Religious Entanglements Between Germans and Indians, 1800–1945

Edited by
Isabella Schwaderer
Gerdien Jonker

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Series in Asian German Studies

Series Editors
Joanne Miyang Cho
William Paterson University of New Jersey
Wayne, NJ, USA

Douglas T. McGetchin
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL, USA

This series contributes to the emerging field of Asian-German Studies by bringing together cutting-edge scholarship from international scholars in a variety of fields. It encourages the publication of works by specialists globally on the multi-faceted dimensions of ties between the German-speaking world (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and German-speaking enclaves in Eastern Europe) and Asian countries over the past two centuries. Rejecting traditional notions of West and East as seeming polar opposites (e.g., colonizer and colonized), the volumes in this series attempt to reconstruct the ways in which Germans and Asians have cooperated and negotiated the challenge of modernity in various fields. The volumes cover a range of topics that combine the perspectives of anthropology, comparative religion, economics, geography, history, human rights, literature, philosophy, politics, and more. For the first time, such publications offer readers a unique look at the role that the German-speaking world and Asia have played in developing what is today a unique relationship between two of the world's currently most vibrant political and economic regions.

Advisory Board:
Prof. Sebastian Conrad, Freie University of Berlin
Prof. Dorothy Figueira, University of Georgia
Prof. Doris Fischer, Würzburg University
Prof. Suzanne Marchand, Lousiana State University
Prof. Lee M. Roberts, Purdue University, Fort Wayne
Prof. Franziska Seraphim, Boston College

Isabella Schwaderer • Gerdien Jonker
Editors

Religious Entanglements Between Germans and Indians, 1800–1945

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Isabella Schwaderer
Religious Studies
University of Erfurt
Erfurt, Germany

Gerdien Jonker
Historian of Religion at Erlangen
Center for Islam and Law in Europe
Friedrich-Alexander-University
Erlangen
Erlangen, Germany

Note on Transliteration

Terms and titles quoted from the classical Sanskrit and Pali manuals have been transliterated according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) except when spelt differently in quotes. Modern or commonly known expressions, even if based on Sanskrit words, are Romanized according to British orthography for easier reading.

Names are rendered in plain writing, namely without diacritical signs. Following the convention of Urdu writers in the 1920s, Urdu terms are rendered without added diacritical signs.

Acknowledgements

June 2023   Isabella Schwaderer
                                                  Gerdien Jonker

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Tilman Hannemann (Oldenburg University) focuses his theoretical approach on intersections of social, cultural, and religious fields in identity-driven discourse. In *Religiöser Wandel in der Spätaufklärung am Beispiel der Lavaterschule 1770–1805* (2017), he traced the construction and circulation of plausibility patterns of religious evidence among German and Swiss Enlightenment actors. His current research is on non-denominational religiosity in the 'Long Fifties' and the processing of trauma between totalitarianism and subjectivation. His publications, among others, include 'Bruno Gröning (1906–1959) und Nachfolgegruppen'. In *Handbuch der Religionen: Kirchen und andere Religionsgemeinschaften in Deutschland*, eds. Michael Klöcker and Udo Tworuschka (2020). tilman.hannemann@uol.de

Julia Hauser is a *Privatdozentin* (non-salaried senior lecturer) at the University of Kassel. From 2014 to 2021, she was an assistant professor of global history at the University of Kassel. In 2022, she received her *habilitation*. The focus of her research is on the entangled histories of Europe, South Asia, and West Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and on the history of knowledge and the body. Her publications include *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut: Competing Missions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) and *A Taste for Purity: An Entangled History of Vegetarianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming). julia.hauser@uni-kassel.de

Gerdien Jonker (University Erlangen) has made many inroads into collective memory and long-durée perceptions of European emancipatory religious movements such as the Turkish and Tatar Muslim communities in Germany, the Halacha movements among German and Russian Jews, and the Ahmadiyya mission in interwar Europe. Her research throws new light on crisscrossing religious pathways in Berlin in the interwar period. Her books include *On the Margins: Jews and Muslims in Interwar Berlin* (2020); *Etwas hoffen muß das Herz. Eine Familiengeschichte von Juden, Christen und Muslimen* (2018); *The Ahmadiyya quest: Missionizing Europe 1900–1965* (2016). gerdientje.jonker@fau.de

Parveen Kanhai (Schiedam, The Netherlands) studied history at Erasmus University in Rotterdam and was affiliated with several cultural institutions as a museum lecturer and teacher. While working in the ethnological museum in Rotterdam, she became interested in the representation of non-European people in the nineteenth century. Within this broad subject, she concentrates on human exhibitions, which have received wide attention in Germany, France, and Great Britain. While locating photographs, advertisements, and newspaper reports in (mainly digital) archives, she also traced reviews of ballet performances in the Netherlands in cooperation with the Menaka Archive (http://menaka-archive.org). info@toentezien.nl

Baijayanti Roy (Goethe University Frankfurt/M) studied modern Indian and European history at the University of Calcutta in India and received her PhD from Goethe University, Frankfurt. Her dissertation was published as a monograph titled, *The Making of a Gentleman Nazi: Albert Speer's Politics of History in the Federal Republic of Germany* (2016). She is affiliated with the History Department at Goethe University and is writing her second monograph on *Knowledge of India and Nazi Politics* (working title). She is a published author on Nazi Germany, Hindu nationalism, the history of German Indology, and aspects of the historical relationship between Germany and India. roy@em.uni-frankfurt.de

Markus Schlaffke (Bauhaus-University Weimar) is a writer, performing artist, and documentary filmmaker. He works on questions of performative memory, the aesthetics of archives and the intertwining of the cultural histories of modernity between India, Afghanistan, and Germany. His publications include *Die Rekonstruktion des Menaka-Archivs: Navigationen durch die Tanz-Moderne zwischen Kolkata, Mumbai und Berlin 1936–38*

(Weimar: Bauhaus-Universität, 2022); 'Identification of Muslim burial sites at the Zehrensdorf prisoner of war cemetery'. *Istoricheskaya etnologiya* (2022, vol. 7/3), 507–27. markus.schlaffke@uni-weimar.de

Sandra Jasmin Schlage (University of Bonn) is a research associate in the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History. She specialized in South Asian art and wrote a thesis on dance sculptures of the Cōḻa dynasty. Her present research focuses on dance reliefs of the Tamil region. She combines her university studies with intensive training in classical Indian dance. Her most recent publication is 'Bound by tradition? An investigation of the extreme dependency of artists on un-written artistic conventions for dance imagery in sculpture and painting'. In *Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms: Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia*, ed. Julia Hegewald (2023). schlage@uni-bonn.de

Isabella Schwaderer (University of Erfurt) is a research associate at the Department of Religious Studies. Her university teaching and research cross history, anthropology, and aesthetics, while focusing on the tangible and experiential side of religion. Her current research addresses the relationships between religion, dance, and race in Nazi Germany and religious renewal movements in Wilhelmine Germany seen through the lens of the Schopenhauer Society. Her publications include *Religion und Gender: Erfahrungen − Konstruktionen − Medien* (2023) (with Katharina Waldner and Silke Martin); 'Negotiating religion in South Asian–European entanglements'. In *Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasienforschung* (2022, vol. 7). isabella.schwaderer@uni-erfurt.de

Mathias Thurner studied Christian-Protestant theology at Heidelberg University and Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai (South India), and is a pastor of the Protestant Church of Baden. His doctoral thesis traced the historical conditions in which a new understanding of 'Christianity' as 'religion' was established within a global context by the end of the nineteenth century. His fields of interest are global religious history, conceptual entanglements between India and Europe, postcolonial studies, and the conceptual foundations of Christian theology. His most recent publication is *Die Geburt des 'Christentums' als 'Religion' am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ernst Troeltschs Theologie und ihre Quellen im Kontext einer globalen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin/Boston 2021). mathias.thurner@kbz.ekiba.de

Simon Wiesgickl (University of Erlangen) is an ordained pastor in the Bavarian Lutheran Protestant Church. His doctoral thesis on German colonialism and the academic study of the Old Testament started as a provocative attempt to understand German Old Testament studies around 1800 as a specific colonial entanglement. His most recent teaching position was at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. His publications include *Postkoloniale Theologien II: Perspektiven aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2017), and *Das Alte Testament als deutsche Kolonie* (Stuttgart 2018). simontielesch@posteo.de

List of Figures

Introduction

Gerdien Jonker and Isabella Schwaderer

With the focus on the interface between religion and art, the contributors to this interdisciplinary volume address India as a trope of primaeval religiosity and imagined origins in Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, and national socialist Germany respectively. The book covers the period from 1880 to 1945, but with historical expeditions going back as far as 1800.

During this period, the trope played a vitally important part in how German people interpreted their personal experiences and in the construction of their collective national identity. Many Germans looked upon India as the cradle of Aryanism, with mythical origins ranging from a linguistic category to a diverse assortment of cultural, biological, and racist notions and, as a result, also saw India as a source of religious and spiritual regeneration.

G. Jonker (✉)
Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany
e-mail: gerdientje.jonker@fau.de

I. Schwaderer
University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany
e-mail: isabella.schwaderer@uni-erfurt.de

German approaches to India not only blurred the lines between the real and the imagined, but they also had severe and lasting effects on many Indians. Although, geographically, the Indian subcontinent included the British Raj and some Dutch, French, and Portuguese colonies, the India of German scholars followed the mythical boundaries of ancient Indian culture as gleaned from Sanskrit and Pali texts. Because this narrative accorded Indian Muslims the role of 'conquerors' who had 'subjugated' the 'original' race, the Muslim population that had peacefully cohabitated in the subcontinent for approximately seven hundred years was not allowed a place. Although relations between Muslims and Hindus in India today are not the topic of this volume, in relation to the period under consideration, the omission presented us with a conceptual challenge we hope to encounter with a fresh view.

Behind Germany's preoccupation with India lay the notion of the 'religion of the future'. In this volume, it will be traced how, in the nineteenth century, scholars, in their attempt to bridge science with religion, turned to the religions of India to formulate a fundamental critique of Christianity (Thurner in this volume). After 1900, in search of religious experience, a wide range of religious seekers tried to fuse their bodies and souls with 'The East' (Jonker, Hannemann in this volume). In this ongoing search, India was used as a projection screen to recast the origins of European religion and reconceptualize its future. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews applied the debate to the inner development of their communities and speculated about the *Gestalt* (primary form) of the divine (Thumann 2015). In this ongoing debate, India was used as a kind of projection, a screen onto which to recast the origins of European religion and to reconceptualize its future.

The ways in which the past and future are linked is of central concern to religion. How religious groups root themselves in a meaningful past governs the drawing of boundaries between 'us' and 'them' and offers the main pointers towards how to proceed into the future together (Koselleck 1985: 211–59, see further below). This engagement may take multiple forms, including communications with the dead, 'as many are resting in the ground' (Jonker 1995: 188–211), or speculations about various godheads entering covenants with circumscribed groups (Pink 2016).

In an attempt to counter the challenge of accelerating globalization, some Germans tried to reground themselves by constructing a novel narrative about their origins in which racial and religious concepts were linked together. When confronted with colonization, Buddhists and Hindus in

the subcontinent tried to reconcile their problems in much the same way. Whatever the outcomes, on both sides of the globe such endeavours tended to occur within much the same historical configuration, usually typified by modernity, a global clash, and worldwide communications. In this setting, Europeans and Indians produced ever-wider assortments of translations, as well as theosophical or theological speculations for all who wanted to read them, which resulted in unexpected explanations popping up in ways that often reinforced both sides. Appearing on the periphery rather than in the centre, such descriptions could take on very different forms. These became sites for cross-cultural borrowing and recasting, thereby creating the diffuse hybridity from which new religious forms could grow. However, although by 1900, Indians and Germans were engaging in exchanges on a vast array of subjects, it is noteworthy that they rarely directly shared information on their religious or spiritual development. Rather, they used each other as sounding boards (Chidester 2014), which instead resulted in numerous creative misunderstandings leading to the religious entanglements we wish to address in this volume.

To acknowledge the elusive nature of this encounter, we address a range of issues, including Protestant speculations on India, the creation of a cosmic theatre through music, the search for religious ecstasy, dance as an expression of racial origin, vegetarianism as a way of linking the body to the nation, and the construction of an Indo–German religion based on race. Between them, our authors target the broad field of religion as a malleable entity, subjected to opposites that shape past and future, self and other, pure and impure, above and below and connect the individual to the group.

Since many of our authors situate their findings outside the academy, they are able to contribute to our understanding of the non-academic reception of Indian knowledge production in Germany.

Interfaces and Entanglements

In *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*, Kris Manjapra states that 'entanglements occur when groups alien from each other in many ways, begin to need each other like crowbars or like shovels to break apart or to dig up problems of the most pressing concern for themselves' (Manjapra 2014: 6).

Although many of the discussions on religious origins taking place in India and Germany seemed to pass each other like ships in the night, the

image of people using each other to unearth their origins and develop new notions still fits the subject under discussion. Some of the actors appearing in this volume took their inspiration from others. During the heyday of the Indian–German encounter, it was not unusual to come across Indian Muslim missionaries guiding German life reformers, Indian dancers seeking cooperation with European choreographers, and German audiences understanding their deepest selves while watching them on stage. While some German vegetarians saw the 'Mahatma' Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) as a model of future leadership, national socialist propagandists reached out to anti-colonial groups in India, each creating sites of empirical knowledge.

Other interfaces occurred in secluded spaces, where knowledge of the other reached recipients in a roundabout way. In this volume a range of actors have dug into the limited space of their minds to address, among other things, German vegetarians dreaming about sharing an Aryan heritage with Indians, German theologians studying the riches of Indian scriptures, a Wagner fan re-creating India in a musical drama, and national socialist scholars recasting the Protestant religious tradition as an Indo–German one.

The authors of this volume also examine how the upholders of several socio-political constellations used the concepts of Aryanism and pure primordial race to alter a perceived deadlock. Whatever form their search for their religious origins took while they were worrying about their futures, Indians and Germans essentially followed different paths. To continue with Manjapra's imagery, they used their own crowbars to their own ends. Solutions appeared when the occasion arose and disappeared again once their needs were satisfied. Ultimately, however, the cross-cultural encounter failed to produce a stable link between the two world regions.

Addressing this bundle of research problems, we continue down the road along which Joanna Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander, and Douglas T. McGetchin set out *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India* (Cho et al. 2014). Placing the focus on religion, including religious feelings, experiences, practices, symbols, expressions, projections, manipulations, movements, and organizations, we have traced forms of identity-making and nation-building processes involved in the German–Indian entanglement. As a result, the volume offers a global historical approach to religion from a modern transformative perspective (Conrad 2018; Maltese and Strube 2021).

The Historical Constellation

What did Germans know about actual, real-life Indians? In which historical constellation did their meeting occur? How did each digest global change? Before introducing the chapters, we offer some answers to set the stage.

When German writers and scholars started to think about the origins of India in the nineteenth century, their mental map of the subcontinent was by no means a *tabula rasa*. For centuries, German missionaries had either worked for British missions or founded German ones in Asia. Their activities helped constitute German perceptions of the non-Christian world, and provided images for German history textbooks and local church communities (Tyrell 2004: 13–37). German missionaries also promoted the British Empire's 'civilizing mission', for which they tried to convert Hindu society to the European model (Osterhammel and Petersson 2003: 56). Even before German theologians started to reach out to the Indian scriptures, India was already a well-populated site.

The Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu communities defended themselves against the Western invaders not only with mutiny, riots, Swadeshi bombings, and non-cooperation, but also with public debates, Friday sermons, books, daily newspapers, reading rooms, and indigenous schools. They gradually reframed their beliefs into world religions by sharpening their parameters through demarcating their mutual boundaries and imitating and recasting Christian organizational forms and fields. Such 'empires of religion' helped shape the individual and the nation in many ways (Bayly 2004: 325; Bergunder 2020).

The German mission was not a success. On the contrary, it caused opposition, which was at times violent. However, it more often took the form of a reformulation and revival of indigenous traditions. The new reform movements criticized Western lifestyles, which they regarded as corrupt, immoral, and characterized by unbridled freedom. As we illustrate in this volume, the revivals lent agency to Indian religious entrepreneurs who travelled to the West, set up their own missions, consulted Western colleagues, swapped ideas, and often found the freedom they needed to alter their traditions as they went along. In this volume, readers will encounter a range of different actors, including missionaries from the Lahore-Ahmadiyya Reform Movement who set up a Muslim mission station in Berlin and Indian dancers who performed around Germany during the Nazi period.

German writers, philosophers, and linguists designed a special place for India within their world horizon, to which they ascribed many positive qualities that whetted political appetites (Myers 2013). Once the German Empire was constituted, such speculations mingled with a wish to undermine the British Empire. Indian students and travellers were welcomed, and when the First World War took off, Indian revolutionaries received ample support. However, only after Germany lost the war did Indians in Berlin set up the organizations that grew into sites of daily encounters (Cho et al. 2014; Manjapra 2014).

THE RELIGIOUS FIELD

What the different actors meant by the word 'religion' still needs to be asked here. The recasting of religion that took place in Germany and beyond by no means was an inevitable development. It constituted a field of endless choices, identifying crossroads, guessing which would be the best to follow, discarding alternatives, and making them invisible. Although the actors presented the results as 'natural' and 'rooted in time immemorial', invoking images of primordial transcendence as they went along, they put a peculiar choice on the table.

In his famous text *Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe* (On the historical-political semantics of asymmetrical counter-concepts), historian Reinhart Koselleck (1985: 217) sets out the 'dynamics of negation' in three steps. Revisiting the binary codes of Hellenes/Barbarians and Christians/Heathens, which in the past the Western world often used to delegitimize and subjugate significant others, Koselleck first rethinks the intimate relationship between 'spaces of experience' (what happened in the past) and 'horizons of expectation' (what is expected in the future) on which such codes rested (Koselleck 1985: 216). Second, he noted that the more globalized the world became, the more people heightened their expectations for the future, which even extended to perceiving a 'man of the future' producing an ever-wider range of speculations about the essence of Germanness (*Deutschtum*). Third, the national socialists brought the old binary code to a new level by proposing superman (*Übermensch*)/non-human as a universal claim with totalitarian consequences.

Koselleck's observations help outline the different shifts in the religious field addressed in this book. As will still become apparent, it has been a long stretch from the 'noble savage' and 'innocent Indian' who, around

1800, Germans sought to 'uplift' to the moment when an Indo-Germanic religion based on racial distinctions appeared. At the start of the uneven road, new concepts with which to classify the world were developed, thus creating a framework that in this book Simon Wiesgickl calls 'second-order colonialism'.

When it ended, the religion of the Nazi perpetrators was promoting 'pure Aryan bodies' to express a 'pure Aryan race' on which the German nation sought to base itself (see Hannemann in this volume). Notions of primordiality, purity, and the feeling of belonging to a race of *Übermenschen* accompanied the shifts. In *30 April 1945*, Alexander Kluge paints an eerie picture of German scholars on the day Hitler committed suicide, feverishly preparing for the administrative takeover of India after the final victory (Kluge 2014: 120). In this volume, we outline the contours of the religion that was ready for that future, one that urged the included to experience their sense of belonging with the help of purification, cosmic thinking, and the spiritualization of their origins. The excluded experienced the deadly cost (Goodrick-Clarke 2002; Von See 2003: 56–99).

As a matter of course, each shift brought forth religious actors and movements to counteract this 'Aryan' sense of superiority. In this volume, the readers will meet German vegetarians who refused to follow the lure of purity, but instead supported Gandhi and Indian anti-colonial movements (Hauser). Then, the Lahore-Ahmadiyya missionaries were Indian Muslims who did not support the Aryan myth. They headed a community of German converts who, while searching for religious experience, endeavoured not to seclude themselves from others but, on the contrary, to embrace 'the whole world', with cosmopolitism perhaps the best word to characterize their political leanings (Jonker).

After the First World War, the public discourse about the future of religion intensified (Gordon 2013: 150–78). For conservative participants in the debate, only a deep incision to cut away any alternatives could rescue that future. Progressive participants, conversely, insisted that the religion of the future adopt multiple religious forms. During this period, numerous spiritual experiments unfolded, for which leftists, life reformers, and far-right national socialists each nurtured their own plan. Depending on their goals, their instruments might include reforming the self, open-minded encounters with other religions, or a top-down religious narrative based on racial selection and ethnic cleansing. For as long as they lasted in these theatres, what people labelled as 'religion' assumed very different

forms. The chapters ahead offer insights into the choices each of them required.

Contemplating this picture, two constellations add their own problems for today's researchers. One is that the vast shadow that the national socialists left behind them still colours our view of the non-Nazi actors. Researchers looking for their stories should turn to private archives and family heirlooms to find new insights. The other problematic constellation is that for each historical stage during which religious entanglements were being probed, Germans focused on Hinduism and Buddhism as India's 'original' religions, so cut Indian Muslim culture out of the equation. However, before the British colonists conquered the Indian subcontinent, Muslims ruled the territory and had created multiple levels of culture and ways of living together. During the period of colonization, they may have lost their empire, but Muslims remained as much a part of India as ever, and their presence in Germany was more likely than not to be as the representatives of other Indian religions. Stitching the pieces together again is a task that has not yet lost its impetus.

The Chapters

This is the panorama against which the chapters are presented in chronological order. *Simon Wiesgickl* and *Matthias Thurner* address an epistemological shift in Protestant theology in which the study of Indian texts led to a new conceptualization, or 'religionization', of Christianity. Whereas Wiesgickl recounts how German Enlightenment thinkers perceived India as the cradle of mankind and Indians as 'noble savages' in need of 'uplifting', Thurner traces the next shift to the theologian Ernst Troeltsch's search, with the help of Buddhism, for a religion of the future. Alongside these speculations, *Julia Hauser* describes a panorama of German vegetarians seeking purity through diet, spirituality, and ethnic cleansing while looking at Aryan India to justify their course. In their analyses of the 'Indian' musical score for the opera *Mahadeva*, *Isabella Schwaderer* and *Markus Schlaffke* trace how the fantasies of German males about traditional gender relations are projected onto the divine order of the world. *Gerdien Jonker* then follows with a description of Germans in search of religious ecstasy through the Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque in Berlin.

Once the national socialists came to power, this multi-faceted and still open-ended experiment was transferred to and fixed in academic institutions rooted in state racism, where, as *Tilman Hannemann* explains,

German scholars in Heinrich Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* think tank deployed several registers of scientific discourse—philology and linguistics, race theory and biology, literature, and arts—to promote life ethics centred on heroism, battle, and the will to dominate. Comparing the reactions of Dutch and German art critics at Indian dance performances on their local stages, *Parveen Kanhai* pinpoints the German idiosyncrasies through a Dutch lens. *Baijayanti Roy* traces national socialist propagandists to India, where they secretly forged fascist networks with Hindu and Muslim organizations, leaving behind in their wake a political spectre that survived the Second World War. Finally, *Markus Schlaffke*, *Isabella Schwaderer*, and *Parveen Kanhai* introduce the digital Menaka archive, which collects the traces of Leila Sokhey's dance performances in Europe and allows for cross-referencing.

The authors of this volume only address the Indians who made an entry onto European stages, so the contemporary developments in colonial India from which their entry resulted are only studied through that lens. Thus, to explain why Indian dancers sought European stages at all, *Sandra Schlage* shows how the development of modern Indian dance was influenced by two opposing trends in artistic expression between Westernization and 'revival'. At the same time, *Parveen Kanhai* follows Indian dancers onto European stages. Considering the scattered fragments of the German Indian dance encounter, *Schlaffke* and his co-authors ask how this common heritage is remembered today in India, Germany, and other parts of the world. Finally, *Gerdien Jonker* highlights the perspective of the Lahore-Ahmadiyya missionaries.

* * *

In hindsight, it becomes clear that the India of German scholarship, Protestant speculative thought, Indian ballet, Indian opera, and the religious projections of German Indologists, had little to do with the complexity of Indian society, just as it took scant notice of the complex Indian presence in Germany. Overall, imperial, republican, and national socialist Germans concentrated on ancient Indian texts while disregarding Muslim history and the diverse forms of religious expression found in contemporary India. As a side effect, this helped reinforce the one-sided vision of the Hindu motherland that the Hindu religious nationalists had meanwhile embraced.

Once more, this conclusion points to the systematic difficulties of trying to chart religious entanglements between Germany and India. The vision that German India seekers developed was essentialist and sustained an extreme form of right-wing politics that proved deadly for European Jews (Stern 1965). The religious views of Hindu nationalists claiming an exclusive right to a supposed primaeval past had catastrophic consequences for Indian Muslims (Van der Veer 2021). Some of these religious entanglements between India and Germany created blind spots on our mental map that are still with us today.

The chapters of this volume address the consequences. To sum up, during the nineteenth century German theologians tried to contextualize the Bible in Buddhist and Hindu texts, while German vegetarians fantasized about an alleged shared Aryan heritage with the Hindus. Indian operas gained popularity among the German middle classes, with the sounds they evoked playing out the cosmic theatre in their heads. Around 1900, the local parishes of Lutheran churchgoers were encouraging them to join a theosophical lodge and take a whiff of other religions. In the 1920s, this led to a veritable craze for seeking religious ecstasy with the help of Eastern religions. The 1930s saw middle-class audiences across Germany gleaning the essence of their Germanness (*Deutschtum*) from the fluent movements of Hindus dancing to the sounds of Indian orchestras. Nazi scholars bundled selective threads into an Indo–Germanic religion for the German people, while Nazi propagandists in India tried to strengthen their bonds with anti-colonial movements. However, this development has always been a matter of choice. Nothing about it was natural, just as no straight line ever existed.

References

Bayly, Christopher A. 2004. *The birth of the modern world 1780–1914*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bergunder, Michael. 2020. Hinduism, Theosophy, and the Bhagavad Gita within a global religious history of the nineteenth century. In *Theosophy across boundaries: Transcultural and interdisciplinary perspectives on a modern esoteric movement*, ed. Hans-Martin Krämer and Julian Strube, 64–107. New York: SUNY Press.

Chidester, David. 2014. *Empire of religion: Imperialism and comparative religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cho, Joanne Miyang, Eric Kurlander, and Douglas T. McGetchin, eds. 2014. *Transcultural encounters between Germany and India: Kindred spirits in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. London: Routledge.

Conrad, Sebastian. 2018. A cultural history of global transformation. In *An emerging modern world: 1750–1870*, ed. Sebastian Conrad, Akira Iriye, and Jürgen Osterhammel, 413–661. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. 2002. *Black sun: Aryan cults, esoteric Nazism, and the politics of identity*. New York: New York University Press.

Gordon, Peter E. 2013. Weimar theology: From historicism to crisis. In *Weimar thought: A contested legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, 150–178. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jonker, Gerdien. 1995. The topography of the dead. In *The topography of remembrance. The dead, tradition and collective memory in Mesopotamia*, ed. Gerdien Jonker, 187–211. Leiden: Brill.

Kluge, Alexander. 2014. *30 April 1945: Der Tag, an dem Hitler sich erschoß und die Westbindung der Deutschen begann*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 1985. Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe. In *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, 211–259. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Maltese, Giovanni, and Julian Strube. 2021. Global religious history. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33 (3–4): 229–257.

Manjapra, Kris. 2014. *Age of entanglement: German and Indian intellectuals across Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Myers, Perry. 2013. *German visions of India, 1871–1918: Commandeering the Holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Osterhammel, Jürgen, and Niels P. Petersson. 2003. *Geschichte der Globalisierung: Dimensionen*. In *Prozesse. Epochen*. Munich: Beck.

Pink, Arthur W. 2016. *Divine covenants: Pathways to the past*. Asheville, NC: Malaprops.

Stern, Fritz. 1965. *The politics of cultural despair: A study in the rise of Germanic ideology*. New York: Doubleday.

Thumann, Jan. 2015. *Religion und Kirche der Zukunft: Friedrich Feuerbachs Entwurf einer emanzipatorischen Pädagogik des realen Humanismus*. https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/ew/forschung/feuerbach/thumann.

Tyrell, Hartmann. 2004. Weltgesellschaft, Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen. In *Weltmission und religiöse Organisationen*, ed. Artur Bogner, Bernt Holtwick, and Hartmann Tyrell, 13–37. Würzburg: Ergon.

Van der Veer, Peter. 2021. Minority rights and Hindu nationalism in India. *Asian Journal of Law and Society* 8 (1): 44–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2020.51.

Von See, Klaus. 2003. Der Arier-Mythos. In *Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA*, ed. Nikolaus Buschmann, 56–99. Frankfurt: Campus.

'To Read in an Indian Way' (Johann Gottfried Herder): Pre-Emergent Colonial Epistemologies in Indian–German Entanglements, Showcased in Protestant Theology *c*.1800

Simon Wiesgickl

There are three basic questions for scholars of religion: 'How is knowledge about religion and religions produced?' 'How is that knowledge authenticated?' And, 'how is that knowledge circulated?' (Chidester 2014: xii). David Chidester, who raises those questions, showed how, by the end of the nineteenth century, comparative imperial religion was formed through connections and networks between the centre and periphery. Scholars of religion agree that our present-day understanding of religion can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Within these processes, entangled histories between the centres of the academic

S. Wiesgickl (✉)
Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany
e-mail: simon.j.wiesgickl@fau.de

13

world and its peripheries played a vital role and, in such discussions, identities were formed and boundaries transgressed. Needless to say, there are different ways of addressing the various global perspectives on global religious history.

I intend to use a global perspective, specifically on interrelations between India and Germany, to reflect on a particular historical production of knowledge (Maltese and Strube 2021: 230–5). Entanglements between Germany and India can be understood as specific sites in which interdependencies played out and rationalities began to mingle with larger power structures (Manjapra 2014: 288). The aim of looking deeper into such specific entanglements is 'to write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and ironies that attend it' (Chakrabarty 2000: 42).

German interest in Eastern religions does not start in the nineteenth century but can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In the period between 1750 and 1820, some European intellectuals saw Germany as backward. Germans felt inferior to other European nations and, to overcome this deficit, would read travel literature and explore the world extensively. Interestingly, this period of critical self-enquiry was intellectually extremely fruitful for the formation of German culture. In fact, Germany's close connection to the Orient was a core theme in this quest.

Decades later, Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), a founding father of comparative religion, made use of German critical methods, which had been developed and designed by the end of the eighteenth century, and established them in Great Britain (Chidester 2014: 65). Philology, universal history, and so-called higher criticism can be understood as having emerged from global entanglements.

Here, I shall highlight some peculiarities of German Orientalism, showcase how Old Testament studies especially have been used as spaces for colonial imagination and connect those findings with new epistemologies paving their way around 1800. I will focus especially on some works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and his broader network in theology and Orientalism.

My central argument is that theology and cultural debates on German origins can illustrate perfectly how a colonial mindset and its attitudes have been at work, even before formal imperialism took place. Old Testament studies were reinvented in those years in Germany, and German methods, wordings, and style took a lead in outrunning every other language. That is why postcolonial approaches might benefit from looking at

the years between 1780 and 1820 (Wiesgickl 2018). Discussions and arguments were still fluid and vast at this particular time, but years later they became the amalgam of a fixed imperial set-up.

The historian Iris Schröder sketches changes in the methodology and understanding of scientific practice from 1800 to 1900: She wrote that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many had been busy forming epistemologies and knowledge. Eventually, we would see how specialization, the formation of disciplines and the loss of cooperative knowledge production had shaped science (Schröder 2013). In this volume, concentrating on the so-called materialism controversy, Mathias Thurner shows the epistemic shifts and turns in the nineteenth century. To look back at times when epistemologies were still in the making promises to mark an important turning point.

Within those epistemic changes, imperial religion can be understood as the endeavour to promote 'a science of religion that generated global knowledge and power' (Chidester 2014: 62). In contrast, I will use 'colonial' in a wider sense to mark certain power constellations and specific colonial mindsets in scientific and public discourses. A colonial mindset or desire can exist even without formal colonialism. As Kris Manjapra (2014: 285) put it, 'it is possible both to be a colonizer and, simultaneously, to feel small or inferior'. Some scholars argue that we can speak of German colonial fantasies (Zantop 1997).

