
‘When I Marry a
Mohammedan’: Migration and
the Challenges of Interethnic
Marriages in Post-War
Germany

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Abstract

Discussions about intermarriage between foreign Muslim men and German Christian women from the 1950s to the 1970s shaped concepts of Islam, gender and difference found in more recent integration debates. Those insisting on inherent incompatibilities between Germans and Turks since the 1970s have drawn on these tropes developed decades earlier. Yet the post-war context differed from the later period in three important ways: the Muslim foreigners were students and interns, not guestworkers; it was German Christian women (not foreign Muslim women in Germany) who were the presumed victims of Muslim men; and it was principally national church institutions that formulated the language about difference.

Debates about the challenges of Muslim integration in Germany are pervasive. Angela Merkel’s recent pronouncement that multiculturalism has failed is only one of the latest declarations in a long line of similar sentiments generally informed by an understanding of Muslim culture as unchanging and insurmountably different, and at odds with German liberal values. Sexual and gender-based mores have been repeatedly cited as the primary reason for this incompatibility. We might note, for example, the 2005 efforts by Baden-Württemberg and Hesse to impose citizenship tests on Muslim applicants with questions about gender and sexuality; the recent

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This article has benefited greatly from the input of Valentina Tikoff, Lisa Sigel, Dagmar Herzog and Mary Alice Gebhart. I also want to thank the anonymous readers for their incisive comments and suggestions.

campaigns by such figures as Necla Kelek and Sayran Ates accusing Germans of being too tolerant of Muslim Turks' poor treatment of women; or Alice Schwarzer's 2010 publication *Die große Verschleierung* (*The Great Cover-Up*), advocating the banning of the headscarf. The popular press and political discourse offer numerous other examples. Scholarly treatments have provided a more nuanced assessment of the evolution of attitudes on the issue; a number of studies have usefully noted the strongly gendered construction of these arguments, especially the ways in which Muslim women have become the 'other' within Germany. Most of this scholarly literature focuses on the guestworker integration debate from the 1970s onwards. It is important to understand, however, that debates about German–Muslim relations centring on issues of sexuality, gender and marriage began much earlier, in the 1950s – a fact recognised in neither the scholarly literature nor popular debates.

A growing body of work has insightfully illustrated that, while older notions of biological racism became taboo after Nazi Germany's defeat, concepts of cultural difference prevailed.¹ Rita Chin and Heide Fehrenbach are among those who have noted that post-war concepts of cultural difference, while avoiding arguments based on genetic notions of incompatibility, nevertheless justified discrimination on political, legal and economic grounds. The politics of exclusion engendered by this way of thinking have led Chin and Fehrenbach to insist that 'Questions of race and difference should be mainstreamed in historical inquiry and recognised as central to the larger political, social and cultural articulation of national and European identities, institutions, economies and societies'.² Scholars who have researched Muslim guestworkers in Germany have embraced this approach, showing that the presence of foreigners challenged long-held views of Germany as ethnically and culturally homogenous and therefore central to the process of (re)negotiating post-war German identity.³ Ruth Mandel, Karin Hunn and Rita Chin, for example, have

¹ See especially the introduction in Rita Chin, Heide Fehrenbach, Geoff Eley and Atina Grossmann, *After the Nazi Racial State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); for other extensive analyses about race discourse in the context of discussions about Turkish migrants, see Berrin Özlem Otyakmaz, *Auf allen Stühlen: Das Selbstverständnis junger türkischer Migrantinnen in Deutschland* (Cologne: ISP, 1995), 11–42; Manuela Bojadzije, *Die windige Internationale* (Munster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2008); Ruth Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

² Rita Chin and Heide Fehrenbach, 'Introduction', in Chin et al., *Racial State*, 29. The book does not focus only on post-war labour migrants but also discusses how difference was renegotiated in the context of so-called *Mischlingskinder*, born out of relationships between German mothers and African–American GIs; and on Eastern European Jewish Holocaust survivors in German displaced persons (DP) camps. These contributions also discuss how concepts of race were shaped by the American Occupation in the aftermath of World War II. The 2010 publication of Thilo Sarrazin's *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (*Germany Is Doing Away With Itself*) and the heated debate about Muslim immigration that has followed only prove the authors' overall point about the continued salience of race and difference in Germany's post-war history.

³ See, for example, Jan Motte, Rainer Ohliger and Anne von Oswald, eds, *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik – 50 Jahre Einwanderung: Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1999); Yvonne Rieker, 'Ein Stück Heimat findet man ja immer': *Die italienische Einwanderung in die Bundesrepublik* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2003); Julia Woesthoff, 'The Ambiguities of Anti-Racism: Representations of Foreign Laborers in the West German Media, 1955–1990', PhD diss., Michigan

explored shifting ideas about hierarchies of difference as central to national identity in the post-war period, particularly in the context of the Turkish diaspora in Germany.⁴ As their studies have shown, Turks emerged as the quintessential ‘other’ from the 1970s, when it became clear that an increasing number of those who had come to Germany as guestworkers were bringing spouses and children and intending to settle. The ensuing debates about integration revealed a German understanding of culture as largely unchanging and essential, thus positing as impossible the idea that former guestworkers and their families could ever be considered fully ‘German’.

Esra Erdem, Monika Mattes, Katrin Sieg and others have also postulated that subsequent debates about integration show how central gender became in marking migrants with a Muslim background (most of them of Turkish origin) as ‘other’ in the wake of the recruitment ban in 1973.⁵ Islam came to be understood as a religion that not only allowed but also mandated the victimisation of women by patriarchal pashas. It was this aspect of Islam more than any other that became the demonstration par excellence of the impossibility of Muslim integration into German society. And yet, it is important to note that while ideas about the supposed unchanging qualities of Islam and the inherent incompatibility of Muslim and German identities in the post-war period have persisted over decades, the precise manifestation of the sites of contestation have changed quite dramatically.

Ideas and tropes about Muslim–non-Muslim sexual relationships forged between the late 1950s and the early 1970s emphasised inherent differences between these two communities, especially as manifested in marriages that challenged traditional German mores. These ideas have proved to have remarkable staying power. Yet it is essential to recognise that this earlier period differed from the subsequent, more familiar (and more thoroughly studied) periods in three fundamental ways.

State University, 2004; Karin Hunn, *‘Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück . . .’: Die Geschichte der türkischen ‘Gastarbeiter’ in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005); Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Post-War Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jennifer Miller, ‘Post-War Negotiations: The First Generation of Turkish “Guest Workers” in West Germany, 1961–1973’, PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2008.

⁴ See Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties*; see also Chin et al., *Racial State*; Hunn, *‘Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück . . .’*.

⁵ See, for example, Otyakmaz, *Auf allen Stühlen*; Esra Erdem and Monika Mattes, ‘Gendered Policies – Gendered Patterns: Female Labour Migration from Turkey to Germany from the 1960s to the 1990s’, in Rainer Ohliger, Karen Schönwälder and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, eds, *European Encounters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 167–85; Woesthoff, ‘The Ambiguities of Anti-Racism’; Monika Mattes, ‘Gastarbeiterinnen’ in der Bundesrepublik: Anwerbepolitik, Migration und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005); Chin, *The Guest Worker Question*; Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties*. For a critical discussion of the ways in which Turkish–German feminists have depicted Islam as inherently patriarchal and oppressive and therefore detrimental to integration and equality, see Esra Erdem, ‘In der Falle einer Politik des Ressentiments: Feminismus und die Integrationsdebatte’, in Sabine Hess, Jana Binder and Johannes Moser, eds, *No Integration? Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Integrationsdebatte in Europa* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 187–202; Katrin Sieg, ‘“Black Virgins”: Sexuality and the Democratic Body in Europe’, *New German Critique*, 36, 1 (2010), 147–85. For a study exploring the pervasive stereotypes about Muslim men as inherently dangerous and antithetical to democratic values, see Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Stolen Honour: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

First, before the 1970s, the Muslim foreigners in question were students and interns from Africa and the Middle East who were in Germany temporarily and entered relationships with German women, not guestworkers and their descendants who settled in Germany. Second, in this earlier discourse, it was German Christian women – specifically those who moved abroad after their marriage to Muslim foreigners – and not foreign Muslim women in Germany who were the presumed victims of Muslim men. Finally, the earlier discourse about Islam (prior to the 1970s) was strongly shaped by national church institutions charged with the welfare of these German Christian women, while the discourse since the 1980s has been located primarily within the public political realm. Giving due attention to the context in which concerns about Christian–Muslim romantic relationships were initially articulated in post-war Germany allows us to understand the roots of popular attitudes about Islam as incompatible with Western enlightened values and therefore in conflict with German democracy. It also encourages us to acknowledge that these ideas were formed in a context fundamentally different from that of subsequent decades.

The social and legal framework informing the debate

In May 1962, a very young-looking German bride in a white wedding gown smiled from the cover of the Christian girls' magazine *Jugend unter dem Wort* (*Youth Under the Word*), boldly contemplating: 'When I Marry a Mohammedan' (see Figure 1).⁶ Though he was far less prominent than the German bride, the same magazine cover also depicted the presumed Muslim groom: a small, cartoonish caricature of a man sporting a double-breasted suit and tie, sunglasses and a fez. A tool-wielding blue-collar worker he is not. The issue of *Jugend*, largely dedicated to Muslim–Christian romantic relationships, made it abundantly clear that the Muslim men that were of most concern to those who considered themselves the protectors of innocent young German women were not guestworkers but Muslim men studying at German universities. As articles within the magazine made clear, *Jugend's* editors and writers cautioned against the cover-girl's marital ambitions, citing experts who considered her desires highly misguided and naive, if not foolishly dangerous.

Jugend's publishers were not the only ones who noted with concern the trend of a growing number of German women and girls wanting to marry 'Mohammedans'. By the early 1960s a number of Christian charitable organisations, working in conjunction with the West German state to counsel prospective emigrants, spearheaded information campaigns on intermarriage. As the May 1962 *Jugend* cover suggests, these organisations were preoccupied with the welfare of German women who seriously considered marrying a Muslim and moving to the husband's home country. Indeed, the individuals who led and wrote for these organisations considered themselves German women's advocates, the would-be brides' protectors against men

⁶ The first issue of *Jugend unter dem Wort* appeared in 1947. It was the magazine of the *Christlicher Verein Junger Männer* (CVJM) – the German Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) – and had both a boys' and a girls' edition. The magazine folded in the late 1960s.



Figure 1. The May 1962 cover of *Jugend unter dem Wort*
 Source printed with permission of the *Archiv für Diakonie und Entwicklung*, Berlin, HGSt 6049. Despite my best efforts to pursue image rights, I have been unable to identify or contact the copyright holder.

who embodied a religion (Islam) and culture ('Oriental') that was inherently different from the women's own German, Christian upbringing. An examination tracing the interethnic marriage debate through the documents created and widely disseminated by these organisations shows how church-run welfare organisations, supported by the state, actively shaped attitudes about religion, race and difference in post-war

Germany. These ideas persisted well beyond the period and contexts in which these organisations framed the discourse. Indeed, many of these views have continued to live on in largely secular discussions about German and Muslim identity. They have retained their currency even as the views of the religious organisations that originally promoted them evolved beyond these essentialist views, and as the organisations themselves receded as influential shapers of popular discourse about intermarriage and German identity.

When the May 1962 special issue of *Jugend* appeared, more than 700,000 foreigners were employed in Germany, over 180,000 of them of Turkish origin (the rest being mainly southern Europeans); but the Muslims discussed in relation to interethnic marriages were not primarily guestworkers.⁷ Rather, they were part of a small group of approximately 7,400 students from Africa and the Middle East attending German universities.⁸ Certainly, the presence of guestworkers in Germans' midst also generated much debate, especially when relationships with German women were involved.⁹ The public image of Mediterranean labourers focused on their supposed hot-bloodedness, sexual prowess and gallantry, which made them exceedingly attractive to German women, who were apparently used to 'coarser fare' from their German suitors.¹⁰ Yet the state and the churches were most keenly focused on the non-European, and initially non-Turkish, Muslim male population who were seen as seducing German women and luring them into miserable lives in the Middle East as wives subject to violent treatment at the hands of Muslim men.

