through a deep crisis that led to a rapid succession of governments and political ideologies (Rabinbach, 2013). Some years later, when National-Socialists voiced racism as their leading political principle, his successor Sheikh M. Abdullah (1898–1956) initiated a debate on ‘Religion of the Future’, suggesting that only religious progress that would enhance the essential equality of Man could produce human beings able to counteract such politics (Jonker, 2020: 81–107).

The year 1924 saw the start of construction work at Brienner Strasse 7–8 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, followed two years later by the festive opening of the mosque. In the years to come, the mosque journal, *Moslemische Revue*, kept a record of the many public debates that the Ahmadiyya missionaries initiated. By building an Indian-German community, establishing networks across Europe, and formulating tentative answers to the question of what Islam ‘is’ (rational, democratic, and open to change), Lahore-Ahmadiyya put itself on the European map. The paper trail they left behind documents 100 years’ worth of invitations, correspondence, building activities, marriage- and conversion certificates, in-house journals, unpublished speeches, sermons at all stages of preparation and religious pamphlets. The 5,000 photographs offer a clear view of Muslim-German community life in all its historical stages.

On these pages, the reader will be guided through the contents of the Lahore-Ahmadiyya mosque archive. First, it relates how it was (re-)discovered and how the mission organisation handled the discovery. There follow short introductions to documents that were collected in the inter-war, war-time,

post-war and Cold War periods. Following the German legislation on archiving, 2005 is the year in which our overview comes to an end (Archiv-Gesetz des Landes Berlin, 2016).¹ After this overview, we shall step back, consider the archive in its entirety, list places in the archive where a stray sheet notes documents that have gone missing and summarise the riches it holds in store for future research.

Some observations on archival growth and stagnation may set the scene. First, the Lahore-Ahmadiyya archive in Berlin saw many periods of growth. Anyone who cares to start at the beginning will soon discover that the first Germans who felt drawn to Ahmadiyya concepts were so-called life reformers. From 1900, the Life Reform movement experimented with art, vegetarianism, sexuality and religion, using Theosophy, the study of the spiritual, as a platform (Treitel, 2004; Bigalke, 2016). Convinced that society needed religious renewal, Lutherans, German Jews and German Buddhists had already put forward their ideas on the future of religion. When the mosque opened its doors, life reformers came crowding in and, when the missionaries suggested rekindling the debate on the future of religion, they were eager to join in. An intense exchange followed, in which the modernisation of religion, forms of spirituality, lifestyles, gender models and forecasts of 'Future Man' were discussed at length. Defending a democratic approach, in which voices from every religious and political perspective were allowed to make themselves heard, between 1924 and 1939, the mosque gave a platform to a wide array of views and voices, the majority of which were published in the in-house journal *Moslemische Revue* (LAB D Rep 920-16: 42–66, 369–70; cf. Jonker, 2020: 81–107).

Second, the archive also experienced critical moments when essential documents were lost. For example, the first one that occurred: Abdul Fazlul Khan Durrani (b. 1894), who arrived in Berlin in 1925 to take Sadr-ud-Din's place, in search of funds to furnish the inside of the mosque and plant a garden around it, pawned the building, leaving it in the hands of the so-called 'Committee of Ambassadors of Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and Egypt in Berlin' (*El-Islah*, 1927: 5). This Committee was a group of high-ranking diplomats who, after the abolition of the Caliphate in Istanbul in 1924, founded the *Mai'at Scha'a'iv Islamiya* to guarantee the continued performance of religious obligations in Berlin (Register Office Berlin-Schöneberg 9 VR 506; cf. Jonker, 2016: 52 *et passim*). It seems that the way they undertook this responsibility was different from what the Ahmadiyya intended. During 1927 and 1928, the *Moslemische Revue* was discontinued and the documents that had already been collected – building

1 German archival legislation bans access to data less than 15 years old. Personal and sensitive documents usually remain inaccessible for 30 years or more.

records, invitations and address lists, conversion and marriage certificates – were lost in the process. Documents that give us some idea of what happened can be traced to the Political Archive of the Foreign Office, an institution that kept a close eye on the Ahmadiyya mosque (PA AA R 78240: 1926–28), but none of it can be traced to the mosque archive itself.