In my case, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak inspired this way of handling historical and systematic ideas. In *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak (1999) writes about Germany's ability to produce scientific representations of the world and the self. She uses cultural critique Raymond Williams's (1961) concept of 'pre-emergence' to illustrate how ideas about classifying and conquering the world were shaped even before the time of imperialism. My aim in this chapter is to show how certain perspectives and intellectual positions were already established in Germany by the end of the eighteenth century and later became part of the imperial production of knowledge we call Eurocentrism.

My interest in the books of the Hebrew Bible and how they are studied is by no means accidental. When around 1900 German intellectuals remembered their first and authentic love of cultures of the so-called East, they were always drawn to the Bible. As Hermann Brunnhofer (1841–1916) put it, 'the longing for the Orient accompanies the Occidental from the cradle to the grave … The Bible is the book through which the world of the West, even in times of the most melancholy isolation, remains

persistently tied to the Orient' (Brunnhofer 1907: 25). By reinventing the Hebrew Bible around 1800, German intellectuals mirrored their own colonial desires and gaze. Johann Georg Hamann's (1968: 129) famous 'pilgrimages to the East' were the foremost explorations into German identity. If Johann Gottfried Herder spoke about 'reading in an Indian way', we can learn almost nothing about India and almost everything about an intense and mind-blowing quarrel over the intellectual formation of German identity.

IN SEARCH OF THE ENTANGLEMENT: GERMAN ORIENTALISM, A SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF *WISSENSCHAFT*, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO COLONIALISM

Before going back in time, let us start with the question of entanglement. By the end of the eighteenth century, what sorts of entanglements could be found in the contact zone between Germany and India? What is the broader picture in academe, culture, and society?

Of course, such questions are far from being answered in the limited space of this chapter. Nevertheless, I would like to sketch some ideas about this specific entanglement, which is a subject that has already been explored.

German intellectuals were undoubtedly interested in India during the period of Romanticism.[1] Probably best-known is Friedrich Schlegel's (1808) *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. Interestingly, his first readers and authors like Goethe, Heine, and Schleiermacher were already criticizing his book for being more about Catholicism than Hinduism. This is also the main argument of Nicholas Germana, who claims that around 1800 scholars were using India to illustrate the increasing centrality of German identity (Germana 2009). The eighteenth century saw the Turkish influence diminishing in Europe through the growing number of European colonies, especially the British Empire, which was expanding its control. Culturally, the image of the 'terrible Turk' was being replaced by a corrupt and oversexed Ottoman, as in Mozart's (1782) *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. At the same time, however, an interest in others' translations of scriptures was growing. Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) translated his *Zend Avesta* in 1771, and within a

---

[1] For a broader discussion on this relationship, see Tilman Hannemann's Chap. 10 in this volume.

few years German translations followed. In 1785, Charles Wilkins's (1749–1836) *Bhagavadgītā* was published and, in 1789, William Jones (1746–1794) translated the *Śakuntalā*. British scholars benefited greatly from the East India Company's network and used its influence to contact local scholars, writers, and language teachers. In Germany, those networks and the shared experience of empire had been missing.

Building on Edward Said's argument that colonizers and the colonized share the same experience of empire, Peter van der Veer undertook a detailed study of British–Indian encounters. He argued that there was a shared colonial experience, which both shaped national cultures and was centred on notions of religion and secularity (van der Veer 2001: 3). If we take the theoretical concept of entanglement, this is a site of entanglement par excellence. If we search for such sites of entanglement between Germany and India, things get more complicated. For anybody knowing anything about the scientific history of Orientalism and the science of religion in Britain, it is no wonder that van der Veer touches the person of Max Müller. Although admired in India, the British are unsure about him for the simple reason that, not only his person, but also his science—Orientalist philology—are considered 'foreign', namely German. In his famous inaugural lecture as professor of comparative philology at the University of Oxford on 27 October 1868, Max Müller recalled the German understanding of *Wissenschaft* running down to Humboldt and emphasized the need for reforms in Oxford. One can argue that Müller's understanding of religion and his philological approach mirror the earlier tradition of William Jones and the like, as does van der Veer (2001: 106–16). Interestingly, he shows how Indian scholars took up those methods in the Bengali Renaissance and applied them to Hindu scriptures. If we want to scrutinize this form of entanglement, it can be simplified as German *Wissenschaft* applied in India through an English middleman. My interest here is to look deeper at the roots of Müller's German understanding of *Wissenschaft*.

As already noted, the beginnings of Orientalism in Germany are closely related to the German quest to define its identity. More than forty years after Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, it seems as if all aspects of his work have been scrutinized, a whole branch of study reorganized, and all its shortcomings criticized. It is hoped that a new interest in a public debate on German colonialism will help to yield a deeper study of its historical background.

In its early years, German colonialism can be understood as 'second-order colonialism' in that it reached Germany via a scholarly revolution that failed to register its significance in far-away colonies (Berman 1998). Instead, German colonialism altered the discourses in Germany's scientific circles insofar as they were now directed towards imaginative communities and the social order in society. Colonialism, to Germans around 1800, was a thrilling literary experience of thus far unreached places and a mixture of adventure and education (Berman 1998: 1).

Let us illustrate this a little: by comparing two different accounts of the same journey—Captain Cook's second circumnavigation—Russell A. Berman shows how the German colonial discourse had been different from those of its European counterparts and mirrored a particularly German position, often called a *Sonderweg*, or special way. In those days, Germany did not occupy a central place in Europe. Instead, Germans were often looked upon as 'others', or outsiders, as somewhat backward and less advanced than other Western societies (Manjapra 2014: 284). German intellectuals expressed this perception through their low self-esteem, in a search for their roots, and by turning to other European societies. There are many poems or stories in which one can pinpoint German writers identifying with subaltern others (Goldmann 1985). British writers would frequently discuss whether Germany bordered the Oriental in political, economic, and cultural terms. It is no wonder that Karl Marx spoke about the 'incompleteness of development' regarding the German question and gave voice to a widely debated and often felt German deficit (Manjapra 2014: 285). Georg Forster (1754–94), who wrote the German travel narrative on Captain Cook's expedition to the South Pacific, established a kind of hermeneutics that led to a strong tendency to identify with the colonized other (Berman 1998: 10). The specific entanglement described here opened up new ways of understanding alterity.

As a result of this specific form of colonialism, one can see how innovations were fostered in different branches, and how the Jews were excluded symbolically and literally. German Orientalism took the shape of a 'linguistic turn', with uncountable new translations, and new forms of literacy and flagship biblical studies (Polaschegg 2005). In her book on German Orientalism, Suzanne Marchand concentrates on 'the practice of Oriental scholarship' and refuses to write a book on 'Orientalism' (Marchand 2010: xx). Although it seems to be a sophisticated difference at first glance, it makes quite an important impact. By focusing on techniques and, through her refusal to create a single and shared discourse, Marchand's study

provides a brighter picture of the different German ways of dealing with alterity and different religions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of her key findings is that 'the cultural politics of *Orientalistik* were defined much less by "modern" concerns—such as how to communicate with or exert power over the locals—than by traditional, almost primeval, Christian questions, such as (1) what parts of the Old Testament are true, and relevant, for Christians? (2) How much did the ancient Israelites owe to the Egyptians, Persians, and Assyrians?' (Marchand 2010: xxiv). Studying how German *Wissenschaftlichkeit* in general, and *Orientalistik* in particular, were formed means concentrating on theology, geography, and philology.

With respect to the special relationship between Germany and India, one can see how, after 1760, Indophilia in Germany was growing more powerful. The key event in the public's love of India was the publication of Georg Forster's translation from English of the Sanskrit play *Sakuntala* in 1791. Johann Gottfried Herder wrote a preface to the second edition of the translation and praised its spiritual worth and classic beauty with the warmest words. This topos was widely shared. Many German intellectuals in those days complained about modern times, French society and culture, and the fragmented way of thinking. The Orient, which seemed to provide a counterpart, was praised for its primordial unity. German nationalists dreamed of a German rebirth and were forever looking for new pieces of folk poetry and collecting universal histories. As Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) put it, 'the only way for us to become great, and, if indeed it is possible, inimitable, is through the imitation of the ancients' (Winckelmann 2013: 32). Since the mid-eighteenth century, a new fashion of writing history had been becoming more meaningful. Montesquieu set a yardstick with his *De l'esprit des loix* (1748) and inspired other writers and historians to think about civilizations and cultures and how they changed through the ages. In Germany, Johann Joachim Winckelmann helped to popularize this new form of historization and, in 1764, he not only wrote a history of ancient art but also produced new epistemologies, of which some were full of ambiguities. For example, he wrote about a region to which he had never travelled yet claimed it as a first-hand experience. He polemicized against knowledge through books alone yet relied on books alone to substantiate his arguments and infused the intellectual debate of his time with a longing for origins (Martus 2015: 688–96). With three civilizations—Persian, Greek, and Indian—mainly sparking German interest, Schlegel's (1808) *Ueber die Sprache und*

Weisheit der Indier can be seen as a contribution to this cultural war, as an attempt to decentre the Greeks in the Germanic and Christian cultural history of humankind. One can interpret these struggles over the history of the past as forerunners to the discussion on the 'history of the future'.[2]

Any summary of a specific German connection with the wider world by the end of the eighteenth century will reveal the central role of religion and, in his contribution to this volume, Tilman Hannemann outlines such developments during the nineteenth century. Although comparative religion did not exist as a discipline as early as 1800, its methods and epistemology were being shaped at that time. Interestingly, it was mainly Protestant theologians who took the lead in that process, which is why I want to focus on the role of the Hebrew Bible and how the picture of a historic community like the Israelites was designed anew at that time.

Hebrew People as Role Models: Theology in a New Era of Ethnography

There is a broad consensus that important innovations in biblical studies that took hold during the long nineteenth century had already been established by the end of the eighteenth century. Many of the ideological movements and new ideas that shaped liberal thinking can be traced back to those years (Reventlow 1995). In the eighteenth century, one can observe how German theologians and intellectuals began to change their way of looking at the Israelites. In previous centuries, they had largely been considered as forerunners in faith and founding fathers of *orbis Christianus.* Now scholars started to study Hebrews as a distinct group of people. Reinhart Koselleck (1979: 63) showed how a basic eighteenth-century advance had been the idea of a linear time frame giving rise to a universal history of mankind. German biblical scholars started to place Hebrews in the universal history of mankind and, on reading biblical stories, they, as did Ofri Ilany (2014: 19) in his mind-blowing *In Search of the Hebrew People*, started to ask questions such as:

> Where has this people come from? What stage in its development had humanity reached during the period in which they lived? What parallels might be drawn between them and other peoples? … The question of this

[2] See the contribution of Mathias Thurner in this volume and his discussion on the 'religion of the future' around 1900.

people's origins is a highly charged one, as it holds the key to the Hebrew people's 'fundamental' characteristics.

The biblical figure of Abraham, for example, undertook a genuine change from father of faith, to father of a clan or nation. Johann David Michaelis (1717–91), a key researcher and networker in those days, addressed the Royal Society of Science in Göttingen in 1756 with a talk on 'The Wandering Shepherds of Ancient Palestine'. Michaelis stands for what today we would call an ethnographic turn in the study of the Old Testament. With his colleagues, he collected more than a hundred detailed questions for the first scientific German endeavour in history, sponsored by Frederick V of Denmark, the famous *Arabia Felix* mission (1761–67) to Yemen (Ilany 2014: 17–39).

Of course, Michaelis selected and taught Arabic and church history to the members of the expedition team, but eventually stayed back in Göttingen to found the notorious armchair traveller's tradition to which Friedrich Max Müller also belonged. In 1800, the ethnographic way of reading the Bible had become so prominent that Georg Lorenz Bauer (1755–1806) wrote about Abraham in the following terms (Bauer 1800: 108):

> He was an upper Asian Man, an Emir or head of a wandering clan, who first meandered from Chaldea to Mesopotamia, and from there moved with his herds to Palestine, where he sought pasture. He was no different from any other inconsequential Bedouin or Arab Sheikh of his time but was to become, if we look at the peoples, that originated from him and the revolutions they brought about in both spirit and matter, a very important man in history.

To understand the dynamic and relevance of this change, we can reduce it to the notion that the chosen people of God had become a simple natural folk. They had been assembled in the booming genre of universal history and represented a stage of infancy, only a little better than the notorious Hottentots.

One can easily see how theological studies were linked to intellectual debates by looking at the new perspective on the Mosaic Law. In 1775, when Johann David Michaelis published *Mosaisches Recht*, he wanted to establish a new kind of investigation and to lift the mainly historical and biblical argument to a new level. He thus addressed not only theologians

but also lawyers, politicians, and philosophers. His aim was to make a strange Asian text accessible to the European public. Hence, he explained, for example, the laws on blood revenge by national character, ancient traditions, and untouched closeness to the state of nature. Michaelis thus distinguished between universal principles at work in the Mosaic Law and particular elements of Hebrew custom (Ilany 2014: 43–62). According to the political thinking of his contemporaries, every state should be regarded as a creation of the *Volk*. Consequently, his colleague Johann Stephan Pütter (1725–1807) drew on original German law (*Gewohnheitsrecht*), which was clear and close to the people and which he separated from abstract, formal Roman law.

The University of Göttingen had become one of the leading universities in history and theology during the time of Michaelis. One might even say it saw the German invention of *Völkerkunde*, as Han F. Vermeulen (2006) puts it. German scholars caught up during the second half of the eighteenth century and eventually even took the lead over French and other scholars. In fact, the University of Göttingen was one of the epicentres of a new and innovative approach hosting most of the prominent scholars in the field (Vermeulen 2015: 12). Historian August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809) summarized the new ethnographic method as a history of the world presented through different people. It related to the history of mankind (anthropology) and had been in line with the upcoming universal histories. Schlözer used the descriptive studies of his time, carried out in Siberia and Swabia, and moved on to universal categories, including newly-discovered people from faraway places such as Oceania, or far back in time such as the Romans or Hebrews (Vermeulen 2006: 129–31). Since the new method distinguished sharply between people who made up a state and wrote historical accounts, and those who failed to do so, new questions had been asked of the historical Hebrews. In the words of Ofri Ilany (2014: 146), 'the Hebrew people, as a historical entity, became an object of study – and even a national model – in their own right'. This Hebrew model was not only of interest to theologians but it also presented an alternative political paradigm. Searching for their own national spirit (*Nationalgeist*), writers, scholars, and intellectuals used the Hebrew tradition both as a source and a space to be fashioned. In other words, the very particular national spirit that Enlightenment philosophers had mocked and ridiculed, received the highest attention in the German debate.

The Old Testament as a Space for the German Colonial Imagination and Johann Gottfried Herder as an Intermediary

Biblical scholars agree that Johann Gottfried Herder's (1782) *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* can be described as a watershed in theology. Christoph Bultmann commented that this book shaped his image as 'a leading figure of the break in biblical studies … through which the Bible changed from a book of revelation to a book of antiquity' (Bultmann 1999: 6). This is why I want to concentrate on Johann Gottfried Herder and scrutinize his role as an intermediary between different cultures and contexts. Herder took up the ideas of the English Bishop Robert Lowth (1710–87), who presented the poetry of the Hebrews as the original poetry of natural Oriental people. This simple but powerful and noble expression was read against the backdrop of the Enlightenment philosophers, who declared Hebrew poetry to be an unclear and filthy product of hot climes (Ilany 2014: 90–1). G. E. Lessing (1729–81) reduced the beginnings of history as the small starting points of the 'human race' on its way to the high standards of moral education. In stark contrast, Herder did not see the development of humankind throughout history as a one-way track but concentrated on its origins and half-forgotten traditions. The new aesthetic sensibility swept from England and Scotland to Germany, where it became part of the quest for a new national literature. Herder was not interested in artificial readings of the Bible, but wanted to foster an understanding of the Hebrew Bible as folk literature with a view to paving the way to a better understanding of Germany's own national literature and soul (Sheehan 2005: 171).

Johann Gottfried Herder was a keen collector of folk tales, stories, and pieces of literature from as many different communities and peoples as he could find. His programme was meant to 'set apart the frontiers of foreign peoples from our own' and make us 'more familiar with the beauty and the genius of a nation that we had viewed quite askance' (Sheehan 2005: 171). The Hebrews provided an interesting contrast to the classical Greeks: Greek mythology concentrated on gods and heroes, whereas the stories in the Hebrew Bible were about normal people with flesh and bones. In this respect, the Hebrews fitted his cultural programme wonderfully in that it concentrated on simple people, folk tales, and stories of everyday life. He also added a whole programme on ethnology, which most Enlightenment scholars often neglect. Concepts like organic growth

or terms such as 'national spirit' (*Volksgeist*) and 'national identity' (*Nationalcharakter*) were powerfully embedded in discourses of philosophy, history, or the origins of language (Vermeulen 2015: 322–3).

Herder believed that this kind of literature preserved the feelings and soul of a people much better than treaties, historical documents, or any other official records. Instead, he was looking for the poetry and the 'little traditions'. For him, Hebrew was the perfect language for poetry and an antidote to any abstract or cold language. At the beginning of his *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, there is a famous imagined dialogue in which Alciphron describes Hebrew as a 'poor barbaric tongue' and even compares it with the language of the native Americans (Herder 1782: 1–6). His counterpart Euthyphron, who echoes Herder's voice, compares it with 'a poor but beautiful and pure country girl' and states how fresh, vibrant, and poetic the Hebrew language is (Ilany 2014: 91). His laudation (Herder 1833: 30) culminates with:

> Even should I admit that for an abstract reasoner the Hebrew language may not be the best, still it is, in regard to this active form of it so much the more favourable to the poet. Everything in it proclaims 'I live and move and act.' The senses and the passions not abstract reasoners and philosophers were my creators. Thus I am formed for poetry, nay my whole essence is poetry.

This new understanding of the Hebrew language found its way into the heart of what Jürgen Fohrmann called the 'quarrel of nations', the intellectual debate between France and Germany on cultural hegemony at the end of the eighteenth century (Ilany 2014: 89). In this controversy, Herder reshaped the understanding of mythology. Inspired by the Göttingen school of ethnology and deeply influenced by biblical stories and texts, he went even further east to find new sources in pursuit of his aim to revitalize German national literature. As we have seen, the Hebrews became part of the Orient and the Orient was looked upon as Germany's fountain of youth. In Germany, more and more printing presses were distributing more and more books and magazines to a growing number of readers, which produced a backdrop for intellectuals in fear of losing their imagination and vitality. In *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (1773), Herder used a fourfold dichotomy to highlight the contrasts between primitive/modern, oral/written, feelings/form, and nature/art (Kontje 2004: 66). Interestingly, this phonocentrism of his also led to ethnocentrism. In *Abhandlungen über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), for

example, he criticized Jewish and rabbinical traditions for overemphasizing the consonants in the Hebrew language and thus losing essential vowels, yet this is exactly what German intellectuals did through trying to gain control of the Hebrew Bible, make themselves part of the Orient, construct their own national literature, and establish alternatives to French cultural hegemony (Martyn 2002: 59).

The Orient as the origin of poetry and religion was central to Johann Gottfried Herder's thinking and a key element in German Orientalism. German Orientalists devised a new way of studying and founded a kind of *Wissenschaft* for which they were widely admired. Philological and ethnographic knowledge helped them to reinvent the study of theology, especially the Old Testament. Johann Gottfried Herder's approach can best be described as historicism, although not the kind that merely tries to muddle its way through the difficult strands of historic knowledge. Instead, he tried to build some kind of 'vivid historicism' (Kraus 1982: 120). He advocated transcending a dogmatic view of the scriptures and replacing it with a deep connection with other people—become a farmer with farmers or a shepherd with shepherds, so literally breathing the 'air of origin' (Kraus 1982: 117). Herder associated the spirit of poetry and 'childhood of mankind' with the Orient, especially India (Germana 2009: 19) and equated childhood, and hence the Orient, with innocence, nature, and purity. It is now time to see how Herder made use of a certain imagined India, which he not only found at hand but also helped to freeze for the years to come.

To Read in an Indian Way: The Romanticized Orient

In striving for authenticity, Herder constructed an essentialized Orient and, at the very beginning of *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (1806: 21), shouted out:

> Leave behind the sticky scientific cabins of the West and enter the free air of the Orient, where this play is instructed. And for not getting out of tune and just imagining the meaning, let us circumnavigate the noble words, we will meet, just like islands, and prove their reference to the Morns.

In that Herder wants to see a philological shift in the study of the Hebrew Bible, his philological zeal cannot be discounted. Nevertheless, he continues by stating that people in the Orient are closer to nature, simpler in

mind, and their stories and legends are filled with God, since the Orientals 'feel God' (Herder 1806: 21–5). There is no doubt that he is reproducing the core Orientalist stereotypes (Loop 2008: 176) and his interest in the Orient did not end with the Hebrews. Instead, his Orient was getting bigger and bigger and included India, China, and the Persians. He constructs a difference between the languages of his contemporaries and so-called modern nations in the West and the original and authentic Morns, who were closer to the infancy of humankind. Modern European languages appeared to him more precise and exact, whereas ancient languages like Arabic and Hebrew were richer and more playful to him. To Herder, languages were not only interesting to study but were also his way of digging into the soul of a people. Comparing different languages with national characters and ideas fascinated him, which is why I want to come back to the *Sakontala* (1791). Herder praises the work in his preface as outstanding among the rich Indian mythological and spiritual, as well as poetical works. He compares it with any Greek poetry and ponders: 'you will find a bundle of sublime and tender notions, unknown to the Greek: the Indian spirit of the world and man itself infused it to the landscape, the nation, the poet' (Herder 1803: xxxi). He goes on to describe a whole set of Indian mysticism that he believed to have found in that very play (Herder 1803: xxxxi–ii):

> You must read the *Sakontala* in an Indian, not a European way, as well. The idyllic scenes for instance, with meekness and love of nature, so typical for this people. Everything is animated in the Indian cosmos; plants, trees, the whole creation is speaking and feeling… All of creation is an epiphany of one God or the other, in ever-changing metamorphosis… Behold that those fortunes of soul and spirit of the most peace-loving people on our globe, including its language, are entrusted to a nation of merchants.

It is no wonder that Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) drew on this romanticized picture of India and could establish a direct link between his vision of a German renewal and a model to counter contemporary European societies (Dusche 2011: 2). The only difference seemed to be that Friedrich Schlegel argued against sophisticated Frenchmen, and Johann Gottfried Herder mocked the English. In his foreword (Herder 1803: xxx), he also argues that the German translation is better than the English original.

How should one understand the introductory phrase of 'reading in an Indian way'? There is a tradition of connecting Herder's understanding of

Indian *Volk* with the bigger debate on 'Oriental despotism'. The Indians as a people were too mild and too humble to resist the Mughals and later the European colonists (Tzoref-Ashkenazi 2013: 305). Herder wants other people to inspire his Germans and to preserve what he identified as their German identity. It is also a perfect example of second-order colonialism. Herder criticizes the barbaric Englishmen and the way they colonized and robbed other cultures and nations. As a German, he identifies with the noble and innocent Indian. Unlike other Europeans, the Germans should understand and defend the rights and customs of Indians. Hence, the image is fashioned here of a brave nation standing up for other subalterns. Their own weakness is transformed and covered by moral strength (Germana 2009: 43–50).

My argument here is a little different. I see the idea of reading in an Indian way as a summary of Herder's approach to indigenizing the study of the Old Testament by establishing an ethnographic method. Every folk tale is inspired, in Herder's thinking, by the nature of the land, the context, and the tradition from which it stems. Hebrew poetry, like any other Oriental tradition, is close to its origin and authentic spirituality. It is not art, but nature, as Robert Lowth had formulated for Hebrew poetry (Fritz 2011). Herder followed his lead and saw the genuine revelation in the Hebrew language. The newly discovered *Zend Avesta* and other scriptures from the East gave him the strong belief that God was first incarnated in light and revealed himself through the mythical and 'child-like' stories of Eastern religion, and not in the rational language of a modern, and hence European, worldview (Marchand 2010: 45). To him, the Indian religion was a 'sensuous religion', as was the Hebrew one (Germana 2009: 31). Herder continued to mark the strong impetus on feelings as the authentic expression of the Orient—'where our religion still makes room for sensuous representations, where it accommodates poetic imagery, there it is – Oriental' (Herling 2006: 51). As Weidner (2005: 170) put it:

> We must read the Bible in a human way, since it is a book written by man for man: the language is human, it was written and preserved through human means, and the sense, in which one can understand it, the whole purpose, for which it may be used, is human.

This famous quote by Herder should not lead us to the wrong supposition that he points to secularization. Instead, he tried to go back to what he identified as the origins of the Hebrew worldview and Hebrew culture

(Weidner 2005), and the Indian lens helped him to grasp that very much clearer idea. The mystical *Morgenland* marked for Herder the 'golden age of mankind in its infancy' (Herling 2006: 55), at a stage when humankind had been closer to the realm of gods. By focusing on India as an ancient civilization and framing its image as having a 'flowery', mild, and poetic nature, Herder helped to establish a certain romantic picture of India (Herling 2006: 85).

Interlude: India as Method?

On Johann Gottfried Herder's attempt to establish 'reading in an Indian way' as a means of understanding the Bible and establishing new epistemic regimes, one could be tempted to engage in recent debates on 'Asia as method'. In his book *Asia as Method*, Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) revisited an older debate between Takeuchi Yoshimi and Mizoguchi Yuzo, who were among a group of Japanese intellectuals trying to make sense of Japan's role in Western modernization by comparing it with that of China. They were refusing to buy into one of the bigger models of Japanization, or of emulating Euro-American modernity. Instead, they tried to analyse the Chinese way and look for analogies and features they might have in common (Morris: 2017: 15). In *Asia as Method*, Chen attempts to combine different methodologies and epistemologies to overcome the hegemony of a monothetic Western way of conceptualizing the other.

Interestingly, one can read Herder and his move to open up alternative spaces against the backdrop of a modern French worldview and ancient Greek culture as just such an attempt. Isaiah Berlin and others praised Johann Gottfried Herder for his 'pluralism' (Germana 2009: 18) and for countering the Eurocentric Enlightenment by coming up with new ways of understanding and formulating plurality and different modes of understanding and reading the world. The idea of reading in an Indian way was inspiring other cultures to foster a cosmopolitan national identity.

However, this was only an uninformed first move because, as Chen (2010: 215) elucidated:

> Asia as method recognizes the need to keep a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of Asia, just as one has to maintain a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of the nation-state. It sees Asia as a product of history and realizes that Asia has been an active participant in historical progress.

Johann Gottfried Herder uses his reference to India as neither a historical progression nor a site of entanglement, for these might shackle or twist his worldview and perceptions of the Hebrew people, but as we have seen instead perpetuates Oriental stereotypes mainly as rhetorical tropes to make his point. The 'childlike Indian' with his exclusive taste for allegories, tales, and mystical images, as one who paints in a language like that of the Hebrew and other Morns, is not a real figure.

Nevertheless, we might be tempted to revert to the openness of historical and epistemological debates from around 1800. There had been a window of opportunity to realize other modernities and new ways of conceptualizing scriptures and religions. The end of Western academic hegemony might offer chances of developing ways of reading in an Indian way, not to formulate a rebirth of Germany, but to strengthen entanglements in space and time.

Summary

Building on an understanding of German colonialism as second-order colonialism, I showed how new epistemologies and a new *Wissenschaftlichkeit* became part of the colonial set-up. Questions of German identity were discussed by comparing German culture with various other cultures. Many intellectuals believed that a German rebirth could happen by looking to the Orient. The end of the eighteenth century saw not only the beginning of universal histories in Germany, but also a whole array of new methods and disciplines. Theological discussions were central to many debates, and biblical Israelites were both historicized and integrated into the history of humankind. Johann Gottfried Herder was among the most important extollers of the beauty and worth of the Hebrew language. The *Oldest Document of the Human Race* (1774) was, to him, the sublime, poetic, and tender language of the Israelites. His new interpretation of the Hebrew Bible as an introduction to the Orient used new ideas and notions of India. Herder identified the spirit of poetry and the 'childhood of mankind' with the Orient, especially India. By reading in an Indian way, Johann Gottfried Herder inspired the debate on Germany's origins and paved the way for a new ethnographic understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Eventually, he also helped to craft a picture of Indians as noble savages who were mild, close to nature, and extremely sensuous. His understanding of organic growth was infused with metaphors of nature and flowers, and it was this floral heritage of the eighteenth century that began to bloom by the end of the nineteenth century.

References

Bauer, Georg Lorenz. 1800. *Handbuch der Geschichte der hebräischen Nation von ihrer Entstehung bis zur Zerstörung ihres Staats*. Altdorf: Monath & Kussler.

Berman, Russell A. 1998. *Enlightenment or empire: Colonial discourse in German culture*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Brunnhofer, Hermann. 1907. *Östliches Werden: Kulturaustausch und Handelsverkehr zwischen Orient und Okzident von der Urzeit bis zur Gegenwart*. Bern: Victor Schlüte.

Bultmann, Christoph. 1999. *Die biblische Urgeschichte in der Aufklärung: Johann Gottfried Herders Interpretation der Genesis als Antwort auf die Religionskritik David Humes*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chen, Kuan-Hsing. 2010. *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Chidester, David. 2014. *Empire of religion: Imperialism and comparative religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dusche, Michael. 2011. *German romantics imagining India: Friedrich Schlegel in Paris and roots of ethnic nationalism in Europe*. http://www.goethezeitportal. de/fileadmin/PDF/kk/df/postkoloniale_studien/dusche_romantics_imagining_india.pdf. Accessed 2 Aug 2022.

Fritz, Martin. 2011. Von der Heiligen Poesie der Hebräer. Eine Relektüre des schrifthermeneutischen Klassikers von Robert Lowth (1710–1783). *Kerygma und Dogma* 57: 90–111.

Germana, Nicholas A. 2009. *The orient of Europe: The mythical image of India and competing images of German national identity*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Goldmann, Stefan. 1985. Die Südsee als Spiegel Europas. Reisen in die versunkene Kindheit. In *Wir und die Wilden. Einblicke in eine kannibalische Beziehung*, ed. Thomas Theye, 208–242. Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag.

Hamann, Johann Georg. 1968 [First published 1759]. *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten. Aesthetica in Nuce*. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. 1782. *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*. Dessau: Buchhandlung der Gelehrten.

———. 1803. Sakontala oder Der entscheidende Ring. Ein indisches Schauspiel von Kalidas. In *Aus den Ursprachen Sanskrit und Prakrit ins Englische und aus diesem ins Deutsche übersetzt. Mit Erläuterungen von Georg Forster*. Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann der Jüngere.

———. 1806. Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts. Erster Theil. In *Eine nach Jahrhunderten enthüllte Heilige Schrift*, ed. Johann Georg Müller. Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung.

———. 1833. *The spirit of Hebrew poetry*. Trans. James Marsh. Burlington: Smith.

Herling, Bradley A. 2006. *The German Gītā: Hermeneutics and discipline in the German reception of Indian thought, 1778–1831*. New York: Routledge.

Ilany, Ofry. 2014. *In search of the Hebrew people: Bible and nation in the German enlightenment*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kontje, Todd. 2004. *German Orientalisms*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 1979. *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik historischer Zeiten*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Kraus, Hans-Joachim. 1982. *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft.

Loop, Jan. 2008. Von dem Geschmack der morgenländischen Dichtkunst: Orientalistik und Bibelexegese Huet, Michaelis und Herder. In *Urpoesie und Morgenland. Johann Gottfried Herders Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, ed. Daniel Weidner, 155–183. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos.

Maltese, Giovanni, and Julian Strube. 2021. Global religious history. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33 (3–4): 229–257.

Manjapra, Kris. 2014. Transnational approaches to global history: A view from the study of German–Indian entanglement. *German History* 32: 274–293.

Marchand, Suzanne L. 2010. *German orientalism in the age of empire: Religion, race, and scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Martus, Steffen. 2015. *Aufklärung. Das deutsche 18. Jahrhundert. Ein Epochenbild*. Berlin: Rowohlt.