To a certain extent, living arrangements and national origin can help explain state and church officials' apparently disproportionate concern about German women marrying Muslim men, and Muslim students in particular. As noted, in the early 1960s, the number of Turks in Germany was still comparatively small; most guestworkers at the time were southern Europeans. Moreover, guestworkers lived rather circumscribed lives that afforded fewer opportunities to forge relationships with German women. They worked primarily in male-dominated sectors of the economy, such as the iron and metal industry, and in construction, and the vast majority of them

⁷ See Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001), 198–9.

⁸ The numbers are for winter semester 1961/2. See Auslandsstelle des Deutschen Bundesstudentenringes, *Das Studium der Ausländer in der Bundesrepublik* (Bonn: Auslandsstelle des Deutschen Bundesstudentenringes, 1963), Vorwort, 16. Many of these students came in the 1950s and 1960s at the invitation of the German government. By the mid-1950s, the Federal Republic had recovered remarkably well from the worst effects of the war and the country experienced what has been characterised as '*Aufbruchstimmung*' – the dawning of a new era. At the time, some members of parliament began debating the merits of educational aid for developing countries in the context of larger development policy objectives geared towards the Third World. As a result, the West German government encouraged students and trainees from Africa and Asia to undergo part of their training in Germany. See Heide-Irene Schmidt, 'Pushed to the Front: The Foreign Assistance Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1958–1971', *Contemporary European History*, 12, 4 (2003), 487, n. 104.

⁹ Stories about German men courting foreign women did not draw as much attention. This can be partly attributed to the lower number of women in the foreign workforce – they made up about 25 to 30%. However, generally speaking – and this was also true for the organisations hotly debating these interethnic relationships – unions between German men and foreign women were seen as much less problematic. The law at the time bore out this skewed view, as discussed elsewhere in this article.

¹⁰ Walter Unger, 'Die deutschen Frauen laufen uns nach', *Stern*, 1 Dec. 1968.

lived in dormitory-style living quarters.¹¹ In contrast, foreign students often sought and secured private housing, and the university environment facilitated mingling with German peers.¹² Many German commentators thus viewed Muslim students as more likely potential spouses for German women, and hence more threatening. Indeed, the very fact that male Muslim students shared a campus environment, and that they had respectable educational, financial and career aspirations, threatened to make these Muslim men seem attractive to young German women as prospective husbands. As we will see, post-war public information campaigns often sought to reveal the presumed hidden, immutable character of Muslim men that was purportedly masked by their superficial adoption of some German behaviours and customs. Without such efforts, German state and religious authorities feared that the core character of a prospective Muslim groom might remain hidden until it was too late, after an innocent young German woman was already irretrievably trapped: married to an abusive Muslim man and living in an oppressive Muslim society abroad that condoned his violence against her. With their public information campaigns, the Christian organisations set out to save German women from this fate.

The organisations that mounted the public information campaigns were responding to some real demographic, legal and social conditions. More German women than German men married foreigners. This trend continued until 1995, when, for the first time, more German men than German women married foreigners.¹³ It is also crucial to recognise that, even when a German woman and a Muslim man met in Germany, it was widely assumed that the German woman would leave Germany to reside in her prospective husband's home country. Indeed, various laws made such women's emigration almost a foregone conclusion. Before 1953, German women lost their citizenship upon marriage to a foreigner. Although an equality statute passed in 1957 officially eliminated the automatic loss of citizenship in such a way, implementation was slow; legal gender equality would be a decades-long process. While naturalisation of foreign women marrying German men became a mere formality the same year the equality statute was passed, the same was not true for foreign men marrying German women.¹⁴ In 1969, the naturalisation and citizenship law was revised, so that neither foreign men nor foreign women were able to gain German citizenship automatically upon marriage, though the general

¹¹ Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980* (Ann Arbor: University of Ann Arbor Press, 1990), 230.

¹² This topic was also discussed in the German press, which characterised the problems students encountered when seeking housing as a widespread issue. Prodosh Aich argues that the press exaggerated in their reporting, not only generalising from individual cases but also singling out students' skin colour as the primary reason for their difficulties in finding accommodation. See Prodosh Aich, *Farbige unter Weißen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1963), 21ff, 85–133.

¹³ That year, 26,554 German women married a foreigner compared to 28,306 German men who did so. Among German women, Turkish men were by far their favourite partners, followed by Yugoslavs, Italians and Americans (2001/2002). In those same years, German men by far preferred Poles, ahead of Thai and Russian women (in places two and three respectively). See Hiltrud Stöcker-Zafari and Jörg Wegner, *Binationaler Alltag in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Brandes und Apsel, 2004), 18, 20–1.

¹⁴ See Karen Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität* (Essen: Klartext, 2001), 516.

process of naturalisation was overall made easier, as long as the prospective immigrants met certain conditions.¹⁵ Moreover, until 1975, the children of interethnic couples received the father's citizenship, creating major problems for German women in cases of divorce and child custody battles.¹⁶ It was not until 1986 that the reform of the Private International Law (which governs litigation when laws of different countries conflict, as is the case in intermarriages) came into effect; before then, in cases of divorce, spousal support and child custody, the law of the husband's country had generally prevailed. Finally, until 1975, the marriageable age for German women was sixteen (in contrast to twenty-one for men), which also helps to explain the heightened concern and doubt about whether the prospective brides in question were sufficiently informed and mature enough to make such an important and permanent decision as marrying a foreigner.¹⁷

Because German women who married foreigners were expected to leave Germany and reside in their husbands' home countries, questions of interethnic marriage were principally taken up by departments and institutions that focused on providing guidance on *emigration* rather than immigration. Such offices were key in informing, organising and counselling on the topic of interethnic, international marriage – referred to in the German literature as *bikulturelle* (bicultural), *binationale* (bi-national), *gemischt-nationale* (mixed-national) or *Mischehe* (mixed marriage), as well as *Ehe mit Ausländern* (marriage with foreigners). Within the prevailing social and legal context, Christian charitable organisations were the principal state-sanctioned institutions offering counselling for prospective emigrants, including women considering marriage to a foreigner. Especially prominent were the Department of Migration of the Protestant social welfare organisation, Diakonie, and the Catholic association St Raphaels-Verein (later renamed Raphaels-Werk). These institutions already had a long history of aiding foreigners in Germany and Germans planning to go abroad, reaching back to the mid- to late-nineteenth century. During the Weimar Republic, they had formalised their collaboration with the German state to provide social services; they renewed that co-operation in the post-war period.¹⁸ These organisations were instrumental in providing support and *Betreuung* (assistance) for guestworkers in West Germany from the mid-1950s onwards to facilitate their transition to living (albeit supposedly only temporarily) in a new country and a new job. Their work with guestworkers is well known, if not yet fully analysed. Their efforts to counsel Germans who were contemplating marriage to foreigners, especially German women, has

¹⁵ See Jens Eisfeld, *Die Scheinehe in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 221f; see also, Schönwälder, *Einwanderung*, 517; and Eli Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany* (New York: Berg, 2004), 239.

¹⁶ See Schönwälder, *Einwanderung*, 521.

¹⁷ In 1975, the age of consent to marry was set at eighteen for both men and women.

¹⁸ See, for example, Dietrich Tränhardt, 'Established Charity Organizations, Self-Help Groups and New Social Movements in Germany', *Beiträge zur Politikwissenschaft und Verwaltungswissenschaft*, 3 (1987); Christoph Sachße, 'Von der Kriegsfürsorge zum republikanischen Wohlfahrtsstaat', in Ursula Röper and Carola Jüllig, eds, *Die Macht der Nächstenliebe: Einhundertfünfzig Jahre Innere Mission und Diakonie 1848–1998* (Berlin: Jovis, 1998), 194–205; Thomas Olk, 'Die Diakonie im westdeutschen Sozialstaat', in *Die Macht der Nächstenliebe*, 274–85.

escaped attention entirely. Yet this function too was critical and provides fascinating insight regarding the construction of race, religion, gender and identity in post-war Germany.

The Christian lay organisations served as liaisons between state authorities represented by the Bundesverwaltungsamt – Amt für Auswanderung (Office of Emigration within the Federal Administration Office; hereafter BVA–AfA) and the public, including individuals seeking information and advice about marriage between Germans and non-Germans. The BVA–AfA provided a variety of educational materials, including bulletins that contained examples of Muslim marriage contracts and information about legal requirements for citizenship in various African and Asian countries. The office also distributed updates on policy and judicial decisions, newspaper articles on intermarriage, and accounts received from people who lived or had lived in the Middle East, usually with an emphasis on the problematic living conditions facing prospective German brides abroad.¹⁹ They also provided didactic material that went beyond strict legal guidance to provide advice about what German women could expect if they married Muslim men. The 1962 issue of *Jugend* featuring the cover-girl bride contemplating marriage to a Muslim man is just one sample from the broad and multifaceted public information campaign through which these organisations disseminated their advice to young women – advice based on particular characterisations of Muslim men and gender roles in Muslim societies.

Protestant and Catholic organisations kept each other apprised of their efforts in regards to educating the public about Christian–Muslim marriages. They exchanged their materials on interethnic marriages with one other and disseminated each other's pamphlets and brochures to interested parties.²⁰ They believed that their concerted

¹⁹ By 1961, the Federal Administrative Office for the first time published the supplement 'Muslim Marriage Contracts' in its *Bulletin for People Working Abroad and for Emigrants: Women's Emigration*. See *Merkblätter für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer: Frauen-Auswanderung. Beilage: Islamische Eheverträge* no. 10 (Cologne: Informationsstelle für Auswanderer und Auslandstätige, Bundesverwaltungsamt, 1961). While it is unclear whether these bulletins were published at the behest of organisations such as Diakonie or St. Raphaels-Verein, concerned staff apparently did take the initiative to spread the word. A footnote in an article published in 1961 in the professional journal *Das Standesamt* stated that 'The suggestion for this overview came from Frau Elisabeth Zillken, head of the 'Katholische[r] Fürsorgeverein für Mädchen, Frauen und Kinder' in Dortmund: Paul Heinrich Neuhaus, 'Eheliche und außereheliche Verbindungen deutscher Frauen mit ausländischen Arbeitern oder Studenten', *Das Standesamt*, 14, 5 (1961), 136 n. 1. The material usually contained a covering letter by the BVA–AfA as to the value of the material, at times also providing a synopsis of the information contained in the documents that were sent on and comments on how to use it. In those notes the BVA–AfA assessed, for example, how indicative the given information was for the situation of intermarried couples in the Middle East. Echoing much of the content provided in what little literature on intermarriage existed, the stories detailed the difficult living conditions abroad. See, for example, BVA–AfA, Az.: 400–04–2745/59 (47), 28 Oct. 1959, Archiv für Diakonie und Entwicklung, Berlin (hereafter ADW) HGSt 2512; BVA–AfA, Az.: 450–04–689/62 (109), 20 Dec. 1962, ADW HGSt 2512.

²⁰ As an example of the cross-confessional fertilisation and exchange, an article published in *Herder Korrespondenz* was republished in a pamphlet entitled 'Marriage in the Orient', by the Protestant Württembergischer Landesverein der Freundinnen junger Mädchen. For the original article, see 'Mischehen zwischen Christen und Muslimen', *Herder Korrespondenz*, 14, 4 (Jan. 1960), 150–2. For the reprint, see Württembergischer Landesverein der Freundinnen junger Mädchen, ed., *Ehe im Orient* [1960]. Moreover, in a letter in March 1966, the catechistic office of the Protestant regional church

efforts were very important indeed. As one Diakonie counsellor noted when talking about sharing intermarriage counselling responsibilities with other mainline Catholic and Protestant organisations: ‘The more [organisations are involved] the better’.²¹ Also included in the exchange were such diverse institutions as the very active and well-established Protestant Württembergischer Landesverein der Freundinnen junger Mädchen (Württemberg Regional Association of the Friends of Young Girls) as well as the evangelical Orientdienst (Middle East Services) founded in 1963.²²

The unbridgeable chasm between Christianity and Islam

Thomas Mittmann has recently argued that in the post-war period Christian institutions were instrumental in identifying Islam as the crucial barrier to integration of the Muslim migration population in Germany.²³ The intermarriage dialogue provides further evidence for this assessment, as the various Christian organisations examined here depicted Islam as a monolithic religion that was fundamentally different from Christianity, entrenched in its patriarchal family and gender relations, and which promoted violence. In this view, marriage could not be successful because love itself was defined by religion; it therefore had a different meaning for Christians and Muslims. A successful union based on a common understanding of love – the fundamental value on which marriage rested – was thus impossible.