Third, the Lahore-Ahmadiyya mosque archive would have been discontinued were it not for Sheikh M. Abdullah, a chemist and professor at Lahore University, who was sent to Berlin in 1928 to set things straight. Abdullah managed to rescue the mission enterprise, taking only a short time to return the mosque management to the care of Lahore-Ahmadiyya. The archive still contains the file in which he stored his college papers and other credentials upon his arrival, adding a tentative to-do list, a sketch of the German-Muslim Society, the organisation for converts that he would soon set up, and letters noting his various engagements at European peace conferences (LAB D Rep 920-16: 382). This file signals the (re-)establishment of the archive, telling the story of a methodical approach that was able to recover the mosque's independence.

Since then, a number of mosque administrators carefully filed their documents, resulting in a paper trail that runs from 1928 to the present day. Documentary evidence is divided unevenly though. Whereas the 1930s, the 1950s, and the 1980s are richly represented, the Second World War, although a period of intense happenings at the mosque, is present through bills for expenses only (Jonker 2016: 182–209). Another gap in the records occurs between 2005 and 2011, when the mosque temporarily closed its doors. Apart from these gaps, however, the archive offers an overview of almost hundred years of Ahmadiyya mission in Berlin, covering the international scene that set the stage for it: globalisation and religious reform; National-Socialism and mass murder; the re-ordering of Europe and the founding of Muslim nation states; contract workers from Turkey; religious persecution in Pakistan; 9/11 and beyond (Bayly, 2004; Judt, 2010). The willingness this archive reflects to adapt to unexpected situations, examine novel religious ideas and keep on talking whatever the odds, reveals the flexibility of the Ahmadiyya tradition. Such a long-term perspective is a rarity and may be seen as the archive's most outstanding feature.

2 The Discovery of the Mosque Archive

The mosque building is reminiscent of a small-scale Taj Mahal, with a dome, two minarets and steps leading up to a wide porch with double doors. It is flanked by a square utility building, the so-called mission house, where the

missionaries live and a large garden surrounds the complex. This is the only mosque in the borough of Wilmersdorf. One hundred years ago this neighbourhood was built with a view to attracting wealthy Berliners and well-to-do families still dominate its population today. While its construction was underway, the city council set aside large plots for 'foreign' religious communities. Across the street from the mosque stands a Swedish church and, further down the road, the gilded domes of the Russian Orthodox church shine in the sunlight. Scattered through the neighbourhood are the buildings of Christian denominations that gained popularity in the 1920s, such as the Christian Scientists and Latter-Day Saints and, until the Nazis destroyed them, several synagogues stood nearby. Muslim, Jewish and Christian attendees of these communities usually lived within walking distance.

In 2017, while preparing for the renovation of his property, the resident imam happened to move some bookcases in the upstairs rooms of the mission house. Behind them, the doors of built-in cupboards came to light and, once the keys were found, it became apparent that a previous imam had used them to store large parts of the archive that were not in use anymore. Thus, the bedroom held the inter-war archive and stacks of photo albums. A double cupboard in the imam's office revealed files containing documents from the post-war period. But the biggest find was made in the cellar. After clearing out decennia of broken furniture and rubbish, boxes and iron shelves revealed the war-time archive, correspondences with the Lahore organisation, a hundred years' worth of religious pamphlets in many different languages, renovation documents, stacks of dirty papers that appeared to be church and synagogue documents granting their owners the right to exit these communities, and speckled files containing conversion records. Cardboard boxes full of photographs and piles of unopened mail were also unearthed. Riffing through them it soon became apparent that the languages in daily use were German and English but that correspondence with Lahore was conducted in Urdu. In addition, there were printed and handwritten documents in Arabic, Turkish, Bosnian, Polish and Dutch (see Figure 1).