Martyn, David. 2002. Der Geist, der Buchstabe und der Löwe. Zur Medialität des Lesens bei Paulus und Mendelsohn. In *Transkribieren. Medien. Lektüre*, ed. Ludwig Jäger and Georg Stanitzek, 43–71. Munich: Wilhelm Fink.

Michaelis, Johann David. 1775. *Mosaisches Recht*. Frankfurt am Main: J. Gottlieb Garbe.

Montesquieu. 1748. *De l'esprit des loix*. Genève: Barillot & Fils.

Morris, Meaghan. 2017. Hong Kong liminal: Situation as method. In *Hong Kong culture and society in the new millennium: Hong Kong as method*, ed. Yiu-Wai Chiu, 3–32. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Polaschegg, Andrea. 2005. *Der andere Orientalismus. Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Reventlow, Henning Graf. 1995. The role of the old testament in the German liberal Protestant theology of the nineteenth century. In *Biblical studies and the shifting of paradigms, 1850–1914*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and William R. Farmer, 132–148. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Schröder, Iris. 2013. Disziplinen. Zum Wandel der Wissensordnungen im 19. Jahrhundert. Einführung. In *Von Käfern, Märkten und Menschen*, ed. Rebekka Habermas and Alexandra Przyrembel, 147–161. Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht.

Sheehan, Jonathan. 2005. *The enlightenment bible: Translation, scholarship, culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1999. *A critique of post reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tzoref-Ashkenazi, Chen. 2013. Romantic attitudes to Oriental despotism. *The Journal of Modern History* 85: 280–320.

van der Veer, Peter. 2001. *Imperial encounters: Religion and modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vermeulen, Han F. 2006. The German invention of Völkerkunde. Ethnological discourse in Europe and Asia, 1740–1798. In *The German invention of race*, ed. Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore, 123–145. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 2015. *Before Boas: The genesis of ethnography and ethnology in the German enlightenment*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

von Schlegel, Friedrich. 1808. *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer.

Weidner, Daniel. 2005. Secularization, scripture, and the theory of reading: J. G. Herder and the old testament. *New German Critique* 94: 169–193.

Wiesgickl, Simon. 2018. *Das Alte Testament als deutsche Kolonie. Die Neuerfindung des Alten Testaments um 1800*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Williams, Raymond. 1961. *The long revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. 2013. *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on art, architecture, and archaeology*. Trans. David Carter. Rochester: Camden House.

Zantop, Susanne. 1997. *Colonial fantasies: Conquest, family, and nation in precolonial Germany, 1770–1870*. Durham: Duke University Press.

In Search of Purity: German-Speaking Vegetarians and the Lure of India (1833–1939)

Julia Hauser

That vegetarianism has long been examined from a national perspective (Klein 2008) is also true of German vegetarianism (Barlösius 1997; Baumgartner 1992; Fritzen 2006; Treitel 2017). For a long time, scholars have seen vegetarianism as an integral part of the life reform movement, which aimed to renew society, if not humankind, by regenerating the individual, and which was seen as unique to German-speaking Europe (Buchholz 2001; Kerbs 1998; Krabbe 1974; Wedemeyer-Kolwe 2004). Recent research, however, has questioned this view on the grounds that references to alimentary patterns elsewhere were central to vegetarianism and that vegetarians forged contacts with like-minded protagonists in other parts of the world (Hauser 2018, 2020). Eventually, India became an important protagonist in its own right in internationally organized

J. Hauser (✉)
University of Kassel, Kassel, Germany
e-mail: julia.hauser@uni-kassel.de

33

vegetarianism, which from the mid-nineteenth century onwards originated in Europe and North America (Hauser 2021).

In British vegetarianism, India has been a major point of reference—not only because of colonialism but also because India was portrayed as the heartland of vegetarianism, a country with a long, seemingly unbroken, and universally embraced tradition of abstaining from meat (Stuart 2006). This image was certainly problematic. First, India was a subcontinent of many religions, some of which, especially Christianity and Islam, did not require their followers to abstain from meat. Second, however, not even all Hindus embraced vegetarianism. Vegetarianism was long a marker of social distinction for Brahmins, the members of the highest caste, widows, and male youths (Roy 2015). Those who did not practice it were considered impure, and were socially ostracized and subject to violence.[1] Vegetarianism came to be challenged under British colonial rule, often because vegetarian diet was considered responsible for the alleged lack of masculinity among Hindu men (Sinha 1995). Nonetheless, the 'merciful Hindoo' figure loomed large in the British vegetarian imagination.

In this chapter I argue that India, or rather the idea of Aryanism, was closely tied to one of the main goals of the vegetarian movement in the West, namely regenerating humankind or—more often—specific branches of it. Hinduism, which I discuss by analysing Gustav Struve's novel *Mandaras Wanderungen* (1843), was only evoked at the beginning. Struve dwelt on the alleged shared Aryan heritage of Hindus and Germans, but deemed the former morally superior. Aryanism remained important in debates on German vegetarianism, over which theosophy came to exercise a major influence, but became increasingly detached from Hinduism and the Indian subcontinent. It had at first been tied to Buddhism, but then embraced new religious trends and the *völkisch* movement, which moved it farther away from India, though both philosophies appropriated aspects of Brahmin and related thought. These branches of the vegetarian movement argued that Aryan purity could be regained through diet and eugenics. On the other hand, as I show in the final part of this chapter, there were German vegetarians who, rather than being taken with Aryanism, were interested in the Indian independence movement. They saw Gandhi as the model ascetic vegetarian leader that crisis-shaken Europe needed,

---

[1] While there is little historical research on food, caste, and violence, autobiographies written by lower-caste people (Dalits) from the twentieth century render a vivid impression of this type of discrimination. See, for instance, Rege (2006) and Valmiki (2003).

and that some would soon find in Hitler. Only a few German-speaking vegetarians had direct contact with protagonists in India, but even they were not immune to misunderstanding their interlocutors' agendas. By and large, the relationships of German vegetarians with India were far more complex and less direct, yet no less meaningful, than those of their British counterparts. India and Aryanism seemed to embody the lost purity that German vegetarians hoped to regain through diet and physical exertion.

INDIA AND GERMAN *VORMÄRZ* VEGETARIANISM

The first major work on ethical vegetarianism appeared in the tumultuous period of the early- to mid-1840s (*Vormärz*) when German radicals were beginning to call for a unified German nation and the reform, if not abolition, of the monarchy (Blackbourn 1998: 120–137; Hewitson 2010: 29–63). It was also the first German-speaking work on vegetarianism to draw inspiration from India. Its author, Gustav Struve (1805–70), was a radical democrat lawyer, writer, and central protagonist in the 1848 revolutions in Baden (Hank 2003; Peiser 1973; Reiß 2004). The protagonist in Struve's *Mandaras Wanderungen* (*Mandara's Travels*) is a young Brahmin who undertakes an educational journey to Germany (Struve 1843: 21) and is interned in a German prison for not having the right papers, where he dies because he refuses to eat the non-vegetarian food served to him (Struve 1843: 240–84). Before that, he holds up a mirror to German society, which he finds disturbing: People bow to statues of Christ on the cross, punish criminals with the death penalty, and eat the flesh of animals. These customs, or so he tells his interlocutors, are unknown in his native India where nobody eats meat (Struve 1843: 7–8, 54–8, 62–3, 73–4, 87–102, 280–84), venerates images, or embraces polytheism (Struve 1843: 7, 8, 24). When a Jesuit tries to convert him to Christianity, he stresses that he cannot convert to a religion that condones murder (Struve 1843: 7–8, 25–38). Animals, according to Mandara, are sentient beings and, as such, have a right to life. Moreover, human bodies are not equipped to digest the flesh of animals. Even if humans had nothing else to eat, it would be better for them to die than to commit injustice (Struve 1843: 62–3).

Mandara's Travels, which promotes vegetarianism motivated by compassion for non-human animals, centres on a protagonist from an India that conspicuously resembles Germany. Indeed, Struve was the German

vegetarian who most emphasized this alleged proximity. Well before South Asian and European authors identified 'Aryanism' as the alleged common origin of high-caste Hindus and Europeans (Figueira 2002; McGetchin 2009, 2017; Poliakov 1974; Pollock 1993; Thapar 2006), Struve (1843: 6) described his protagonist Mandara as a 'tall and slender youth of noble features'. Although initially introduced as 'exotic-looking', Struve (1843: 6–7) soon emphasized his blue eyes, luscious blonde curls, and fair skin. Mandara thus simultaneously appears both exotic and German—he even sports the feathered hat characteristic of the German radical democrats of the 1830s and 1840s (Bausinger 2011).

Struve's book placed India and Germany in close proximity. According to Marc Cluet, Struve borrowed this idea from the renowned German geographer Carl Ritter (1779–1859) (Cluet 2007; Vantard 2004). Ritter, for his part, had been influenced by William Jones's discovery of the common roots of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, and the ensuing theories of the common descent of Europeans and Indians put forward by August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), who argued that 'Aryans'—a term borrowed from the *Veda*s that initially signified elevated social status rather than linguistic or 'racial' identity—had invaded Europe from India (Poliakov 1974: 183–245). From this perspective, Hindu civilization had once been superior to its European counterpart, and in Struve's book it still was. As Romila Thapar (2006) shows, through the writings of Max Müller and the Theosophical Society, Hindu nationalists would soon subscribe to this theory. Struve's novel, however, did not resonate in India and, indeed, was never published in any language other than German.

Struve's version of India was a peculiar one. Apparently, he was unaware that vegetarianism in India was an elite phenomenon solely practised by Brahmins, and that it was often tied to discrimination against those who did not practice it—lower-caste and casteless people, Christians, and Muslims. Throughout the book, Struve never quoted from Hindu texts, such as the *Code of Manu*, that justified caste hierarchies and thereby promoted stark social inequality through diet.[2] Struve was a revolutionary

---

[2] Jones's edition of the *Code of Manu* appeared in English in 1796, and in a German translation the following year (Gesetzbuch 1797; Jones 1796). Even if Struve did not know these works themselves, he might have encountered them in Friedrich Schlegel's (1808) *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians), which makes ample reference to Manu.

who, while ready to take up arms for his cause, regarded India as the epitome of an equal, non-violent society. Vegetarianism appeared to him as the very centrepiece of that peaceful equality—even although it was far from being so.

Indian Connections with German Theosophists

Struve's focus on India was unusual in German vegetarianism, for although treatises on vegetarianism usually mentioned India in passing, references to the subcontinent were rarely seen in German vegetarian magazines. However, all this began to change when Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–91) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) founded the Theosophical Society in 1875, especially once the organization established its headquarters in Adyar, Madras, in 1879. Its aim was to find a synthesis between what its founders considered the world's main religions and present-day science, above all evolutionary theory (Godwin 2013; Santucci 2012; Viswanathan 2013).

From the beginning, the Theosophical Society was a transnational organization, counting not only Russians and Americans, but also British, Austrian, and Indian fellows, almost exclusively high-caste Hindus, among its members (on its Indian members, see Moritz 2009, 2012; Mukhopadhyay 2019, 2021). Initially, it put itself under the spiritual guidance of Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83), a religious reformer and founder of the *Arya Samaj* (Fischer-Tiné 2012; Jones 1976). Dayanand and his organization were eager to re-establish Hindu supremacy in India and thereby return to the golden age when so-called *Arya*s were believed to have conquered the subcontinent (Jordens 1960: 509–12; Sarda 1946: 525–6; van der Veer 2001: 55–7; 75–6).[3] Dayanand Saraswati also actively campaigned for the protection of cattle, whose existence he saw as threatened by the Muslim and British presence in India (Adcock 2010; De 2019; Dharampal-Frick and Sitharaman 2015; Freitag 1980; O'Toole 2003). While he saw both the British and Muslims as enemies of a Hindu nation in the making, he characterized Muslims as particularly loathsome and cruel (Saraswati 1889: 28–37). While the Theosophical Society did not force its members to embrace vegetarianism, its publications established a close link between a diet free from meat, alcohol, and

---

[3] The letters exchanged between Dayanand, Olcott and Blavatsky are reprinted in Saraswati (2015).

other stimulants, and the idea of spiritual progress (Blavatsky 1883, 1889: 260–2, 1890).

The Theosophical Society, which soon established chapters in other countries, including Germany, attracted individuals who subscribed to the idea that meat abstention furthered spiritual enlightenment. While these connections have been little researched so far, some of its German members clearly forged contacts with Hindu fellows of the Theosophical Society, a case in point being the *Internationaler Verein zur Bekämpfung der wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter* (International Association for Combatting the Scientific Torture of Animals). Contrary to what its name suggests, the association only had one chapter, which was German, although some of its members hailed from well beyond Germany. Its only published membership roster (Internationaler Verein zur Bekämpfung der wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter 1889) listed several upper-caste Bengali Hindus in addition to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. In all likelihood, its founder, Paul Förster (1844–1925), was a member of the Theosophical Society. Förster was, however, also a professed anti-Semite, who had initiated a petition to the Reichstag calling for the abolition of the legal emancipation of German Jews, and campaigning, like many vegetarians and animal welfare activists, against Jewish practices of slaughter (Zerbel 1999). It may hint at an overlap of convictions to state that Förster's *International Organization*, a body with several Hindu members, was founded at a time when anti-Semitism was surging in Germany, and when the cow protection movement in India had begun to erupt into anti-Muslim violence. In any case, both Hindu and German anti-Semitic vegetarians like Förster defined themselves as 'Aryan', although the respective connotations of this term varied.

Another theosophist who established connections with India was Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden (1846–1916), a German economist and colonial activist who travelled there to seek spiritual enlightenment between 1894 and 1896 (Moritz 2014). Hübbe-Schleiden believed that the subcontinent was peopled by 'Eastern Aryans', who were intellectually and culturally inferior to their alleged Western brethren (Hübbe-Schleiden 2009: 215). Despite the alleged superiority of what he considered his own race, he felt that he needed regeneration. Thus, while on the subcontinent, he not only placed himself under the guidance of Hindu gurus and a prominent Austrian author on vegetarianism who was living in Calcutta, but also sought to further his spiritual development by consuming *ganja* (marihuana) and abstaining from meat—or at least making an attempt to

do so. In the end, however, he could not refrain from eating meat and returned to Germany without realizing his spiritual aims (Hübbe-Schleiden 2009: 323, 343, 385–6, 424, 435, 471, 531, 541).

German Buddhists on the Subcontinent

Members of the Theosophical Society interacted with both Hindus and Buddhists, with Olcott and Blavatsky eventually embracing Buddhism. On the other hand, some Buddhists also joined the Theosophical Society. One of them, Don David Hevavitharane (1864–1933), left the society to reform and revive his own religion, and soon founded an association known as the Maha Bodhi Society (Blackburn 2010: 104–42; Brekke 2002: 86–115; Gombrich 2006: 186–94; 97, 110–13; Saroja 1992). Buddhist reform became known to a wider Western audience in the wake of the World Parliament of Religions conducted during the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, in which Hevavitharane, now called Anagarika Dharmapala, participated (Bartholomeusz 1993; Moritz 2016).

In Germany, Buddhism had met with growing interest since Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788–1860) praise of it (Zotz 2000). In contrast to Hinduism, which at the time did not attract German converts, Buddhism seemed more attractive, being considered a philosophy rather than a religion. By the end of the nineteenth century, some German intellectuals claimed allegiance to it (Myers 2013). In Leipzig, a German chapter of the Maha Bodhi Society came into being (Bigalke 2016: 235–46; Bigalke and Neef 2008). Some German Buddhists also went to Ceylon to be initiated as monks (Hecker 1995: 18–29). Although Buddhism never completely ruled out meat consumption and even reformist Buddhism remained ambivalent on it, some German Buddhists stressed the close connection between Buddhism and vegetarianism.

One such person was Ludwig Ankenbrand (1888–1971), an ardent advocate of animal welfare, who saw Buddhism as the religion best reconcilable with the diverse aims of the German life reform movement. Ankenbrand, a sharp critic of Christianity, to him a religion that was both Semitic and materialist, claimed Buddhism to be the most Aryan of the religions (Albrecht 2016; Ankenbrand 1911). Unlike most Germans fascinated with the religion, Ankenbrand, his wife Lisbeth,[4] and a group of friends visited Ceylon as part of a round the world trip begun in 1912.

---

[4] Her dates are unknown.

The trip ended in disaster, with one member of the group suffering from a mental breakdown and the others being interned during the First World War (Ankenbrand 1913, 1920). During his internment, Ankenbrand edited a newspaper for the inmates at the German camp, with the articles he submitted to it hinting at a negative perception of Hindus while idealizing Ceylonese Buddhists (Ankenbrand 1914a, b, c, 1915a, b, c). On his return, Ankenbrand remained committed to both Buddhism and vegetarianism, while also interacting with the Ahmadiyya community in Berlin.[5]

Aryanism Without Hindus: Mazdaznan

Reformist Buddhism was not the only way in which German vegetarians, hoping to regenerate their alleged Aryan identity, came into contact with the Indian subcontinent. There were other, more obscure paths. One of them was Mazdaznan, a community founded in Chicago in the wake of the World Columbian Exposition. Its founder, Otto Hanisch (1856–1936), was a German migrant from Silesia, who pretended to be the son of the Russian ambassador to Persia and to have been raised by Tibetan monks. It was his expressed intention to restore Zoroastrianism. Mazdaznan focused on systematic breathing, exercise, sexual practices, and vegetarianism, all of which were believed to enhance racial evolution (Bigalke 2016: 188–215; Graul 2013; Krabbe 1974: 73–7; Linse 2001, 2005; Stausberg 2004: 378–401, 2007; Wedemeyer-Kolwe 2004: 153–63). Mazdaznan, which was strongly influenced by the Theosophical Society, Brahmin and Jain notions of purity, and yoga as refashioned by Swami Vivekananda, never in fact acknowledged these influences, but instead stressed its alleged Zoroastrian qualities. Mazdaznan hierarchized six races based on skin tone, with the white or Aryan one at the top. Following a pure lifestyle without meat, the members of the white race were considered to have the potential to develop further into the 'race transparent'. Yet, Mazdaznan's notion of Aryanism differed from that of the Theosophical Society in one significant respect: Hindus were not considered Aryans. Instead, Arabs and Zoroastrians were included in this seemingly elect race (Ammann 1914).

---

[5] State Archives of Baden-Württemberg (Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart). Sonderbestand 8600. Autographensammlung Ankenbrand. S. M. Abdullah to Ludwig Ankenbrand, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 21. September 1929. H. Mazooruddin Ahmad to Ludwig Ankenbrand, Berlin-Friedenau, 24. September 1942.

Mazdaznan's obscure teachings struck a chord among the upper-middle classes in the United States, and the religion soon spread not only to Canada but also to Britain, Germany, and Switzerland. Leipzig, which was the centre of German Buddhism, also became the centre of Mazdaznan until its leader in Germany, Swiss-born David Ammann (1855–1923), was expelled from Saxony for indecency in 1914, at which point Mazdaznan's German-speaking headquarters were moved to Herrliberg near Zurich (Graul 2012, 2013: 240–7). Yet, although the German authorities eyed the group with suspicion and mainstream German vegetarians derided it, German vegetarian magazines continued to carry advertisements for products such as underwear, cosmetics, and health foods that Mazdaznan members marketed. Mazdaznan was also promoted at the Bauhaus, most notably by the painter Johannes Itten (1888–1967), who was elevated to a leading position in the community (Schmitz 1999; Wagner 2005, 2009).

Mazdaznan had already started trying to set up personal connections with Parsis in India on the eve of the First World War, but they were few and far between.[6] However, neither the German nor Swiss vegetarian magazines ever portrayed the group as in any way influenced by the subcontinent. Indeed, Mazdaznan itself masked its indebtedness to these influences by vaguely referring to its alleged roots as the Arab-speaking 'Orient'—a region that had long fascinated German-speaking vegetarians—rather than India (Hauser 2018). Although abolished by the Nazi regime, in the 1950s Mazdaznan again became influential in organized vegetarian circles, including in Germany, when Gloria (Maude) Gasque, a high-ranking US Mazdaznan member, became president of the International Vegetarian Union from 1953 until her death in 1959.[7]

Völkisch Vegetarianism: Claims to Teutonic Superiority

While Aryanism originally emerged as a concept that stressed ties between India and Europe, some German-speaking vegetarians captivated by their Aryanism laid strong emphasis on their supposed Teutonic heritage. In fact, those connected to the *völkisch* movement conceived of Aryanism as more or less congruent with anything Teutonic. What they shared with

---

[6] In 1911, two Parsi priests allegedly praised Hanish's understanding of Zoroastrianism (Shirmad 1911; Sirkaris 1911).

[7] See https://ivu.org/members/council/Maude-gasque.html. Accessed 31 January 2023.

theosophy, neo-Buddhism, and Mazdaznan, however, was the belief that vegetarianism was an apt instrument with which to heighten their supposedly Aryan racial purity. As a result, this branch of the movement was relatively large, so cannot be discussed at any great length here.

One of the first vegetarians to represent this branch of the movement was Bernhard Förster (1843–1889), Paul Förster's brother. Bernhard, while sharing his brother's anti-Semitism, was not taken with Paul's fascination for India. Instead, Bernhard's Aryanism was a pronouncedly German one. Far from wishing to confine his field of action to Germany, Bernhard Förster advocated migrating to South America and, in the late 1880s, he publicized his plan to found a vegetarian colony in Paraguay by the name of Nueva Germania, to which only Germans of supposedly pure Aryan stock were to be admitted. In South America, they would be able to settle on virgin land, which offered far healthier conditions for regenerating the race than industrializing Europe could provide (Starker 1888). Although energetically supported by his wife, Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) sister Elisabeth (1846–1935), Förster's plan came to naught. By 1891, he was on the edge of bankruptcy and the colony was riven by conflict (Kraus 2008). Only a few of the colonists embraced vegetarianism and the Försters themselves supplemented their income by selling fresh and cured meat, as well as alcohol, to the inhabitants of Nueva Germania. Needless to say, they also consumed these foods themselves (Klingbeil 1889: 33–4, 39, 49, 61–2, 65).[8] In 1891, Förster died by committing suicide in a hotel room in Nueva Baviera, another German colony in Paraguay (Kraus 2009; Meinecke 1889).

In 1906, Willibald Hentschel (1858–1947), an avowed anti-Semite and anti-feminist (Pelger 2017; Puschner 2011, 2013), put forward another proposal to establish an 'Aryan' vegetarian settlement. Like many other protagonists of the life reform movement, he believed that the 'Aryan' race was in decay because of industrialization, the women's movement, and the preponderance of meat, alcohol, and tobacco in the modern diet (Hentschel 1910: 37, 59–66, 77–84). Above all, however, he held Judaism and Christianity principally responsible for the downfall, particularly Christianity, which because of its stress on monogamy, offered men too little opportunity to exercise their reproductive potential (Hentschel 1910: 96, 1918: 155). It was through deliberate breeding that the 'Aryan'

---

[8] See also Goethe und Schiller Archiv, Weimar: GSA 72/1478 f. Nueva Germania, Fleisch-Buch.

race (whose origins Hentschel located on the shores of the Baltic and North Sea rather than in the Himalayas) had become great. Vishnu, the grandson of Varuṇa, the Hindu god of creation, had been given 16,000 wives (Hentschel 1918: 183–4), and the ancient Teutons had killed their opponents to take their wives (Hentschel 1910: 27). Accordingly, Hentschel proposed rural settlements, called Mittgart after the abode of the gods in Teutonic mythology, that were to be composed of 1000 women and 100 men each. In these 'human gardens', men and women were to live separately, with the men residing jointly in a manor while the women stayed in cottages. Marriages, decided upon by a male council of elders, were to be dissolved when women got pregnant, with men moving on to the next marriage while women had to wait at least two and a half years (Hentschel 1906). The inhabitants were to sustain themselves through agriculture and to follow a vegetarian diet. This did not mean that Hentschel opposed violence: Indeed, he approved of murder between men as a means of racial selection (Hentschel 1906: 14). His utopia never materialized on the scale he had envisaged, but it likely exerted some influence on the Nazi *Lebensborn* project (Puschner 2013: 162).

Walter Sommer (1887–1985), a vegetarian (or in today's terms, a raw vegan)[9] and youth leader based in Hamburg and mainly active in the 1930s, likewise embraced a concept of Aryanism that traced the Germans' origins back to the Teutons. According to him, the Teutons were the chosen people in world history. They had been able to reach hegemony well beyond Europe because of their land law, which made land common property and which the Teutons used wisely to cultivate fruit, vegetables, nuts, and grains, thus achieving autarchy, and eventually military, moral, and intellectual superiority without harming animals (Sommer 1933a). Although Sommer held that diet influenced the character, an idea central to Hindu scriptures (Sommer 1928), he sharply criticized the fascination with India that was so common among German vegetarians (Sommer 1933b).

---

[9] On Walter Sommer's notion of diet, see Sommer (1924).

GERMAN VEGETARIANS AND THE CULT OF THE ASCETIC LEADER IN WEIMAR GERMANY

While some German vegetarians were fascinated with India and the idea of Aryanism and some only with the latter, others came to be attracted to the subcontinent without succumbing to Aryanism. It was above all Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), the Indian independence fighter, who impressed these German vegetarians. This fascination was connected to a growing feeling that only a strong ascetic leader could save crisis-shaken Weimar Germany.[10]

During the 1920s, some aspects of German vegetarianism developed strong affinities with ideas that would later characterize Nazi rule, including support for strong male leadership and hierarchy. Vegetarians on both the left and right articulated these tendencies in different contexts. While the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund* (ISK) fought Nazism, the *Vegetarische Presse* lent increasingly more support to the Nazi party, yet both stressed the importance of an ascetic male leader.

The ISK, founded in 1925 by Leonard Nelson (1882–1927), professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen, and Minna Specht (1879–1961), an educator, objected to the Nazis' economic policy and their anti-Semitism (ISK 1930), but was less bothered about their anti-democratic tendencies. Nelson favoured hierarchy topped by a male leader (Nelson 1920a, b), and the ISK was hierarchically structured. Required to subordinate their whole life to the cause, ISK members were to donate a major part of their income to the movement, embrace celibacy and vegetarianism, abstain from alcohol and tobacco, and regularly confess their failings to each other—principles that Nelson considered central to his concept of *Führererziehung*, education for (male hierarchic) leadership (Lindner 2006: 30–6; see also Eicher 1926; Nelson 1920a: 17).[11]

The figure of the ascetic leader appealed equally to vegetarians with right-wing leanings. We can see this in the *Vegetarische Presse*, the journal of the German Vegetarian Union, which turned to a cult of leadership

---

[10] For more on this, see my forthcoming article "The Birth of the Ascetic Leader. Die Botschaft des Mahatma Gandhi in Troubled Weimar Germany." In *Nodes of Translation. Rethinking Modern Intellectual History between Modern India and Germany*, edited by Martin Christof-Füchsle and Razak Khan, 195–220. Berlin: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2024.

[11] As testimonies of ISK members preserved in Nelson's papers show, many of them had difficulty accepting or following through with these principles. Bundesarchiv. Leonard Nelson Papers. N 2210/258.

early on. Its articles focused on outstanding male figures, usually historical advocates of vegetarianism, including philosophers, writers, artists, (rarely) statesmen, or prominent present-day advocates (Förster 1926, 1932a, b). It was in this context that the *Vegetarische Presse* reported on India and Gandhi, depicting the latter as a strong leader rather than as an advocate of non-violence. In 1930, an article emphasized that Gandhi 'did not shy away from any consequence, not even from revolution, indeed from combat', preferring 'the use of violence … over the whole race being enslaved' (Albrecht 1930). However, Gandhi was soon replaced in the *Vegetarische Presse* by another ascetic vegetarian leader. In 1932, its editor explicitly called on German vegetarians to vote for the Nazi party (Förster 1932c, d), considering a vegetarian head of state as a victory for the vegetarian cause (Förster 1932d; Rothe 1931). In 1933, the journal enthusiastically welcomed Hitler's rise to power, interpreting it as a major step towards a vegetarian world order (Förster 1932e; Förster and Buck 1932).

Contacts with the Indian Independence Movement in the Interwar Period

Most German-speaking vegetarians who admired Gandhi never encountered him or any other representatives of the Indian independence movement. Two renowned vegetarians, however, did indeed encounter protagonists fighting for an end to colonial rule in India, namely Werner Zimmermann (1893–1982) and Magnus Schwantje (1877–1959).

Zimmermann, who was born near Berne in 1893, was the son of a factory worker. After training to become a teacher, in 1919 he travelled to the United States on a shoestring with a view to 'building character' and witnessing workers' living conditions (Zimmermann 1921: 7). In 1929, he travelled around the world, visiting North and South America, Japan, China, India, and the Middle East (Zimmermann 1930, 1937). Another journey after the Second World War followed much the same route (Zimmerman 1950). On both his trips around the world, Zimmermann visited Gandhi's ashram in Sevagram, yet never found him at home. Despite his enthusiasm for Gandhi, Zimmermann was uninterested in Hinduism[12] but drew his inspiration from Taoism instead, which he considered a philosophy of non-interference akin to Gandhi's notion of

[12] Indeed, he was highly critical of Mazdaznan, associating it not with Zoroastrianism, but with intellectual dishonesty (Zimmermann 1927a).

satyagraha (quest for truth).[13] In reality, the two were quite different. Gandhi's notion of freedom focused on *swaraj* (self-rule)—a term that simultaneously encompassed the ability to govern one's urges and, his ultimate aim, India's self-rule (Banerjee 2020: 68–76; Slate 2019: 55). This was quite different from Zimmermann's position, which was essentially about vegetarianism, economic reform, nudism, and sexual freedom.[14] During their only encounter, which took place during Gandhi's sojourn in Europe in 1931, the Swiss vegetarian tried to inform the Mahatma about his notion of freedom, but Gandhi, obviously bored, fell asleep in the middle of the conversation. Despite their obvious differences, Zimmermann became the main authority on Gandhi among German vegetarians and lectured extensively about him in the 1930s and again in the 1950s (Zimmermann 1931a, b).[15]

Magnus Schwantje, a German vegetarian, animal rights activist, and pacifist, had been interested in India, particularly Buddhism since his youth (Brucker 2010: 272). However, it was only in the interwar era that Schwantje met Indian activists and befriended M. P. T. Acharya (1887–1954), an anti-colonial activist in Berlin. Like Schwantje, Acharya considered himself an anarcho-pacifist.[16] Most likely, both met at the Theosophical Society (afas 1950a, 1952, 1956). Through Acharya, Schwantje developed an interest in Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle (Vegetarischen Presse 1931). Later, when Schwantje was in exile in Switzerland, Acharya informed him of the protest against animal sacrifices in Hindu temples organized by a young Brahmin called Ram Chandra Sharma (1909–2009). Fascinated by his commitment, Schwantje began publishing articles and leaflets about him, and both exchanged several letters in 1937 and 1938 (Schwantje 1937).[17] Ram Chandra borrowed Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha*, non-violent resistance, for his campaigns.

---

[13] Zimmermann translated a Belgian scholar's work on Taoism into German (Borel 1933).

[14] Zimmermann translated Alice Bunker Stockham's work on birth control through continence (Stockham 1925). He also wrote books on free love and nudism (Zimmermann 1923a, b, 1927b).

[15] Zimmermann remained a popular speaker at German vegetarian congresses in the 1950s (Zimmermann 1951, 1955a, b).

[16] 'Anarchist' was a term Acharya (2019) used to describe his political positions – originally published in the newspaper, *The Road to Freedom*, 3 (1), 1 September 1926, 5–6.

[17] For contemporary Indian accounts of Ram Chandra's fast, see 'Fast to stop animal sacrifice', *Times of India*, 26 September 1935, 3; 'Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma's fast for stopping animal sacrifice,' *Modern Review* LVIII, no. 4 (1935): 482–3; 'Rabindranath Tagore and Pandit Ram Chandra Sharma's fast,' *Modern Review* LVIII, no. 4 (1935): 484.