In the early literature and correspondence, descriptions of Muslim men were neither uniformly negative nor entirely unique.²⁴ Terms such as ‘Muslim’ (or, in the early years, ‘Mohammedan’), ‘Oriental’ and ‘Afro-Asian’ were used interchangeably,

in Brunswick (in charge of appointing religious education teachers) requested material from the Innere Mission (Home Mission) Central Office dealing with the topic of intermarriage. It explained its request with the observation that in the vocational schools (*Berufs- und Berufsfachschulen*) female students were forming intimate friendships with guestworkers and foreign trainees. See Katechetisches Amt der Braunschweigischen Ev. Luth. Landeskirche to the Hauptgeschäftsstelle der Inneren Mission, 24 March 1966, ADW HGSt 2991. In its response, the Innere Mission office referred the sender to the evangelical Orientdienst, as well as the state-run Aktion Jugendschutz (Campaign for the Protection of Youth). See Isolde Traub (from the Innere Mission) to Katechetisches Amt der Braunschweigischen Ev. Luth. Landeskirche, 5 April 1966, ADW HGSt 2991. For a similar response see also the letter by Christine Winzler of the Diakonie/Innere Mission Central Office to Dr Goldacker from the Department of Children and Families (*Jugendamt*) in Mannheim, 16 Aug. 1966, ADW, HGSt 2991.

²¹ Vermerk für Fr. Urbig, gezeichnet: Schäfer, 1 Dec. 1965; ADW, HGSt 2512.

²² Ahmad von Denffer, *Mission to Muslims in Germany* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1980), 12–17. Orientdienst emerged out of the Europäische Mission in Oberägypten (Protestant Mission to Upper Egypt), founded in 1900 and headquartered in Wiesbaden.

²³ Thomas Mittmann, ‘Säkularisierungsvorstellungen und religiöse Identitätsstiftung im Migrationsdiskurs’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 51 (2011), 271.

²⁴ As Karen Schönwälder has argued, government officials at the time attempted to inhibit labour recruitment from what they labelled as ‘Afro-Asian’ countries, a policy based on ‘the principles of an at least partly racially motivated selection underlying West Germany’s guestworker policy’. A variety of policy decisions made in this context also had dire consequences for men from third countries married to or intending to marry German women. Amazingly, according to the author, such racial views never evoked a ‘wide-ranging public debate’. Karen Schönwälder, ‘Why Germany’s Guestworkers Were Largely European: The Selective Principles of Post-War Labour Recruitment Policy’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27, 2 (March 2004), 249.

but, in many ways, Muslim men were depicted in terms similar to those used for European Christian guestworkers from the (European) Mediterranean countries: hot-blooded, virile and gallant. Various pamphlets and conference papers depicted Muslim men as initially ‘exceptionally polite’, ‘considerate’, ‘generous’ and exuding ‘exotic charm’.²⁵ In this way, they were ‘not nearly as “prosaic”, “matter-of-fact” or “sober” as the central European’ man.²⁶ Moreover, just like ‘the Mediterranean’, ‘the Oriental’ had a violent streak.

Yet the particular nature and object of Muslim men’s violence fundamentally distinguished them from European men. Whereas a ‘hot-blooded’ European might be depicted as using violence against men whom he saw as amorous competitors, as was often reported about Mediterranean guestworkers, the Muslim man was also portrayed as violently attacking his female spouse. The Muslim husband’s violent behaviour towards his wife became an established trope in accounts of intermarriage in the Middle East, so that religious devotion came to be considered a predictor of violent, oppressive behaviour condoned by Muslim society at large.²⁷ Some commentators conceded that life in Oriental culture could change politically, economically and in some social respects, yet they were nearly unanimous in their belief that two factors of Muslim culture exhibited an ‘unvarying capacity to persist . . . : Religion and the clan, Islam and family ties’. It followed that ‘The status of women and family remains fundamentally Islamic-Orientalist, even if the Oriental has studied in Europe and is trying to live a European way of life’.²⁸ This argument was repeated throughout the advice literature, asserting that cultural difference – including the violent treatment of women – could not be overcome, no matter how much Muslim men otherwise adapted to a European lifestyle while living in Germany. Rather, Muslim men were intrinsically ‘Oriental’, their views on women, violence and marriage inextricably connected and unchanging.²⁹

²⁵ Norbert Zimmer, ed., *Heirat mit Ausländern* (Hofheim/Ts.: Verlag des Auslands-Kurier, 1968), 16, 36; Erich Volandt, *Ausländer zum Heiraten gesucht* (Gladbeck: Schriftenmissions-Verlag, 1963), 4.

²⁶ ‘Mischehen’, *Herder Korrespondenz*, 151.

²⁷ News reports generally echoed this assessment, but hardly any made it as forcefully as the popular magazine *Stern*, which published a fifteen-part series published between 9 July and 15 Oct. 1961 entitled ‘Die Braut hat ihre Schuldigkeit getan’ (‘The Bride has Done Her Duty’). The series provided glimpses into the lives of four women who had met an Oriental, either in Germany or the Middle East, had married him, and ultimately lived with him in a Middle Eastern country. Despite the foreign partners’ varied backgrounds (both socially and geographically), the outcome of the relationship was always a version on the same theme. The Oriental husband, who was either rich, or had posed as being rich, was always loving and caring in the beginning, and then was later exposed as a selfish individual, who was either physically harming his wife or forcing her to live under untenable (that is, uncivilised) conditions. In each instance, if the husband became violent, then his actions were explained by the fact that he was a Muslim.

²⁸ Willi Höpfner, ‘Die Stellung der Frau im Islam’, in Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 28. The idea of outward adoption of norms and inward retention of values was a persistent theme in the literature on intermarriage. See, for example, ‘Ein Graf Amore war in Messina nicht bekannt’, *Tagesspiegel*, 10 May 1962; Walter Becker, *Ehen mit Ausländern*, 1st edn (Hamm: Hoheneck Verlag, 1965), 6; Haeberle, ‘Ehen mit Moslems’, in Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 36.

²⁹ Württembergischer Landerverein, *Ehe*; Becker, *Ehen mit Ausländern*; Orientdienst, *Die christlich-islamische Mischehe* [1963]; Orientdienst, ed., *Seine Frau werden?* [1965]; Volandt, *Ausländer*.

Advice literature attempted to lift women's veil of ignorance about Muslim culture by explaining stringent Muslim customs particularly in relation to women's role in society: women were not allowed to leave the house without the husband's permission; the man had the right to have up to four wives and to castigate them, and he often made use of this right; men could not be accused of adultery, while women could be punished for it – with six months in prison in 'civilised countries', and with death by stoning in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen.³⁰ A 1966 booklet by religious education teacher Erich Volandt, entitled *Ausländer zum Heiraten gesucht* (*Seeking Foreigner for Marriage*), underscored its discussion of the violent, patriarchal nature of Muslim culture with ostensibly humorous sketches that depicted a stereotypically Middle Eastern man wearing a caftan and turban, hitting a woman (his wife) with a whip or cane. In another, a woman was literally getting kicked out of the house.³¹ Orientdienst's *Die christlich–islamische Mischehe* (*The Christian–Muslim Mixed Marriage*) gave added authority to the argument of the oppressive and violent nature of marriage in Muslim countries. The pamphlet was made up almost exclusively of quotes from the Koran and Islamic scholars – and thus what could be considered authoritative sources about intrinsic aspects of Islamic life and religion. Apart from reiterating the primacy of male authority, including the man's right to polygamy and to holding his wife captive, quotations from Muslim theologians compared the role of the wife to that of a slave or argued that the husband would only have contempt for his wife (because otherwise she would not honour him). The text further quoted from a Saudi Arabian Muslim marriage contract that underlined the power a husband had in marriage, and the booklet closed with the Orientdienst's own – negative – stand on Christian–Muslim intermarriage.³² A memo from the headquarters of Diakonie praised the publication as 'matter-of-fact and clear . . . The warnings about a Christian–Muslim mixed marriage are by no means exaggerated'.³³

At the heart of these assessments was the idea that love itself was religiously constituted. Authorities weighing in on intermarriage doubted that the male Muslim partner could understand love the way his female Christian partner did, let alone reciprocate it. As Volandt explained, different understandings of love and sexuality existed among 'Orientals', even if foreigners were of the 'erroneous opinion' that their 'feelings are just the same as ours'.³⁴ Hermann Haeberle, who for many years ministered to German women married to Muslim men abroad, maintained that 'To the Oriental, the woman is the object of his sexuality, the bearer of his children, neither their educator, nor their mother in the original sense of the word. The

³⁰ This is one of the only times that distinctions between different countries are made within publications concerned with Christian–Muslim marriages. See Bundesverwaltungsamt – Amt für Auswanderung, eds, *Merklblätter für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer*.

³¹ Volandt's work elicited some concern that the drawings could be offensive to the Muslim groom. Christiane Winzler to Frau Dr Goldacker, Jugendamt Mannheim, 16 Aug. 1966, ADW, HGSt 2991.

³² The contract was just labelled as a 'Muslim Marriage Contract'. No differentiations were made between different forms of Islam practised in different parts of the Middle East.

³³ 'Vermerk, Betr: Die christlich–islamische Mischehe', Stuttgart, 13 March 1963, ADW, HGSt 2958.

³⁴ Volandt, *Ausländer*, 25.

man does not know marital fidelity. He abandons his wife when she starts to wilt physically'.³⁵ In another instance, a contributor to *Jugend* argued that 'Love is able to bring together forces drawn in opposite directions; it only receives its deepest and strongest power, however, where it continues to be buoyed and strengthened by the power of faith. But Christian faith and Islam cannot be united through love'.³⁶ Ruth Braun, head of the Württembergischer Landesverein der Freundinnen junger Mädchen, seconded this assessment in the same magazine issue, arguing that 'the love of two people is not able to unite the two worlds' of Christianity and Islam.³⁷

The idea about different religious conceptions of marriage and love also informed assertions published in *Herder Korrespondenz* (*Herder Correspondence*) that Muslim men chose German women not because they loved them but because it seemed expedient. Because of social and religious customs in their country of origin – especially the concept of arranged marriage – Muslim men did not have the opportunity to meet their wives prior to marriage; even more importantly, they had to pay a 'handsome amount' to the family of the bride. Choosing a Western woman therefore made marriage more convenient and less costly.³⁸

The advice literature repeatedly warned women that religion *did* play a role in their romantic relationships with Muslim men, not just because it had informed the prospective Muslim partners' mental world but also because the women's own mental world was that of a Christian – even if they did not want to acknowledge that fact. Thus, the apparently inevitable outcome of ignoring such advice resulted in 'a lack of spiritual [*seelischen*] connections between [the Muslim] man and [the Christian] woman'.³⁹ Attempts to bring the two worlds of Orient and Occident, Islam and Christianity, together could thus be viewed as problematic not only because such efforts supposedly brought about turmoil but also because they took young women even further away from their religion. This was somewhat like closing the barn doors after the horses had already left. Romantic connections – even if they were not spiritual in nature – were already afoot, as reflected in the growing numbers of German women marrying non-Western non-Christian men.

This line of argument conformed to an understanding of religion as a force essential to culture that indelibly stamped one's character. Volandt, for example, argued that 'We are all somehow the sum of our two-thousand-year-old history and cannot escape the view of the world and of the reality informed by it. Even the outspoken atheist is influenced by these ways of thinking [*Denkvoraussetzungen*], whether he accepts them or not'.⁴⁰ Haeberle was unusually frank when he stated Islam was 'the religion without Christ', and for him that was 'the bottom line'. He continued to enumerate the elements he saw sorely lacking in Islam: it was the 'Religion without

³⁵ Haeberle, 'Ehen mit Moslems', 37.

³⁶ Walter Posth, 'Traum und Wirklichkeit', *Jugend unter dem Wort* (May 1962), 5.

³⁷ Ruth Braun, *Jugend unter dem Wort*, 9.

³⁸ 'Mischehen', *Herder Korrespondenz*, 151.