All in all, some 70,000 documents came to light and, although the cellar had suffered water damage in the past, they were in remarkably good condition. Judging from the letter heads and handwriting, over time, five different administrators had processed the documents, put them into folders, stored files in cupboards or taken them to the cellar. Their names are Sheikh M. Abdullah (in office 1928–1939), Amina Alexandrina Mosler-Beine (b. 1895, caretaker of the mosque 1939–1960), Muhammad Aman Herbert Hobohm (b. 1926, in office 1949–1952), Yahya Butt (b. 1924, in office 1959–1987) and Saeed A. Chaudry (b. 1925, in office 1988–2004).



FIGURE 1 The cellar of the Mission House in 1996
PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

As we have said, Abdullah was a good organiser. A study of the cardboard folders he originally purchased, which have his handwritten remarks and lists in ink on the inside cover, when this imam arrived in 1928, he acquired a series of folders with a view to the paperwork that lay ahead and then started to fill them. His successors added their own documents, until the folders were full. On his arrival in Berlin in 1959, Yahya Butt emptied some of them into boxes but took care to leave the piles in their original order. The boxes went to the cellar, the folders returned to the cupboard, and over the years filled up again, until Saeed Chaudry closed the cupboards with their overflowing folders and placed bookcases with fresh folders in front of them.

Although nothing ever seems to have been thrown away, in the course of time parts of the archive went missing. Thus, we suspect that, when The Committee of Muslim Diplomats returned the mosque to Abdullah in 1928, they took their own paperwork with them. When the Gestapo searched the mosque in 1936 on account of rumours that Jews were hiding there, they confiscated the marriage and conversion records. We know that Mrs Amina Mosler moved the correspondence with Lahore to her own flat at Hauptstrasse 83. Her house was firebombed in 1944 and nothing was left.² Finally, the architectural

² Part of the correspondence survived in the private archive of Hugo Marcus, President of the *Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft*, who took refuge in Switzerland during the war (Hugo Marcus in *Nachlass W.R. Corti*, National Library Zürich).

drawings for the mosque and the building records were transferred soon after the War to the Berlin Chamber of Architecture, just down the road from where the mosque is located.

In 2019, the board of Lahore-Ahmadiyya, realising that the discovery of the mosque archive was the key to their European history, travelled to Berlin to take a view and discuss what to do next. As a result, the mosque archive was donated to the National Archive of Berlin, where it was processed and given a lasting resting place. Finally, a find book was prepared, allowing future researchers to navigate through the contents (LAB D Rep 920-16; cf. Jonker and Huck, 2020).

3 The Inter-war Period

Thanks to Abdullah's orderliness, we have a fairly good idea of the range of tasks this imam undertook in between the two World Wars. Soon after he settled in Berlin, he took steps to secure the organisation of the convert community that had already come into existence of the mosque. This resulted in the German-Muslim Community (*Deutsch-Moslemische Gesellschaft*), which registered with the Registry Office and subsequently produced an extensive document trail. Files provide annual reports, lists of board members, lists of community members and records of various activities. Next, Abdullah took care of the community services. The yearly festivals alone produced stacks of invitations and thank-you cards, printed on creamy handmade paper and still wrapped in their original bindings (see Figure 2).

A huge album of postcards still contains the postcards that community members wrote to their imam in answer to his invitations. The folders with records of mixed marriages and conversions are no longer there. Most likely, the Gestapo removed them during a house search, as was their custom, but some of these documents have re-surfaced in private archives, so we know that they were carefully designed on expensive paper and written in Arabic and Latin script (Jonker, 2018: 188). The lecture series that took place in the mosque once a fortnight provided the bulk of the documents: typewritten speeches held together with multi-coloured strings, and lists of speakers, subjects and Qur'an quotations used by the imam to introduce the speakers (see Figure 3). Boxes full of copies of the *Moslemische Revue*, the journal in which most of the speeches were printed, confirm the lists.