However, although Ram Chandra used Gandhi's methods, he had different goals—goals of which Schwantje was unaware. In contrast to Gandhi, Ram Chandra embraced a notion of Hindutva, which was reminiscent of the one developed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), an advocate of violence as a means of achieving freedom from the British (Kapila 2021: 89–118; Sharma 2011: 147–204). Like Savarkar, he regarded Muslims as foreign elements in India of whom the emerging nation needed to be purged. Ram Chandra believed that this ought to happen in much the same way as the Nazis purged Germany of Jews (Śarmā 2000: 170–87).[18] Schwantje never learnt of Ram Chandra's anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic beliefs. In 1950, when he received a letter from Acharya for the first time since 1937, he asked after Ram Chandra. A close associate of Gandhi told Schwantje that the Mahatma had been unimpressed by him (afas 1950b). This harsh judgement lessened Schwantje's respect for the Mahatma who, in his opinion, cared too little about animals. Gandhi, or so he argued, had been 'a very honourable man, yet sometimes pronounced wrong judgements' (afas 1950c).

Conclusion

As this brief overview shows, India's influence on German vegetarianism was less direct than it was on British vegetarianism. However, as Gustav Struve's early novel *Mandaras Wanderungen* has demonstrated, it was there long before the surge of interest in Asian spirituality, which, according to Suzanne Marchand (2013), was confined to the Weimar period in Germany. Also, as the examples of Wilhelm Hübbe Schleiden, Bernhard Förster, Ludwig Ankenbrand, Werner Zimmermann, and Magnus Schwantje show, several direct contacts were made between German-speaking and Indian protagonists that the previous research has ignored. Encounters with India, therefore, were not confined to the realm of fantasy, though fantasy certainly played a major role.

Emerging at a time of industrialization and urbanization, in Europe organized vegetarianism was cast as a means of regenerating humankind, of regaining the purity that Europe's supposedly increasingly degenerative workers and city dwellers seemed to have lost. This search often took on

---

[18] In his support of the Nazi government, Ram Chandra was not a singular case among Hindu nationalists. As Maria Framke (2013) and others have shown, Hitler and the Nazis were widely admired and even read in Hindu nationalist circles.

clear racial connotations. India therefore came to be of interest not only as a supposed homeland of vegetarianism, but also as a country in which 'Aryans' had supposedly originated or settled. Thus, India was considered synonymous with both Hinduism and Brahminism. Few vegetarians noticed that other communities and religions on the subcontinent did not embrace vegetarianism, or if they did, they tended to approve of the discrimination and hierarchies to which non-vegetarians were exposed. Enthusiasm for India among German-speaking vegetarians was often ambivalent, for those attracted to the idea of Aryanism were quick to find ways of claiming their own superiority, even if they considered themselves in need of purification.

How close were vegetarians who embraced Aryanism to Nazi thought? To be sure, there were significant overlaps. However, it needs to be noted that there were also divergences. First, the Nazi authorities did not share many vegetarians' convictions that one's racial status could be upgraded through vegetarian nutrition; a person's racial identity was considered permanent (Weber 1935). Second, as Corinna Treitel has shown, the Nazi government did not actively promote vegetarianism but merely a diet less rich in meat (Treitel 2017: 189–233). On the other hand, the Nazis clearly accepted vegetarianism. Many of its protagonists, therefore, were able to continue their work. Only pacifist vegetarians like Magnus Schwantje were persecuted under Nazi rule. It is no surprise that certain tendencies in the vegetarian movement, including the notion of Aryanism, survived the Second World War and continued into the 1950s—but that would be subject enough for another chapter.

References

Acharya, M.P.T. 2019. Anarchist manifesto. In *We are Anarchists: Essays on anarchism, pacifism, and the Indian Independence Movement, 1923–1953*, ed. Ole Birk Laursen, 45–49. Edinburgh: Chico.

Adcock, C.S. 2010. Sacred cows and secular history: Cow protection debates in colonial North India. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30 (2): 297–311.

afas (Archiv für alternatives Schrifttum). 1950a. Magnus Schwantje papers: M. P. T. Acharya to Magnus Schwantje, 29 July.

———. 1950b. Magnus Schwantje papers: K. G. Mashruwala to M. P. T. Acharya, Bajajwadi, Wardha, 1 August.

———. 1950c. Magnus Schwantje papers: Magnus Schwantje to M. P. T. Acharya, Stade, n.d. (after June).

———. 1952. Magnus Schwantje papers: Magnus Schwantje to Helene Haas, Wuppertal-Elberfeld, 10 August.

———. 1956. Magnus Schwantje papers: Magnus Schwantje to Erika Krüche, Jena, 4 September.

Albrecht, Paul. 1930. Gandhi. *Vegetarische Presse* 13: 37–38.

Albrecht, Jörg. 2016. Ludwig Ankenbrand: Buddhism and the modern reform efforts. In *Religious dynamics under the impact of imperialism and colonialism*, ed. Björn Bentlage, Marion Eggert, Hans Martin Krämer, and Stefan Reichmuth, 186–191. Leiden: Brill.

Ammann, David. 1914. The coming race and race hygiene. *Mazdaznan* 13: 304.

Ankenbrand, Ludwig. 1911. Der Buddhismus und die modernen Reformbestrebungen. *Zeitschrift für Buddhismus* 1–2: 56–61.

———. 1913. Von Genua nach Kairo. *Vegetarische Warte* 46 (2): 16–17. 46–7.

———. 1914a. Aus Diatalawa. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 2: 6.

———. 1914b. Vom Kriegsschauplatz. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 1: 4.

———. 1914c. Aus Diatalawa. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 1: 6.

———. 1915a. Ich habe keine Zeit, muede zu sein. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 10: 5–6.

———. 1915b. Aus Diatalawa. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 10: 9.

———. 1915c. Bilder aus Ceylon. *Deutsche Kolonial- und Kriegsgefangenenzeitung Diyatalawa* 15: 2–6.

———. 1920. Deutsche Buddhisten in Indien während der Kriegszeit. *Zeitschrift für Buddhismus* 1–2: 62–63.

Banerjee, Samir. 2020. *Tracing Gandhi: Satyarthi to satyagrahi*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Barlösius, Eva. 1997. *Naturgemäße Lebensführung: Zur Geschichte der Lebensreform um die Jahrhundertwende*. Campus: Frankfurt am Main.

Bartholomeusz, Tessa J. 1993. Dharmapala at Chicago: Mahayana Buddhist or Sinhala chauvinist. In *A museum of faiths: Histories and legacies of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions*, ed. Eric J. Ziolkowski, 235–250. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Baumgartner, Judith. 1992. *Ernährungsreform – Antwort auf Industrialisierung und Ernährungswandel: Ernährungsreform als Teil der Lebensreformbewegung am Beispiel der Siedlung und des Unternehmens Eden seit 1893*. Frankfurt: Lang.

Bausinger, Hermann. 2011. Die Dinge der Macht. In *Die Macht der Dinge: Symbolische Kommunikation und kulturelles Handeln*, ed. Andreas Hartmann, Peter Höher, and Christiane Cantaw, 27–34. Münster: Waxmann.

Bigalke, Bernadett. 2016. *Lebensreform und Esoterik um 1900: Die Leipziger alternativ-religiöse Szene am Beispiel der Internationalen Theosophischen Verbrüderung*. Würzburg: Ergon.

Bigalke, Bernadett, and Katharina Neef. 2008. Mitleiden oder Energie sparen? Buddhismus und Monismus in Leipzig um 1900. In *Stadtgeschichte: Mitteilungen des Leipziger Geschichtsvereins. Jahrbuch 2008*, ed. Markus Cottin, Detlef Döring, and Cathrin Friedrich, 205–235. Leipzig: Sax.

Blackbourn, David. 1998. *The long nineteenth century: A history of Germany, 1780–1918*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blackburn, Anne M. 2010. *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism and modernity in Sri Lanka*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. 1883. Pertinent questions. *The Theosophist* 4 (9): 235.

———. 1889. *The key to theosophy, being a clear exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the ethics, science and philosophy, for the study of which the Theosophical Society has been founded*. London: Theosophical Publishing Company.

———. 1890. Drinking and meat-eating. *The Theosophist* 11: 854.

Borel, Henri. 1933. *Wu-Wei: Eine Auslegung der Lehren Laotses*. Rudolf Zitzmann: Trans. Werner Zimmermann. Nuremberg.

Brekke, Torkel. 2002. *Makers of modern Indian religion in the late nineteenth century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brucker, Renate. 2010. Tierrechte und Friedensbewegung: 'Radikale Ethik' und gesellschaftlicher Fortschritt in der deutschen Geschichte. In *Tierische Geschichte. Die Beziehung von Mensch und Tier in der Kultur der Moderne*, ed. Dorothee Brantz and Christof Mauch, 268–285. Paderborn: Schöningh.

Buchholz, Kai. 2001. *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst Um 1900*. Darmstadt: Häusser.

Cluet, Marc. 2007. Persische Briefe eines urtümlichen Himalaja-Inders: Mandaras' Wanderungen Von Gustav Struve. In *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005*, ed. Jean-Marc Valentin, 27–32. Bern: Peter Lang.

De, Rohit. 2019. Cows and constitutionalism. *Modern Asian Studies* 53 (1): 240–277.

Dharampal-Frick, Gita, and Sudha Sitharaman. 2015. Cow protection. In *Key concepts in modern Indian studies*, ed. Gita Dharmpal Frick, Monika Kirolskar Steinbach, Rachel Dwyer, and Jahnavi Phalkey, 49–51. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eichler, Willi. 1926. Der 'internationale Jugend-Bund' (IGB) und der 'Internationale Sozialistische Kampf-Bund' (ISK). *Mitteilungen des Bundes für radikale Ethik* 7: 9–11.

Figueira, Dorothy M. 2002. *Aryans, Jews,* Brahmins*: Theorizing authority through myths of identity*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Fischer-Tiné, Harald. 2012. Arya Samaj. In *Brill's encyclopedia of Hinduism. Vol. V: Religious symbols, Hinduism and migration, contemporary communities outside South Asia, some modern religious groups and teachers*, ed. Knut A. Jacobson, 389–396. Leiden: Brill.

Förster, Georg. 1926. Führer. George Bernhard Shaw. *Vegetarische Presse* 9: 92.

———. 1932a. Führer. Leo Tolstoi als Vegetarier. *Vegetarische Presse* 15: 103–105.

———. 1932b. Führer. Mikkel Hindhede. *Vegetarische Presse* 15: 19–20.

———. 1932c. Politik: Reichspräsidenten-Wahl. *Vegetarische Presse* 15: 34.

———. 1932d. Adolf Hitler. *Vegetarische Presse* 15: 50.

———. 1932e. Vegetarier Hitler Reichskanzler. *Vegetarische Presse* 16: 13.

Förster, Georg, and Karl Buck. 1932. Aufruf zum vegetarischen Großkampf auf der ganzen Linie! *Vegetarische Presse* 16: 133–134.

Framke, Maria. 2013. *Delhi – Rom – Berlin: Die indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus 1922–1939*. Darmstadt: WBG.

Freitag, Sandria B. 1980. Sacred symbol as mobilizing ideology: The North Indian search for a 'Hindu' community. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (4): 597–625.

Fritzen, Florentine. 2006. *Gesünder leben. Die Lebensreformbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Steiner.

Gesetzbuch, Hindu. 1797. *Oder Menu's Verordnungen nach Cullucas Erläuterung*. Weimar: Verlag des Industrie-Comptoirs.

Godwin, Joscelyn. 2013. Blavatsky and the first generation of theosophy. In *Handbook of the theosophical current*, ed. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, 15–32. Leiden: Brill.

Gombrich, Richard F. 2006. *Theravāda Buddhism: A social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*. London: Routledge.

Graul, Johannes. 2012. Die Mazdaznan-Bewegung im deutschen Kaiserreich. Eine archivalienbasierte Spurensuche. In *Nonkonformismus und Europäische Religionsgeschichten [Nonconformism and European histories of religions]*, ed. Danny Schäfer, 369–386. Berlin: Lit.

———. 2013. Nonkonforme Religionen im Visier der Polizei. In *Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel der Mazdaznan-Religion im Deutschen Kaiserreich*. Würzburg: Ergon.

Hank, Peter. 2003. Einführung. In *Freiheit und Menschlichkeit: Ausgewählte Programmschriften*, ed. Gustav Struve, Amalie Struve, and Peter Hank, 9–43. Eggingen: Edition Isele.

Hauser, Julia. 2018. Körper, Moral, Gesellschaft: Debatten über Vegetarismus zwischen Europa und Indien, 1850–1914. In *Geschichte des Nicht-Essens: Verzicht, Vermeidung und Verweigerung in der Moderne*, ed. Norman Aselmeyer and Veronika Settele, 265–294. Munich: Oldenbourg.

———. 2020. A frugal crescent: Perceptions of foodways in the ottoman empire and Egypt in nineteenth-century vegetarian discourse. In *Food as a cultural signifier: Perspectives on the Middle East and beyond*, ed. Kirill Dmitriev, Julia Hauser, and Bilal Orfali, 292–316. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2021. Internationalism and nationalism: Indian protagonists and their political agendas at the 15th World Vegetarian Congress in India (1957). *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44 (1): 152–166.

———. 2023. *A taste of purity: An entangled history of vegetarianism.* New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2024. The Birth of the Ascetic Leader. Die Botschaft Des Mahatma Gandhi in Troubled Weimar Germany. In *Nodes of Translation. Rethinking Modern Intellectual History between Modern India and Germany*, edited by Martin Christof-Füchsle and Razak Khan, 195–220. Berlin: DeGruyter Oldenbourg.

Hecker, Hellmuth. 1995. *Der erste deutsche Bhikkhu: Das bewegte Leben des ehrwürdigen Nyanatiloka (1878–1957) und seine Schüler.* Konstanz: Hecker.

Hentschel, Willibald. 1906. *Mittgart: Ein Weg zur Erneuerung der germanischen Rasse.* Leipzig: Fritsch.

———. 1910. *Vom aufsteigenden Leben: Ziele der Rassen-Hygiene.* Leipzig: Eckardt.

———. 1918. *Das Deutschtum, sein Werden, seine Not, und seine zukünftigen Sicherungen.* Leipzig: Erich Matthes.

Hewitson, Mark. 2010. *Nationalism in Germany, 1848–1866: Revolutionary nation.* European Studies Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hübbe-Schleiden, Wilhelm. 2009. *Indisches Tagebuch 1894/96.* Göttingen: Norbert Klatt Verlag.

Internationaler Verein zur Bekämpfung der wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter. 1889. *Verzeichniss der Mitglieder des internationalen Vereins zur Bekämpfung der wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter.* Guben: Albert Koenig.

ISK (Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund). 1930. Zum Kampf gegen die NS. *ISK-Mitteilungen* 5 (4): 55–66.

Jones, William. 1796. *Institutes of Hindu law: Or, the ordinances of menu, according to the gloss of Cullúca. Comprising the Indian system of duties, religious and civil. Verbally translated from the original Sanskrit.* London: Sewell.

Jones, Kenneth. 1976. *Arya Dharm: Hindu consciousness in 19th-century Punjab.* New Delhi: Ajay Kumar Jain.

Jordens, J.T.F. 1960. *Dayananda Saraswati: His life and ideals.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kapila, Shruti. 2021. *Violent fraternity: Indian political thought in the global age.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kerbs, Diethart. 1998. *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933.* Wuppertal: Hammer.

Klein, Jakob A. 2008. Afterword: Comparing vegetarianisms. *Journal of South Asian Studies* XXXI (1): 199–212.

Klingbeil, Julius. 1889. Enthuellungen über die Dr Bernhard Förster'sche Ansiedelung Neu Germanien in Paraguay. In *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte unserer Gegenwärtigen en Bestrebungen; nach eigenen Erfahrungen mitgetheilt.* Leipzig: Baldamus.

Krabbe, Wolfgang R. 1974. *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Kraus, Daniela. 2008. Bernhard Foerster und Seine Siedlung Nueva Germania in Paraguay. *Jahrbuch fuer Antisemitismusforschung* 17: 171–194.

———. 2009. Förster, Bernhard. In *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Bd. 2, 1: Personen: A-K*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, 236–237. Berlin: de Gruyter Saur.

Lindner, Heiner. 2006. Um etwas zu erreichen, muss man sich etwas vornehmen, von dem man glaubt, dass es unmöglich sei. In *Der Internationale Sozialistische Kampf-Bund (ISK) und seine Publikationen*. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Linse, Ulrich. 2001. Mazdaznan – die Rassenreligion vom arischen Friedensreich. In *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne. Entwürfe 'arteigener' Glaubenssysteme seit der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Stefanie v. Schnurbein and Justus H. Ulbricht, 268–291. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

———. 2005. Mazdaznan. In *Lexikon neureligiöser Gruppen, Szenen und Weltanschauungen: Orientierungen im religiösen Pluralismus*, ed. Harald Baer and Thomas Becker, 776–777. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Marchand, Suzanne. 2013. Eastern wisdom in an age of Western despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe. In *Weimar thought: A contested legacy*, ed. Peter Gordon and John McCormick, 341–360. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McGetchin, Douglas T. 2009. Indology, Indomania, and orientalism. In *Ancient India's rebirth in modern Germany*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

———. 2017. The rise of ancient India in modern Germany. In *On the paths of englightenment. The myth of India in Western culture, 1808–2017*, ed. Elio Schenini, 40–55. Geneva: Skira.

Meinecke, Gustav. 1889. *Kleine Mitteilungen (Dr Bernhard Förster)*. Deutsche Kolonialzeitung. Neue Folge 2, no. 28 p. 232. 20 July.

Moritz, Maria. 2009. Between 'Eastern sacred space' and esoteric capitals of 'the West'. Indian theosophists as mediators between India and Euro-America, 1882–1893. In *Capitales de l'ésoterisme Européen et dialogue des cultures. Actes du IIe colloque international, European Society for the Study of Western esoteri-cism 2–4 Juillet 2009*, ed. European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism, 181–196. Strasbourg: MISHA.

———. 2012. *Globalizing 'sacred knowledge': South Asians and the theosophical society, 1879–1930*. PhD thesis. Bremen: Jacobs University Bremen.

———. 2014. Looking for spirituality in India: A German theosophist's experiments with ganja (1894–1896). In *A history of alcohol and drugs in modern South Asia: Intoxicating affairs*, ed. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Jana Tschurenev, 117–136. London: Routledge.

———. 2016. 'The empire of righteousness': Anagarika Dharmapala and his vision of Buddhist Asianism. In *Asianisms: Regionalist interactions and Asian integration*, ed. Nicola Spakowski and Marc Frey, 19–48. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Mukhopadhyay, Mriganka. 2019. Mohini: A case study of a transnational spiritual space in the history of the theosophical society. *Numen* 67 (2–3): 165–190.

———. 2021. Occult's first foot soldier in Bengal: Peary Chand Mittra and the early theosophical movement. In *The occult nineteenth century*, ed. Lukas Pokorny and Franz Winter, 269–286. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Myers, Perry. 2013. *German visions of India, 1871–1918: Commandeering the Holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nelson, Leonard. 1920a. *Erziehung zum Führer. Vortrag, gehalten im Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht in Berlin am 14. April 1920*. Leipzig: Der Neue Geist.

———. 1920b. *Demokratie und Führerschaft. Vortrag, gehalten im Schweizer Ferien-Kurs des Internationalen Jugend-Bundes im Fextal am 27. Juni 1919*. Leipzig: Der Neue Geist.

O'Toole, Therese. 2003. Secularizing the sacred cow: The relationship between religious reform and Hindu nationalism. In *Hinduism in public and private: Reform, Hindutva, gender, and Sampraday*, ed. Anthony Copley, 84–109. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Peiser, Jürgen. 1973. *Gustav Struve als politischer Schriftsteller und Revolutionär*. PhD thesis. Frankfurt am Main: Druckschnelldienst.

Pelger, Gregor. 2017. Willibald Hentschel. In *Handbuch der Völkischen Wissenschaften. Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 288–293. Berlin: Saur.

Poliakov, Léon. 1974. *The Aryan myth: A history of and nationalistic ideas in Europe*. London: Chatto; Heinemann.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1993. Deep orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and power beyond the Raj. In *Orientalism and the post-colonial predicament. Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, 76–133. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Presse, Vegetarische. 1931. Über Vegetarismus und Gewaltbekämpfung. *Mitteilungen des Bundes für Radkale Ethik* 23: 23–24.

Puschner, Uwe. 2011. Mittgart: eine völkische Utopie. In *Utopien, Zukunftsvorstellungen, Gedankenexperimente: Literarische Konzepte von einer anderen Welt im abendländischen Denken von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus Geus, 155–186. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

———. 2013. Völkische Intellektuelle? Das Beispiel Willibald Hentschel. In *Intellektuelle und Antiintellektuelle im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Richard Faber and Uwe Puschner, 145–164. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

Rege, Sharmila. 2006. *Writing caste/writing gender: Reading Dalit women's testimonios*. New Delhi: Zubaan.

Reiß, Ansgar. 2004. *Radikalismus und Exil: Gustav Struve und die Demokratie in Deutschland und Amerika*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Rothe, Arthur. 1931. Lebensreformer und ihre Politik! *Vegetarische Presse* 14: 5.

Roy, Parama. 2015. Vegetarianism. In *Keywords in South Asian studies*, ed. Gita Dharampal-Frick, Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Rachel Dwyer, and Jahnavi Phalkey, 272–275. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Santucci, James A. 2012. Theosophy. In *The Cambridge companion to new religious movements*, ed. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, 231–246. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saraswati, Maharshi Dayananda. 1889. *Ocean of mercy: An English translation of Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati's 'Gocaruna nidhi' by Durga Prasad*. Lahore: Virajanand Press.

———. 2015. *Ka patra-vayvahar* [bhag-9]. Vedic Pustakalay: Reprint. Ajmer.

Sarda, Har Bilas. 1946. Dayanand Sarasvati. In *World Teacher*. Ajmer: Vedic Yantralaya.

Śarmā, Pandit Rāmacandra Vīra. 2000. First published 1943. In *Vijaya-Patākā*. Sāgara: Akhila Bhāratīya Ādarśa Hindū-Saṅgha Madhyaprāntīya Śākhā.

Saroja, G.V. 1992. The contribution of Anagarika Devamitta Dharmapāla to the revival of Buddhism in India. In *Buddhist themes in modern Indian literature*, ed. J. Parthasarathi, 27–38. Madras: Institute of Asian Studies.

Schlegel, Friedrich. 1808. *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier [on the language and wisdom of the Indians]*. Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer.

Schmitz, Norbert. 1999. Mazdaznan am Bauhaus – Der Künstler als Heilsbringer. In *Bauhaus*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler, Peter Feierabend, and Norbert Schmitz, 120–125. Cologne: Könemann.

Schwantje, Magnus. 1937. *Ram Chandra Sharma's Kampf gegen die religiösen Tieropfer in Indien* [Lutte de Ram Chandra Sharma contre les sacrifices religieux d'animaux aux Indes]. Reproduction spéciale du bulletin de la ligue antivivisectionniste L'antivivisection. Geneva: Ligue Antivivisectionniste.

Sharma, Jyortirmaya. 2011. *Hindutva: Exploring the idea of Hindu nationalism*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Shirmad, Jamshid Jaranmard. 1911. Anerkennung aus Persien. *Mazdaznan* 4: 55.

Sinha, Mrinalini. 1995. *Colonial masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sirkaris, Cawas Pestonji. 1911. Gutachten eines Zendgelehrten. *Mazdaznan* 4: 54.

Slate, Nico. 2019. *Gandhi's search for the perfect diet*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Sommer, Walter. 1924. *Die natürliche Ernährung*. Rendsburg: Sommer.

———. 1928. Naturell und Ernährung. *Lichtheilgrüße* 4: 143–147.

———. 1933a. Blut und Boden: Das deutsche Bodenrecht. *Lichtheilgrüße* 9: 98–103.

———. 1933b. Ex Oriente Lux. *Lichtheilgrüße* 9: 98–103.

Starker, G. 1888. Zur Auswanderung nach Neu-Germanien. *Thalysia: Vereins-Blatt für Freunde der natürlichen Lebensweise* XXI (1): 6–11.

Stausberg, Michael. 2004. *Die Religion Zarathushtras*. Vol. 2. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

———. 2007. Para-Zoroastrians: Memetic traditions and appropriations. In *Parsis in India and the diaspora*, ed. John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams, 236–254. London: Routledge.

Stockham, Alice B. 1925. *Ethik der Ehe: Karezza. Berechtigt übersetzt aus dem Amerikanischen von Werner Zimmermann*. Jena: Die neue Zeit.

Struve, Gustav. 1843. *Mandaras Wanderungen* [Mandara's travels]. Mannheim: Schwan & Götz.

Stuart, Tristram. 2006. *The bloodless revolution: Radical vegetarians and the discovery of India*. London: Harper.

Thapar, Romila. 2006. The historiography of the concept of 'Aryan'. In *India: Historical beginnings and the concept of the Aryan*, ed. Romila Thapar, Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, Madhav M. Deshpande, and Shereen Ratnagar, 1–40. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

Treitel, Corinna. 2017. *Eating nature in modern Germany: Food, agriculture, and environment, c.1870 to 2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Valmiki, Omprakash. 2003. *Joothan: A Dalit's life*. New York: Columbia University Press.

van der Veer, Peter. 2001. *Imperial encounters: Religion and modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vantard, Cécile. 2004. Le végétarisme 'occidental-oriental' de Gustav Struve. In *La fascination de l'Inde en Allemagne*, ed. Marc Cluet, 155–163. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Viswanathan, Gauri. 2013. Theosophical Society. In *Brill's encyclopedia of Hinduism. Vol. V: Religious symbols, Hinduism and migration, contemporary communities outside South Asia, some modern religious groups and teachers*, ed. Knut A. Jacobson, 679–689. Leiden: Brill.

Wagner, Christoph. 2005. Zwischen Lebensreform und Esoterik: Johannes Ittens Weg ans Bauhaus in Weimar. In *Das Bauhaus und die Esoterik*, ed. Christoph Wagner, 65–77. Bielefeld: Kerber.

———. 2009. Johannes Itten und die Esoterik: Ein Schlüssel zum frühen Bauhaus? In *Esoterik am Bauhaus: Eine Revision der Moderne?* ed. Christoph Wagner, 108–149. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner.

Weber, G. 1935. Verfälschung des Rassegedankens durch Geheimlehren. *Leib und Leben* 3: 293–299.

Wedemeyer-Kolwe, Bernd. 2004. *'Der neue Mensch': Körperkultur im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Zerbel, Miriam. 1999. Tierschutzbewegung. In *Handbuch zur 'völkischen Bewegung' 1871—1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner, 546–557. Munich: De Gruyter.

Zimmermann, Werner. 1921. *Weltvagant: Erlebnisse und Gedanken*. Rudolf Zitzmann: Lauf an der Pegnitz.

———. 1923a. *Liebe: Von ihrem dreifachen Sinn*. Erfurt: Steiger.

———. 1923b. *Lichtwärts: Ein Buch erlösender Erziehung*. Erfurt: Steiger.

———. 1927a. Masdasnan. In *Tao: Monatsblätter für Verinnerlichung und Selbstgestaltung*, 32: n.p.

———. 1927b. *Liebes-Klarheit*. Rudolf Zitzmann: Lauf an der Pegnitz.

———. 1930. *Tropenheimat*. Stuttgart: Die neue Zeit.

———. 1931a. Berichte. Gandhi. *Tau* 82: 27.

———. 1931b. Berichte. Vorträge. *Tau* 82: 18–19.

———. 1937. *Weltheimat*. Rudolf Zitzmann: Lauf an der Pegnitz.

———. 1950. *Zu freien Ufern*. Munich: Drei Eichen.

———. 1951. Vorträge von Dr. h. c. Werner Zimmermann. *Vegetarisches Universum* 4 (10): 3.

———. 1955a. Werner Zimmermann-Obara-Vorträge. *Vegetarisches Universum* 8 (5): 4.

———. 1955b. Werner-Zimmermann-Vorträge. *Vegetarisches Universum* 11: 4.

Zotz, Volker. 2000. Auf den glücklichen Inseln. In *Buddhismus in der deutschen Kultur*. Berlin: Theseus.

The Indian Challenge: Indology and New Conceptions of Christianity as 'Religion' at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Mathias Thurner

The present notion of religion as a universal concept, the question of its historical origins and the circumstances of its global dissemination has been significantly influenced and inspired by Tomoko Masuzawa's (2005) *The Invention of World Religions.* Following other historians of religion (Asad 1993; Dubuisson 2003; Fitzgerald 2000), Masuzawa identified a structural Eurocentrism within fundamental categories of the discourse on religion. Two of her claims are important. First, the notion of world religions, which European scholars coined at the end of the nineteenth century, was subsequently exported to the rest of the world (Masuzawa 2005: 20, 32–3); and, second, in a time when history as a scientific discipline became foundational to the humanities and a comparative history of religions evolved, coining the concept of world religions was a means of

M. Thurner (✉)
Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany

Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Sandhausen, Sandhausen, Germany
e-mail: mathias.thurner@kbz.ekiba.de

59

safeguarding Christianity's traditional claim to supremacy over other religions in the guise of religious pluralism (Masuzawa 2005: 29, 327). Masuzawa identifies this fundamental shift from Christianity's traditional claim to supremacy based on metaphysical assumptions to a new approach based on history in the work of the German Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) (Masuzawa 2005: 309–28).

Several outlines of a global history question the view that Europeans were the first to see religion as a universal concept (Bayly 2004: 325–65; Beyer 2006; Osterhammel 2009: 1239–304). These authors see the birth of the modern world, including the emergence of the notion of religion, as the product of an entangled history of colonialism, in which the last decades of the nineteenth century, in particular, saw fundamental changes in all religions, including Christianity. In this respect, global history and postcolonial studies converge to confirm that globally applied concepts like religion have a global history: Both colonizers and the colonized—despite the asymmetry of the power relations between them—were intimately connected and in the nineteenth century underwent parallel transformations based on mutual influences (Chidester 2014; van der Veer 2001). Furthermore, from a postcolonial viewpoint, several regional studies have shown how, in colonial contexts at the end of the nineteenth century, local reformers conceptualized various cultural formations as religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (Hatcher 1999; Hopf 2021; Kateman 2019; King 2008; Snodgrass 2003). As I have mentioned elsewhere (Thurner 2021), we should try to understand Christian theologians like Ernst Troeltsch in the context of the new global discourse on religion occurring at the end of the nineteenth century and his conception of Christianity as paralleling the development of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam as religions. This, plus the agency of reformers on the periphery, casts doubt on Masuzawa's hypothesis of there being a unilinear export of a European concept to colonial contexts.

Masuzawa contests the Eurocentrism of religion as a universally applied concept. However, seeing the categories of religion and world religions as a Western or European construct would in no way alleviate the problem of structural Eurocentrism. In his seminal work *Provincializing Europe*, Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty warns of the consequences of assigning universal concepts to a particular geographical or cultural origin—usually Europe—prior to historical examination (Chakrabarty 2000: 27–46). In this case, the conceptual content is identified with the intellectual history of a certain region. If then, in a second step, a universal

concept is applied to another region, the region of the supposed origin of the concept works as the prototype by which all other contexts will be measured. In this scheme, any difference to the prototype can only be grasped as a 'failure, lack, and inadequacy' (Chakrabarty 2000: 34). In historiography, where universal concepts function as fundamental categories structuring historical investigations, this creates the epistemological and ethical problem of Eurocentrism. As Chakrabarty (2000, 29) put it, 'only "Europe", the argument would appear to be, is *theoretically* (that is at the level of the fundamental categories that shape historical thinking) knowable; all other histories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton that is substantially "Europe"'. This unconscious prioritizing of Europe and its history is marked by classifying societies as *pre*-modern or *pre*-capitalist because they are measured by and located on the timeline of European intellectual history as the self-evident point of reference for all other histories. To quote Chakrabarty again: '"Europe" remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian", "Chinese", "Kenyan", and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe"' (Chakrabarty 2000: 27).