³⁹ BVA-AfA, Az.: 400-04-2745/59 (47), 28 Oct. 1959, ADW HGSt 2512. idem, Az.: 450-04-689/62 (109), 20 Dec. 1962, ADW HGSt 2512.

⁴⁰ Volandt, *Ausländer*, 11.

the gospel, without forgiveness, without prayer to thy father in heaven, without the strengthening, consoling leadership of the Holy Spirit that provides a feeling of security. Islam is purely a religion based on law [*Gesetzesreligion*], belief, not faith, but submission'. In this depiction, Islam did not merely seem utterly unattractive but also completely different from Christianity. Not surprisingly, Haeberle ultimately concluded that 'From the first, what is missing is the common ground that carries and sustains a marriage with all its pressures and tensions'.⁴¹ While some ministers actually did recommend converting to Islam in some instances to obviate marital conflicts, most did not even address this possibility, and those who did generally argued that even this dramatic step would not prevent marital problems, because 'it will be incomprehensible to the oriental family that one could change one's religion like one changes one's shirt out of love for another person'.⁴² As we see, Christian authors were themselves dubious that religious beliefs could be so easily put off and taken on. Indeed, the article in *Herder Korrespondenz* asserted that the disappearance of 'existing racial prejudices and religious qualms' and the growing number of interethnic relationships forming as a result could paradoxically engender a host of new problems, because young German women in relationships with Muslim men did not appreciate the lack of religious common ground that Haeberle and others considered so crucial.⁴³

Part of the explanation for the vehement defence of religious difference has to be sought not just in contemporary Christian understandings about Islam, but also in the churches' own insecurities at the time about the role of the Christian faith in German people's lives, particularly in its institutionalised form.⁴⁴ Considered in this light, the positive comments about Christianity and the equality of men and women within it become more comprehensible and compatible with more critical statements about Germans and their own religious lives: 'how fragile our own lives are, how weak our own power of faith [*Glaubenskraft*]'.⁴⁵ The following observations about

⁴¹ Haeberle, 'Ehen mit Moslems', 38.

⁴² Pfarrer Unkrig, 'Impressionen und Erfahrungen bei Ehen deutscher Frauen mit Ägyptern', Anlage 3, Jahrestagung der evang. Auswanderer-Berater im Dominikaner/Kloster Frankfurt/M am 29./30.4.1975, 2, ADW, Abgabe 396/107. On this issue see also 'Referat Pastor Slaby, Islam – Erfahrungen bei Ehen deutscher Frauen mit Türken, Zusammenfassung', Anlage 2, Niederschrift der Jahrestagung der evangelischen Auswanderer-Berater im Dominikaner/Kloster Frankfurt/Main am 6./7.5.1976, ADW, Abgabe 396/51.

⁴³ 'Mischehen', *Herder Korrespondenz*, 150.

⁴⁴ A burgeoning body of scholarship has explored these questions of secularisation within the churches since 1945. See, for example, Frank Bösch and Lucian Hölscher, eds, *Kirchen – Medien – Öffentlichkeit: Transformationen kirchlicher Selbst- und Fremddeutungen seit 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009); Martin Greschat, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die deutsche Geschichte nach 1945* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002); Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Post-War West Germany, 1945–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Siegfried Hermle, Claudia Lepp and Harry Oelke, eds, *Umbrüche: Der deutsche Protestantismus und die sozialen Bewegungen in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Benjamin Ziemann, 'Die katholische Kirche als religiöse Organisation: Expertenberatung und Reformdiskussion in Deutschland und den Niederlanden, 1950–1975', in Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Klaus Große Kracht, eds, *Religion und Gesellschaft: Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 329–51.

⁴⁵ Posth, 'Traum und Wirklichkeit', 5.

Christianity and Islam by a young German woman, who married a man in Tehran and converted to Islam to facilitate her married life there, then also make more sense. In an interview published in the special issue of *Jugend*, this young German convert to Islam openly challenged the readers to ask: 'Where in Christendom can we find such strong ties to God amidst a community of people [*inmitten menschlicher Gemeinschaft*], as are evident, for example, among Mohammedans on the shop floor? You Christians are already ashamed when you pray at the dinner table'.⁴⁶ Ultimately, it seems, her loss of faith in Christianity was due to the lack of answers and support within the Christian community prior to her conversion.

To understand the disproportionately strong reactions to the very low number of marriages between German Christian women and foreign Muslim men at the time, we have to look beyond the various religious organisations' concern – apparently genuine – for the wellbeing of German women. The scepticism expressed towards Islam and intermarriage was linked to the problems and anxieties that existed *within* the German Christian churches at the time about their standing within German society. The churches' growing concerns about their tenuous hold on members might also explain the irritation among intermarriage experts about the decision to allow Muslims to celebrate the end of Ramadan at the cathedral in Cologne on 3 February 1965. In the media, the gesture did not evoke open protest. As Karin Hunn has argued, news coverage of the event showed that 'religion among the Turks occasionally even met with sympathy'. Hunn concludes that in 1965, 'In contrast to the coming years, the Muslim religion did not yet form a negative point of reference among the German public'.⁴⁷ This may well be true insofar as the German public was concerned, especially if that public saw Muslims' presence in Germany as fairly marginal and self-contained, and moreover recognised and appreciated religious difference and understood Islam in Germany as a temporary phenomenon. Yet the reaction in those sectors of the Christian community that dealt with the intermarriage issue was very different; there the generous act was read as trying to minimise the importance of religious differences, and therefore became highly problematic.⁴⁸ In a letter to Cardinal Frings, then the archbishop of Cologne, the head of the Office of Emigration in the Federal Administration Office, Karl-August Stuckenberg, expressed these anxieties openly while asking the cardinal to reconsider such gestures in the future. After all, as Stuckenberg later explained to the head of the Department of Migration at Diakonie:

Among those who have not yet married [their Muslim partner], often the only reason that prevents them [from doing so], is the Christian faith ... Now that the Catholic Church has opened up [Cologne] cathedral for Muslim ritual [*Ritus des Islam*] and given that other churches and cathedrals will probably follow this example, I foresee with great trepidation that those girls raised in the Christian faith, who up until now had reservations about entering into marriage with a follower of the Muslim faith, will now be relieved and take the next step, and all those who so far have kept their acquaintances at bay [*bisher nur Bekanntschaften per distance pflegten*], will now seriously plan to

⁴⁶ 'Verheiratet in Teheran', *Jugend unter dem Wort*, 10.

⁴⁷ Hunn, *Nächstes Jahr*, 138, 139.

⁴⁸ 'Muselmanen beten im Kölner Dom', *Die Zeit*, 12 Feb. 1965.

start a relationship. The example set by the Church will now be used as an argument presented to the parents.⁴⁹

Here, Stuckenberg expressed a fear also voiced in other contexts by emigration counsellors: that German Christian women did not sufficiently appreciate key distinctions between the two religions, thus leading to intermarriage heartache and ultimately failure.⁵⁰

Overall, however, commentators made a self-conscious effort to acknowledge the validity of Islam generally and express appreciation for Muslims in Germany in particular. Officials were keenly aware that their portrayal of Islam and life in the Orient appeared harsh and might fall on deaf ears, but, as they explained, the stated goal was not to 'create resentment between us and our Mohammedan friends. On the contrary, we want to help both sides'.⁵¹ They had not set out purposefully to 'paint black in black. And far be it for us to raise the contempt of the foreigners who work and study here. We just want to see what is.'⁵² Despite evidence to the contrary, as discussed above, publications insisted that they did not understand Christianity as superior to Islam. However, pronouncements about intermarriage also continued to reveal their utter conviction about the incompatibility between Orient and Occident, between Islam and Christianity, especially in the context of marriage. As one article in *Jugend* argued in 1962, 'The message of Jesus Christ and Mohammed are so categorically different that a Christian and a Mohammedan have a completely different attitude towards life'. This included their position on marriage and on the role of women in society. The article further asserted that such assessments had

nothing to do with a false sense of arrogance to place ourselves [German Christians] above other peoples [*Völker und Menschen*] and religions. It is not the intent to argue that, as we might naturally assume, everything is brighter and better here [in Germany]. Rather it is about the importance of realising how much the world in which we live differs from the world of a Mohammedan.⁵³

Even more explicit in her assessment of religious differences was Ruth Braun. She very much welcomed the meeting of youths from different (Christian and non-Christian) countries if they were 'conducted the right way', because it could ultimately lead young people to realise 'the abyss that exists between Europe and the Orient'. Education, in other words, would not so much lead to the two religions moving closer together and recognising their commonalities as it would to bringing about the acknowledgment that the differences between the two were too great to overcome

⁴⁹ Stuckenberg to Dambacher, 11. Feb. 1965, ADW, HGSt 2599.

⁵⁰ Various sources quoted a failure rate of over 90% among these interethnic couples, though the evidence for such a pronouncement was lacking. See, for example, Becker, *Ehen mit Ausländern*, 3rd edn (Hamm: Hoheneck Verlag, 1974), 23. Norbert Zimmer, editor of *Auslands-Kurier*, just asserted a failure rate of 90% without referring to any sources. See Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 'Vorwort', 6. Becker claims to quote 'the head of an emigration mission' regarding this information while Gutermuth references the Foreign Office of the Protestant Church in Germany, quoting a failure rate of 95%.

⁵¹ Orientdienst, ed., *Die christlich-islamische Mischehe*, n.p.

⁵² Volandt, *Ausländer*, 33.

⁵³ Posth, 'Traum und Wirklichkeit', 5.

in marriages and other areas. A mid-1960s bulletin by St Raphaels-Verein therefore implored women to ‘Make a clear and courageous decision! Undo the relationship [with a Muslim]! You will save yourself and your family much sorrow and misfortune. And just believe in this: If God has appointed you to be married, then He will make sure that you find a Catholic partner that suits you’.⁵⁴

The deployment of racial rhetoric

While asserting the unbridgeable religious and cultural chasm between Orient and Occident, writers of the advice materials generally tried to avoid any association with racial politics as they had been practised in Germany just two decades earlier. There were exceptions; in particular, those who counselled German women abroad sometimes still deployed racist ideology when trying to explain the failed marriages they encountered. For example, Haeberle asserted that he had ‘noticed repeatedly that children born in those marriages often develop into conflicting [*zwiespältige*] characters, as they combine oppositional genetic material [*gegensätzliche Erbanlagen*]’.⁵⁵ More commonly, however, officials strenuously denied that ‘chromosomes’ or ‘biology’ factored into the dire assessments of an interethnic couple’s marital longevity.⁵⁶ For example, Gerhard Stratenwerth, then head of the Kirchliches Außenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (the Office for Foreign Affairs of the Protestant Church in Germany; hereafter KA), argued that the issues raised in assessing marriages to foreigners were ‘not questions of a biological nature. This would rightfully be rejected as racist discrimination’.⁵⁷ Pre-emptively addressing – and then dismissing – charges of biological racism made it possible to continue to talk about culture and difference without completely striking the concept ‘race’ itself from the vocabulary.

From the beginning of the debate, internal correspondence, advisor conferences and advice literature explicitly and unselfconsciously utilised the concept of race. For example, Stuckenberg argued at the annual meeting of emigration counsellors in 1961 that the most pressing questions on intermarriage were ‘certainly raised about marriages that European women want to enter into with Oriental men or other members of the coloured races’.⁵⁸ Diakonie talked about *Völkervermischung* (mixing of peoples) and romantic ‘relationships between different races’ in their correspondence

⁵⁴ ‘Wenn ein katholisches Mädchen einen Moslem heiratet’, in Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 75.

⁵⁵ Haeberle, ‘Ehen mit Moslems’, 37. Haeberle pointed out that he had years of experience working in ‘the Orient’ but did not state in what country. Specifics like this seemed secondary to Haeberle, who talked about ‘the Oriental’, thereby underscoring the general view at the time of a culturally unified population in Africa and Asia.

⁵⁶ See Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 26, 61, 64, 66.

⁵⁷ Stratenwerth, ‘Ergebnisse einer Ausländerkonferenz’, in Zimmer, *Heirat mit Ausländern*, 61.