Apart from those responsibilities, Abdullah visited religious communities in Berlin that invited him as a speaker. He also undertook mission journeys to Muslim reform communities in south-eastern Europe. The archive preserved



FIGURE 2 Two invitation cards, the upper an invitation to a summer party in the illuminated mosque garden (1938), the lower to a talk by Emran Husain on Mysticism in Islam (1939)
 LAB D REP 920-16: 385

the printed programmes or these activities and related correspondence and all the articles in the printed press in which his appearance was mentioned. When he returned to Lahore in 1939, Abdullah also stored his personal photo albums in the archive. The seven leather-bound volumes indicate that he was a keen photographer. Snapshots of friends, the mosque community, mixed

28	<i>The Flame</i> 111:63–70	Azeez Mirza	<i>The Spirit of Islam</i>	05.01.1934
29	<i>Small Kindness</i> 107:1–4 <i>The Unbelievers</i> 109:1–6	Hugo Hamid Marcus	<i>Liebes- und Heldengedanken im Islam</i> (Thoughts of Love and Heroes in Islam)	02.02.1934
30	<i>The Cow</i> 2:284–86	Amin Boosfeld	<i>Islam und Nationalsozialismus</i> (Islam and National-Socialism)	16.02.1934 06.07.1934
31	<i>Hūd</i> 11:1–6	Hugo Hamid Marcus	<i>Lehre des Islam</i> (What Islam Teaches Us)	06.04.1934
32	<i>Hūd</i> 11:177–82	Sheikh M. Abdullah Baronin Margarete von Stein	<i>Islam und Sklaverei</i> (Islam and Slavery) <i>Berührungspunkte zwischen den Religionen</i> (Crossroads between the Religions)	20.04.1934 18.05.1934
33	<i>The Ranks</i> 61:1–9	J. Abbud Al-Ibrahim	<i>Hat der Islam eine Zukunft?</i> (Does Islam Have a Future?)	15.06.1934

FIGURE 3 Copy of a section of Abdullah's list of Qur'an quotations, speeches and speakers
LAB REP D 920: 370

marriages conducted in the mosque, group portraits on festival days and receptions for high-ranking visitors provide some unique images of Muslim community life in Germany before the Second World War (LAB Rep D 92/Photos: 18–24).

Abdullah also collected a library of contemporary publications on Muslim modernity, Theosophy and German life reform (Jonker, 2016: 152–81) and, finally, we note the two pamphlets he wrote in German, of which considerable stacks survived in the cellar: *Die Frau im Islam* (Woman in Islam) and *Das Schwert im Islam* (Islam and the Sword). They reflect well-known Ahmadiyya positions on gender relations and 'Jihad of the pen', respectively.

One topic that must have pervaded mosque community life but left hardly any traces in the mosque archive should be mentioned here. From the start of the mission, Lahore-Ahmadiyya found itself in conflict with the Islamic Community Berlin (*Islamische Gemeinde Berlin*), an organisation founded by the Kheiri Brothers in 1923 that attracted Muslims who were working towards

the political independence of their home countries (Liebau, 2019). Quite the contrary, having declared itself a religious minority in 1902, and utterly loyal to the colonial administration of British-India, the Ahmadiyya refrained from making political claims such as demands for Muslim independence (Gilmartin, 1995). Starting from the different political positions, the conflict between Lahore-Ahmadiyya and the Islamic Community Berlin intensified over the years. In 1935, the latter unleashed a worldwide campaign against the mosque in Berlin. Abdullah was decried as a pork eater, and a man who played tennis with his wife while other Muslims were praying and sought the company of 'immoral women'. The archive only contains the court case Abdullah brought to stop the slander (LAB D Rep. 920-16: 367, 375) but much more can be found in other Berlin archives, and in the archives of Muslim dailies and magazines in Lahore, Islamabad and Cairo (Ryad, 2016).

4 Surviving the War

When the Second World War began in 1939, Abdullah was declared an enemy alien and he and his family left the country in haste, but he first secured the mosque property, offering a government official Dr Gaedicke residence in the Mission House free of charge, and leaving him with enough financial provision to keep the place running. Judging from the documents, Dr Gaedicke succeeded in doing so. Among the most prominent war-time records, we find monthly bills for water, electricity, rubbish collection, insurance, snow removal and chimney sweeping. Their seamless payment tells a story of its own, namely that both the mosque and its interim lodger ran smoothly until the very last day of the War.