To assert that the concept of religion is of European origin would on the one hand legitimize claims of Europe's exclusive ownership of the concept, and on the other would discriminate against the numerous other extant cultural identities in postcolonial contexts based on a self-understanding as religion. As religious studies can neither do away with universal categories nor seek refuge in cultural relativism, the only solution can be to engage in a conscious, yet historically informed, use of these categories. It is thus important to remember that the global application of these categories has a global history; that this history is closely connected to the colonial project of Europe and its power relations, but happened on a global stage and included voices from the colonial periphery that also shaped these categories; and that the supposed universality of these categories stems not directly from their alleged enlightened rationality but from a contingent global historical development against the backdrop of colonialism (Chakrabarty 2000: 43). Thus, historicizing religion as a universal concept reveals its contingency and accommodates both criticism and modification.

In this chapter, we will demonstrate how, within a global discourse on religion, German theologian Ernst Troeltsch and German Indologist

Hermann Oldenberg tried to counteract the onslaught of non-Christian religions on Christianity. Ernst Troeltsch drew on Hermann Oldenberg's work to substantiate his new conception of Christianity as a religion against the backdrop of a global religious history. We will see how Oldenberg was himself part of a global discourse on religion in which, through his Indological scholarship, he attempted to defend the supremacy of Christianity against the rising popularity of Buddhism and Indian philosophy.

THE CHALLENGE

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Heidelberg-based Protestant theologian-cum-philosopher Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) found himself and his academic guild challenged to justify Christianity's claim to truth and validity in a recently globalized world of religions. As 'Orientalist scholarship was considered to be among the highest scientific achievements of the time' (van der Veer 2001: 65), the act of establishing a general religious history reduced Christianity to just one religion among others. To maintain its claim to the truth, Troeltsch argued, theology needed to make an empirical turn towards history and, to avoid descending into relativism, this had to be supplemented by an idealistic philosophy of history. As Troeltsch noted, in his Essay *Die Selbständigkeit der Religion* (The Independence of Religion), published in 1895/6, this empirical adjustment had already been made insofar as 'the general religious history had increasingly been forming the basis of all theological research and its methods had permeated the whole body of theological scholarship' (Troeltsch 2009: 367). In his eyes, however, this turn was only half-hearted—an impossible attempt to integrate a few ideas and methods merely to maintain the conventional theological metaphysics in the age of science. Troeltsch (2009: 366), by contrast, argued that the serious 'contemporary crisis' of religion called for a fundamental shift from theological scholarship to the general religious history. For him, the 'essence of religion' and the possibility of its 'coexistence with science' (Troeltsch 2009: 365) were at stake. In sum, Troeltsch saw science as fundamental challenge for Christianity and religion in general. In other words, religion needed to accommodate science in a way that legitimated its independence.

THE ANTAGONISM OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW CONCEPT OF RELIGION

While, at first sight, religion's antagonistic relationship with science seems to have been ongoing throughout the ages, Troeltsch's alarming tone suggests that there had to be something new to it. In fact, the antithetical juxtaposition of the two terms has its roots in the historical conditions of the mid-nineteenth century (Bergunder 2016; Burrow 2000: 31–67; Chadwick 1972: 1–39, 1975: 161–88; Harrison 2006). Following the impressive discoveries and immense progress in the natural sciences in the first half of the nineteenth century, some scientists claimed that only science could provide a full explanation of the natural world. In Germany, its impetus was not least due to political developments: After the failure of the first pan-German democratic movement in 1848/9, some disappointed leaders of that movement returned to their original professions to overcome what they had come to regard as an oppressive and obsolete system. One of them was the physiologist Carl Vogt (1817–95). In his *Physiologische Briefe* (Physiological letters), Vogt expressed a profound physiological materialism, in which he not only refuted that reason and nature were independent of one another but also characterized the spiritual world as a direct outcome of nature and wholly accessible through science. As he put it (Vogt 1847: 206):

> Each and every scientist whose thinking is logically consistent will, I think, adopt this notion: that all those capabilities, which we think of as spiritual, are merely functions of the cerebral matter; or, to express myself bluntly: that thoughts have the same relationship to the brain as bile has to the liver or urine to the kidneys.

The line of attack of this statement was directed against the idealistic philosophy of mid-nineteenth-century Germany, which, because it had state approval during the post-revolutionary years was influential. Vogt toured Europe, held lectures, and became the most popular figure in what later came to be known as the 'materialism controversy' (*Materialismusstreit*) (Bayertz et al. 2007). Owen Chadwick (1975: 166) described him as 'a wonderful orator, with a perfect mixture of humour and satire. … He had far more power of popular exposition than Darwin, more power than Huxley'. Jacob Moleschott (1822–93), who in 1847 became associate professor of physiology at Heidelberg University, expressed similar views

in his work *Der Kreislauf des Lebens* (Circuit of life), published in 1852, in which he (Moleschott 1852: 419) claimed that:

> Man is the sum of parents and nurse, of place and time, of air and weather, of sound and light, of food and clothing. His will is the necessary consequence of all those causes, bound to a law of nature which we recognize from its appearance as the planet from its orbit, like the plant from the soil.

Moleschott, like Vogt, also became a public figure especially through devising his famous phrase of 'no thoughts without phosphorus'. A third spearhead of physiological materialism was Ludwig Büchner (1824–99), a physician and active politician during the German democratic revolution, as well as the brother of the famous writer Georg Büchner (1813–37).

In 1854, the controversy over materialism came to a head at the 31st Convention of the Society of German Scientists and Doctors in Göttingen, when Rudolf Wagner (1805–64), a physiologist at Göttingen, advocated basing science on Christian convictions. He wholly discredited physiological materialism and explicitly attacked Vogt, who countered with his monograph (Vogt 1855) *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (Birdbrained faith and science). Also stepping into the controversy, in the same year Ludwig Büchner (1855) produced *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and matter). The essence of this book lay in his claim that there is 'no matter without force and no force without matter', which left no space for a spiritual force, let alone traditional biblical images of God. Acknowledging its influence, Chadwick (1975, 170–1) observed that 'if a single book represents the popular, as distinct from the real … oppositions between Science and Religion in Europe of the middle nineteenth century, that book is Büchner's *Force and Matter*'. By 1904, there were already 21 German editions of the book and it had been translated into 15 languages.

Although the controversy over materialism began in Germany, it quickly spread to other countries. Besides prominent figures like Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–95) and John Tyndall (1820–93), John William Draper (1811–82) made an important contribution towards fuelling the debate in the Anglo-Saxon world. In *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, he (Draper 1874) constructed a history of the millennia-old enmity between the two spheres and their respective agents. However, Chadwick concluded that 'the conflict was hypostatized, Science and Religion were blown up into balloon duellists, Science containing all knowledge, Religion containing no knowledge. … Once it had been

hypostatized, it became possible to read back the antipathy throughout history, and see the ding-dong of duel through the centuries' (Chadwick 1975: 162–3). Draper regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the primary enemy of science, but emphasized that all religions had to meet the challenge of science. As he (Draper 1874: 324) explained:

> When by our wonderful facilities of locomotion strange nations and conflicting religions are brought into common presence – the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Brahman – modifications of them all must ensue. In that conflict science alone will stand secure; for it has given us grander views of the universe, more awful views of God.

Draper's universal claim for the legitimacy of science was amply rewarded by the global attention his book attracted. It was quickly translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Portuguese, and Serbian, and also, among other languages, into Japanese (1883), Turkish (1885), and Urdu (1910) (Bergunder 2020: 81; Chadwick 1975: 161). By the end of the nineteenth century, the supposed conflict between science and religion was widely acknowledged as a matter of fact around the globe.

Peter Harrison equated the materialism controversy and the popularization of the conflict between science and religion with the birth of the concept of science as we now know it, namely strictly based on empirical research, with anything like natural philosophy being outsourced (Harrison 2006). There are strong indications that the same is true of religion. Materialism's attack on religion resulted in theologians and other intellectuals beginning to define the latter as an inner experience. As John Burrow (2000: 60) remarked, 'even theologians began to strut a little, on ground cleared by idealist philosophy or in an enclave of inner personal experience of the divine which might reasonably … seem immune from scientific tampering'. In the same way, Thomas Green (2016: 51) argued that 'defining religion in terms of experience had the appealing result that religion would be made seemingly invulnerable to scientific or historical criticisms which could pick holes in scripture, but which could hardly touch the inner sense of the Infinite'. In other words, the new understanding of religion as a matter of inner personal experience, was a direct consequence of the new understanding of science. In the eyes of its advocates, this conceptual shift safeguarded the existence of religion in the age of science.

This new understanding of religion was not restricted to Europe and North America. Religious movements like the neo-Buddhism of Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), or the neo-Hinduism of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), each defined their belief system as a religion, with inner experience as its core, and thus claimed to be compatible with science (Bergunder 2020: 86–103; Green 2016; Snodgrass 2003: 198–221; van der Veer 2001: 73–4). In a speech held in Lahore in 1897, Vivekananda, a prolific writer and orator who toured Europe and America propagating *advaita vedānta* as the essence of Hinduism, warned his followers about the evils of materialism (quoted by Green 2016: 89):

> In the first place we have to stop the incoming of such a wave [of material-ism] in India. Therefore preach the Advaita to every one, so that religion may withstand the shock of modern science. Not only so, you will have to help others; your thought will help out Europe and America.

The alarming tone of this quote and the urgency of the warning about science threatening religion, evokes Troeltsch's plea to reconcile religion with science. Like Troeltsch, Vivekananda looked upon his native beliefs as a religion exposed to a serious threat from science, and his response to that threat was to embrace a new understanding of religion as an inner experience (quoted in Green 2016: 49):

> Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion.

Hence, the new understanding of religion at the end of the nineteenth century as an inner experience was a global one from the start. It developed in relation to a new understanding of science fundamentally based on empiricism and established as the ultimate authority for truth. Against this backdrop, the significance of the new concept of religion was to unfold over the following decades. In Chap. 10, Tilman Hannemann shows, in relation to the philosopher Paul Krannhals (1883–1934), that it was still influential in the 1930s.

The Problem of Religious History

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the global use of religion for different 'isms'—such as Buddhism or Hinduism—created a new stage on which different religions could compete in the current global public challenge to claim the ultimate truth. In this situation, history became the decisive benchmark against which to compare, measure, and value these religions. Ernst Troeltsch was fully aware of this new development, which was why he insisted on the shift from theology to the religious history convinced that Christianity's ultimate claim to the truth could only be proven by making interreligious comparisons. Troeltsch (2009: 375) argued that 'the [phenomenon of the] isolated individual … will never be able to attest its absolute truth in a scientific way … it is always necessary to go back to something general'. For Troeltsch, it was evident that religion must be this overall category, a *tertium comparationis* for different cultural formations. He focused on a historic perspective combining historical sources with an idealistic philosophy of religion. In this manner, he was able to consider religions as principles that compete and that are modelled like species within the framework of Darwin's natural selection. For individual religions, however, he (Troeltsch 2009: 487) used 'tendencies' in the general religious history as points of comparison. These tendencies were intended to represent the general direction of religious history (Troeltsch 2009: 487). This represented a teleological understanding of history ultimately led by divine reason. But, as Troeltsch (2009: 488) admitted, Buddhism was a historical formation that did not lend itself to such a historiographic summary. As he argued (Troeltsch 2009: 488):

> Its importance consists not in his excellence – that is out of the question with respect to a strong people – but in his pessimistic, sceptical and atheistic character, which is opposed to the essence of Occidental and other religions. If a religion with the spread of Buddhism, which far exceeds Christianity, moves in a completely new direction, then it seems that the Occidental development of religion should not be given one-sided consideration. Rather, the pessimistic atheism of Buddhism should be taken into account when determining the direction of the history of religions and should be included in the calculation. That is also the demand of the pessimists stimulated by *Schopenhauer* and *Hartmann*, for whom the importance of Buddhism in the history of religion is a welcome argument.

For scholars like Troeltsch, who tried to legitimize Christianity's claim to universal truth through the general religious history, Buddhism posed a major problem. On the one hand, its history differed from that of Occidental religions, but on the other intellectuals regarded it as the 'religion of the future'. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Indological research had become a major battlefield for 'the religion of the future'.

INDIA AND THE 'RELIGION OF THE FUTURE'

From the beginning, the term 'religion of the future' was designed to accord with science, and thus was meant as criticism of the present state of religion (Bergunder 2020: 108–11). Intellectuals, scholars, churchmen, and religious reformers claimed their own ideological viewpoints through which to bring religion into accord with science. This claim was primarily articulated through the term monism and intended as a critique of Christianity. Jena professor of zoology Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) vividly propagated a monism based on the 'unity of nature' that would be able to overcome the gap between science and religion. He developed a universal world view based on materialism but also claiming to encompass spiritual matters. In *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* (General Morphology of Organisms), Haeckel (1866: 452) argued that 'recognizing no other than the divine powers in nature, monism, which recognizes all natural laws as divine, rises to the highest and loftiest conception of which man, the most perfect of all animals, is capable, the conception of the unity of God and nature'. Since the publication of his *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (Natural History of Creation), Haeckel (1868) also became Germany's main propagator of Darwin's theory of biological evolution and its implications for a new religion or *Weltanschauung* (Nipperdey 1994: 507–10, 614). His most successful work, *Die Welträtsel* (Riddle of the world), published in 1899, went through 21 editions until 1914 (Bergunder 2020: 109). Another prominent contributor in Germany to the discourse on the 'religion of the future' was former Protestant theologian David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74). In 1872, his famous book *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (The Old Belief and the New) was published, and by 1885 it had run to a total of 14 editions. He propagated a monistic religion based on science, thus resolving the opposition between idealism and materialism, religion and science. The German scholar Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906) was Haeckel's idealistic counterpart (Heinßen 2003:

129–52) and, in his popular work *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Philosophy of the unconscious), Hartmann (1869) proposed a monism in the philosophical tradition of German idealism that claimed to be based on the findings of empirical science. The crucial point in this discourse is that Hartmann, influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, identified his monism with Buddhism and the Brahmanical *advaita vedānta* philosophy. In his polemical pamphlet *Die Selbstzersetzung des Christenthums* (1874), which was soon translated into English under the title *Religion of the Future*, Hartmann (1886: 108–9) said:

> Schopenhauer, on the contrary, plunges into the cosmic conception of the Vedas and of Buddhism; he revived their dreamy subjective Idealism, their Pessimism (which is far more profound than that of Christianity), and also he resuscitated the Ethics and the Nirvana of Buddhism. Thus Philosophy, anticipating the history of Religious Evolution, revives the more or less useful elements of Hinduism, brings them near to the consciousness of Modern Culture, and prepares a future synthesis of them with the transformed doctrines of (or the elements fit to be retained of) the Jewish–Christian religious development.

Hartmann envisaged a religion of the future that merged elements of the Indian and Jewish–Christian religious histories. His personal contribution to the discourse was to link the highly suggestive term monism with a concrete object of religious history: 'we must, in justice, recognize the truth that Buddhism is a stricter form of Monism than Brahmanism ever was' (Hartmann 1886: 104). Hence, the religion of the future had to be monism: 'if, then, we consider the actual condition of Science, what appears to be most probable is that the Religion of the Future … will be a Pantheism, or, to speak more precisely, a Pantheistic Monism' (Hartmann 1886: 118). In linking Buddhism and the Brahmanical *advaita vedānta* philosophy to this discourse on the religion of the future, Hartmann on the one hand accorded high esteem to Indian religious traditions, but on the other took the opportunity to legitimize his idealistic form of monism with historical methods. This was even more necessary as the claim to science required empirical foundations.

In the nineteenth century, Buddhism and *advaita vedānta* philosophy were already providing the historical references needed to mount sharp criticisms of Christianity (Almond 1988; King 2008: 118–60). Supporters of the rising popularity of Buddhism and *advaita vedāntic* philosophy

included figures such as Edwin Arnold (1832–1904), who wrote an influential biography of Buddha, *The Light of Asia* (Arnold 1879; see also Marchand 2009: 270–1) and the Theosophical Society. Founded in 1875 in New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–91) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), the Theosophical Society moved its headquarters to Madras (India) in 1882, thereby signifying a new focus on the Orient (Harlass 2021). With Vivekananda's propagation of *advaita vedāntic* neo-Hinduism influencing theosophy's anticlerical and anticolonial rhetoric (van der Veer 2001: 73), members of the Theosophical Society 'declared that Hinduism and Buddhism were far superior to Christianity in terms of scientific rationality and moral values' (van der Veer 2001: 74–5). Some of its leading members advised Ceylonese and Japanese Buddhists to challenge the religious arguments of the Christian missionaries in public debates and encouraged them to represent Buddhism as scientific religion to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893 (Snodgrass 2003: 155–71). Within the academic field of Indology, Thomas William Rhys Davids (Snodgrass 2003: 104–7) and Paul Deussen (Bergunder 2012: 95–107; Feldhoff 2008), among others, were looking to the so-called Eastern religions for ways of transforming the religious profile of present-day Europe. The focus on Buddhism and an *advaita vedāntic* form of Hinduism strengthened when these religions acquired the dignity and scientific appeal of monism. One representative of this trend was Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), founding father of the science of religion and editor of the *Sacred Books of the East* (Molendijk 2016). In the three lectures he gave on *vedānta* philosophy, he praised the monism of *advaita vedānta* for reconciling science and religion (Müller 1894: 11–15). Moreover, his intellectual exchanges with religious reformers such as Swami Vivekananda elucidate the global entanglements of the discourses on religion in general and on monism in particular (Green 2016).

Oldenberg's Role in Troeltsch's Philosophy of Religions

Troeltsch's unease towards some Indology scholars must be understood against the backdrop of the global discourse on the religion of the future. In this regard, he especially mentioned two scholars: '[Paul] Deussen represents the same notion more elegantly. Likewise, the positivistic opponents of belief in God and souls have taken hold of Buddhism as a

counterweight to Western spiritualism, as [T. W.] Rhys Davids's well-known Hibbert lectures on Buddhism show' (Troeltsch 2009: 488). Troeltsch wanted to maintain Christianity's claims to supremacy in terms of a general religious history. Hence, he saw himself challenged to classify Buddhism as a religion in a way that allowed this. That Troeltsch quoted only one Indologist academic for his interpretation of Buddhism demonstrates the difficulty of this task. Herman Oldenberg (1854–1920), a German professor of Indology in Kiel, found Troeltsch's full appreciation. He called the German Indologist's two works—*Buddha: His Life, his Doctrine, his Order*, first published in German in 1881, and *The Religion of the Veda* first published in German in 1894—masterpieces (Troeltsch 2009: 476, 489) and drew heavily on this still well-known scholar. In the following, it will be shown how Troeltsch's concept of Christianity as a religion relied on Oldenberg's work. Three aspects are of particular importance—Troeltsch relied on Oldenberg to underpin his understanding of religious history as an evolutionary process that led to internalization and individualization and culminated in Christianity. Furthermore, he tried to explain Buddhism's supposed atheism through India's specific religious history. Finally, he based his work on Oldenberg's outline of the history of religion in general to support his claim that the latter must be understood in terms of divine human interaction.

Troeltsch's Reception of Oldenberg's Buddha (1881)

To begin with, Troeltsch needed to understand the religious history as an ongoing process from outward practices to an individual inner experience. He calls it a 'constitutional law of all religions, that they tend by their own necessity to a belief in salvation' (Troeltsch 2009: 513), while the starting point is always a form of 'natural religion' (Troeltsch 2009: 512). In this respect, he found scholarly support from Oldenberg (1882: 3), who, in his *Buddha*, identified a

> phenomenon, specially observable in the domain of spiritual life, which we may venture to describe as a shifting of the centre of gravity of all supreme human interests from without to within: an old faith, which promised to men somehow or other by an offensive and defensive alliance with the Godhead, power, prosperity, victory and subjection of their enemies, will …

be supplanted by a new phase of thought, whose watchwords are no longer welfare, victory, dominion, but rest, peace, happiness, deliverance.

For Oldenberg, this new 'condition of the inner life' (Oldenberg 1882: 4) is followed by new social forms of religious life: it is no longer naturally based on the traditional creed of a community but on 'the will of the individual' (Oldenberg 1882: 4). From this perspective, general religious history shows a clear tendency towards individualization, spiritualization and, thereby, internalization. At certain points in religious history, religion becomes an individual matter of the inner life and gives rise to new forms of social life organized originally around a teacher and his disciples. This pattern devalues natural and popular religions as preliminary stages to an internal religion of salvation. Oldenberg (1882: 4–5) does not conceal the prototypical example behind this supposed universal development.

> Were it allowable to borrow from one particular instance of those cases which illustrate this, a designation for this revolution of universal occurrence, which transforms the religious life of nations internally as well as externally, we might describe it as the transition from the Old Testament dispensation to the New Testament dispensation. The honour of having given the most unique and most marked expression to this transition in forms unequalled in history, belongs to the Semitic race.

He admits, that 'five hundred years earlier than in Palestine, analogous occurrences took place among the Indo–Germanic nations in two places', which he locates 'in Greece and in India' (Oldenberg 1882: 5). As it turns out, the three localities—Palestine, Greece, and India—are placeholders for specific contemporary identity markers in terms of religion: Oldenberg (1882: 5) makes clear that he was talking about 'Socratic, Buddhist, and Christian vitality' as distinct historical forces performing the same transition, yet in different ways. As he explained (Oldenberg 1882: 5–6):

> the Greeks were bound to meet this demand with a new philosophy, the Jews with a new faith. The Indian mind was wanting in that simplicity, which can believe without knowing, as well as in that bold clearness, which seeks to know without believing, and therefore the Indian had to frame a doctrine, a religion and a philosophy combined, and therefore, perhaps, if it must be said, neither the one nor the other; Buddhism.

From this viewpoint, Buddhism served as a useful empirical reference to the claim that there had been a universal transition in general religious history. However, given Christianity's prototypical function within this scheme, Buddhism can only be an imperfect expression of this general law in the religious history. The same can be said of Greece's role in philosophy. For Oldenberg, philosophy and religion were universal concepts of undoubted validity and historically tied to Christianity and classical Greek philosophy, which led him to devalue everything that is Indian in history. As a subsidiary aspect, this enabled Troeltsch to rely on Oldenberg in his classification of Buddhism as an imperfect composition of philosophy and religion (Troeltsch 2009: 491).

Oldenberg was not the only Indology scholar to see revealing parallels in general religious history. His fellow scholar Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922) also discovered parallels between Buddhism and Greek philosophy, though, he came to very different conclusions. In describing Buddha's first sermon, Rhys Davids (1879: 909–10) wrote:

> But its chief value, after all, is historical. It shows us that in India, as elsewhere, after the belief in many gods had given rise to the belief in one, there arose a school to whom theological questions had lost their interest, and who sought for a new solution of the questions to which theology had given inconsistent answers in a new system in which man was to work out his own salvation. In this respect the resemblance, which Mr. Frederick Pollock has pointed out, between Nirvāna and the teaching of the Stoics, has a peculiar interest; and their place in the progress of thought may help us understand how it is that there is so much in common between the agnostic philosopher of India, and some of the newest schools in France, in Germany, and among ourselves.

This quotation shows how, in this case, parallels could be drawn in completely different ways. For Rhys Davids, the rise of Buddhism and Stoicism in India and Greece points to an intellectual discontentment with present forms of metaphysics and a penchant for an anthropocentric ethical theory. Moreover, it hints at what was at stake in this Indological matter. Oldenberg, Rhys Davids and others negotiated the relevance of religion and Christianity for their own time as well as for the future based on Indological research. The real subject was the contemporary discourse on religion.

Furthermore, the absence of a concept of God in Buddhism was a serious problem for the German Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch. It challenged the very category of religion as European scholars understood it and, in this regard, disputed the status of Christianity within general religious history. Therefore, he (Troeltsch 2009: 489) tried to explain this perceived aberration of Buddhism from ordinary religion:

> This explanation lies – as has been shown many times – in the development of Indian religious reasoning. There, as everywhere else, the polytheism of the original natural religion was first purified and unified by scientific reflection, then decomposed and converted into a pantheistic monism, only in a peculiarly Indian form, where liturgical interpretations and fantastic brooding mixed bleakly with scientific thinking. … Here is the source of the sceptic and atheistic ideas of the Buddha about the world and its course.

As in the first point, Troeltsch drew here on the Orientalism of his day. In contemporary Indology, he found reasons for the atheism of Buddhism and in Oldenberg a reliable reference that seemed to prove that this did not need to mislead Christian convictions. Below, Oldenberg (1882: 18) described the historical lines that finally led to the rise of Buddhism in the period after the formation of the oldest strata of the *Veda*s:

> The development of thought, which was progressing in this period, while resting apparently on the basis of the old faith in gods, had really undermined that faith, and, forcing its way through endless voids of fantastic chimeras, had at last created a new ground of religious thought, the belief in the undisturbed, unchangeable universal-Unity, which reposes behind the world of sorrow and impermanence, and to which the delivered, leaving the world, returns. On this very foundation, moreover, centuries after the Brahmanical thinkers had laid it, were the doctrine and the church built, which were named after the name of Buddha.

In this view, there can be no doubt that the Indian religious history found its apex in the monism of the Brahmanic tradition. This corresponds to the widely shared nineteenth-century Orientalist stereotype that perceived the radical monism of *advaita vedānta*, usually ascribed to the Indian philosopher *Śaṅkara* (AD *c.*788–820), as the core of Indian religion (Inden 2000: 101–8; King 2008: 128–34). By emphasizing this cultural background, Oldenberg (1882: 53) tried to present monism as an exception and as a special Indian path in religious history:

> If in Buddhism the proud attempt be made to conceive a deliverance in which man himself delivers himself, to create a faith without a god, it is Brahmanical speculation which has prepared the way for this thought. It has thrust back the idea of a god step by step; the forms of the old gods have faded away, and besides the Brahma, which is enthroned in its everlasting quietude, highly exalted above the destinies of the human world, there is left remaining, as the sole really active person in the great work of deliverance, man himself, who possesses inherent in himself the power to turn aside from this world, this hopeless state of sorrow.

This development had a clearly negative connotation for Oldenberg. He identified the Brahmans as the driving force behind this development towards an atheistic creed and therefore, not only called them 'a vain and greedy priestcraft' but also saw in them 'the evil genius, … of the Indian people' (Oldenberg 1882: 13).

Still, the rejection of the Brahmanical tradition's monism and its classification as an Indian special case was by no means undisputed. Oldenberg's academic colleague Thomas William Rhys Davids (1881: 30) saw things very differently:

> Everywhere where the attitude of mind called Animism … has been permanently modified, it has been so by its development into *Polytheism*. … Everywhere where philosophy … has arisen in the midst of polytheists, it has perceived a unity behind the many, and has tended towards a more or less pantheistic *Monotheism*. Then, lastly … there has come a time … when men have tried, with more or less success, to seek for the *summum bonum* in account. Comtism, Agnosticism and Buddhism are, it is true, the only systems which have broken away, in the most uncompromising manner, from the venerable soul-theories which have grown out of the ancient Animism.

For Rhys Davids, general religious history was a human emancipation from metaphysical theories, a linear development with Buddhism at the end of that line. He paralleled it with philosophical positions of his time— Comtism and agnosticism. Therefore, to him, the absence of a concept of God in Buddhism was not a lack but a sign of progress. Oldenberg, on the other hand, explained Buddhism's supposed atheism as a consequence of the alleged peculiarities of the Indian religious history. Their differing interpretations of Buddhist metaphysics is all the more striking as Oldenberg and Rhys Davids were both proven experts in the *Pāli* language and closely connected to each other. In 1881, they co-edited several

volumes in the famous series *The Sacred Books of the East* on the *vinayapiṭaka*—the monastic rules of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. What the distinguished Indological scholars had in common shows that their differences were based on ideological grounds (Snodgrass 2003: 88). Oldenberg embodied a liberal Protestant view (Marchand 2009: 271–2) and Rhys Davids an agnostic, rational humanist standpoint, for which Buddhism provided historical evidence, and which served as a source of inspiration for the religious questions of his time (Snodgrass 2003: 107).

The same difference between these two excellent scholars of *Pāli* texts can be found in their interpretation of the fact that the historical Buddha did not receive divine status from his followers. Oldenberg identified the Brahmanical tradition in the Indian religious history as the reason for the 'remarkable attitude of the idea of Buddha' (Oldenberg 1882: 323), namely his lack of deification. Unlike Christianity, which evolved 'on the basis of a strong faith in a God', Oldenberg found it 'natural that in the consciousness of the community, a reflection … of the grandeur and fulness of the almighty and all-good God should fall on the person of him who, as master, teacher, example, is in every way of immeasurable significance to the life of his followers' (Oldenberg 1882: 323). On Buddhism, however, he asserted that these kinds of 'preconditions did not exist' because of the supposed eradication of the Indian gods 'by the pantheism of the *Ātman* theory' (Oldenberg 1882: 323). Once more, for Oldenberg, the pantheism of the Brahmanical tradition became a source of evil in terms of Buddhism's metaphysics in which 'remained no more a god, but only the natural law of the necessary concatenation of causes and effects' (Oldenberg 1882: 324) thereby presenting Buddhism as a kind of materialism.

The non-divine nature of the Buddha in Buddhism is, in Oldenberg's view, a remarkable exception to what he would call the ordinary course of history, an exception that for him calls for an explanation. For Oldenberg, the human status of the historical Buddha derives from the development of the specific Indian *atman* theory and its perceived absence of divine power. Remarkably, however, his fellow scholar Rhys Davids almost reverses the argument: He did not consider Christianity the norm and Buddhism the exception, but vice versa. He found Buddhism 'full of instruction, full of much-needed help, to a right solution of another question now increasingly pressed upon our attention: the question, namely, of the true history, the true meaning of Christianity' (Rhys Davids 1923: 51). He asked his audience to step aside for a moment from the inherited

affections for Christianity and 'to look at it in the cold light of reason' (Rhys Davids 1923: 51). Based on the biblical literary criticism in the wake of David Friedrich Strauss, he proposed a comparison of the historical Jesus and the historical Buddha as in 'the history of Buddhism we have revealed to us on the other side of the world as a religion whose development runs entirely parallel with that of Christianity' (Rhys Davids 1923: 51). He went on to qualify the similarity of the two religions: 'every episode, every line of whose history seems almost as if it might be created for the very purpose of throwing the clearest light on the most difficult and disputed questions of the origin of the European faith' (Rhys Davids 1923: 51–2). In other words, the problem for Rhys Davids is not the lack of divinity with respect to the Buddha but the understanding of the conventional faith in the divine nature of Jesus Christ in the age of science. For Rhys Davids, the outcome of the comparison is quite clear. The reason for the supposed divine nature of Christ is the same as for the veneration of the Buddha as a superhuman being. 'Need we be surprised that they were only half understood, that succeeding generations failed to learn the lessons of simplicity they had taught?' (Rhys Davids 1923: 52). For him, the great teachers were misinterpreted by their followers. Likewise, scholars differed in their notions of *nirvāna*'s ontological status in Buddhism (cf. Oldenberg 1882: 264–6 with Rhys Davids 1881: 128) and the two morality of Buddhism (cf. Oldenberg 1882: 341–2 with Rhys Davids 1923: 44–5).

TROELTSCH'S RECEPTION OF OLDENBERG'S *THE RELIGION OF THE VEDA* (1894)

Brahmanism or Hinduism posed no specific problem for Troeltsch's conception of Christianity as a religion in 1895, though Buddhism did. Nonetheless, Troeltsch found scholarly support for his general interpretation of religious history in Oldenberg's work on Vedic religion, particularly the latter's outline of the ancient Indian religious history in which he combined two conflicting—evolutionary and degenerative—approaches. The latter was based on the discovery of linguistic similarities between Indian and European languages. A theory of the Indo–European or Aryan family of languages, which evolved after the end of the eighteenth century, shaped the nineteenth-century debates on identity in India and Europe (Trautmann 1997; van der Veer 2001: 134–57). Oldenberg assumed that

the former Aryan tribes had degenerated culturally after their supposed displacement from western Asia to India in prehistoric times. He described a process in which originally healthy, strong, intelligent Aryan invaders deteriorated over the subsequent centuries into intellectually limited, passive, dreamy, and servile people (Oldenberg 1988: 1–2). Oldenberg's degeneration model rooted in the colonial domination of India by European states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This colonial domination helped to produce conventional stereotypes of the country and its people. Indological scholarship formed part of the colonial knowledge production called Orientalism, which constructed the Orient as the other in the attempt to define its own identity as 'Europe' (Inden 2000; King 2008). In employing this degenerative model, Oldenberg was trying to reconcile the linguistic (and alleged ethnic) kinship of South Asian and European people with colonial rule of British India, which entailed a division between the European colonizers and the colonized Indians. As shown above, in Oldenberg's view, the driving force behind the degeneration of the Aryans during their transformation into Indians was the Brahmanic tradition embodied in their priesthood. The evolutionary approach, however, studied religions in terms of their historical development, just like biology analyses the biological evolution of animate beings. According to this view, religious history ascended from so-called lower forms of religion to so-called higher religious expressions.