⁵⁸ In another part of his report, Stuckenberg called the prospective foreign husbands ‘Fremdlinge’, a term one might translate as ‘aliens’. Karl-August Stuckenberg, ‘Information über Entwicklungsländer für Fach- und Führungskräfte’, Niederschrift über die 11. Arbeitstagung der Leiter der öffentlichen Auswanderer-Beratungsstellen am 2. und 3. Februar 1961 in Köln, 14, ADW, HGSt 2514.

to parents seeking advice. As late as 1980, a Caritas counsellor, while admitting that German society was not free of prejudice vis-à-vis foreigners, still referred to ‘racial differences’.⁵⁹

In other instances, ‘race’ as a category was not only used as a matter of course within the intermarriage discourse, but its application also explicitly defended. As various editions of the advice brochure *Ehen mit Ausländern* (*Marriage to Foreigners*) between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s stated:

What is true for religion, folk traditions [*Volkstum*] and language, is even more relevant for the differences between the races. On this point we [Germans] are a bit sensitive, as differences between races were once overemphasised here and the value of our own race excessively promoted. Race hatred is contemptible to us. The equality of all humans has become self-evident for us, and whoever says anything else rightfully encounters the charge of being backward.⁶⁰

This passage reflects a common trope in post-war Germany: a tortured attempt to reject the racial politics of the Nazi period while also insisting that the concept of race was real. The 1967 radio play ‘The Black Groom: A Contribution to the Race Debate’, broadcast by the Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcast) Church Radio, explicitly defended the continued salience of the concept of race if not the term itself. The play featured a conversation between a daughter who was in love with a Muslim and her father. While the daughter tried to convince her father that it was time for love to scale the wall between cultures, races and religions, and to bring about one community, even if it was difficult to do so, her father depicted these same boundaries not only as natural, but also as permanent and necessary. Therefore it would be futile if not harmful to breach them. As the father maintained:

To divide [the world] into races is a fairly new development within human history, definitely not as old as the races themselves. One could abolish racial thinking. It might even be possible to get rid of the word ‘race’ completely. But what will not disappear are the differences that exist among humans. New names will be given to them and divide [humans] anew. Not just out of malice but out of the necessities of life. We are all creatures that must assert ourselves against one another. Therefore, boundaries have to exist. Life would just be chaos otherwise. Not every human being accepts another as equal, unfortunately. Yes, before God we are all equal, but not before one another.⁶¹

The father’s words echoed what many other commentators also argued, if in less explicit terms: differences between peoples, whether labelled ‘racial’ or not, were real and inevitable; trying to overcome them was futile, even dangerous, threatening to bring about ‘chaos’.

⁵⁹ Letter sent by Diakonie headquarters in response to a query from FS [initials given to preserve letter writer’s privacy], 9 Nov. 1966, ADW, HGST 2523; Regina Gretemeier, ‘“Wohin Du gehst, will auch ich . . .”’: Es wird immer noch ins Ausland geheiratet’, *Caritas*, 80, 2 (1980), 94.

⁶⁰ Becker, *Ehen mit Ausländern*, 1st edn, 5. The assertion that ‘What is true for religion, folk traditions [*Volkstum*] and language, is even more relevant for the differences between the races’ was still part of the 1974 edition, as was the conviction that ‘The equality of all humans has become self-evident for us’. Becker, *Ehen mit Ausländern*, 3rd edn, 7.

⁶¹ Paul Rieger, ‘Der schwarze Bräutigam: Ein Beitrag zur Rassenfrage’, radio play for the Bayerischer Rundfunk–Kirchenfunk, broadcast 6 Jan. 1967, ADW, HGST 2513.

Participants in the debate also continued to employ rhetoric based on biological understandings of race. Friedrich Minning, former general counsel for the Protestant Church in Erfurt and head of the BVA–AfA until 1973, was among the most strongly invested in the issue of intermarriage. In a 1972 article, he proclaimed that

Even the [Muslim] husband's good intentions usually cannot change customary and usually established habits ... The *inherent* [angeboren] affinity for traditional ways of thinking, feeling and acting that shape his environment ... often differ fundamentally from that of the central European [husband] ... We would be mistaken if we criticised and judged the foreign partner because of his immersion [Einfügung] in his native behavioural pattern.⁶²

Here, Minning managed to emphasise the racial incompatibility of European/Christian and Muslim cultures even as he ostensibly posited both as equally valid. At the November 1973 Conference on Foreigner Questions, Enver Esenkova, an Islamic scholar, used even more problematic language when he defined marriage between a Muslim and a Christian as a union 'between a man and a woman of different faiths, different habits, and different social and racial origins', and argued that such a union 'represents the invasion of foreign elements into a body'.⁶³ Esenkova's statement unselfconsciously echoed Nazi rhetoric about Jews and others deemed undesirable during the Third Reich.

Even if arguments did not specifically use racial rhetoric, they did represent views that betrayed hierarchies of difference. In his discussion of German women married to Muslim men in Egypt, Minister Unkrig from the German Protestant parish in Cairo argued:

One would have to have an understanding of youth psychology to be able to understand this [Egyptian] people. Among them, we find the very lovable pushiness [Aufdringlichkeit] of a four-year-old, the once-seen-and-ready-to-do-it [approach] of a bright eight-year-old, the know-it-all attitudes of a freshman [1. Semester], the puberty-fuelled emotional outbursts vacillating between love and hate of a fourteen-year-old, the hidden inferiority complexes of a slow Latin student, but also the enthusiastic [offenherzige] friendliness, the proud hospitality of the poor, and skilful adaptability.⁶⁴

Unkrig's condescending characterisation only contributed to reaffirming observations that were rooted in racial arguments, as Egyptians appeared as childlike, and therefore stunted and inferior from an evolutionary point of view.

Those who ultimately paid the price for daring to enter into interethnic relationships with 'incompatible' partners were the German women living in the Middle East. According to the experts, they were woefully ill-equipped to deal with

⁶² Friedrich Minning, 'Eheschließung deutscher Frauen mit Ausländern', *Informationen für die Frau*, 21, 7/8 (July/Aug. 1972), 22; emphasis added.

⁶³ Enver Esenkova, 'Die moslemische Ehe und das Problem der christlich-islamischen Mischehe', 29, Konferenz für Ausländerfragen am 6. Nov. 1973 im Dominikanerkloster in Frankfurt/Main, 16, ADW, Abgabe 395/51.

⁶⁴ Pfarrer Unkrig, 'Impressionen und Erfahrungen bei Ehen deutscher Frauen mit Ägyptern', Anlage 3, Jahrestagung der evang. Auswanderer-Berater im Dominikaner-Kloster, Frankfurt/Main am 29./30.4. 1975, ADW Abgabe 396/107. Unkrig followed this assessment with a racist-sexist joke about emancipation in Egypt, which supposedly manifested itself in the fact that the woman was now allowed to walk in front instead of behind the donkey carrying the man.

these experiences. As a result, according to Unkrig, ‘many break down because of the permanent emotional overexertion, they become slovenly, [they] Egypticise. They move around unkempt during the day, wearing a night-gown or bathrobe and slippers in their own home’.⁶⁵ The Catholic nun Sister Liselotte Köhler, who also worked within the German Protestant Community in Cairo, asserted that

after asking around 300 German wives who are married to Egyptian men, newlyweds, or established couples, who are in marriages that seem to work, I received the same answer from every one of them: if I had to decide again about marrying an Egyptian, I’d never do it. I also want to add that, if a wife is not able to come to terms any more with marriage and family, an escape from this situation is rarely possible. The husband even has the right to castigate his wife. Suicide or the insane asylum might be the end result of her despair.⁶⁶

We have to wonder if Köhler’s horror scenario of brutal, dominating husbands and abused wives, and Unkrig’s assessment of women’s ‘Egypticisation’, were not also tainted by the writers’ own highly sceptical views of Middle Eastern culture – Islam in general, and Christian–Muslim marriages in particular. Reports in the 1980s and 1990s argued that residents of German communities in parts of the Middle East were highly biased against interethnic marriage and not very welcoming of their female compatriots who married Muslim partners.⁶⁷ Similar attitudes probably also prevailed in the preceding decades. Thus, it might not have been Muslim customs alone but also the attitudes of Germans themselves that made the life of German women in interethnic marriages difficult.

⁶⁵ Pfarrer Unkrig, ‘Impressionen und Erfahrungen bei Ehen deutscher Frauen mit Ägyptern’, Anlage 3, Jahrestagung der evang. Auswanderer-Berater im Dominikaner-Kloster, Frankfurt/Main am 29./30.4.1975, ADW Abgabe 396/107.

⁶⁶ ‘Betr.: Ausländerheiraten: Auszug aus einem Brief von Schwester Liselotte Köhler, Evangelische Gemeinde deutscher Sprache in Kairo vom Juli 1973’, ADW, Abgabe 396/51.

⁶⁷ Hans Vöcking (of the order of the White Fathers), a speaker at the 1984 meeting of emigration counsellors, seemed reluctant to be explicit but thought it an important enough issue when he stated during a Q&A session that ‘in the German colonies abroad there is very little contact with German women in interethnic marriages. I know of a case, though I want to name neither the place nor the country. A German woman married to a Muslim has been working at the German Institute [there] for twenty years. Often, parties and receptions are held there and one is always willing to invite each other to dinner. But this woman and her husband have not been invited once. Therefore, selection is also practised among Germans abroad’. ‘Diskussion zum Thema’, Niederschrift über die 33. Jahrestagung des Bundesverwaltungsamtes für die Leiterinnen und Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer vom 15.–18. Mai 1984 in Trier, 130, Archiv des Raphaels-Werks e.V. (hereafter ARW). Dr Elsbeth Nachtigall-Khalil, herself residing in Egypt, at the 1995 annual meeting of emigration counsellors explicitly addressed what she called the ‘particular problem that German women in German–Egyptian marriages face: it’s not coming from the Egyptian side (Germans are generally well liked and highly regarded in Egypt) but from the German side’. The attitude exhibited ‘by the members of the so-called “German colony” towards the German woman who has an Egyptian husband is surprising time and again’. See Elsbeth Nachtigall-Khalil, ‘Möglichkeiten und Probleme deutscher Frauen in Ägypten’, Niederschrift über die 33. Jahrestagung des Bundesverwaltungsamtes für die Leiterinnen und Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer 19.–22. Juni 1995 in Aachen, 78, ARW.

The mixed legacy of the 1970s

The most explicitly racial remarks about Islam and the detrimental effects of life in a Muslim country emerged most strongly during the early 1970s, the heyday of the intermarriage debate. At the time, key aspects of the discourse were already changing, however, as the focus turned towards those interethnic couples who lived or wanted to live in Germany but found it difficult to do so legally. Women in such relationships had started to speak up and organise themselves to address the injustices they as German citizens suffered because they were married to foreigners. Their activism also effected legal changes, some of which were already under way due to the state's attempt to deal with the growing presence of guestworkers and their dependents within Germany's borders. The growing plurality of voices from the early 1970s onwards, the concomitant shift in focus towards Germany and the enactment of legal reforms contributed to a broader acceptance of intermarriage without at the same time appreciably changing the tenor of characterisations of Islam. Instead, in what other scholars have identified as growing concern about 're-Islamicisation' in the early 1970s, well-worn tropes about Muslim religion and culture continued to inform discussions that focused increasingly on Turks *qua* Muslims. This occurred even as alternative voices within the emerging interfaith dialogue also attempted to provide more nuanced understandings about the Muslim religion in the context of marriage.⁶⁸

Especially those who still assumed that women would move to their husband's country of origin continued their strident rhetoric against intermarriage to warn of the dangers of such a union. For example, Friedrich Minning, who had been instrumental in shaping the debate since its early days, in 1972 still defiantly maintained that:

The modern mobile society has reached a greater freedom when it comes to choosing one's partner, but has not minimised or even solved the concomitant problems. Such a depiction has nothing to do with race discrimination. Only those maliciously inclined [*Böswillige*] or those who are ideologically blinded can claim such a thing. In reality it is the revelation of sociological findings, which shed light on the fact that people from faraway and foreign countries are not inferior but absolutely equal – it is just that their perception and behaviour are different.⁶⁹

Reiterating some of the earlier arguments about the problems that arose due to the lack of (physical and ideological) barriers properly to direct partner choice, and rejecting the charge of racism, Minning also managed to emphasise once more that insistence on the existence of cultural and religious difference was not a value judgment. At the Conference for Foreigner Questions in 1973, he expanded on the dire consequences of not heeding those differences, saying that he dared to be

so bold as figuratively to extend the basic principles of current social welfare legislation, which grants the blind and handicapped legal claims to take advantage of the aid of the community, to those women who want to enter into marriage with a foreigner, and who are thus – quasi blind or

⁶⁸ See Mittmann, 'Säkularisierungsvorstellungen', 276.