Abdullah entrusted the keys to the mosque to Mrs Amina Mosler, a faithful community member who embraced Islam in 1936 (Jonker, 2016: 182–211). It appears that she was not to be discouraged, whatever the cost. During the first years of the War, she managed to find ways to stay in contact with Lahore (Hugo Marcus private archive). But in 1942, when the Ministry of War Propaganda appropriated the mosque for war purposes and appointed the Mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammad Amin al-Husseini (1897–1974), as Friday preacher, the convert community retreated to her apartment. The mosque itself was used to receive large groups of Russian Muslim POWs, who had been transferred from prison camps in Eastern Europe to be trained as SS soldiers in the vicinity of Berlin (Motadel, 2014). The Political Archive of the Foreign Office still contains a copy of the German propaganda magazine *Barid-al-Schark*, written and



FIGURE 4 The mosque, the Mufti and Muslim trainees in SS uniforms
BARID-AL-SCHARK, 1942

printed in Berlin, and lavishly illustrated with photographs of the Mufti, the mosque and Uzbek soldiers in SS uniforms (see Figure 4). Apart from a single letter, headed 'Ciaro Amin!' and dated 1943, however, the Mufti left no documents in the mosque (Motadel, 2017). Amina Mosler must have kept a careful eye on the proceedings, because, during the bombing of April 1945, she flew the red flag from the mosque rooftop and, although the building came under mortar fire, it was never bombed from the air. The archive survived without much damage (Backhausen, 2008: 97–110).

5 Repositioning after the Second World War

In summer 1945, the mosque once again opened its doors for Friday prayers. In the archive, one finds a trickle of field-posted letters dating from this time. They appear to have been written by former community members, now in POW camps in Eastern Europe, asking Abdullah for help. Other people wrote to inform him that they were still alive. Irma Saffiyah Gohl, who had converted

in this mosque in 1932 and moved to Australia in 1938, sent a stack of reports that she and her partner M. Sayed Abd al-Abdal, a former community member and contributor to the *Moslemische Revue*, sent to the League of Nations in 1944 to protest against the Italian massacres in Libya. Amina Mosler seems to have spoken on the radio on several occasions, asking all Muslims remaining in Germany to report themselves. Lists of names, written in pencil on coarse pieces of paper, bear witness to the handful who followed her call.

Non-Muslim partners of the mosque also re-established contact, among them the World Council of Churches, the Quaker Community, and an organisation called 'The Victims of the Nuremberg Laws', representing the 30,000 survivors from Jewish-Christian marriages and their offspring. In 1947, the Jewish community and a range of Christian denominations that had also suffered persecution joined ranks in the Working Group of Churches and Religious Communities in Berlin (*Arbeitskreis Religiöser Gemeinschaften in Groß-Berlin*), inviting the mosque to join them. Fourteen files in the mosque archive, dating from 1947 to 1993, provide ample evidence of the mosque's decision to accept that invitation (LAB D Rep 920-16:15 *et passim*; cf. Jonker, 2021).

And it was not only persecuted religious organisations that re-established contact. In 1948, several theosophical lodges in cooperation with Buddhist, Mazdaznan, Yoga and Pythagoras groups founded the 'Free Spiritual Covenant', and they in turn invited the mosque community to join. But in contrast to the free religious atmosphere that had characterised the mosque community in the inter-war period, it decided to distance itself from free spirituality from then on (LAB D Rep 920-16: 25) and the sought-after cooperation did not materialise.

Shortly after the war, Amina Mosler also arranged two events. In March 1948, she organised a commemoration for Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), who had been assassinated on 30 January in the Indian capital, New Delhi, and, in October of the same year, the mosque announced a ceremony for Pakistan's independence. Reading through the guest lists and viewing the invitation and thank-you cards still stacked in the archive, they seem to have constituted major occasions, during which the mosque received not only the Lord Mayor of Berlin, but also representatives of the Russian, French, British and American military governments (LAB D Rep 920-16: 377, 380).

Between these events, Muhammad Hobohm, who had embraced Islam in Berlin in 1939 at the age of 13, arrived from London. Apart from notes of his many inter-religious activities, radio broadcasts and other appearances, this imam filed away all the stages of preparation of an international quarterly, *The Orient Post*, written in English, Urdu and Arabic. The quarterly was designed as a window on Pakistan and appeared from November 1949 to December 1950,

after which lack of funds forced Hobohm to end its publication (LAB D Rep 920-16: 33-37).