Against this backdrop, Troeltsch insisted on distinguishing between fundamental religious conceptions and human rationality. He relied on both Oldenberg's works, but focused mainly on his later one, *The Religion of the Veda*. Troeltsch (2009: 478) was convinced that 'religion grows in the connection and assembling of such fundamental conceptions, which are only fixing and assembling religious emotions'. He insisted that these fundamental religious conceptions 'are entirely involuntary, neither made nor invented' (Troeltsch 2009: 478) and are strictly opposed to 'indifferent or artificial spinning out, the conscious elaboration of cultic and priestly cleverness, the harmless or braiding game of imagination, which sinks down to the profane, and egoistic superstition or magic' (Troeltsch 2009: 478). The latter must be understood as genuine human products, the former as a divine human interaction. The dichotomy of the two terms was meant to underpin Troeltsch's assumption of the divine–human character of religious history. For him, religion was more than a mere cultural phenomenon. It was a vestige of divine will in history, manifesting itself

mainly in the inwardness of piety. This could be seen in general religious history from its earliest stages. Troeltsch (2009: 478) argued that:

> By means of a mythological mindset, which is not a form of religion but a common, primitive form of reasoning, religious objects become easily connected with the other objects of this kind of an all-personalizing reasoning and to the great fundamental conceptions new ones are added, which merge with the hitherto existing ones into distinct anthropomorphic pictures and create the sharper figures of the pantheon. At the same time, the artistry of a priestly class seeking special insights takes possession of those objects, or the purely profane imagination of narrators and poets.

Troeltsch saw the categorial differentiation between religion and reasoning as crucial. Consequently, he used both Oldenberg's evolutionary classification of the religious history and his contempt for *brahmin* priests as evidence of that differentiation.

Leaning on the newly established ethnology, Oldenberg (1988: 18, 27) understood religious history as subsequent epochs ascending from a stratum 'that is primitive, robust, crude: with goblins and monsters, with the cult of magic, with the devil-possessed' to a further step of the 'idolized nature-being'—such as stars, weather, plants, and animals. Finally, he proceeded to the stage of venerating anthropomorphic gods, which he called the mythological era. In his description of the two Vedic gods Mitra and Varuṇa, Oldenberg (1988: 27) distinguished between mythology and religion:

> Finally and above all, a sphere of moral concepts was peculiar to Mitra and Varuṇa alone. These concepts were enlarged by the process of progressive ethical absorption and these, in turn, contributed considerably in restraining the natural significance of those gods. It can be said that the religious factor drained especially energetically the mythological complex of ideas of its force.

Here, the mythological stage is represented as a lower stratum in religious history that should be overcome by religion proper—a faculty of the inner life connected to ethical advancements that are somehow opposed to the natural meaning of the gods. Therefore, Oldenberg's evolutionary model seemed to demonstrate that religion was opposed to mythology and anything natural.

In fact, the converse theory of degeneration showed the same outcome in the Indian religious history with respect to Oldenberg's contrasting juxtaposition of popular belief and priestly concepts. In the *Ṛgveda*, the oldest stratum of Vedic literature, he discerns 'a language from which the breath of fresh simple nature has not yet vanished. But besides these, there are a vast number of hymns imbued with another spirit' (Oldenberg 1988: 2–3). The latter belong, according to Oldenberg (1988: 3), to 'a closed circle of priest-technicians of the sacrifice'. In the same way, he (Oldenberg 1988: 9) thinks about the origin of the texts in the *Atharvaveda*:

> In addition, there are, in part, extensive texts, which have little to do with so-called popular magic, but more with the new inventions of shrewd priests, say, in developing or reconstructing the great sacrifices as magic acts of different types; then there are, with dubious repetitions, texts extolling the virtue of pious alms giving to the priests.

'Yet, the reader of the *Atharvaveda* will have the impression that what was originally popular has gone through the priests' hands' (Oldenberg 1988: 9). As shown above with respect to his earlier monograph *Buddha*, Oldenberg's attitude towards Brahmanical priests was quite negative. In his view, they were responsible for the development of monism eventually leading to the atheism of Buddhism. At that point, he (Oldenberg 1988: 2) discerned a harmful influence on the minds of the then Indian Aryans in the works of the priests among the Aryan invaders in particular:

> The first signs of this passivity are manifest in the oldest document of Indian literature and religion, the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, in the sacrificial songs and litanies with which the priests of the Vedic Aryans invoked their gods to the templeless sacrificial places of sacrificial fire surrounded by grass. Barbaric priests invoked barbaric gods who came through the celestial realms astride steeds and in chariots to feast upon the sacrificial cake, butter and meat, and to invigorate themselves with courage and divine strength with the intoxicating *Soma*-juice.

This verdict on *brahmin* priests located the assumed degeneration as long ago as the earliest sources of Vedic literature. Therefore, Oldenberg's differentiation between popular belief and priestly concepts must be understood in terms of his contempt for the latter as exponents of anything Indian, while popular belief contains some remnants of original Aryan culture.

In this assessment of Indian intellectual history, Oldenberg had a prominent opponent. While in his first work, Thomas William Rhys Davids was his implicit interlocutor, Paul Deussen (1845–1919) can be seen as a scholarly opponent of his monograph, *The Religion of the Veda*. Paul Deussen, a professor of philosophy in Kiel since 1889, was a pioneering translator and editor of a considerable corpus of *vedānta* philosophy and a fervent advocate of Schopenhauer's philosophy (Feldhoff 2008). Understandably, his general assessment of Indian intellectual history was more sympathetic than Oldenberg's. In the first volume of his general history of philosophy, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, he expressed his appreciation of Indian culture by saying that 'India is the only case of an original culture in the high sense of the word having developed in the tropics, and the poetry of the Indians reflects the peculiar magic of the tropics in all genres – epics, lyrics, and drama' (Deussen 1894: 37). Like Oldenberg, Deussen identified the magical or animistic features of Vedic literature. However, unlike Oldenberg, Deussen (1894: 78–9) regarded the influence of magic on Vedic traditions as very minor and traced it back not to *brahmin* priests but to ordinary people:

> animism, a belief in demons associated with magic, which we assume exists in India, as elsewhere, as a preliminary stage of polytheism, must be left aside here, for the religious consciousness from which Indian philosophy has arisen has long surpassed it, however much it may still linger among a certain level of the lower classes and even although it found expression in many of their Atharvaveda songs.

Moreover, Deussen's key concern with respect to morality was to acknowledge the high moral standard of the Vedic tradition. Although Deussen noted the moral shortcomings of some Vedic gods, in the *Ṛgveda* he also discerned a morality without theology (Deussen 1894: 93). For him, philosophy and not theology brought about the most important shift in Indian intellectual history, namely the development of the concept of oneness in the form of the monism of *vedānta* philosophy (Deussen 1894: 103), which reflects Deussen's general standpoint on religion. For him, all philosophy rejects dualistic ideas of God and necessarily leads to monism as the only reasonable metaphysical position. He located the beginnings of this development in Indian and Greek philosophy leading directly to modern philosophy in the form of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). Furthermore, for Deussen, the inner

experience of morality was the only epistemic approach to the divine. He saw both monism and the inner experience of morality as key expressions of religion and means of legitimating religion in the age of science. He was thus keen to meet Swami Vivekananda in Kiel on his journey through Europe, for he could use him as a reference for his own image of Indian religion (Bergunder 2012). Following Schopenhauer, all mythological conceptions of the divine were, in Deussen's view, of Semitic descent. Therefore, his ideal was a 'scientifically renewed Christianity' (Deussen 1894: 22) that had dropped all its Semitic influences and incorporated the monism of the (supposed Aryan) *advaita vedānta* school. Thus, his advocacy of Indian philosophy was a means of promoting monism as a respectable metaphysical standpoint because of its historical originality and Aryan character (Deussen 1894: 11–12). Hence, the differences between Oldenberg and Deussen reflect their respective positions on the contemporary discourse on religion. As Isabella Schwaderer demonstrates in Chap. 5, Deussen had a popular appeal that continued into the twentieth century: He made a significant impression on artists from the Bayreuth Circle like Felix Gotthelf (1867–1931) who saw his opera *Mahadeva* (1910) as a form of redemption.

Summary of Troeltsch's Reception of Oldenberg

The German Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch relied on the Indologist Hermann Oldenberg to support crucial points of his theory and history of religion. For Troeltsch, Oldenberg's importance lay in the challenge that Buddhism as a religion posed for Christianity. First, he used Oldenberg to validate his understanding of general religious history as the evolution of religion itself—the historical process from natural religion to an individual inner experience of the divine. For Troeltsch, Christianity was at the top of that development. He thus aimed to legitimize his devaluation of Buddhism, which in the last decades of the nineteenth century had gained global popularity as an alternative to Christianity and, in Oldenberg, he found Indological support for his view. Second, Troeltsch referred to Oldenberg to explain Buddhism's alleged atheism. He based his argument on Oldenberg's assessment of the Indian religious history in the wake of contemporary Orientalist stereotypes about India, but with special contempt for the *brahmin* tradition. Third, Troeltsch focused on the conceptual distinction between religion and reasoning. Echoing the conception of religion in the age of science, he argued for religion as a *sui generis*

category as an individual inner experience of the divine that could be perceived in history. This, in turn, was meant to support his understanding of general religious history as an ongoing divine human interaction. In all these ways, Oldenberg provided Troeltsch with important Indological references that allowed him to uphold Christianity's claim to supremacy in general religious history.

Conclusion

I started this chapter with a critique of a common notion in religious studies—the idea that religion as a universal concept was a European invention. Against its main advocate, Tomoko Masuzawa, I tried to demonstrate that the idea of religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon identified with an inner experience of the divine, had emerged from a globally entangled history in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The first fundamental precondition of this new concept of religion lay in the hegemony of a new understanding of 'science' as a mere empirical matter without metaphysical defilements, which had evolved in the second half of the nineteenth century. Against this background, the concept of religion was recast as a personal inner experience of the divine to meet the truth claims of science. The second precondition lay in the challenge presented by a general religious history that had also emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Based on the new importance of 'history' in the wake of the empirical paradigm of 'science' and the increase of colonial knowledge production the history of religion became the arena of competition for cultural identities classified as 'religions'. As several regional postcolonial studies have shown, all this was by no means a European or Western development: By the end of the nineteenth centruy, it was something with which reformers in all parts of the world were having to cope. All sorts of different people were defining their own traditions as religions, and claiming that they were completely in accordance with science. Furthermore, by examining religious history, European intellectuals were starting to think about 'the religion of the future'. Buddhism became popular because it seemed to meet all the criteria of a 'religion of the future'—an ancient ethical religion of salvation by an inner experience that could accommodate science. Against this backdrop, we saw how the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch turned to the works of the German Indologist Hermann Oldenberg to deal with the challenge that Buddhism was presenting to his new conception of Christianity as a religion in the age of science.

In this context, Ernst Troeltsch looked to Indology for scholarly support, and Oldenberg supplied him with an image of India and Buddhism within the framework of Orientalism. Indian religion was seen as part of the supposed degeneration of an originally great Aryan culture into the passive, servile, and backward people of nineteenth-century British India. Furthermore, in his view, an important defect in Indian religion was its alleged domination by the *brahmin* tradition of Vedic scriptures identifying it with the monism of *advaita vedānta*. In short, for Oldenberg, India simply embodied Europe's other. Surprisingly, his academic colleagues Thomas William Rhys Davids and Paul Deussen had the same language skills, used the same textual sources, and were part of the same Orientalist discourse on religion, yet they came to quite different conclusions. In that they looked to India and Buddhism for inspiration on the 'religion of the future', they were clearly critical of Christianity in its present state, which was how Indology came to be part of a global religious history in the late nineteenth century.

Indological research was not confined to academic circles, as events like the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893 in Chicago indicated. Religious reformers from British India, such as Swami Vivekananda or Anagarika Dharmapala, claimed Hinduism and Buddhism as religions that could coexist alongside science by referring to European Indology. Thus, the new discourse on religion was globally entangled from the beginning and cannot be described as a European invention exported to the world, as Masuzawa would have it. These colonial voices were part of a new global religious history that led even European Protestant theologians like Ernst Troeltsch to see Buddhism as a challenge for his own conception of Christianity as religion.

REFERENCES

Almond, Philip. 1988. *The British discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arnold, Edwin. 1879. *The light of Asia*. London: Trubner & Co.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bayertz, Kurt, Myriam Gerhard, and Walter Jaeschke. 2007. *Weltanschauung, Philosophie und Naturwissenschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Band. 1: Der Materialismus-Streit*. Hamburg: Meiner.

Bayly, Christopher A. 2004. *The birth of the modern world 1780–1914*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bergunder, Michael. 2012. Indischer Swami und deutscher Professor: Religion jenseits des Eurozentrismus. In *Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Stausberg, 95–107. Berlin: De Gruyter.

———. 2016. 'Religion' and 'science' within a global religious history. *Aries* 16: 86–141.

———. 2020. Umkämpfte Historisierung. Die Zwillingsgeburt von Religion und Esoterik in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts und das Programm einer globalen Religionsgeschichte. In *Wissen um Religion: Erkenntnis – Interesse. Epistemologie und Episteme in Religionswissenschaft und Interkultureller Theologie*, ed. Klaus Hock, 47–131. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Beyer, Peter. 2006. *Religions in global society*. London: Routledge.

Büchner, Ludwig. 1855. *Kraft und Stoff: Empirisch-naturphilosophische Studien. In allgemein-verständlicher Darstellung*. Berlin: Meidinger.

Burrow, John Wyon. 2000. *The crisis of reason: European thought, 1848–1914*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Chadwick, Owen. 1972. *The Victorian church. Part II: 1860–1901*. London: Black.

———. 1975. *The secularization of the European mind in the nineteenth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chidester, David. 2014. *Empire of religion: Imperialism and comparative religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Davids, Thomas William Rhys. 1879. Buddha's first sermon. *The Fortnightly Review* 26 (156): 899–912.

———. 1881. *Lectures on the origin and growth of religion as illustrated by some points in the history of Indian Buddhism*. London: Williams & Norgate.

———. 1923. What has Buddhism derived from Christianity? 22.2.1877. *Journal of the Pāli Text Society 1920–1923* 7: 37–53.

Deussen, Paul. 1894. *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Religionen. Bd. 1, Abt. 1: Allgemeine Einleitung und Philosophie des Veda bis auf die Upanishad's*. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

Draper, John William. 1874. *History of the conflict between religion and science*. New York: Appleton.

Dubuisson, Daniel. 2003. *The Western construction of religion: Myths, knowledge, and ideology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Feldhoff, Heiner. 2008. *Nietzsches Freund: die Lebensgeschichte des Paul Deussen*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Fitzgerald, Timothy. 2000. *The ideology of religious studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Green, Thomas J. 2016. *Religion for a secular age: Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda and Vedānta*. Farnham Surrey: Ashgate.

Haeckel, Ernst. 1866. *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen. Allgemeine Grundzüge der organischen Formen-Wissenschaft. Mechanisch begründet durch*

die von Charles Darwin reformirte Descendenz-Theorie Zweiter Band: Allgemeine Entwickelungsgeschichte der Organismen. Berlin: Reimer.

———. 1868. *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte: Gemeinverständliche Wissenschaftliche Vorträge über die Entwickelungs-Lehre im Allgemeinen und Diejenige von Darwin, Goethe und Lamarck im Besonderen*. Berlin: Reimer.

Harlass, Ulrich. 2021. *Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft: eine Untersuchung der theosophischen Lehrentwicklungen in der Zeit zwischen den Hauptwerken Alfred Percy Sinnetts*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Harrison, Peter. 2006. 'Science' and 'religion': Constructing the boundaries. *The Journal of Religion* 86: 81–106.

Hatcher, Brian A. 1999. *Eclecticism and modern Hindu discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Heinßen, Johannes. 2003. Historismus und Kulturkritik: Studien zur deutschen Geschichtskultur im späten 19. In *Jahrhundert*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Hopf, Arian. 2021. *Translating Islam, translating religion: Conceptions of religion and Islam in the Aligarh movement*. Heidelberg: CrossAsia-eBooks.

Inden, Ronald B. 2000. *Imagining India*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kateman, Ammeke. 2019. Muhammad 'Abduh and his interlocutors: Conceptualizing religion in a globalizing world. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

King, Richard. 2008. *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*. London: Routledge.

Marchand, Suzanne L. 2009. *German orientalism in the age of empire: Religion, race, and scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Molendijk, Arie L. 2016. *Friedrich Max Müller and the sacred books of the East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moleschott, Jacob. 1852. *Der Kreislauf des Lebens: Physiologische Antworten auf Liebigs Chemische Briefe*. Mainz: Victor von Zabern.

Müller, Friedrich Max. 1894. *Three lectures on the Vedânta philosophy: Delivered at the Royal Institution in March*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.

Nipperdey, Thomas. 1994. Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist. In *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 1. Munich: Beck.

Oldenberg, Hermann. 1882. *Buddha: His life, his doctrine, his order*. Trans. W. Hoey. London: Williams & Norgate.

———. 1988. *The religion of the Veda*. Trans. S. B. Shrotri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Osterhammel, Jürgen. 2009. Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Munich: Beck.

Snodgrass, Judith. 2003. *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the west: Orientalism, occidentalism, and the Columbian exposition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Strauss, David Friedrich. 1872. *Der alte und der neue Glaube*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel.

Thurner, Mathias. 2021. *Die Geburt des 'Christentums' als 'Religion' am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ernst Troeltschs Theologie und ihre Quellen im Kontext einer globalen Religionsgeschichte*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Trautmann, Thomas R. 1997. *Aryans and British India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Troeltsch, Ernst. 2009. Die Selbständigkeit der Religion (1895/96). In *Schriften zur Theologie und Religionsphilosophie: (1888–1902): Band. 1. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

van der Veer, Peter. 2001. *Imperial encounters: Religion and modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vogt, Carl. 1847. *Physiologische Briefe für Gebildete aller Stände*. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag.

———. 1855. *Koehlerglaube und Wissenschaft: Eine Streitschrift gegen Hofrath Rudolph Wagner in Göttingen*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

von Hartmann, Eduard. 1869. Philosophie des Unbewussten. In *Speculative Resultate nach inductive-naturwissenschaftlicher Methode*. Berlin: Duncker (Heymons).

Hartmann, Eduard von. 1886. *Religion of the future*. Trans. E. Dare. London: W. Stewart & Co.

Death and Transfiguration: Religion and Belonging in Felix Gotthelf's Indian Opera *Mahadeva* (1910)

Isabella Schwaderer

Faith and Modernity: A Difficult Relationship

On 24 October 1910, the *Badische Presse* (Baden Press) published an article on its front page entitled 'The oath against modernism'. It reported how, in the diocese of Metz, all the 'general vicars and canons, the arch-priests of the whole diocese, the ecclesiastical professors of all institutions, the parish priests and chaplains of the city and surrounding area' had gathered in the chapel of the seminary 'to take the oath against modernism prescribed by the Pope for all priests of the world' (*Badische Presse* 1910). This oath, introduced by Pope Pius X on 1 September 1910, dismissed as heresies any interpretations of the Christian faith that regarded technical, scientific, or social innovations as progress. The resulting polemics

I. Schwaderer (✉)
University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany
e-mail: isabella.schwaderer@uni-erfurt.de

deepened the rifts, especially with liberal Protestants and, generally, in the broader social circles of Wilhelmine Germany (Schepers 2016; Wolf 2009).

A divergence between Christianity and modernity was, however, a cause for concern for more people than conservative Catholics. Despite ample historical biblical scholarship and research into the life of Jesus, the relationship between faith, knowledge, religion, and the natural sciences was by no means decided, even in liberal Protestant circles, so the controversy certainly existed, even if by means other than a papal decree. On the same page, the newspaper announced the guest appearance on 28 November 1910 of *Mahadeva*, a symphonic drama by Felix Gotthelf (1867–1931). In a lengthy commentary, the newspaper described how the opera promised an eloquent account of idealism, Indian epistemology, and the 'mystical unity of ego and universal being' (Meister 1910). While the papal decree raised concerns about the 'demise of theological faculties' (*Badische Presse* 1910) and the acceptability of scientific knowledge being abandoned in favour of a putative 'purity of faith' (*Badische Presse* 1910), the city's educated public awaited the staging of a musical drama in the style of Richard Wagner (1813–83), which, as a religious musical event, promised temporary salvation through a work of art.

The musical drama *Mahadeva* by the otherwise little-known composer and self-taught writer Felix Gotthelf is now a forgotten artistic event that took place during a phase of radical transition. More interesting than its significance as a work of art is its role as a symptom of the controversy over the relationship between religion and modernity. *Mahadeva* is particularly difficult to classify if one follows the historico-teleological approach of thinkers like Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) and Max Weber (1864–1920), who understood modernity as an irreversible process occurring under the auspices of disenchantment and secularization (see Thurner 2021 on Troeltsch; and Yelle and Trein 2021 on Weber). Instead, I propose reversing this view and seeing it as a negotiation between the religious and the secular, not to be misunderstood as a tale of increasing disenchantment and decay of religious values. Rather, the process should be understood as an integral part of the confessional debates that establish narratives rather than timeless theories (Habermas 2019: 4).

For this purpose, however, I will first classify the artistic horizon of the work and, in a second section, situate its religious resonances in a Protestant reception of Wagner and Schopenhauer. I have traced the intellectual connections and friendships of composers, writers, journalists, and professors in the almost exclusively male circles of the Wagner family and the

Schopenhauer Society. In a further step, I shall explain how the debates about the *Mahadeva* are tightly interwoven into the political and social discourses of the period immediately before the catastrophe of the First World War. The Indian opera tells a story of popular debates on religious experiences in music and how German Christianity should be played out. It is also a story of bold German self-images of cultural superiority over other European nations.

The search for historical material for this study stretched over a long period, and many new findings continued to shed light on the opera's cultural and historical relevance. I started by asking why the dancers and musicians in the Menaka Indian ballet received such wide attention as *völkisch* art during the Nazi era (see Schlaffke, Schwaderer, and Kanhai, Chap. 12 in this volume). Extensive visits to Weimar's Anna Amalia Library, which specializes in German literature, philosophy, and music—with excellent nineteenth- and twentieth-century holdings, including rare journals—led to the serendipitous discovery of an intellectual circle that united particular interests, namely philosophy, India, and music. This was the Schopenhauer Society, and its yearbooks recorded the entire debate that later, in the 1930s, presaged the reception and political instrumentalization of a tour of Indian artists. The Düsseldorf and Karlsruhe municipal archives contain press reviews of the performances, and the Saxon State and University Library Dresden house the residue of Felix Gotthelf's estate. A closer examination of persons connected to the Schopenhauer Society (Schwaderer 2021) and a detailed analysis of works of art with an Indian connection originating in this environment (I have analysed another in Schwaderer 2022) finally provided a key with which to understand the reactions examined in the further contributions to this volume.

A Forgotten Indian Opera

Little is known about the private life of Felix Gotthelf, but for details of what is known, see Markus Schlaffke's Chap. 6 in this volume. Gotthelf took a ballad by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) entitled *Der Gott und die Bajadere* (The God and the *Bayadère*) as the model for his drama *Mahadeva* (Goethe 1798). In it, Goethe draws on a French travelogue by Pierre Sonnerat, which includes a section on the '*bayadères*, or dancing girls, whose true name [is] *devadāsī*, who devote themselves to honouring the gods, and at whose processions they sing and dance before

their images' (Sonnerat 1782: 29; see also Schlage 2018). In the European tradition, *bayadères* were mainly seen as sacred prostitutes.

Goethe draws on Christian motifs, but playfully repurposes them in a philanthropic and humanist way (Wild 1996). While the incarnation of the deity and redemption through ascension are well-known aspects of Christian doctrine, Goethe emphasizes the sensual side of love, which causes the protagonist to transcend herself. In the end, the poem recognizes neither contrition nor penitence, but rather the genuine feelings of love that Goethe's contemporaries saw as 'anti-Christian and critical of religion' (Wild 1996: 292). Goethe depicts the supreme deity as a benevolent figure who is experiencing life on Earth and who regards joy and anguish as essential components of compassion. In her love encounter with the god, the *bayadère* undergoes such a profound transformation that she sacrifices herself. Despite these various religious motifs, the ballad is not a doctrinal piece about sin and repentance. Instead, its emphasis is on a fictitious encounter with the deity and the transformative power of love. This detail is important because later adaptations focus on the atoning aspect of a 'repentant sinner', or see the dancer as 'Mary Magdalene' being uplifted by the deity.

Apart from Goethe, Gotthelf's main inspiration for his *opus magnum*, his only opera, came from Richard Wagner's redemptive drama *Parsifal*, which had been premiered on 26 July 1882. Gotthelf composed the *Mahadeva*, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or rather a religious—philosophical—musical opera in which he imitated Wagner's work down to the smallest detail—see Schlaffke (Chap. 6 in this volume) on his use of the *Parsifal* music. However, apart from this, he was also productive and quite well respected as a journalist on musical and philosophical subjects, although he always modestly admitted to being self-taught (Gotthelf 1919: 288). Gotthelf wrote for newspapers and cultural magazines and was well known in the Bayreuth Circle of Wagner admirers, in which he also came across Schopenhauer's philosophy for the first time. The *Mahadeva* was Gotthelf's only extensive work and in it he turned the above-mentioned Goethe ballad into a religious-artistic manifesto. Between 1909 and 1916, *Mahadeva*, or parts of it, were staged in German cities such as Stuttgart, Düsseldorf (where the premiere was held in 1910), Karlsruhe, and Munich, and, in 1916 and 1917, audiences in Vienna heard a choral scene. Gotthelf dedicated the opera to his mentor and friend, the Kiel history of philosophy professor Paul Deussen (1845–1919), whom he described on the dedicatory page as the 'rediscoverer of Vedic wisdom' (Gotthelf 1908: 3). The

opera was thus not only a musical work, but also a contributor to the contemporary national discourse on religious renewal.

MAHADEVA: THE PLOT

While the libretto (Gotthelf 1908) is based mainly on the story in Goethe's ballad, Gotthelf shifts the narrative in favour of Maya, an ostracized dancer living as a member of the *cāṇḍāla* (the considered untouchable) on the outskirts of the city. After a loving union and the unknown visitor's death, Maya jumps into the pyre and the play ends with the couple's transfiguration. To build up the dramatic tension that keeps the story going, Gotthelf adds two characters, the pilgrim Narada and Maya's lover Kama. Although their contribution to the narrative is minimal, they sing duets to express the main character's inner conflicts and give form to her complex characteristics. Gotthelf places the subject in a religious and cosmic framework with a prelude in heaven. The deity Mahadeva (Shiva), the centre of the universe, wakes up with a longing to be, or what Gotthelf (1908: 8) called a 'thirst for existence'. The state of blissful non-existence thus ends, and the world comes into being. The god awakens from the complaints of humankind and realizes that he is responsible for his creation, which has arisen from his dream and his desire. He decides to redeem his guilt through his incarnation, and the chorus of the divine dancers is already announcing the redemption—'Hope's saying/Be proclaimed to you,/death love/overcomes: Homewards leads thee/the path of highest sacrifice's /deed of love' (Gotthelf 1908: 15).

In the first scene, the dancer Maya rejects her lover Kama and approaches the sanctuary of Mahadeva (Shiva). She seeks blessings from the saint Narada, but an outraged crowd chases her away. In its human form, the deity observes the scene, is disappointed by its moral depravity, and approaches the dancer. Kama tries to drive him away but the deity stops him. After that, the plot returns to the *bayadère* ballad, but with an eschatological backdrop. The deity accepts the dancer's invitation to her house and allows her to take care of him, but instead of a physical encounter, the deity gives the dancer an explanation for her inner conflict: Her subordinate status is a punishment for having committed an offence in a previous life when she was living as a *brahmin*'s daughter and had betrayed her lover and had him killed for purely selfish motives. This moralizing twist in the plot is taken from a Buddhist legend from a then widely known

book by the French Indologist Eugène Burnouf (1801–52), the *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme indien* (Burnouf 1844: 205 ff.).

Maya's story reveals the cosmic connections of her personal fate. Having recognized her guilt, her longing for redemption is no longer just a vague feeling but follows a rational course: If she has sinned in the past, she must atone for it now. This insight into the relationships in her life not only redeems her, but also, in the second half of the drama, enables her to redeem others. After this slight addition to the middle of the plot, Gotthelf returns to Goethe's ballad. When the guest is found dead the following morning, Maya insists on being burned with him as his wife and calmly enters the flames, despite the protests of the priests. The transfiguration in the last director's note reads, 'from the flames emerges Mahadeva, slowly carrying Maya up in his arms' (Gotthelf 1908: 85). The final image resembles the beginning, when, in the state of unity before the creation of the world, 'lotus flowers, in whose opened chalice the couple appears' (Gotthelf 1908: 86) are seen floating on the calm surface of the sea.

Press Reaction

The Düsseldorf premiere of *Mahadeva* on 7 March 1910, and the guest performance in Karlsruhe on 28 November 1910, both of which received wide coverage in the newspapers, give us some impression of this now forgotten musical event. The composer spared no expense in having two new stage sets designed, which the Düsseldorf artist Georg Hacker (1864–1945) executed (Düsseldorf Statistisches Amt 2023: 112). These stage sets, which not only heightened the theatrical illusion but also needed to be transported to Karlsruhe, consisted of two characteristically Indian landscape paintings, which as backdrops produced a good long-distance effect, along with lotus blossoms that opened and closed, albeit not always smoothly (*Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* 1910). To prepare the Karlsruhe audience for the event, Richard Meister (1881–1964), a close friend of Gotthelf's from Vienna, provided a detailed résumé of the religious and ideological background to the drama (Meister 1910). Moreover, in the early afternoon before the performance, the director and conductor held a didactic lecture on the work at the Düsseldorf city theatre, which included salient musical motifs of its religious transfiguration. However, while these introductions were designed to enhance the reception of the work, they also revealed its shortcomings. 'In its embarrassing verbosity', remarked the otherwise only moderately enthusiastic critic of the socialist

newspaper *Volksfreund* (1910: 1), 'Meister's erudite introduction was unsuitable'.

The editor-in-chief of the *Badische Presse*, Albert Herzog (1867–1955), was sympathetic to the play and wrote a detailed review of it in which he, like all the other reviewers, emphasized its unique nature, and called it a 'mystery averted from real mundane life' (Herzog 1910). The other-worldliness of its religious theme did not provoke ridicule from any of the reviewers; on the contrary, one took it quite seriously and wrote in the *Karlsruher Tagblatt* of 28 November 1910:

> In his drama, Dr. Gotthelf tried to express the philosophical, ethical, and religious character of Brahmanism, which in some respects is related to Christianity. In doing so, he starts from the knowledge inherent in all superior cultural religions, namely the union of the human soul with God through the sacrifice of love. However, in a mystical, almost magical way, he builds his entire drama on a mythical element in which he makes the deity appear on the stage in various forms, thus from the outset excluding any profound effect. … What is excellent in the Goethean ballad on which the poet–composer draws, is impossible for the drama. Yes, if God had become a divine man, then the entire drama would have gained much credibility.