⁶⁹ Minning, 'Eheschließung', 23.

handicapped – in need of support in these particular circumstances because of their ignorance or misjudgement of the circumstances that will principally shape their lives.⁷⁰

In other words, to ignore or to dismiss the warnings about incompatible values was a form of self-mutilation, rendering women virtually blind or handicapped and reliant on the mercy of the state.

Given such an outlook, the persistence of intermarriage worried many experts, and the assumption that these women would move abroad also endured.⁷¹ By 1972, the counselling of young women and girls considering marriage to a foreigner was listed among the top four priorities of the Department of Migration in the Diakonie, even though in the early 1970s such work only made up between about 1%–3% of the overall case load.⁷² In addition, by March 1973 all parishes of the German Protestant Church in the Middle East had social workers and ministers to advise and support German women who were married to foreigners.⁷³ Organisations redoubled their efforts in the information campaign that aimed to discourage women from interethnic unions. By 1971, a group of counsellors had initiated a workshop on ‘Marriage with Foreigners’ that focused on ‘the position of the woman in marriage and public abroad’ rather than on the problems the couples faced in Germany – an emphasis retained at the second workshop a year later, even if brief asides now also acknowledged the difficult legal situation faced by couples who wanted to stay in Germany.⁷⁴ The counsellors’ aims in holding the workshops were to expand and intensify existing efforts to provide information on intermarriage and to increase the visibility of the advising services through public-relations campaigns.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Friedrich Minning, ‘Grundlagen und Umfang der Arbeit öffentlicher und privater Stellen zur Beratung von Ehen mit Ausländern’, 29, Konferenz für Ausländerfragen am 6. Nov. 1973 im Dominikanerkloster in Frankfurt/Main, 6, ADW, Abgabe 396/51.

⁷¹ Even as the total number of unions with foreigners declined between 1965 (18,700) and 1970 (14,645) intermarriage experts were not reassured but argued that the numbers only reflected the years of low birth rates, rather than a decline in the intermarriage trend itself. The numbers for 1965 were discussed at the second meeting of the workshop on ‘Marriage with Foreigners’. See Elisabeth Maschat ‘Ehe mit Ausländern’, Arbeitstagung des Arbeitskreises ‘Ehe mit Ausländern’, 8 March 1972, 2, ADW, HGSt 2501; the numbers for 1970 can be found in Stöcker-Zafari and Wegner, *Binationaler Alltag*, 18. Both sources draw their information from reports of the Statistisches Bundesamt (the Federal Statistics Office), Wiesbaden.

⁷² The document has no title or date but can be clearly identified as the annual report of the Department of Migration of the Diakonie for 1972, 2, ADW, Abgabe 396/27; ‘Referat Wanderung’ [The annual report of the Department of Migration of the Diakonie for 1973], 1; ADW, Abgabe 396/27. By 1973, counselling sessions made up 3.5% of the information centre’s overall meetings with clients. In absolute numbers that meant around 200 women and girls sought out Protestant emigration information centres in 1972. Their numbers doubled to more than 400 the following year. Most probably these numbers were also in part due to the strenuous efforts on the part of all involved in providing and making accessible information about marriage to foreigners to as many young women as possible.

⁷³ Schrey to Direktor Pastor Hahn, 18 March 1974, ADW, Abgabe 396/51.

⁷⁴ Niederschrift über die 1. Arbeitstagung des Arbeitskreises ‘Ehe mit Ausländern’ – Stellung der Frau in Ehe und Öffentlichkeit im Ausland am 27. Okt. 1971, ADW, HGSt 2501.

⁷⁵ The best exposure – if not entirely ideal in terms of results – was the participation of an employee of the BVA–AfA in one of the most popular game shows of the period. A staff member at Raphaels-Werk first suggested this as early as the mid-1960s, and Frau Maschat from the BVA–AfA finally participated

The pattern of concentrating on the vicissitudes of married life abroad endured. Various organisations had reported time and again how many desperate calls for help they received in the form of letters from young women stuck in difficult if not downright desperate and abhorrent situations abroad. Letters published in magazines in response to articles about interethnic marriage also attest to this.⁷⁶ It is undoubtedly true that, on average, these marriages did face greater challenges than marriages between Germans. One has to consider, however, that women in happy interethnic relationships had much less reason to write to magazines or to seek assistance and information from the various organisations. Moreover, the claims that these marriages failed because of irreconcilable cultural and religious differences merit further scrutiny. Prejudicial attitudes among those who were supposed to provide aid and support for these women may have exacerbated rather than assuaged marital problems. The legal framework also probably contributed to creating rather than solving the problems, but at the time there was no critical evaluation of the ways in which the tenuous legal situation of foreign male partners might drive a couple to marry just so that they could be in the same country. Marital success stories, on the other hand, when they were presented at all, served as the exception to the rule, paradoxically underscoring the unlikelihood of a successful marriage rather than serving as a hopeful example.⁷⁷

on 'Was bin ich' in 1972, a show similar in concept to the American 'What's My Line', featuring a panel of (moderate) celebrities charged with guessing the guest's professional occupation after he or she had provided a small clue in performing a hand gesture characteristic for the job in question. While well over a thousand queries reached the BVA-AfA after the show had aired, it seems that it might not have been clear enough that the candidate's job was the guidance of couples considering interethnic marriage rather than marriage counselling more generally. However, the response to the show apparently also threw into stark relief how relatively common intermarriage had become, with people from virtually all corners of the globe writing in. See Niederschrift über die Regionaltagung der Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Ausländstätige und Auswanderer im Bereich Nord am 7. Nov. 1972 in Hamburg, 2, ADW, Abgabe 396/62.

⁷⁶ 'Wenn der Ehepartner Ausländer ist: Was Frauen in der Fremde passieren kann', *TV Hören und Sehen*, 45 (1975). In a subsequent issue, the magazine published letters to the editor in response to the article: 'Wenn der Ehepartner Ausländer ist: TV-Leser berichten über eigene Schicksale', *TV Hören und Sehen*, 1 (1976). While the outlook on intermarriage was overwhelmingly negative, and the arguments for failure plentiful, the counsellors conceded that some marriages did succeed. These arguments were based on assumptions about class and education, though the overwhelming differences could, it seems, sometimes be overcome. More educated, better-off couples were better able to discuss their differences, to appreciate them and work through them intellectually. Moreover, their higher education at least made it possible to achieve a higher income, which would mean that they would eventually be able to afford a place of their own, thus escaping what was always depicted as the suffocating presence and dominance of the extended family in the husband's home country. Some measure of sexism was not absent from these assessments either. As the head of the Department of Migration at Diakonie, Dambacher, remarked, 'Furthermore I want to note that educated, adaptable German marriage partners are generally more capable of dealing with problems [resulting from interethnic marriage] than dowdy [*hausbackene*] German girls of humble means'. Dambacher to Hauser at St. Raphaels-Verein Hannover, 24 June 1965; ADW, HGSt 2523.

⁷⁷ See, for example, interview with Siegrun Yazdan Pourfard, 'Verheiratet in Teheran', *Jugend unter dem Wort*, 10; *Seine Frau werden?* rev. edn (n. p., 1982); a letter by a German woman that had reached the BVA-AfA and depicted the husband as 'European' because he helped with the housework, and let his wife leave the house by herself, was not published in the office's newsletter because the

While essentialist arguments about Islam and Muslim culture continued to circulate, especially in the context of emigration, the debate also slowly brought more attention to the situation couples faced in Germany. This was due to the fact that those directly affected by popular negative attitudes towards foreigners and discriminatory laws began to speak up themselves. At the annual meeting of emigration counsellors in 1973, for example, Minning felt the need to assert his views in the context of 'sensitivities tainted by prejudices especially among members of the Third World, as well as the narrow perspective and rigidity of ideologues' that he encountered in Germany.⁷⁸ According to this line of argument, the problem was caused not by problematic perspectives among some German experts but by the foreigners' misreading of those perspectives. The 'ideologues' mentioned were apparently Germans, most of them theologians. At a meeting at the Protestant Academy Hofgeismar, they had seconded Muslim participants' demands for improved legal rights for immigrants after critical remarks by one of the German presenters had provoked members from Muslim countries 'to protest heatedly that the depiction neither reflected the current circumstances nor the true legal situation'. Minning dismissed those charges and warned against falling into the trap of 'following the well-intentioned disposition to give in to emotions'.⁷⁹

Apart from Muslims and Christian theologians, women married to foreigners in Germany made themselves heard as well. In September 1972, Rosi Wolf-Almanasreh, a German woman married to a Palestinian, founded the Interessengemeinschaft der mit Ausländern verheirateten deutschen Frauen (Interest Group for German Women Married to Foreigners), commonly known by its abbreviation IAF. Wolf-Almanasreh started the organisation after the terrorist attacks at the Olympic Games in Munich that year, fearing that her Palestinian husband could be caught up in the wave of deportation of Arabs that followed the attacks.⁸⁰ Through her media-savvy efforts to establish a network of self-help groups for German women in similar situations, word about the organisation spread rather quickly, and local branches formed as a result. Beyond providing advice and a venue for talking about the experiences women had as wives of foreigners, the IAF worked towards improving public relations and effecting legislative reform. It also focused on education about other cultures and

depiction of the husband's behaviour could 'not be viewed as universally valid'. BVA-AfA, Az.: V 2 452-04-1518/63 (61), 1 July 1963.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Minning, 'Die Beratung bei Ehen mit Ausländern: Ein Erfahrungsaustausch im mitteleuropäischen Raum und Überlegungen für eine engere Zusammenarbeit', Anlage 7, Niederschrift über die 22. Jahrestagung der Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer am 29./30. Mai 1973 in Stuttgart, 14-15, ADW, Abgabe, 396/62.

⁷⁹ According to a note relating to a meeting about intermarriage with representatives of the KA, Minning referred to the conference as a 'major mishap'. See Vermerk, 24 Jan. 1973, KA 955/73, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv (hereafter: EZA) 6/9561.

⁸⁰ Today, the organization is called Verband bi-nationaler Familien und Partnerschaften, IAF (Association for Bi-national Families and Partnerships, IAF), reflecting the changes in contemporary understanding not just of romantic relationships and the effect they have on partners as well as their children, but also of the potential need for advice to all people in bi-national relationships, not just German women. A history evaluating this grass-roots organization's anti-racist efforts has yet to be written.

religions (especially Islam) in the context of intermarriage and protested against discrimination towards their foreign husbands and themselves. Crucially, it was the rights of German women as German female citizens and German wives – specifically, their right to choose their spouses and to live with their families in Germany – that were also at the heart of the IAF's concerns and efforts. In their role as German women, as mothers of children with foreign citizenship and as wives of foreign husbands, IAF members' efforts to educate the public about interethnic partnerships and to lobby against discriminatory legal practices contributed to shaping the outlook on intermarriage in Germany.

The legal situation improved only gradually, however. As Karen Schönwälder has pointed out, changes in the regulations on the *Verwaltungsvorschrift zum Ausländergesetz* (implementation of the aliens act) in May 1972 stated that 'The constitutionally guaranteed protection of marriage and family was now to be given preference over the other concerns, residence permits were to be issued and expulsions were to be avoided'.⁸¹ Yet by mid-1977 guidelines for naturalisation still asserted that people from developing countries who had come to Germany in the context of foreign aid programmes should not be naturalised.⁸² Moreover, the courts still largely insisted that German women could be expected to follow their husbands back to their home country upon expiration of the residency permit or because of expulsion.⁸³ Given that until 1975 the children of interethnic couples received only the foreign father's citizenship, the deck was clearly stacked against the couple's permanent residency in Germany. The tenuous and often confusing legal situation, and continued scepticism about Muslim culture, led Karl-Heinz Kopetzki, then head of Raphaels-Werk, to proclaim defensively that

even if all you [my colleagues] disagree with me, as a counsellor I would go so far as to advise girls in no uncertain terms: keep away from [such interethnic relationships]; nobody can guarantee you that your husband can stay here, [and] nobody can predict how you will cope with the different circumstances [in your husband's home country]; you get into difficulties and cannot escape or get yourself out of trouble on your own. A return [to Germany] is almost hopeless.⁸⁴

He also pointed to the contradictory messages the organisations and the public received: on the one hand, organisations were informed that the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation supported Germany's responsibility towards developing countries that students and interns should immediately return after the conclusion of their training. On the other hand, various newspapers and magazines informed their readers that foreigners married to Germans no longer had to fear deportation.⁸⁵ Kopetzki ultimately concluded that the staff of the various organisations involved in counselling prospective intermarriage partners were simply overwhelmed with the

⁸¹ Schönwälder, 'Why Germany's Guestworkers Were Largely Europeans', 255f.

