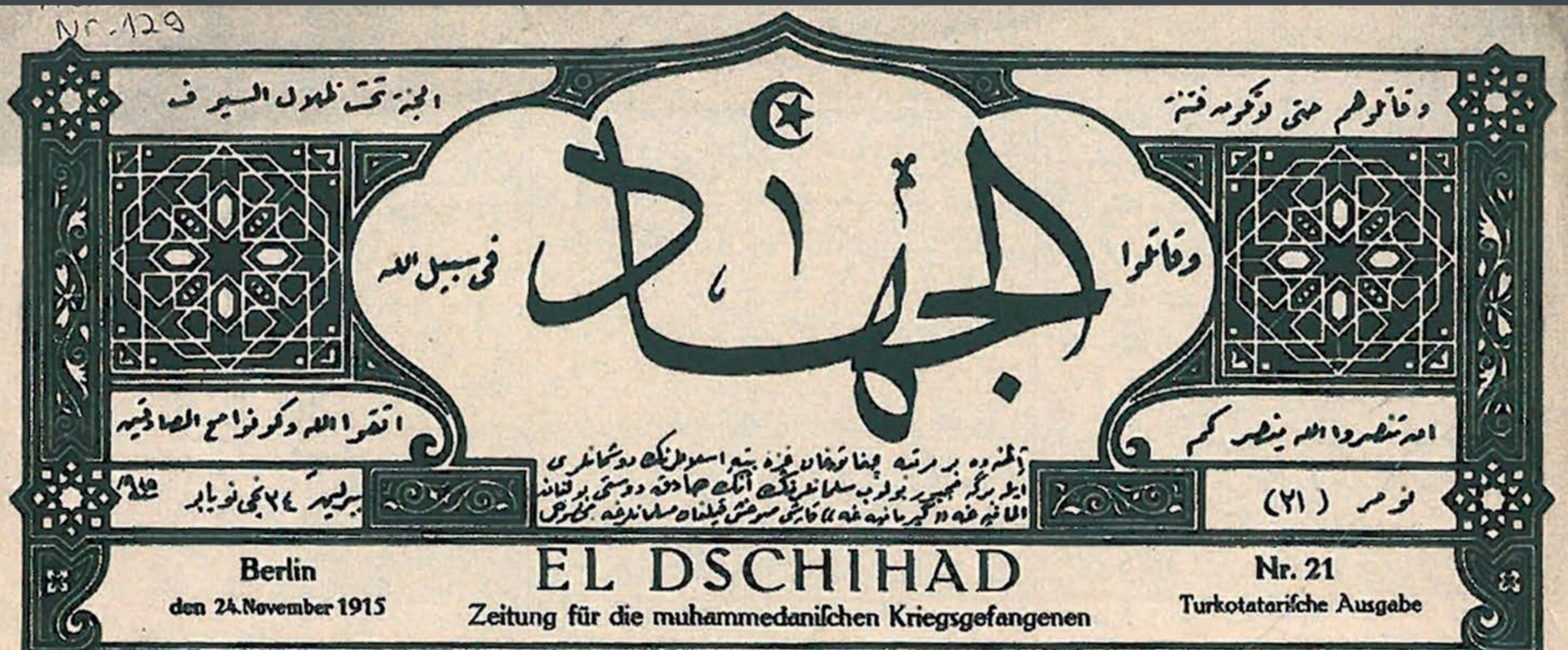


The History of the Present:

A Postcolonial Genealogy of Germany's Politics of Islam

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Project Overview

Taking these processes and the proliferation of discourses linked to Islam and Muslims into consideration, my thesis engages with and, at the same time, extends this scholarship: I trace the genealogical trajectory of Germany's politics of Islam along with its continuities, ruptures as well as shifts. In doing so, I intend to break with the usual assumption that this politics of Islam is solely of recent occurrence – related to post-1945 migration only. Rather than addressing the issue at stake as a contingent phenomenon, I scrutinize Germany's politics of Islam as bearing and being an effect of long-standing imaginaries and discursive patterns, which, in turn, have constituted, informed, and (re-)affirmed far reaching notions of “Europe” and “Christianity” as well as of “Islam” and the “Muslim,” among other things. Hence, the attempt is made to put Germany's politics of Islam into a larger framework of historical-philosophical inquiry.

My investigation begins with the assumption that the appearance and significance of the politics of Islam has only little to do with Islam and Muslims and much more to do with Europe and its “debates about the nature of European-ness” (Sayyid 2009; Said 1978). Following Talal Asad, I argue that these discourses on European identity are not only concerned with “exclusions” but are “a symptom of anxieties about non-Europeans” (2003). In “turning the postcolonial critical gaze” (Huggan 2009) towards Europe itself, Europe's colonial past is not only understood as an epoch long gone but as a significant force of irreversible global transformation intrinsic to Europe's present.

The project begins by examining the making of “Islam” and “Muslims” as objects within Europe's Christian-secular imagination. While tracing this development, their

investments into notions of “Christianity” and “European-ness,” among other things, are also investigated. The research then focuses upon the formation of the German nation as well as its colonial and post-colonial enunciations in which “Islam” and “Muslims” have been politically significant. While scrutinizing these instances, not only structures of governance, and their far reaching effects, are at stake, but specifically the investigation of technologies of power and their consequences in articulating differences, endorsing exclusions and posing and answering questions.

Some of the questions my work intends to answer include:

- What about the significance of “Islam” and “Muslim” for Europe in general and Germany in particular?
- Is there a “Muslim Question” at stake, posed and answered by Europe/Germany?
- Which discursive practices and imaginaries have informed such questioning and towards what effects?
- To what extent has a “Muslim Question” influenced the formation of the German nation/state as well as preceded Germany's politics of Islam in past and present?
- What about the appearance and presence of a “Muslim Question” alongside others, such as, for example, the “Jewish Question” or the “Black Question”?
- Do these different questions demand separated and disentangled registers of inquiry or can these questionings (and the attempts to answer them) be conceptualized as a structure of sedimented divisions that are part and parcel of a much longer European trajectory?
- How can we think about the subject doing the questioning? Is it a subject at all and by what is it constituted and kept together?

Introduction

Perceived either as deviant, deficient or the enemy to secular modernity and its democratic-humanist futures, Islam has been the target of Western European government policies aimed at reforming, nationalizing, and regulating it. Recent scholarship has analyzed these processes as attempts to domesticate Islam and Muslims. A number of scholars have addressed external structures such as legal and administrative settings or constitutional and political arrangements involved in accommodating Islam in Europe and Germany. Others, however, have investigated the assemblage of different (and often contradictory) power techniques – pastoral power, biopolitics, governmentality, discipline – and the procedures by which Islam as well as the Muslim subject are produced as objects of academic inquiry and policy programs.