Gotthelf's design of an intellectual religion of redemption remained unchallenged; only when he deviated too far from the model, and left the act of saving to a woman instead of a 'divine man', did the work no longer seem convincing. Regardless of the highly idealistic values it conveyed, the effect on the audience was nevertheless limited. 'The main flaw in this generous work', the author of the *Volksfreund* sarcastically noted, 'is particularly noticeable when it is presented as a stage work – its length!' (*Volksfreund* 1910: 2). Moreover, the critics emphasized the epigonal character of one of the last of Wagner's imitators in which the poetry lifted the creator 'high above the bombastic ecstasy of sound in the comet's tail of Richard Wagner's 'word-sound-dramas' of an earlier epoch erring through opera literature'. It was an altogether remarkable work containing 'sublime beauties' as well as 'thorny, impassable undergrowth of harmony' (*Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* 1910).

However, if the work was probably of little artistic significance, if not entirely out of time, it nonetheless reveals social dynamics that temporarily secured it a place on at least two stages. The sponsors of the presumably rather expensive guest appearance in Karlsruhe, Prince Max of Baden

(1867–1929), and his wife Maria Louise (1879–1948), 'attended the performance to the very end', as the Karlsruhe newspaper explicitly pointed out (Z. 1910). Prince Max, the last heir to the throne of the Grand Duchy of Baden and, in 1918, the last chancellor of the German Empire, 'was an aesthete and eternal seeker of meaning who felt attracted not only to the musical but also to the politico-religious spirit of the Bayreuth Circle' (Urbach and Buchner 2004: 125; see also Bermbach 2016). A close connection to Bayreuth is visible in his correspondence with Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), who not only spread Wagner's anti-Semitism as the basis of his worldview to broad swathes of readers but also legitimized his Aryan fantasies with the same Indological sources that Gotthelf himself had integrated into his music drama—namely the books of Paul Deussen. This strong connection may have been one reason for bringing the monumental production to Karlsruhe.

In *Mahadeva*, redemption and salvation are the critical terms of the drama and, in his musical offering, Gotthelf offered his audience the exact same thing. This was temporary relief from the urgent and painful questions of the time—the relationship between religion and the natural science on the one hand, and the national and political self-image of the Germans vis-à-vis their European neighbours on the other. The discussions about *Mahadeva* followed the Schopenhauer tradition. They were continued by Richard Wagner, further developed in the Bayreuth Circle, and thus inspired a circumscribed range of people in the Schopenhauer Society.

Schopenhauer, Wagner, and the Redemption Dramas

By dedicating the libretto of the drama to Paul Deussen, Gotthelf joined the circle of Schopenhauer's more artistically-minded followers. Gotthelf wrote occasional pieces on the theoretical and philosophical aspects of music, and his reflections on the Schopenhauer and Wagner tradition made him a recognized specialist in this artistic-cum-philosophical niche. On 15 November 1915, he gave a lecture on Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner at the Vienna Urania, a precursor of today's adult education centres, which he based on an article he was writing for the Wagner circle's journal, the *Bayreuther Blätter* (Gotthelf 1916). A few months earlier, he had published an article under the same title in the Schopenhauer Society's yearbook (Gotthelf 1915). This created a bridge between the two scholarly circles, which brought the respective founding figures closer to each

other. For his articles, he would collect sources in which Schopenhauer and Wagner referred to one another, although they had never met in person, but in so doing, established a link between the philosopher and musician that is still generally accepted today. According to this, Wagner came to recognize his own worldview in Schopenhauer's philosophy (Karnes and Mitchell 2020). Also, by bringing Indian philosophy and Christian religion to the stage in a symphonic drama, Gotthelf could, in an unspoken way, consider himself a disciple of Schopenhauer and a perfector of Wagner. Below, I shall show how Gotthelf incorporated material from his own models into a broader context while imitating Wagner's works.

WAGNER'S SHARE: *MAHADEVA*—A COSMIC DRAMA ABOUT LOVE, DEATH, AND SALVATION

Goethe's ballad celebrates a sensual encounter between a human being and a deity and thus ironically deconstructs the religious ideas of his time, in which bodily pleasure was declared a sin. Gotthelf, conversely, is very serious about his drama of redemption. He exaggerates the different variants of the figures in an 'Indian legend' and inserts them into a theatre on a cosmic scale—and they are all based on Schopenhauer's philosophy (Meister 1931: 373).

He was not the first composer to cherish such an ambitious project, as the young Felix Weingartner's (1863–1942) example will show. Schopenhauer became the 'gateway drug' to his alternative reality, much like swallowing the 'red pill' in *The Matrix* (1999), a science-fiction film in which the Schopenhauerian mood was projected onto a dystopian vision of the future of a people caught up in an illusory reality. Weingartner became acquainted with this worldview when Cosima Wagner (1837–1930), second wife of the composer and trustee of his legacy, introduced him to one of Schopenhauer's books for the first time (Weingartner 1928: 263). The 'powerful vibrations of knowledge of this peculiarly gloomy philosophy', which sent people 'into a state of lasting, elated happiness', mesmerized quite a few members of the Wagner family circles he regularly attended (Weingartner 1928: 317). Also, his enthusiasm lasted, as Weingartner proved with his wide-ranging accounts of his philosophical and ideological position in *The Doctrine of Rebirth and the Musical Drama* (Weingartner 1895). The Indian–Schopenhauer–Wagner triad provided the anthropological backdrop to his cultural and musical

enterprise (Weingartner 1895: 48–9). As he (Weingartner 1895: 68–9, original italics) put it:

> [This triad] is, however, [not only] a reflection of the essence of the world, but an incomparably nobler and more refined one than we customarily perceive with our daily senses. … Its effect on the musical drama will therefore also be one of *idealization*, of *elevation* above the ordinary level, and even of *transfiguration*.

Here Weingartner, who professed the 'Brahmanic–Buddhist doctrine of rebirth', found a worldview superior to the Christian doctrine of morality, which in the 'negation of the will to life' means the end of a rebirth process, in other words, final redemption. As Weingartner (quoted in Gebhard 1931: 369) explained:

> After Schopenhauer's philosophy recently showed us the way to redemption, and Wagner, through his great discovery, gave us the opportunity to create true musical dramas, the production of such a drama, which would express the idea of redemption from rebirth in a pure form, is one of the most glorious tasks that the artist can face.

Weingartner's monumentally designed drama *Mysterium* was a Christian passion play, yet in its epilogue the redemption is achieved in Buddhist India (Weingartner 1895). Unsurprisingly, he never elaborated it beyond a sketch, whereas Gotthelf carefully penned and composed *Mahadeva* down to the minutest detail. He attended a performance of *Parsifal* in 1884, which had premiered only 2 years before, 'with the enthusiasm of the awakened' (Meister 1931: 371) and had taken from it the longing for redemption as the driver of the plot. Richard Wagner had already framed his opera in explicitly religious terms, calling it a *Bühnenweihfestspiel* (stage pageant) and enacting baptism and the Last Supper in the story of the knights around the Holy Grail. Both composers negotiated the themes of purity and contamination, spirituality and sexuality, and renunciation and redemption. Just as Wagner moved the action of his play to some fictitious Germanic Middle Ages, Gotthelf used Schopenhauer's India as the setting for his philosophical and religious reflections, and shaped the plot of the Indian dancing girl quite differently from that of his Goethe model. His was ironic, romantic praise for sensual love resulting from humanistic

convictions, whereas Gotthelf's was a monumental and difficult-to-digest cosmic drama.

'*Büsserin in der Hülle des Zauberweibs*' (Penitent in the Cloak of the Sorceress): Obsession or Liberation?

As described, *Mahadeva's* central motif is the path to redemption. Unlike Goethe's *bayadère*, the dancer regrets her previous conduct in life and her attachment to sensual pleasure, and acknowledges her betrayal of love in an earlier existence—'I once hated / Him who cherished me, /I once murdered/Him who loved me' (Gotthelf 1908: 78). This purifies her— 'Broken is sin's /Addictive desire; / Finished repentance's /Tormenting anxiety; /From earthly distress /Saved in salvation' (Gotthelf 1908: 61). She then renounces her past and embarks on a path to spiritual development, along which the descended god supports her, although without any physical union. In the plot, she develops from a vibrant, sensual woman into one adopting asceticism. In a letter to the singer Hedy Brügelmann (1879–1941) of 15 March 1910, Gotthelf describes this by saying that 'in Act I, Maya is not yet a penitent Magdalene. She is corrupt, but inwardly pure and above all naive like a child' (Gotthelf 1910). Only later does she become conscious of her depravity and 'the full tragedy [comes] to light for the first time, [in which] she is not only the despised hetaera but also the outcast and impure *cāṇḍāla*' (Gotthelf 1910). Realizing her guilt, she finally repents, renunciates and prepares for the ultimate sacrifice. Here the major transformation takes place, which the author (Gotthelf 1910) describes as follows:

> Only now she feels worthy of the marvellous friend; she grows up to him, but there is now nothing sensual in her passion, the earthly love is completely overcome, it is the pure heavenly love, it is a relationship like that between [Mary] Magdalene and Christ. At the same time, she has also attained knowledge; she has grasped the real connection between guilt and atonement. And now she feels free from guilt and remorse and knows herself worthy of the sublime beloved.

Leopold von Schroeder (1851–1920), an Indologist in Vienna and member of both the Bayreuth Circle and Schopenhauer Society, also praised the opera's fascinating protagonist—'the sinner who becomes a loving

wife sacrificing herself in a death by flames, a martyr, she has grown to cosmic significance' (Schroeder 1917: 124).[1] In this ecstatic moment, the sinner becomes a saint and the vehicle of redemption. The cremation of the corpse in the last act and the obstacles to her eventual sacrifice are merely preparations for the final salvation. Maya, the sinful convert promoted from the lowest social level to almost a godhead is the real miracle and religious centre of the play's plot.

Maya's character is composed of a mixture of different models. Several scenes mirror motifs found in the Gospels and popular religion in which Jesus meets a 'sinful woman'. In his letter to Brügelmann, Gotthelf draws on the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. The cipher of the repentant sinner follows a medieval tradition that conflated several female figures of the biblical and apocryphal traditions (Almond 2023: 7–12). By the sixth century, Pope Gregory had already equated Mary Magdalene with the wealthy woman and unnamed sinner who proclaimed the message of Jesus's resurrection to the apostles (John 20: 11–18), and who washed Jesus's feet in the Pharisee's house and anointed him with expensive oil (Luke 7: 36–50). In the Gospel of Luke, the main disciple Simon [Peter] criticizes the woman as well as the action by saying that 'if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – that she is a sinner' (Luke 7: 39). The sin of this nameless woman was considered prostitution, exacerbated by dissipation. Jesus, however, reverses the accusation and his answer can be read as the key to the entire love and redemption metaphor of this opera, as well as of a large number of works of art of the time with a similar theme: This socially ostracized woman has shown him more love and adoration than his own disciples: 'therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little' (Luke 7: 47). For this, she deserves more attention than his faithful disciples, which also explains why she was honoured by the resurrected's first apparition (Almond 2023: 19–20).

Maya, however, embodies yet another female figure from Jesus's environment who belongs to a group of socially unacceptable people

---

[1] For a comparison between Buddhism and Christianity, see Schroeder (1893). Von Schroeder was an Indologist who wrote more than one theatrical play on Indian subjects (Roy 2017: 739). On von Schroeder's views on what he understood as 'Aryan religion', see Myers (2013: 184–91); and on his connections with the Wagnerians, see Roy (2017: 740–1).

who come exceptionally close to him. She invites the unknown wanderer into her house. Although she will stain his ritual purity, the guest asks for a cup of water, but Maya initially refuses: 'O may I refresh thee! /But alas, from the impure hand/ The pure may spurn /The drink of refreshment' (Gotthelf 1908: 55–6). This scene is modelled on Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well; here, likewise, the woman hesitates to offer the desired drink (John 4: 9). In the biblical story, however, the difference concerns groups 'within a broad spectrum of Israelite-Jewish religiosity' (Böhm 2010), in which different sects are not allowed to share tables (and this includes accepting a cup of water). For the scene in the *Mahadeva*, the salient point about the meeting at the well is that the woman had relations with several men and was living in a non-legitimate relationship (John 4: 18). To her, Jesus promises the water that quenches thirst for eternity (John 4: 14). From the early tradition, this thirst is understood as a metaphor for erotic desire and links the scene to a Schopenhauerian worldview fuelled by an unbridled will to live.

Maya and Mahadeva are the Indian equivalents of characters in well-known stories in the Christian tradition about love and repentance. *Mahadeva* was not therefore an attempt to stage an Indian drama or even an exoticizing fantasy, but simply a pastiche of Wagnerian motifs in Indian disguise and maybe an attempt to realize Wagner's unwritten Buddhist opera *The Siegers* (App 2011: 28–40). At the time of its performance, *Mahadeva* complied with the interpretation approved by the circle around Cosima Wagner, the custodian of her late husband's artistic and ideological legacy, and one that hardly allowed any alternatives.

Musicologist and writer Arthur Prüfer (1868–1944) referred to this constellation of love, sin, and redemption in his popularizing introduction to the works of Wagner (Prüfer 1909: 182–3). The character of Maya was based on Wagner's Kundry in *Parsifal*, a similarly enigmatic figure. She approaches the protagonist with a view to seducing him but, through her self-sacrifice, experiences the transformation into a lover (Kitagawa 2015: 127–9). She does not redeem herself, however, as this happens in the baptism by the saviour Parsifal. What connects Wagner's and Gotthelf's two female figures is their inner development, for in Wagner's last work Kundry is also conflictive and is thus a 'threshold figure of modernity' who carries elements or traces of Judeo-Christian and Indian Buddhist culture (Kitagawa 2015: 55). In her ambivalence, she is symptomatic of modern times. Kundry was, in the words of Wendell Kretzschmar, a fictitious

character in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, 'the penitent in the garb of the sorceress' (Mann 1999: 68) and the symbolic figure for music par excellence. Thus, Gotthelf's Maya, whose name is associated with deception in the material world, simultaneously embodies sensual pleasure and immaculate innocence. At first, she is an ostracized and exotic outsider, yet driven by a longing for the redemption that the society denies her. Maya, who personifies humanity, begins her journey in sensual attachment to the material world, but decides to repent and renounce it. In doing so, she redeems herself, the deity, and the entire world. *Mahadeva* ends with the annulment of multiplicity through unity: 'Multiplicity far faded/Unity near attained. /World delusion escaped, /Highest salvation won' (Gotthelf 1908: 86).

SCHOPENHAUER'S SHARE: MAYA, THE WILL, AND PESSIMISM

Schopenhauer has been considered the artists' philosopher (Mann 1974: 530) because he granted them the special gift of genius. These geniuses, he claimed, can maintain themselves in a purely intuitive state, grasping the ideas, the 'immediate and adequate objecthood of the thing in itself' (Schopenhauer 2014: 207). Moreover, music occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of the arts because it can express all aspects of the will, always in the 'universality of mere form' (Schopenhauer 2014: 291). Life consists of suffering, says Schopenhauer, as 'the will, existence itself, is a constant suffering, partly miserable, partly horrible; on the other hand, the same thing as representation alone, purely intuited, or repeated in art, free from pain, affords a meaningful spectacle (*Schauspiel*)' (Schopenhauer 2014: 295). Art, therefore, offers the only possibility of temporarily alleviating the burden of life.

When exactly Gotthelf first became aware of Schopenhauer's philosophy is not yet known, but as a reader of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, Gotthelf definitely knew about Paul Deussen, for he regularly sent his work to the journal, which Chamberlain would review and praise to the hilt (Feldhoff 2009: 198, 204). Both men, Gotthelf and Deussen, described their relationship as a friendship (Deussen 1922: 335, 350), despite the age difference and considerable social inequality between them. Deussen mentioned first meeting the ambitious musician in Düsseldorf during Easter 1907,

when out walking in the Ahr valley with Deussen's Düsseldorf relatives, the Herzfelds[2] (Deussen 1922: 335). He met him a second time in October 1913, when, at Gotthelf's invitation, Deussen gave three popular lectures on Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche at the Vienna Urania before an audience of 500 people (Deussen 1922: 350). Although certainly not a friendship between equals, Gotthelf wrote an obituary for Deussen in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, in which he highlighted those of the professor's traits that had become formative for him, especially his 'truly popular attitude' (Gotthelf 1919: 288). By this, he meant that Deussen's works resonated beyond their expected academic audience, especially among artists, 'opera singers and conductors' (Gotthelf 1919), in other words, among those likely to read his obituary in the journal of Richard Wagner's friends.

These people also made up the audience of Gotthelf's *Mahadeva*. The *Düsseldorfer Generalanzeiger* mentioned the appearance of 'numerous theatre directors and many representatives of the non-local press' at its opening in Düsseldorf (A. E. S. 1910). And, at its premiere in Karlsruhe on 28 November 1910, the *Badische Presse* also noted that 'the foreign stage directors, conductors and critics who came to the performance confirmed the importance of this theatrical evening' (Herzog 1910). Here, a circle of people had gathered who were connected not only through their interest in the music of Wagner and his imitators, which was very popular at the turn of the century, but also through their particular worldview. This circle linked the musical dramas with a dose of Deussen's 'stencil-like simplification' (Atzert 2015: 80), a considerably diluted philosophy of Schopenhauer, transferred by Wagner's reception and reduced to a nostalgic search for origins in a supposedly superior Indian culture (King 1999: 118, 62–72; Masuzawa 2005: 121–45). The musical–poetic work had become a mystically elated product that had moved well beyond theatrical entertainment and was tied up with a late attempt at *Kunstreligion*. In the early nineteenth century, this 'arose in response to the perception that German society was yielding its national identity to foreign, secular,

---

[2] Albert Herzfeld (1865–1943), a former co-owner of a spinning mill and artist from Düsseldorf, was married to Paul Volkmar's daughter Else (born in Berlin on 10 June 1882), and was Paul Deussen's brother-in-law. He was murdered in the Theresienstadt concentration camp on 13 February 1943. His fate is unhappily linked to Paul Deussen's estate stored in the Herzfeld family apartment, which had been looted after the deportation of the wealthy family in 1942 (Feldhoff 2009: 187, 235).

Enlightenment influences and the belief that religion must play a crucial role in Germany's national redemption' (Stanley 2008: 154). The rather vague term *Kunstreligion* described art in the service of religion, perhaps even a substitute for religion, which accentuated deep feelings of elation and community (Nowak 1971).

GOTTHELF AND THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE

As the large attendance at his 1913 lectures in Vienna attested, Deussen was able to captivate the masses by successfully condensing the knowledge of humankind and reducing it to a few catchy phrases. We read in Gotthelf's obituary that Deussen was concerned with nothing less than the 'final reconciliation of science and religion' (Gotthelf 1919: 291), which he achieved by linking the millennia 'from Vajnavalkya to Kant and Schopenhauer'. He even adjusted to the Bayreuth ear by speaking of a 'primal affinity between the old Indian and the new German idealism' and a 'marriage of the Indian and German spirit' (Gotthelf 1919: 291). Many sought and found impulses for a religious reorientation in the texts of the Indian tradition, which Deussen had made known to a broad German audience. His translations of the *Upanishads* (Deussen 1897) and the *Brahma Sutra of Vedanta* (Deussen 1887), contributed significantly to the understanding and dissemination of Indian philosophy and religion in Germany (for an evaluation and criticism of his periodization of Indian philosophy, see Franco 2013: 2–6.) In his multi-volume general history of philosophy produced between 1894 and 1913, Deussen presented the Indian tradition as an integrative component of Occidental philosophy and its starting point. In addition, the translations of Vedic texts and Deussen's works on the history of philosophy were popular precisely because they were stylistically accessible. The constant repetition of the basic idea, which was neither groundbreaking nor philosophically demanding, lay in the continuity of Indian thoughts that materialized again in various historico-cultural contexts and found their culmination and conclusion in the philosophy of Kant and Schopenhauer.

As he continues his praise of Deussen, Gotthelf adds a considerable amount of his own concern and cultural scepticism when he speaks about the 'innermost longing of our unfortunate time for retrieving' the lost salvation contained in the 'belief in a moral meaning of the world' that Schopenhauer had founded (Gotthelf 1919: 291). Adopting the pathetic tone of Chamberlain's prose, he described (with considerable

philosophical incoherence) the 'transcendental idealism' that carries the 'transcendental unity of all beings', omits no cliché, and preaches the 'Indian magic word *tat twam asi*' to which the 'delusion of multiplicity must vanish' and that 'separates individual from individual'. He then goes on to explain how 'selfishness will be overcome', and how 'greed, hatred, envy, and malice will be transformed into selflessness, toleration, compassion and love' (Gotthelf 1919: 291).

With these sentences in mind, Gotthelf's mission is finally visible. In a Wagnerian sense, his artistic vision of the symphonic drama stood at the top of the artistic forms of expression and the philosophico-religious context. *Mahadeva* was, therefore, not meant to serve as purposeless entertainment, but rather contained the most profound expression of German culture. Gotthelf wrote about this in his treatise on the essence of music as early as 1893, in which he described music as the spirit of the Germanic and Christian worldview, as opposed to the ancient Hellenic one, and as 'the noblest, purest humanity, of all-embracing love and purest religiosity' (Gotthelf 1893: 53).

The whole musical project of *Mahadeva* thus had a religious background, and Gotthelf wrote an article about his own theological premises. Significantly, it did not appear in the *Bayreuther Blätter* but in a rather marginal journal called *Religion und Geisteskultur* (Religion and culture of the spirit) under the title 'Indian renaissance' (Gotthelf 1911). In it, he traced the idea of an Indian renaissance[3] back to Chamberlain, who wrote enthusiastic reviews of Deussen's Indian books in the *Bayreuther Blätter* and who was at the centre of a circle of Indianizing scholars, including the winner of the 1917 Nobel Prize in Literature, Karl Gjellerup (Schwaderer 2022). Redemption was to occur in the 'salvation of the Christian faith through marriage with Indian knowledge' (Gotthelf 1911: 68), in the

---

[3] At this point, some terminological differentiations are necessary. I am grateful to Eli Franco for pointing this out to me. The idea of a renaissance in the sense of a national rebirth already had a history in Germany by the time Gotthelf wrote his article. The enthusiasm of European readers for the newly discovered Indian texts combines with a romantic search for origins and an impulse for renewal, especially in Germany. In any case, the term 'Oriental renaissance' as the source of renewal seems to have been coined by the French historian Edgar Quinet and later adapted by Raymond Schwab (Schwab 1984), but is not limited to India. The sources for the discussion have been collected in Grünendahl (2015), where the author sometimes tends to draw apodictic conclusions. On the other hand, 'Indian renaissance' is commonly used for the flourishing in Bengal in the nineteenth century, which begins with Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833). However, if Gotthelf speaks of an 'Indian renaissance', he attributes it to Chamberlain (Gotthelf 1914: 106; Gotthelf 1917: 267).

final healing of the 'Amfortas wound', which, in the language of the Wagnerites, means the division of faith and knowledge brought about through the orientation of the modern world to scientific and economic principles (Gotthelf 1919: 292), or the 'incurable affliction that ails modern humankind' (Gotthelf 1911: 53).

In this text, numerous keywords and clichés about the Indian, or rather Aryan, religion and worldview appear in the Bayreuth Circle, starting with the 'primeval homeland' (Gotthelf 1911: 53) from which Occidental philosophy developed. Here, he follows Deussen and his idea of transcendental idealism, to turn his extreme monism into his music drama. Gotthelf sketches his theological approach and speaks of a unity (*brahman*) in multiplicity, the empirical reality that exists only apparently, the 'veil of *māyā*' (Schopenhauer 2014: 379), which conceals the fact that truth is overshadowed by the senses and thirst for existence (*tṛṣṇā*), also known as the erotic drive (*kāma*) (Gotthelf 1911: 54).

This condensed retranslation of Schopenhauer's philosophy into Vedic texts is part of Deussen's main argument, which he repeats again and again (Deussen 1894: viii–x). In the mystical devolution, Gotthelf continues, and in the redemption that arises from the realization of the unity of subject and object, one recognizes both 'the ecstatic transfiguration of the sacred' and the 'highest ecstasy of the artist' (Gotthelf 1911: 55). For Schopenhauer, the artistic spectacle (*Schauspiel*) had a soothing effect, even on his pessimistic worldview (Schopenhauer 2014: 295, 315–16). Accordingly, Gotthelf (1916: 30) continues, 'the purifying ennobling of true art is therefore also based on the fact that it frees us, even if only for a few moments, from our selfishness and expands our self'. This happens in the 'moral act of taming the senses and desire. Thus, *nirvāna* is also a state of highest purification and purity' (Gotthelf 1916: 30). In his drama, Gotthelf leads his audience through the enactment of this transcendental experience—in which elements of Deussian Indianizing philosophy become personified—and on to salvation in community through artistic experience. 'This is the inestimable significance of this highest art, that it transmits to thousands the inner miracle of salvation, which was once granted to the saint only in the solitary silence of the penitential forest on the holy Ganga stream, or else in the narrow monastic cell' (Gotthelf 1916: 67–8). He calls this the 'Last Supper of Art', during which the children of the time 'are led back from the faithless, sensual materialism … to the pure idealism of faith' and finally the 'ecstatic force of music … is

supposed to reawaken the religion that has died in our hearts' (Gotthelf 1916: 67–8).

The Role of Religion in National Identity: Some Conclusions

So far, Gotthelf has outlined the artistic ideals of a late Wagnerian. He wrote *Mahadeva* to revive a unique musical-cum-religious experience, the powerful effect that the *Parsifal* had had on him almost three decades earlier, but which until its copyright expired in 1913 had rarely been performed. The staging of the symphonic drama *Mahadeva* was intended to provide an experience of ecstasy and unity to a very circumscribed group of mainly bourgeois, Protestant, male intellectuals facing the challenges of the modern world. Accordingly, the themes did not deal with real Indian stories, but rather with well-worn Christian themes transposed onto a fantastic backdrop against which Schopenhauer's philosophical concepts were played out on stage as characters in the drama. The audience was not supposed to see Indian themes, but to recognize what was really 'German' in its awareness of an autochthonous foundation for community life based on purely national principles in a blending of religion, philosophy, and music as a late form of Romanticism.

What he explicitly disavows, however, is the question in this context of the meaning of race. In the Bayreuth Circle, the anti-Semitism aggressively put forward by Chamberlain in particular (Bermbach 2015; Hein 1996) was a 'cultural code' (Volkov 2000: 13–36), sometimes covert but mostly overt, to which sympathizers apparently subscribed, even without need, when communicating in this society. Gotthelf (1911: 62) rejected the importance of the collective idea of race in favour of a Christian 'dignity of personality', which supposedly replaced the more primitive 'race dogma'. His criticism of the Indian caste system, which often had to serve to justify racial differences in what later became racial science (*Rassenkunde*), also sounds refreshing in this context. One can speculate whether this heterodox opinion, which Gotthelf did not express in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, has something to do with his humanist worldview, which Goethe had influenced, and from which *Mahadeva*'s inspiration came. However,

that his wife was of Jewish descent seemed insufficient reason to reject anti-Semitism. If one follows the train of thought in the text further, an elitist trait surfaces with the cult of the 'ingenious personality' and its 'liberation … and the abolition of the law'. Where 'Brahmins and Jews, become high priests, scribes and Pharisees', it was up to Jesus to melt this religiously ossified mass 'by the flame of love' (Gotthelf 1911: 63). In the end, Gotthelf again moves on the well-trodden paths of a widespread theological anti-Judaism, linked with an Enlightenment dualism that in its popularized form expressed only a poorly masked anti-Semitism (Mack 2003; Nirenberg 2004). The line of connection he draws between Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion and the self-sacrificing love of Christ on the cross also seems Wagnerian, and his Indianized copy of *Parsifal* celebrates a radical ideal based on a blending of Schopenhauer and Wagner, Goethe and Deussen's Indo–Germanic Christianity (Marchand 2009: 302).

Gotthelf was undoubtedly unique in his approach to this project. However, for a generation of readers, including quite a few women, musicians, artists, and literati, Deussen's popular œuvre opened the door to a supra-temporal second reality. This Indian-inspired artistic idealism gradually developed into a bulwark of anti-modern, politically restorative national identity with strong anti-Semitic overtones. Schopenhauerian ideas served as a cipher through which people could recognize themselves, creating a counter space for discourses that were critical of capitalism and modernism, yet increasingly anti-democratic and anti-Semitic. As Christopher Ryan (2010: 62) pointed out, Schopenhauer 'assimilated the ancient religions of India to his system to create a centre of opposition to positivism and materialism and to fill the gap opened up by the decline of Christian institutions in the wake of the increasing awareness of the intellectual indefensibility of historical Christianity'. Schopenhauer thus became the focus of a 'kind of counterculture in the *Kaiserreich* that popularized discourses on non-Western religions' (Knöbl 2019: 41; Marchand 2009: 302) and indirectly on the compatibility of the Christian faith with modernity. The perception of a dichotomy between Western, modern, and natural science-based understandings of the world often branded as 'materialism', and 'German' culture, which was seen as idealistic, that is based on spiritual principles and in which (Christian) faith was not abandoned in favour of 'divisive knowledge'.

Clemens Albrecht (1993: 13) speaks of a 'specifically German version of a dilemma … underlying modernity in general', in which the

replacement of authoritarian forms of government with democratic elements, as well as secularization, was perceived as a history of loss. Social and political disruptions, as well as the looming catastrophe of the First World War, which changed everything, caused great insecurities at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was compensated for 'in an aggressive, nationalistically tinged habitus' and expressed in 'striving for world power and an ideology of superiority' (Lörke 2010: 58). These particularly often used religion—and, in the German case, music—as a repository of knowledge and apologetic strategy (Potter 1998). The debates about faith in modernity were fought on different battlefields; if the Vatican tried to rally the faithful Catholics behind it in an international alliance and thus adopted a minority position in Germany, cultural Protestantism was a strictly national affair and oriented towards a supposedly German culture, using metaphors of organicity and inwardness. This was opposed to Western, materialist civilization, which conversely was adopted by socialists and democratic forces in Germany (Albrecht 1993).

A Karlsruhe critic from the ranks of the working people had criticized the play for lacking 'the essential – the new!' (*Volksfreund* 1910: 1). However, the deliberately epigonal drama of the Wagnerite was not supposed to be novel but to capture its audience's expectations of self-assurance, a need for 'eternal truths' and 'supra-temporal moral values'. As late as 1916, Gotthelf, convinced of Germany's imminent victory, assured the readers of the *Bayreuther Blätter* that they were fighting on the right side against the exclusively material interests of their opponents, solely for a supreme spiritual good, the grail of young, unspoiled German culture against a rotten international civilization (Gotthelf 1916: 26). Christmas 1917 saw the last notes of the *Mahadeva* fade away in Vienna and the sublime melodies of a musical redemption that had failed to materialize finally fell silent.

References

A. E. S. 1910. Stadttheater. *Mahadeva: Mysterium von Felix Gotthelf, Düsseldorfer General-Anzeiger* 35., 9 March (67): 1.

Albrecht, Clemens. 1993. Kultur und Zivilisation: Eine typisch deutsche Dichotomie? In *Kultur und Technik. Zu ihrer Theorie und Praxis in der modernen Lebenswelt*, ed. Wolfgang König and Marlene Landsch, 11–29. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Almond, Philip C. 2023. *Mary Magdalene: A cultural biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

App, Urs. 2011. *Richard Wagner und der Buddhismus*. Rorschach: UniversityMedia.

Atzert, Stephan. 2015. *Im Schatten Schopenhauers. Nietzsche, Deussen und Freud*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Bermbach, Udo. 2015. *Houston Stewart Chamberlain: Wagners Schwiegersohn – Hitlers Vordenker*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler.

———. 2016. Der Kulturdeutsche: Houston Stewart Chamberlain. In *Der Wunschlose. Prinz Max von Baden und seine Welt*, ed. Konrad Krimm, 78–87. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Böhm, Martina. 2010. *Samaritaner*. https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/25967/. Accessed 4 April 2023.

Burnouf, Eugène. 1844. *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme Indien*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale.

Deussen, Paul. 1887. *Die Sûtra's des Vedânta: Oder, Die Çârîkaramîmânsâ des Bâdarâyana, des Bâdarâyana, nebst dem vollständigen commentare des Çañkara*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus.