⁸² Schönwälder, *Einwanderung*, 521.

⁸³ Haris Katsoulis, *Bürger zweiter Klasse* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1978), 74; Schönwälder, *Einwanderung*, 519ff.

⁸⁴ Karl-Heinz Kopetzki, 'Ehen mit Ausländern', Anlage 3, Arbeitstagung der Auswandererberater des St. Raphaels-Vereins e.V. im St. Jakobshaus in Goslar vom 23.–28.10.1972, 21, ARW.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

task at hand due to the cacophony of messages they received. Recognising these hurdles, organisations slowly came around to identifying structural problems *within* Germany rather than inherent religious, cultural or racial differences as responsible for the difficulties interethnic couples faced.⁸⁶

The conference in November 1973 for migration counsellors organised by the KA is indicative of the tensions between the different constituencies within the intermarriage debate at the time. While the BfA–AfA had requested that the KA put on another conference on the topic, and asked Minning, the ardent opponent of intermarriage, to give the keynote speech, the conference ultimately and self-consciously attempted to frame the meeting as a counterpoint to the 1966 conference it had hosted, which had emphasised ‘preventative counselling’ and was focused on emigration to the husband’s home country. The following comment made by one of the counsellors from the Frankfurt office speaks volumes about how little the idea of couples remaining in Germany had been considered a viable – and advisable – possibility up to that point: ‘the focus [of the conference] is mainly supposed to be on those who stay with their foreign husbands in Germany (!!!???) [*sic*]. So far, we know only of very few who have managed that’.⁸⁷ So, while Minning still spoke out against interethnic unions, the organisers of the 1973 conference also became more cognizant about the legal problems interethnic couples faced when staying in Germany, mentioning the ways in which the equality statute and sanctity of the family inscribed in the German constitution came into potential conflict with residency and naturalisation laws. In other words, the conference started to raise awareness about the ways in which it was the state, rather than women’s desire to marry foreigners, that was the problem. Such a shift in focus also led to a rethinking of how to aid foreigners and conduct advice work, including seminars for emigration advisors to update and further develop their skills and knowledge, and, crucially, the consultation of intermarriage partners themselves at the conferences. Some counsellors still believed that advising was done well when the woman or girl ‘backed out of the marriage to a foreigner’.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, instead of exclusively treating and depicting the marriage partners as the ones in (present or future) crisis, in need of help, counsellors started to view them as potentially valuable sources of information, who could provide insight into the ways intermarriage could also succeed. Contact and co-operation with the IAF also speak to this change in approach.⁸⁹ This gradual shift in attitude

⁸⁶ Einleitende Bemerkungen von Oberkirchenrat K. Kremkau, 29, Konferenz für Ausländerfragen am 6. Nov. 1973 im Dominikanerkloster in Frankfurt/Main, 2ff, ADW, Abgabe 396/51. Earlier assessments of interethnic couples concluded that intermarriages in Germany usually had the same success rate as German–German ones. Legal hazards that might trouble the marriage were never mentioned.

⁸⁷ Katharina Jacobsen to Dambacher, 23 July 1973, ADW, Abgabe 396/117.

⁸⁸ Protokoll über die Tagung der Leiter der Beratungsstellen für Auswanderer und Auslandstätige am 30. und 31. Okt. 1973 in Hamburg, ADW, Allg. Slg. 1308.

⁸⁹ ‘Zusammenfassung der Aussprache durch Oberkirchenrat K. Kremkau’, 29, Konferenz für Ausländerfragen am 6. Nov. 1973 im Dominikanerkloster in Frankfurt/Main, ADW, Abgabe 396/51. Over the years, IAF and the various emigration information offices exchanged information and at times attended each other’s meetings. See, for example, Katharina Jacobsen from the Diakonisches Werk in Hessen und Nassau to Walter Dambacher, 9 Apr. 1973, ADW, Abgabe 396/117; Raphelswerk

was also reflected in other small if significant ways. In mid-1974, for example, a memo circulated by the Office of Migration at the Diakonie advised: 'Never say "Mohammedan". The term "Mohammedan" is considered a swear word among those of the Muslim faith!'⁹⁰

Despite growing awareness about the state's complicity in creating difficulties for interethnic couples, continuing difficulties were caused by problematic and undifferentiated depictions of Islam, Muslim men and life in the Middle East, even as those Muslims were increasingly of Turkish origin. By the late 1970s, Turkish men were among the top five foreign marriage partners of German women. While experts and literature acknowledged that fact, they merely included Turks among the 'Afro-Asians' or 'Orientals', as the following comment by a participant at the second meeting of the workshop on 'Marriages with Foreigners' in 1972 illustrates: 'While I am now going to stick to my example of Turkey, it can symbolically stand in for all Afro-Asian marriages'. She added that 'slight differences' might exist, but recognising them in this context 'would be taking things too far'.⁹¹

Already by 1965, Orientdienst had produced a pamphlet specifically targeting women considering marrying a Turk. Entitled *Seine Frau werden? (To Become His Wife?)*, it was organised as a series of (mostly leading) questions and answers regarding various issues that should be considered in the marriage decision: how the couple met; what the boyfriend really thought about his girlfriend; whether the boyfriend might already be engaged to be married to somebody else; and whether the prospective wife knew what to expect in her partner's home country, especially in terms of living conditions, family life and religion. While mostly focused specifically on life in Turkey and interactions with Turks, the answers also reflected notions expressed in earlier literature about the primacy of the Muslim religion and the incompatibility between a Christian wife and her Muslim husband. The pamphlet maintained, for example, that the young woman would enter her prospective husband's household 'as a servant' and warned that 'nobody will respect your religion'. Maintaining old friendships would be a futile endeavour because the husband would insist that 'the relationship with his family has to suffice'. The fact that the first edition was largely unchanged when it was reprinted in 1982 shows the longevity of these ideas. The later edition was merely expanded to include a six-page letter from a 28-year-old German wife of a Turkish man in Anatolia that was to serve as a warning about the difficulties of such a relationship. The editors insisted that the document was 'not supposed to be a "warning" against intermarriage in the usual manner'. Instead, it was meant

Tätigkeitsbericht 1979, 6, Diözesanarchiv Hamburg (hereafter DH), 06-41-01-04; Raphelswerk Tätigkeitsbericht 1980, 12, DH, 06-41-01-04.

⁹⁰ Note dated 12 June 1974 and signed 'uh' (Ursula Hasubek of the Department of Migration at Diakonie). To illustrate the shift in sensibilities here, it is instructive to note that in 1962, *Jugend unter dem Wort* had published interviews with Muslims, the first of which pointed out the misuse of the term 'Mohammedan'. Ignoring this intervention at the time, the term 'Mohammedan' was applied to the followers of Islam throughout the series of articles in the issue. See *Jugend unter dem Wort*, 6.

⁹¹ Elisabeth Maschat, 'Ehen mit Ausländern', 2. Arbeitstagung des Arbeitskreises 'Ehe mit Ausländern' – Stellung der Frau in Ehe und Öffentlichkeit im Ausland, 8 March 1972, ADW, HGSt 2501.

to provide a realistic illustration of ‘the situation in which a German woman married to a Turk can find herself’. Despite the fact that the woman had been happily married for five years, the letter underscored and gave concrete examples related to the various issues raised in the original pamphlet. It emphasised in great detail the woman’s difficult interactions with the extended family – manageable mainly because of her ability to keep the Turkish relatives at bay – and the challenging and unfamiliar way of life in Turkey more generally. Crucially, the letter writer concluded that ‘It would be impossible for me to live among the extended Oriental family’, highlighting the way in which Turks were both specifically recognised and also used as an illustration for Oriental (Muslim) culture at large.

As the title of the 1983 publication *Ehen mit Muslimen: Am Beispiel deutsch-türkischer Ehen* (*Marriage to Muslims: The Example of German–Turkish Marriages*) suggests, the trend of seeing the life of Turks as representative of broader Muslim culture while also identifying them primarily according to their faith continued.⁹² While the authors took care to present diverse experiences of German wives in Turkey, they ultimately asserted that ‘A large number of Turks do not want to adapt to life in central Europe’ and argued that ‘Islam in Turkish society has more import than Christianity in central Europe. Islam is not merely personal faith but the expression of national belonging.’⁹³ In other words, Islam was intrinsic to national identity. Reflecting on women’s roles in Turkish society, the authors of *Ehen mit Muslimen* maintained that ‘the veil had fallen’. Images throughout the publication showed Turkish women wearing headscarves, even a *niqab*, underscoring the assertion that traditional Muslim gender norms nevertheless governed everyday life.⁹⁴ The message of the publication was therefore ambivalent. While not wanting to dismiss intermarriage out of hand, the assessment of life in Turkey provided by the publication reflected the deep scepticism about Muslim culture that had informed the intermarriage debate for decades.

Epilogue

The evolution of the intermarriage debate beyond the 1970s merits further exploration, especially as it has intersected with interfaith dialogue initiatives and the mounting concerns over the growing numbers of foreigners, particularly Turks, settling in Germany. The following observations are meant to highlight some of the trends that have developed since the 1980s. For example, voices within the Catholic Church have self-consciously positioned themselves in opposition to the official – mostly negative – assessment about Islam and intermarriage. Yet broader trends have also persisted, such as the identification of Turks primarily as Muslims and the reliance on Christian scholars as authorities on Islam.

⁹² Erika Fingerlin and Michael Mildenberg, eds, *Ehen mit Muslimen: Am Beispiel deutsch-türkischer Ehen* (Frankfurt/Main: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 1983). The publication was vetted by a number of Protestant and Catholic committees and experts.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 21–2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, 17, 21, 25, 31.

These authorities have emerged within initiatives and groups fostering interfaith dialogue that have developed since the 1960s, and some of which have also dealt with questions of marriage to foreigners, particularly Muslims. For example, the Ecumenical Office for Non-Christians (Ökumenische Kontaktstelle für Nichtchristen, ÖKNI), was founded in Cologne in 1974 under the leadership of a member of the White Fathers, Werner Wanzura.⁹⁵ A few years later, another White Father, Hans Vöcking, was tasked by the Catholic Church with establishing the Christian-Muslim Congress and Documentation Centre (Christlich-Islamische Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle, CIBEDO), which he headed for twenty years.⁹⁶ Other organisations and groups such as the Protestant Church Service for Mission and Ecumenism (Gemeindedienst für Mission und Ökumene, GMÖ) and the Committee of the Protestant Church in Germany to Aid Foreign Employees (Ausschuss der EKD zur Hilfe für ausländischen Arbeitnehmer) have also increasingly turned their attention to the growing number of Muslims in Germany. They all produced literature focused on Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue from the early 1970s onwards.⁹⁷ Tellingly, the very first guide called *Moslems in der Bundesrepublik* (*Muslims in the Federal Republic*), created by a committee within the Protestant Church and endorsed by its council, also contained chapters on marriage to Muslims and on the emigration information offices.⁹⁸ As Thomas Mittmann has recently shown, the role of the Christian churches in the interfaith dialogue has proved to be highly problematic, especially in the way that they have shaped popular perceptions of the Turkish population and the Muslim religion. He argues that ‘Through semantic and discursive strategies, the Christian institutions succeeded in identifying the “foreign religion” [Islam] as the decisive barrier to integration of the migrant population in Germany and Europe’.⁹⁹ Churches have propagated a largely homogenous view of Islam, depicted as unsuitable for the contemporary secular world because it has supposedly lacked the modernising trends within the Christian faith.