6 Prospering in Walled-in Berlin

For the mosque archive, the arrival of Yahya Butt in Berlin in 1959 marks the start of a new era of prosperity. After completing his history studies at the University of Lahore, Butt was sent by Lahore-Ahmadiyya to Berlin to replace Amina Mosler, an assignment he took up with enthusiasm and a considerable talent in communication. With this imam, the mosque community thrived again, experiencing a period of extremely positive visibility, embedded as it was in the inter-religious network that dominated post-war religion in Berlin. Butt turned the mosque community into a vibrant student community and he himself enrolled at Berlin Free University, first as a student of Lutheran theology, German history and history of the Muslim world, and then as a lecturer. His Friday speeches on Radio RIAS were well received by the Berlin public. The Berlin *Tagesspiegel* called him a reformer of Islam and concluded: 'The Wilmersdorf Imam prefers ecumenical thought' (Schwerk, 1979).

In the National Archive of Berlin to which the mosque archive has been transferred, Butt's legacy fills 50 folders, providing information about the work of this imam in the quickly changing Berlin society. From the very beginning, he attracted an international student audience. The first folder he set up, was filled with marriage contracts between German women and Pakistani, Persian and Egyptian students, often as many as hundred per year. Another folder kept track of the many conversions to Islam. His invitations to the annual Eid celebrations were printed on red, blue or yellow A4 pages with handy calculations of moon rises printed on the back. Notes from the seminars he attended – Lutheran Theology, Philosophy, Islamic History – are mixed with notebooks containing his sermons (LAB D Rep 920-16: 481, 499, 502, *et passim*). His radio broadcasts were printed as pamphlets, of which whole stacks survived in the cellar. In the mid-1970s, when Muslim contract workers created their own prayer rooms, thereby bringing a novel visibility to Muslim life in Berlin, Butt accepted invitations to explain 'Islam' to the public at large. Judging from a handful of letters he exchanged with the GDR authorities, he tried to stay in contact with Muslims in East Berlin.

His annual reports to Lahore were rich in information and we also learn from this correspondence that there was a growing rift between Lahore and Berlin. When the Berlin imam complained about missing funds and a bitter sense of being isolated, the Lahore organisation grew suspicious about what

their missionary was doing 'out there'. Indeed, during the period of almost 30 years in which Butt lived in Berlin, their worlds grew apart. While he dealt with student matters and a city that increasingly worried about the growing visibility of contract workers from Turkey, a cohabitation that local newspapers decried as the 'Islamisation of Berlin' (Schwerk, 1979), Lahore-Ahmadiyya increasingly faced religious persecution in Pakistan, culminating in the denunciation of the Ahmadiyya as 'non-Muslim' (Qasmi, 2014: 221–6).

7 1989 and After

In 1987, Yahya Butt returned to Lahore and was replaced by Saeed A. Chaudry, a retired civil servant, who accepted the mission post at the advanced age of 62. Upon his arrival, he found a dilapidated, draughty mission house and a mosque with a leaking roof. Keeping the place in order had not been among Butt's concerns, or so it appeared. For many years, Chaudry dealt with monument care, investors, construction workers and noisy renovation work. However, unopened letters from the working group, other mosque communities, the Senate and the Commissioner for Foreigners tell us that he did not find the time to follow in his predecessor's footsteps. An extra handicap was Chaudry's lack of German language skills, which led to many misunderstandings with his bank and the Registry Office and gave rise to several legal disputes over missed payments and tax matters.

His time of office happened to overlap with a tumultuous period in world history. The end of the Cold War, the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the genocide in Bosnia creating a large community of Bosnian refugees in Berlin, and the attack on the Twin Towers in New York and its world-wide reverberations, seem to have passed over this mosque and its little circle of friends almost unnoticed. In the mosque archive, at least, hardly an echo remains. Instead, Chaudry tried to set up a new statute and gather a new community around him but his declining health forced him to stay in Lahore for long stretches of time, and so the initiative dwindled.

He was most appreciated as a host, and a loving witness of the many marriages he conducted. Approximately 4,000 photographs show Chaudry as a benign elderly man between school children, church and youth groups, newlywed couples and international guests. He concluded mixed marriages on an almost weekly basis, and it seems that many of the couples continued to maintain contact, sending 'their' imam photographs of their children and their homes from every part of the world. In 2004, after falling seriously ill, and having been refused a further visa, he finally returned to Lahore for good.

8 Conclusions

All archives are a result of selections. In this archive, mosque administrators selected paperwork that needed to be stored for later. At several junctures, others removed documents that had been stored and their reasons for doing so were many. The aim of this contribution has been to introduce researchers to potential research subjects in the Lahore-Ahmadiyya mosque archive in Berlin. This has posed the question of what to do with persons / subjects that are of importance for the Ahmadiyya mission but of whom no (or hardly any) trace is found in the mosque archive. In such cases it was explained why they did not leave a trace in this particular archive and where researchers should go to find more about them.

Despite such lacunae, the mosque archive of Lahore-Ahmadiyya in Berlin considerably expands our knowledge about Islam in Germany. It lends ample visibility to the flourishing Muslim community in the Berlin Mosque that came into existence in the inter-war period and bears witness to its war-time continuity, however meagre that witness may be. It offers ample documentation of the effort to reconnect after the War and the religious adjustment that followed. It makes it possible to reconstruct Muslim life in Berlin as it existed before Turkish contract workers started to create their own prayer halls, thereby creating a novel public awareness of 'Islam' in Germany. Above all, the mosque archive reflects the positive attitude with which Muslims were received in Berlin during most of the twentieth century.

The Lahore-Ahmadiyya mosque archive is at the centre of many different lines of communication. On a worldwide level, it connects Ahmadiyya communities that are scattered between the Americas, Europe and the Philippines. Between Lahore and Berlin, it stretches to include proponents of Muslim reform movements in India, connecting them to German life reformers in the inter-war period and the student and hippie movements of the 1960s. During the inter-war period, it linked into Muslim reform communities in Vienna, Belgrade, Sarajevo and Tirana. Within the city of Berlin, it reached out to similarly reform-minded religious communities in the Buddhist and Jewish traditions, but also to major city institutions such as the Registry, the Court, the Police, the churches, the Mayor and the Foreign Office. Finally, it demonstrates the circumstances in which this impressive communication network, building on five generations of mosque administrators, could almost be undone.

The mosque archive offers a unique window onto Muslim modernity at work. Building on a flexible concept of the Islamic tradition and developing the language of secular Islam (Datla, 2013; Ansari, 2001), the Lahore-Ahmadiyya missionaries in Berlin connected to other religious communities that were

also searching for ways to modernise their religious traditions, among them Christians, Baha'is, Buddhists and Jews. Many religious pamphlets in the archive also speak the language of secular Islam. Before the War, when India was still a British colony, Sheikh M. Abdullah was not afraid to compare the Islamic command to refine oneself as a Muslim (the greater jihad) with the ideas of German life reformers who were experimenting with non-European religions. A Muslim moderniser of the next generation, Yahya Butt, studying and teaching at Berlin Free University, acquired a wide range of German academic knowledge, the gist of which he included in his sermons.

Most of this archival material still awaits discovery. Hundreds of sermons and religious pamphlets; handwritten correspondence in Urdu. The work-flow between this mosque and Muslim reform communities on the Balkans; the conflict with the Islamic Community Berlin; religious repositioning after the War; testimonies of religious refugees from Pakistan in the 1970s; legal correspondences on Pakistani exile seekers in the 1990s – these are only some of the subjects covered in the Lahore-Ahmadiyya mosque archive. Lists of names provide tools with which to reconstruct pre- and post-war networks. Journals that were drafted and edited at the mosque offer windows onto a German society undergoing rapid change. Finally, the extensive photo collection shows more than documents can the persistent ideas of community building and gender relations, and the ideology of mixed marriage. For the reconstruction of the Lahore-Ahmadiyya mission, this mosque archive offers a fascinating source.

Archives

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