⁹⁵ It is now called Referat für Interreligiösen Dialog (Department for Interreligious Dialogue), REFIDI for short.

⁹⁶ Markus Kampmann, ‘Ein “weißer Vater” macht seinem Orden alle Ehre’, *Ibbenbürener Volkszeitung (IVZ) Online*, 18 March 2010. CIBEDO was an organisation founded in 1978 by the Catholic missionary society of the White Fathers devoted to interfaith dialogue. In 1997 it became a Fachstelle der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (department of the Conference of German Bishops).

⁹⁷ See Kirchliches Außenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, ed., *Moslems in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt/Main: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 1974); Abdullah Mohammed, *Moslems unter uns: Situation, Herausforderung, Gespräch* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1974); Gerhard Jasper, ed., *Muslims, Unsere Nachbarn* (Frankfurt/Main: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 1977); *Christen und Muslime im Gespräch* (Frankfurt/Main: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 1982).

⁹⁸ According to Gerhard Jasper, one of the Protestant pioneers of Christian-Muslim dialogue in Germany, the publication was only a ‘first venturing forth into unknown territory’, and its character was ‘akin to a premature birth’. He particularly criticised the mentioning of the AfA among the addresses where one could seek advice about intermarriage, because it sounded to him as if ‘the question of emigration for the Christian partner was inevitable’. Having the benefit of hindsight, Jasper deemed the list of recommended literature to be ‘completely inadequate’. Gerhard Jasper, *Unterwegs im Dialog* (Berlin: LIT, 2008), 89, 90.

⁹⁹ Mittmann, ‘Säkularisierungsvorstellungen’, 270.

These perceptions were certainly reflected in the early discourse on intermarriage as well, and Muslims themselves remained conspicuously absent among the experts on Islam. Still, a more complicated picture emerged from the 1980s onwards. The Catholic Church, for example, did not respond with one voice to the ongoing challenges posed by intermarriage. On one hand, *Muslime in Deutschland* (*Muslims in Germany*), published in 1982 by the Deutsche Bischofskonferenz (Conference of German Bishops), still warned about fundamental differences between the religions, including their divergent concepts of marriage. According to the publication, these 'profound disparities' could not be overcome, so that marriage between a Catholic woman and a Muslim man needed to be prevented 'as much as possible'.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, since the 1970s Raphaels-Werk had created a number of pamphlets on intermarriage that did not reject the idea of intermarriage outright, though it was not until 1983 that a more in-depth publication appeared, entitled *Ehen zwischen Katholiken und Moslems in Deutschland* (*Marriages between Catholics and Muslims in Germany*) and specifically directed at the clergy.¹⁰¹ As the preface, written by Father Wanzura, stated, the guide was not an official announcement from the Catholic Church, but was supposed to provide support for pastors faced with prospective couples who saw their marriage as a 'done deal', and the Catholic partners who wanted 'to remain in the Church despite the resistance' they faced.¹⁰² At a conference for migration counsellors, Wanzura explicitly spoke out against the warning of the Conference of German Bishops, remarking that it was 'highly questionable, since it [the official warning] would not prevent' these marriages.¹⁰³ Like the Protestant literature from the 1970s onwards, the content pointed out both similarities and differences between the religions rather than dwelling on immutable chasms, and in the context of intermarriage mentioned first commonalities such as the primacy of family, honour and love within it and the responsibilities as well as rights of the husband.¹⁰⁴

Criticism about the negative assessment of intermarriage continued from within the Church's ranks. At the annual conference for migration counsellors in 1984, Father Hans Vöcking took the Christian churches in Germany to task for emphasising 'dangers . . . more than opportunities' in the context of intermarriage.¹⁰⁵ He also insightfully criticised the German state for failing to recognise partnerships beyond

¹⁰⁰ Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, ed., *Muslime in Deutschland* (1982), 46, 48.

¹⁰¹ Werner Wanzura et al., *Ehen zwischen Katholiken und Moslems in Deutschland* (Cologne: Erzbischöfliches Generalvikariat, Hauptabteilung Seelsorge, 1983).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰³ Werner Wanzura, 'Ehen zwischen Christen und Muslimen – interkultureller und religiöser Dialog', Niederschrift über die 41. Jahrestagung des Bundesverwaltungsamtes für die Leiterinnen und Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer, vom 2.–5. Juni 1992 in Heidelberg, 156, ARW.

¹⁰⁴ See Wanzura et al., *Ehen*. In 1984, two issues of the journal *CIBEDO-Dokumentation* were dedicated to the question of intermarriage.

¹⁰⁵ Hans Vöcking, 'Die islamisch-christliche Ehe als bikulturelle Ehe', Niederschrift über die 33. Jahrestagung des Bundesverwaltungsamtes für die Leiterinnen und Leiter der Auskunfts- und Beratungsstellen für Auslandstätige und Auswanderer vom 15.–18. Mai 1984 in Trier, 112–24, here 113, ARW.

marriage, thus creating difficulties for unmarried interethnic couples. He further chided those who viewed culture as a closed system and theoretically advocated greater openness towards foreigners in general and interethnic couples in particular. And yet, for Vöcking, life for a German woman in a Muslim country was a difficult endeavour as it seemed nearly impossible to live the 'European family model', as he called it, because Muslim society just exerted too much pressure on the couple to follow traditional European/Christian family patterns.¹⁰⁶ Vöcking still presented Islam in very homogeneous terms, as a monolithic religion prescribing a strictly patriarchal social order in which women are forever dependent on men (such as fathers and husbands) and therefore at odds with Western Christian values.¹⁰⁷

In contrast, as the topic of Islam in the context of intermarriage was revisited at the 1992 conference for migration counsellors, Father Wanzura not only expressed admiration for key tenets of Muslim life, but also acknowledged the cultural diversity among followers of the Muslim religion. As he put it, 'Islam *as such* does not exist'.¹⁰⁸ As a major point of departure, Wanzura praised the importance Islam bestowed on family, with the Koran's emphasis of mutual respect and love between the spouses and the feeling of security and protection it offered. Thus, Wanzura managed to reinterpret aspects of Muslim culture as positive and supportive that had previously been disdained as confining and limiting for the German wife. Furthermore, one of the greatest sticking points in the past had been the Muslim man's right to polygamy. Wanzura tried to confront and disarm this criticism by pointing out that the Koran stated that men had to treat and love equally each of their wives, arguing – disarmingly simply – that this was hardly possible. Muslim theologians, he continued, had concluded that the Koran was therefore really supporting monogamy 'though by law polygamy was still possible'. Wanzura even defended arranged marriages, arguing that they had one of the lowest divorce rates because of the support of the families who were invested (presumably emotionally as well as financially) in these unions.¹⁰⁹ He ended on a confident note, remarking that in his experience 'when couples sufficiently reflect [on their decision] before the wedding, then these [interethnic] marriages are as solid as "normal" marriages'.¹¹⁰ Despite Wanzura's positive assessment of the Muslim religion, the distinction between interethnic marriages and 'normal' ones indicates that these unions, more than four decades after the debate began, still were not considered mainstream.

Furthermore, in his presentation 'with an emphasis on the situation in Turkey', Wanzura followed the common trend of identifying Turks first and foremost as Muslims, even as he quoted statistics showing that 75% of adolescent and adult Turks in Germany did not have and did not want to have anything to do with

¹⁰⁶ Vöcking, 'bikulturelle Ehe', 121.

¹⁰⁷ To counter such dependencies and therefore work against traditional social patterns, Vöcking advocated a woman's financial independence in case of marriage with a Muslim, arguing that this made a big difference in the way the couple's life together would be shaped. *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁰⁸ Wanzura, 'Ehen zwischen Christen und Muslimen', 149; emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 153, 159.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

Islam.¹¹¹ Even more dramatically, according to Wanzura, 90% of all Turks living in Germany were ‘unable to explain their faith’, many mistaking ‘Turkish customs for Muslim duty’. Referring to his publication on marriage between Catholics and Muslims in Germany, Wanzura remarked that in the conference proceedings the organisers could just ‘say Germans here instead of Catholics. I had to say Catholics because I am a priest and need the imprimatur of the cardinal’.¹¹² Tellingly, Wanzura did not advise the conference organisers to identify the German marriage partners as ‘Christians’, further highlighting the primacy of religion in understanding the foreign marriage partners, while downplaying it when talking about their German spouses. Thus, by the 1990s, an uneven picture had emerged. On one hand, Christian experts on intermarriage had moved away from issuing warnings about the perils of Christian–Muslim marriages and homogenous, problematic views of Islam. Yet, they also reinforced the notion that Islam centrally informed Turkish identity while further cementing their roles as authorities on Muslim theology.

This ambiguity in the German churches’ views in the 1990s is consistent with the trajectory plotted in the scholarly literature, which has highlighted the 1970s as a crucial decade for migration discourse in Germany, leading to a ‘political and ideological shift towards cultural incommensurability’ based on the religion of Turkish immigrants.¹¹³ Indeed, the churches’ views in the 1990s are just one example of the continuing power of these ideas about cultural incompatibility. Yet this investigation of the post-war intermarriage discourse has shown that those insisting on insurmountable differences between Germans and Muslim Turks from the 1970s onwards were able to draw on readily available tropes developed several decades earlier – what I have called the first two decades of the intermarriage debate. With its focus on Islam, gender and difference, the intermarriage discourse from the late 1950s through the early 1970s reveals the roots of key concepts of the more recent integration debate. It is equally important to recognise that those ideas were originally articulated in the very different context of West Germany in the initial decades after World War II, and that both the Muslim men and their wives (putative victims) were very different populations than they would be in the 1970s and beyond. The impetus for discussion in the 1960s and 1970s emanated from the church community rather than the political pulpit. Moreover, the focus during these years was on the potential victimisation of German women (not Muslim women) in Muslim countries (not Germany) at the hands of Muslim men, generally university students (not guestworkers) in Germany.

¹¹¹ Wanzura, ‘Ehen zwischen Christen und Muslimen’, 158.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 157.

¹¹³ Chin, ‘Guest Worker Migration’, 99.

‘Si j’épouse un mahométan’: La Migration et le défi des mariages mixtes dans l’Allemagne de l’après-guerre

Ce sont les discussions sur les mariages mixtes entre Allemandes et musulmans d’origine étrangère entre les années 1950 et le début des années 1970 qui sont à l’origine des concepts de l’islam, du genre et de l’altérité culturelle tels qu’ils apparaissent dans les débats plus récents sur l’intégration. Depuis les années 1970, le discours sur l’incompatibilité profonde entre Allemands et Turcs s’inspire largement de ces conceptions issues des décennies précédentes, alors que le contexte de l’après-guerre différait de celui de la période ultérieure sur trois points fondamentaux: les musulmans étrangers étaient alors des étudiants et des internes plutôt que des travailleurs immigrés turcs; ce sont des chrétiennes allemandes qui étaient perçues comme les victimes de musulmans (et non des musulmanes d’origine étrangère en Allemagne), et ce sont des institutions chrétiennes – plutôt qu’étatiques – qui ont donné le ton et largement contribué à forger ces conceptions.

‘Wenn ich einen Mohammedaner heirate’: Migration und die Problematik binationaler Ehen im Nachkriegsdeutschland

Die Diskussionen über Ehen zwischen muslimischen Ausländern und deutschen Frauen ab den 1950er bis in die frühen 1970er Jahre prägten entscheidend die Konzeptionen von Islam, Gender, und kultureller Andersartigkeit. Der Diskurs über die grundsätzliche Inkompatibilität von Türken und Deutschen, der sich seit den 1970er Jahren entwickelt hat, hat sich weitestgehend dieser Grundvorstellungen bedient. Allerdings war der Hintergrund, vor dem die vorangegangenen Diskussionen stattfanden, ein nicht unwesentlich anderer: die besagten muslimischen Ausländer waren zumeist Studenten oder Praktikanten, nicht türkische Gastarbeiter; die vermeintlichen Opfer der muslimischen Männer waren deutsche Christinnen und nicht ausländische Musliminnen in Deutschland; außerdem waren es christliche – eher als staatliche – Institutionen, die in der Diskussion tonangebend waren und Konzeptionen wesentlich mitbestimmten.