———. 1894. Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Religionen. In *Allgemeine Einleitung und Philosophie des Veda bis auf die Upanishad's*, vol. 1. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus.

———. 1897. *Sechzig Upanishad's des Veda*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus.

———. 1922. *Mein Leben*. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

Düsseldorf Statistisches Amt. 2023. *Bericht über den Stand und die Verwaltung der Gemeinde-Angelegenheiten der Stadt für den Zeitraum vom 1.* April 1909 bis 31. März 1910. http://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/ihd/periodical/titleinfo/4736356, Accessed 18 March 2023.

Düsseldorfer Tageblatt. 1910. *Stadttheater*. Mahadeva. (Uraufführung), Nr 67, 9 March.

Feldhoff, Heiner. 2009. *Nietzsches Freund: Die Lebensgeschichte des Paul Deussen*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag.

Franco, Eli. 2013. On the periodization and historiography of Indian philosophy. In *Periodization and historiography of Indian philosophy*. Twelve lectures held at the fourteenth world Sanskrit conference (Kyoto, September 1–5, 2009), ed. Eli Franco, 1–34. Vienna: Institut für Südasien- Tibet- und Buddhismuskunde der Universität Wien.

Gebhard, Richard. 1931. Felix Weingartner über Schopenhauer. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 18: 368–371.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. 1798. Der Gott und die Bajadere: Indische Legende. In *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1798*, ed. Friedrich Schiller, 188–193. Tübingen: J. G. Cottaische Buchhandlung.

Gotthelf, Felix. 1893. *Das Wesen der Musik*. Bonn: Cohen.

———. 1908. *Mahadeva: Symphonisches Drama in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen*. Vienna: J. Weiner.

———. 1910. *Felix Gotthelf an Hedy Brügelmann, Düsseldorf*. Letter, https://www.iracema-brugelmann.de/deutsch/pers%C3%B6nlichkeit/briefe-von-felix-gotthelf/. Accessed 18 March 2023.

———. 1911. Indische Renaissance. *Religion und Geisteskultur. Zeitschrift für die religiöse Vertiefung des modernen Geisteslebens* 1: 52–68.

———. 1914. Über indische und deutsche Philosophie. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 3: 98–111.

———. 1915. Schopenhauer und Richard Wagner. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 4: 24–42.

———. 1916. Schopenhauer und Richard Wagner. *Bayreuther Blätter* 39: 26–40.

———. 1917. Referat über den Vortrag: "Indischer Geist in der deutschen Kunst". *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 6: 267–269.

———. 1919. Dem Andenken Paul Deussens. *Bayreuther Blätter* 42: 288–292.

Grünendahl, Reinhold. 2015. Romantische Indomanie oder orientalische Renaissance? Zu einigen Erklärungsmustern für das Entstehen der Indologie in Deutschland. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 165 (1): 185–210.

Habermas, Rebekka. 2019. Introduction: Negotiating the religious and the secular in modern German history. In *Negotiating the secular and the religious in the German Empire: Transnational approaches*, ed. Rebekka Habermas, 1–29. New York: Berghahn.

Hein, Annette. 1996. *Es ist viel Hitler in Wagner: Rassismus und antisemitische Deutschtumsideologie in den Bayreuther Blättern (1878–1938)*. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer.

Herzog, Albert. 1910. Großh. Hoftheater zu Karlsruhe. Zum ersten Male: Mahadeva. Ein Mysterium in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen für die Bühne in Wort und Ton verfaßt von Felix Gotthelf. *Badische Presse Generalanzeiger der Residenz Karlsruhe und des Großherzogtums Baden* 26., 28 November (552): 2.

Karlsruher Tagblatt. 1910. *Erstaufführung Mahadeva*, 28 November (329), p. 2.

Karnes, Kevin C., and Andrew J. Mitchell. 2020. Schopenhauer's influence on Wagner. In *The Oxford handbook of Schopenhauer*, ed. Robert L. Wicks, Kevin C. Karnes, and Andrew J. Mitchell, 516–534. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

King, Richard. 1999. *Colonialism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*. London: Routledge.

Kitagawa, Chikako. 2015. Versuch über Kundry. In *Facetten einer Figur*. Frankfurt am Main, PL Academic Research.

Knöbl, Wolfgang. 2019. A secular age? The 'modern world' and the beginnings of the sociology of religion. In *Negotiating the secular and the religious in the German Empire: Transnational approaches*, ed. Rebekka Habermas, 31–55. New York: Berghahn.

Lörke, Tim. 2010. *Die Verteidigung der Kultur: Mythos und Musik als Medien der Gegenmoderne: Thomas Mann – Ferruccio Busoni – Hans Pfitzner – Hanns Eisler*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Mack, Michael. 2003. *German idealism and the Jew: The inner anti-Semitism of philosophy and German Jewish responses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mann, Thomas. 1974 [first published 1938]. Schopenhauer. In *Reden und Aufsätze*, Thomas Mann, 528–80. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.

———. 1999. Doctor Faustus. *The life of the German composer Adrian Leverkühn as told by a friend*. Trans. John Woods. New York: Random House.

Marchand, Suzanne L. 2009. *German orientalism in the age of empire: Religion, race, and scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The invention of world religions. Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meister, Richard. 1931. Felix Gotthelf zum Gedächtnis. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 18: 371–374.

Myers, Perry. 2013. *German visions of India, 1871–1918: Commandeering the holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nirenberg, David. 2004. *Anti-Judaism: The Western tradition*. New York: Head of Zeus.

Nowak, Adolf. 1971. Wagners Parsifal und die Idee der Kunstreligion. In *Richard Wagner: Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus, 161–175. Regensburg: Gustav Bosse.

Potter, Pamela Maxine. 1998. *Most German of the arts: Musicology and society from the Weimar Republic to the end of Hitler's Reich*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Presse, Badische. 1910. Der Eid gegen den Modernismus. *Badische Presse Generalanzeiger der Residenz Karlsruhe und des Großherzogtums Baden*, 24 November (546): 1.

Prüfer, Arthur. 1909. *Das Werk von Bayreuth*. Leipzig: Siegel.

Meister, Richard. 1910. Mahadeva. (Zur bevorstehenden Aufführung von Gotthelfs Mysterium 'Mahadeva' am Karlsruher Hoftheater). *Badische Presse Generalanzeiger der Residenz Karlsruhe und des Großherzogtums Baden* 26., 24 November (546): 1–2.

Roy, Baijayanti. 2017. Leopold von Schroeder. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 737–741. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Ryan, Christopher. 2010. *Schopenhauer's philosophy of religion: The death of god and the oriental renaissance*. Leuven: Peeters.

Schepers, Judith. 2016. *Streitbare Brüder: Ein Parallelbiographischer Zugriff auf Modernismuskontroverse und Antimodernisteneid am Beispiel von Franz und Konstantin Wieland*. Boston: Brill.

Schlage, Sandra. 2018. Goethe und die Tempeltänzerin: Anmerkungen zur Ballade 'Der Gott und die Bajadere'. *Südasien* 38 (3): 32–35.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. 2014. The world as will and representation. In *The Cambridge edition of the works of Schopenhauer*, ed. Judith Norman, A. Welchman, and C. Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schwab, Raymond. 1984. *The oriental renaissance: Europe's rediscovery of India and the east, 1680–1880.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Schwaderer, Isabella. 2021. *Die Schopenhauer Gesellschaft 1912–1913: Ein Forschungsprojekt mit Hilfe des FactGrid*. FACTGRID a database for historians. https://blog.factgrid.de/archives/2116. Accessed 19 Mar 2023.

———. 2022. Enlightened religion? On Buddhism in Karl Gjellerup's *Die Weltwanderer. Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasienforschung* 7: 161–191.

Sonnerat, Pierre. 1782. *Voyage aux Indes orientales et à la Chine, fait par ordre du roi, depuis 1774 jusqu'en 1781.* Paris: published by the author.

Stanley, Glenn. 2008. Parsifal: Redemption and Kunstreligion. In *The Cambridge companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey, 151–175. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Thurner, Mathias. 2021. *Die Geburt des 'Christentums' als 'Religion' am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ernst Troeltschs Theologie und ihre Quellen im Kontext einer globalen Religionsgeschichte.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Urbach, Karina, and Bernd Buchner. 2004. Prinz Max von Baden und Houston Stewart Chamberlain. *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 52 (1): 121–177.

Volkov, Shulamit. 2000. *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code: Zehn Essays.* Munich: Beck.

Volksfreund. 1910. Theater und Musik. Hoftheater Karlsruhe. Mahadeva! By Sch. *Volksfreund. Tageszeitung für das werktätige Volk Badens* 29 (279): 1.

von Schroeder, Leopold. 1893. *Buddhismus und Christentum: Was sie gemein haben und was sie unterscheidet.* Reval: Franz Kluge.

———. 1917. Mahadeva: Ein symphonisches Drama von Felix Gotthelf. Vortrag, gehalten im Wiener akademischen Wagnerverein am 16. März 1916. *Bayreuther Blätter* 40: 122–130.

Weingartner, Felix. 1895. *Die Lehre von der Wiedergeburt und das musikalische Drama.* Kiel: Lipsius & Tischer.

———. 1928. *Lebenserinnerungen.* Vol. 1. Zürich: Orell Füsli.

Wild, Reiner. 1996. Der Gott und die Bajadere. In *Goethe-Handbuch, 1, Gedichte*, ed. Bernd Witte and Regine Otto, 291–293. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Wolf, Hubert. 2009. *In wilder zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem: 100 Jahre Modernismus und Antimodernismus in der Katholischen Kirche.* Boston: Brill.

Yelle, Robert A., and Lorenz Trein. 2021. *Narratives of disenchantment and secularization: Critiquing Max Weber's idea of modernity.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Z. 1910. Aus der Residenz. Großherzogliches Hoftheater *Karlsruher Zeitung*, 29 November.

The Indian *Parsifal*: Revisiting Felix Gotthelf's Forgotten Opera *Mahadeva*

Markus Schlaffke

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Felix Gotthelf, a 30-year-old German physician and specialist in throat diseases from Mönchengladbach, gave up his medical practice to study musical composition. He then devoted ten years of his life to creating his magnum opus, *Mahadeva, Ein Mysterium in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen für die Bühne in Wort und Ton (A Mystery in a Prelude and Three Acts for the Stage in Words and Music)*. Since it had involved much grappling with the metaphysical, religious, and artistic issues of the day, he dedicated his work to Paul Deussen, a philosopher, Indologist, and founder of the Schopenhauer Society. *Mahadeva* explores Schopenhauer's reflections on Buddhism and Richard Wagner's unfulfilled plans to write a Buddhist opera by combining Hindu scriptures, Buddhist legends, and their European interpretations in a poetic musical drama. The story centres on the divine creator, Mahadeva, who assumes human form to redeem humanity through coming to the aid of a young woman whom society had ostracized. Gotthelf's work opened

M. Schlaffke (✉)
Weimar, Germany
e-mail: markus.schlaffke@uni-weimar.de

in Düsseldorf in 1910, but soon disappeared from the theatre schedules. Remaining virtually unknown as a musician, Gotthelf died in Dresden in 1930.

The journey of this self-avowed composer, poet, and author of treatises on the philosophy of religion, Felix Gotthelf, says a lot about the emergence of European modernity in the years leading up to the First World War—as seen by the laggardly, the late-coming, the marginal, and the epigonic. From the vantage point of established historiographies of artistic modernism, it is obvious why the opera never really succeeded. Even at its premiere in 1910, the work clearly failed to distinguish between the old and the modern. In other words, Gotthelf's life's work did not fill any gaps in the history of opera form and contributed little to what still moves us today, either artistically or philosophically. It seemed outdated because it could not convincingly fulfil the expectation that artwork should create something new. This aesthetic judgement about an artistic creation that could not prevail comes from our lips today as quickly as it did to the critics of Felix Gotthelf's day. The central claim of artistic modernism is that the measure of a work of art is its constant ability to break with convention. However, in his works on aesthetics, French philosopher Jacques Rancière questions this avant-garde narrative. He argues that the traditional concept of modernity complicates our understanding of the shifts in art because 'it traces, in order either to exalt or deplore it, a simple line of transition or rupture between the old and the new' and 'tries to retain the forms of rupture, the iconoclastic gestures.' The hallmark of a modern aesthetic regime, by contrast, encompasses a 'co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities' (Rancière 2019). Felix Gotthelf's *Mahadeva* is precisely an example of this juxtaposition of temporality. It spoke of something that had become conceivable but could not be elaborated on. It left no trace worth mentioning. Instead, it is itself a trace of quite different continuing movements.

The trail I follow here is an attempt to read history from the back of the stage, to perform a kind of sonic archaeology on the acoustic dustbin of modernity. In doing so, it may be possible to observe what the complex machinery of the musical theatre processed, digested, and discarded between the turn of the century and the First World War, when the bourgeois lifestyle of the German Empire was at its peak. On the other hand, this also brings into view what has been preserved and sustained.

Gotthelf's opera represents a double loss—the loss of the work itself, which had become unperformable and inaudible, and the loss of what it

ought to have been but never was—the work of art that was intended to be but remained hidden because it failed. After all, this unrealized opera was once thought possible and the art critics had been eagerly anticipating it. Its religious and philosophical ideas struck a chord. It tamed the 'many-headed beast, the audience' (Gotthelf 1910), and the German theatre granted it an opportunity to show what it could do, but it was an opportunity that Gotthelf admittedly squandered. The critics gave *Mahadeva* the thumbs down, and the work never entered the canons of opera. Hope remained, however, for the much-anticipated 'work of art of the future' that *Mahadeva* should have been.

In her chapter in this volume, Isabella Schwaderer describes Gotthelf's opera in the context of negotiating religion and secularism—as a form of modernity that 'cannot be fully understood as an increasing disenchantment with and decay of a religious worldview.' With this in mind, she reconstructs the Christian interpretation of Wagner and Schopenhauer that emerges from the ideas in Gotthelf's opera. I approach this analysis from another angle, one that starts from the two facets of the work itself, namely its success and its failure – in other words, the work that was heard on the German stage in 1910 and the work that the audience hoped to hear, but did not.

However, the music for the opera, which should speak for itself, must first be recovered. Until an ensemble willing to rehearse the score can be found, this auditory event can only be reconstructed for those skilled at reading music. I shall therefore proceed mainly along experimental lines. In the autumn of 2020, I asked André Kassel, a composer and opera répétiteur at the Weimar German National Theatre, to examine the piano score of *Mahadeva* and to play some excerpts from the opera's musical passages. Based on our immediate impression of those auditory snatches, we discussed the obscurity of the work, as perceived from the year 2020, and recorded a video of our conversation. I shall rely on this recording for an intuitive understanding of Gotthelf's music, but above all, to gain the greatest possible distance from established musicological narratives on the history of German opera. The concern here is not, strictly speaking, with the history of music but with the steady realignment of the ethical, aesthetic, and scientific thoughts reverberating around the German art scene of the day. Richard Wagner had brought this realignment into full swing; the work of his apologist Felix Gotthelf reflected on and updated it and, in the process, it became plausible for Gotthelf, who had never visited India,

to 'apply the Indian spirit in all its mystical and metaphysical depth to German art' (Gotthelf 1917).

Gotthelf's opera was a characteristic product of post-Wagnerian German music insofar as it spelled out Wagner's ideas on art and religion for the benefit of German national culture. However, the project was carried out on the shaky ground of artistic modernism, which was shaky because it was continually reconfiguring the framework for designing and interpreting a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The success or failure of a work of art in 1910 depended on its ability not only to produce aesthetic innovation but also to address such things as the religious realm, the experience of alterity, and colonial knowledge.

AN ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Little is known about the life of the doctor turned artist Felix Gotthelf beyond his own sparse writings. Gotthelf was born in Mönchengladbach in 1857. He studied medicine in Heidelberg and became a resident medical specialist in Dresden. In 1884, he described the premiere of Wagner's *Parsifal* in Bayreuth as awakening his interest in the arts. He then studied musical composition in Dresden under Felix Draeseke from 1887 to 1891 and subsequently became a *Kapellmeister* in Cologne for a year (Meister 1931: 371). Gotthelf spent several years in Munich, where he pursued his creative interests. Alongside his magnum opus, *Mahadeva*, he produced several carefully composed lesser works, mainly songs, a string quartet, and the symphonic fantasia *Ein Frühlingsfest*. Gotthelf also emerged as an author who wrote on musical and philosophical topics for newspapers and arts magazines. He was known in the Bayreuth Circle of Wagner devotees, and it was its members who introduced him to Schopenhauer's philosophy. In 1898 he moved to Vienna and, after the First World War, he returned to Dresden, where, having been widowed at a relatively young age, he led a secluded life with his daughter Maya (Meister 1931: 372). He died in Dresden in 1930 (Fig. 6.1).

After working on it for ten years, Gotthelf completed the libretto and score of *Mahadeva* in 1908. In 1909, part of the final act was performed in Stuttgart with the royal chamber-music singer Hedy Iracema Brügelmann (1879–1941), a famous German–Brazilian soprano from the *Hoftheater*, in the leading role of Maya. In 1910, the actual premiere of *Mahadeva* took place in Düsseldorf, where there were no fewer than eight documented opera performances during the 1910/11 season. The three

Fig. 6.1 Portrait of
Felix Gotthelf. (Source:
Düsseldorfer
Stadttheater Nr. 22,
Düsseldorf, 28 February
to 7 March 1910)

FELIX GOTTHELF.

performances in which Iracema-Brügelmann played Maya were notewor-
thy. In 1911, the Karlsruhe theatre added several performances of
Mahadeva to its schedule. On 19 November 1916, an excerpt of *Mahadeva*,
performed by the ensemble of the Vienna *Concertverein*, was probably
heard on stage for the last time at the *Konzerthaus* in Vienna.

The libretto and the part for piano, which Gotthelf printed and pub-
lished, are what have survived of *Mahadeva*. The score is in the Saxon
State Library, which safeguards Gotthelf's several other publications and
papers. His essays were published in the Schopenhauer Society's yearbooks
from 1914 to 1917. Singer Hedy Brügelmann's estate has preserved
lengthy correspondence with Gotthelf on the *Mahadeva* premiere.
Reviews of the first performances can be found in the Düsseldorf and
Karlsruhe local newspapers.

That is the extent of the sources for our listening experiment. From
there, let us as impartially as possible wade into the 'thorny, impassable
harmonic thicket' of Gotthelf's composition and capture an echo of
Mahadeva.

The Tail of Wagner's Comet

Weimar, November 2020

The Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar (DNT, or German national theatre in Weimar) is one of the oldest theatres in Germany: it dates back to the eighteenth century when its director was the most famous German author of the classical period, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Today the DNT offers a broad repertoire of classical and modern operas, theatrical productions and concerts in four different venues. The day-to-day operations of the DNT in the year 2020 provide an appropriate backdrop to Gotthelf's forgotten work, which has not exactly entered the canons of contemporary theatre. The programme for the DNT's 2019/20 season featured works by Claudio Monteverdi, Jacques Offenbach, Paul Dessau, André Kassel, Richard Strauss, and Leonard Bernstein. In addition, a symposium dealt with the ties between opera and colonialism. In 2020, however, the coronavirus pandemic put an end to all productions for months on end. This granted us an unexpected moment of contemplation in which to take a closer look at a piece of music that the theatre had cast aside a hundred years ago. Since lockdown measures restricted access to the theatre, I arranged to meet André Kassel in the room in which my rock band rehearses. It has black walls, scuffed Persian rugs on the floor, and a neon sign left over from a former stage production in one corner of the room spelling out the words 'The End' – a fitting prop for the exotic pathos of the demise of Gotthelf's work to which we are about to listen. Kassel takes a seat on the piano stool and opens the score.

The Mahadeva prelude is notated in four quarters in E major. Gotthelf indicates 'moderately slow' as the tempo and 'misterioso' as the expression. The score's first chord comprises a low E and a C-sharp of the double basses in pianissimo and is sustained over 20 full measures. Above this, the first harp enters, followed by two soft timpani strokes, each concluding the first measures. Muted French horns come in with an initial motif. Thereafter, the curtain rises. Here Gotthelf has included the following instructions:

'The stage represents a surface of water, boundless in all directions and perfectly smooth, in the centre of which a white lotus blossom floats, its calyx closed. Slowly moving clouds of mist gradually fade over the surface of the water. Night falls and there is a clear but starless sky.' Invisible to the audience, the 'voice of the heights' enters with the words: 'Ma-ha-de-va, We-sens-walt-er' (Mahadeva, keeper of the essence of beings) (Fig. 6.2).

Fig. 6.2 Bringing the opera back to life with composer André Kassel. (Source: Videostills © Markus Schlaffke)

André Kassel fumbles his way through the chords of the first act, sight-reading and mimicking the cues for the singers and chorus. A somewhat grotesque echo of Gotthelf's composition can thus be heard on the slightly out-of-tune piano in the rehearsal room.

'It's really nothing special,' says Kassel, putting aside the prelude. 'Quite normal, just as a European would imagine it. Tritonal couplings of A major and E-flat major, semitones. It plods along to get people in the mood. Most importantly, the double basses do not lose count when they play there for so long.'

I wonder what the narrative of our improvised 'stand-up revision' actually is. How can the forgotten piece of art be mirrored today? How can it acquire significance? Only two argumentative thrusts come to mind – the idea of the overlooked masterpiece and the overlooked ideological scandal.

> *I attempt to explain the plot of the opera to André Kassel. It is difficult for me to summarize the plot without also going into the underlying cosmology. It requires great effort to convey the anachronistic assortment of characters in the opera as seen from the year 1910.*

What is this strangely anachronistic piece of literary musical theatre actually about? Even in 1910, *Mahadeva*'s reviewers found it a challenge to give a coherent summary of the opera's plot. How terms like *brahmin*, 'reincarnation,' and *nirvāna* were explained in the arts section of German newspapers illustrates how vague the semantics of this vocabulary were in 1910. After all, this was not about India but about the big picture of worldly wisdom. Gotthelf condenses this into 4 h of opera in a prelude and three acts. Mahadeva appears in numerous guises—a pilgrim, priests of the Mahadeva cult, a dancer named Maya, a young warrior, the god of death Yama, temple maidens, penitents, *Veda* scholars, and conch blowers. The action takes place 'in ancient times' in the Indian city of Benares.

The god Mahadeva's awakening from the sleep of *nirvāna* sets the events in motion. When Mahadeva realizes that he has dreamt up the world and thus brought the cycle of suffering into existence, he becomes a human so that he can break the cycle through self-sacrifice. He starts by entering the temple and encountering priests and followers of his cult who do not recognize him. He then turns to Maya, a dancer who is a *cāndāla*[1] (an untouchable). After thwarting Kama's insistent advances on Maya, Mahadeva spends the night with her himself (without approaching her sexually). Then he invokes the god of death and thus ends his human existence. Maya, however, is accused of murder. A public trial ensues, during which various accusations and intercessions are made. During these proceedings, an entanglement involving Maya's reincarnation is revealed. In a former life as a high-caste *brahmin*, she had betrayed Kama, who was at the time an outcast. During reincarnation, their roles were reversed. When Maya becomes aware of her guilt in the entanglement, she throws herself into the flames of the funeral pyre on which Mahadeva's body is being cremated. In a final scene, she appears united with Mahadeva in a lotus blossom.

The outline of this plot expands on something that Richard Wagner had intended to do, but never achieved in this form. Since Wagner had

---

[1] On the erroneous interpretation of the term *cāndāla* in European academic literature, see Elst (2008).

been introduced to Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, he had, as is well known, explored Buddhism.[2] Wagner first had the idea of creating an opera about Buddhism in 1856 (see Osthoff 1983). The project bore the working title *Die Sieger* (the victors), a reference to Buddha's title as the *Siegreich Vollendete* (victoriously consummate). Wagner's idea is documented in correspondence and conversations, as well as in a plot outline:

> The Buddha on his last journey. Ananda given water from the well by Prakriti, the Chandala maiden. Her tumult of love for Ananda; his consternation. Prakriti in love's agony: her mother brings Ananda to her: love's battle royal: Ananda, distressed and moved to tears, released by Shakya [the Buddha]. Prakriti goes to Buddha, under the tree at the city's gate, to plead for union with Ananda. He asks if she is willing to fulfil the stipulations of such a union. Dialogue with twofold meaning, interpreted by Prakriti in the sense of her passion; she sinks horrified and sobbing to the ground, when she hears at length that she must share Ananda's vow of chastity. Ananda persecuted by the *brahmin*s. Reproofs against Buddha's commerce with a Chandala girl. Buddha's attack on the spirit of caste. He tells of Prakriti's previous incarnation; she then was the daughter of a haughty *brahmin*; the Chandala king, remembering a former existence as Brahmin, had craved the *brahmin*'s daughter for his son, who had conceived a violent passion for her; in pride and arrogance the daughter had refused to return the love, and mocked the unfortunate. This she had now to expiate, reborn as a Chandala to feel the torments of a hopeless love, yet to renounce it, and be led to full redemption through acceptance into Buddha's flock. Prakriti answers Buddha's final question with a joyful 'Yea.' Ananda welcomes her as a sister. Buddha's last teachings. All are converted by him. He departs to the place of his redemption. (Wagner n.d.)

Wagner steadily developed his *Sieger* project from 1856 onwards, but ultimately abandoned it because he saw its central ideas largely realized in

---

[2] On the main ideas underlying Wagner's conception of Buddhism as influenced by Schopenhauer, see Sven Friedrich (2012: 48): 'The notion of achieving salvation by overcoming the all-controlling will through renunciation and resignation. … Insight through contemplative perception free of will, independent of Kant's principle of reason; *karma*; overcoming of the will through meditation and asceticism; identity of all living things as an *anima mundi*; knowledge of the self through compassion with creatures and others; continual recurrence through transmigration and reincarnation until redemption is achieved in nirvāna.'

his *Ring* cycle and certainly in *Parsifal*.[3] Gotthelf knew all about Wagner's plans. He was familiar with the ideas they contained and knew how Wagner had conceived his Buddhist opera and why he had abandoned the project. It is not difficult to discern that *Mahadeva* is, in many ways, a scenic translation of Wagner's *Sieger* project. The Buddhist themes in Wagner's operatic œuvre were already well-known to scholars of musicology. They were discussed in a sophisticated and cognizant manner in the reviews of Gotthelf's *Mahadeva*. Following the performances of *Mahadeva* in Karlsruhe, editor-in-chief of the *Badische Presse*, Albert Herzog (1910), wrote:

> It is well known how Richard Wagner, after turning away from Feuerbach's optimism, received in Schopenhauer the foundation of the new philosophy that had already been quietly forming within himself… . The hymn of *Tristan and Isolde* has become the artistic messenger of Wagner's worldview, which, given the many similarities between the Indian and Christian ideas of redemption, also resounds in *Parsifal*… . Yes, Wagner had even been able to conceal it in the *Nibelungen Ring*, which was composed under Feuerbach's influence, no matter how much the straightforward Germanic mythology might have resisted it… Now his passionate disciple, Felix Gotthelf, has presented the Germanic divine drama in conjunction with an Indian one. Here, too, the deity who has erred and whose guilt requires atonement.

Thus, in 1910, initiated audiences were able to hear the parallels of *Parsifal*'s ideological themes in Gotthelf's composition. From the basic idea of the human need for redemption through the protagonist's compassionate act of self-sacrifice, to how the idea of redemption is exemplified in the main female character, to the psychological characterization of the female counterpart—Kundry, like Maya, faces an entanglement from a previous life—up to the visual leitmotif of the Holy Grail, which is echoed in the opening and closing lotus blossom, *Mahadeva* was recognizable as an obvious transposition of Wagner's Grail universe into the mythical parallel world of the Upanishads.[4]

[3] 'Since undertaking *Parsifal*, I entirely abandoned the Buddhistic project (related in a weaker sense to *Parsifal*), and I have never since then had it in mind to do anything with it, much less to read it aloud.' Wagner, in Bayreuth, 10 July 1882 [to an unnamed correspondent] (Wagner 1953).

[4] Wolfgang Osthoff (1983) explains in detail how Wagner's reading of Buddhism permeates the whole work as an underlying context and is found in all dramaturgical conceptions of Wagner's operas.

I suspect that audiences were not hearing Gotthelf; they were hearing Wagner. Indeed, *Mahadeva* can at first be understood primarily as an utterly innocent attempt to carry over into the twentieth century the tremendous impression that Wagner's operatic œuvre had left on some of Germany's intellectual and artistic elite. In Rancière's (2019) terms, Gotthelf aimed to establish a new 'aesthetic regime' by reorganizing aesthetic space through a massive transfer of the ethical into the realm of poetic drama, as well as through a new relationship to history.

In this context, we must bear in mind that, in 1910, the 'culture war' surrounding Wagner was far from over and that a select band of 'prophets of the new faith' (Otto 1999) were still on their way home from the sacred halls of Bayreuth to preach the new Wagnerian gospel. In 1911, late Romanticism in music, in which Gotthelf's work can be placed, had not yet subsided. This is the genre in which people continued to argue about redefining the artist's role in society. For example, *Parsifal* was only allowed to be performed outside Bayreuth after a 30-year period expired in 1913. Thus, a large segment of the German public had yet to experience the Wagner awakening. It is, therefore, understandable that a Wagner devotee like Gotthelf was determined to revive the initial earth-shaking effect of Wagner's 'magic' by any means necessary.

Nevertheless, Wagner's way of using music to lend meaning to the saga of the Grail legend and the obsolete liturgical symbols of Christianity in 1884 could not simply be replicated for contemporary audiences in 1910. Discontinuities reveal themselves. When it came out, *Mahadeva* was regarded and treated not as a much-needed sequel but merely as an outdated copy of Wagner's plans. It was precisely this assessment by music critics that helped to seal its fate. For example, the trade journal *Die Musik* concluded: 'If this extraordinary volition … is not matched by its execution, as unfortunately appears to be the case, then this is primarily because Gotthelf has, in basing his music to an ever-greater extent on Wagner, nearly or completely abandoned his own individuality' (Schuster 1913). Another critic had remarked sarcastically that Gotthelf was 'so dependent on Wagner, both lyrically and tonally, that on every page of the libretto and the score, one could write Wagner's original version in the margin at any number of places' (*Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* 1910). Even today, listening to Wagner's operas in parallel remains the only way to understand how *Mahadeva* sounds. For example, the first few bars of the Rheingold prelude, in which a solitary E-flat on the double bass is sustained over four

measures, may sound quite like Gotthelf imagined the *Mahadeva* prelude as starting.

Gotthelf's project thus plays out in front of a mirror with multiple flaws—it chases after a phantom, namely the unwritten Wagner opera, which it can only apprehend in the form of a copy. It has entered the vast whirlwind of modernity, in which everything gets mixed up: 'Cartesian science gets mixed up with revolutionary patricide, the age of the masses with romantic irrationalism, the ban on representation with the techniques of mechanized reproduction, the Kantian sublime with the Freudian primal scene, the flight from the gods with the annihilation of the Jews in Europe' (Rancière 2019). And the redemption longed for by the modern individual in the guise of the opera-goer—his desire to be absorbed into a restored community founded on ethics—can only be brought about through the schizophrenic inversion of this desire, namely through an emphasis on distinct artistic individuality.

The Indian *Parsifal*

We continue to advance throughout the score. Gotthelf has composed a dance scene at a key point. The dance constitutes a major appearance of the female protagonist, Maya, initiating her mystical transformation. We are looking for clues about how Gotthelf constructed the image of the Indian Orient in musical terms. Kassel opens the score to the dance scene and plays the first few chords. He notes that Gotthelf has set this part in Dorian mode, which would, Kassel assumes, probably correspond to Gotthelf's association of Oriental sounds. We come to talk about the opera's reference to India. Kassel asks whether Gotthelf's philosophy might be a typical example of the colonial exploitation of Indian sources.

This dialogue leads us from another angle into the essence of the present in which Gotthelf constructed his artwork of the future. This was the space of the Other—the construct of the Eastern fairy tale that clads the European longing for redemption. Kassel's question about the colonial structures in this project is, by contrast, not so easy to answer. Indeed, different Orientalist strands run through the conception of Gotthelf's opera. One is Wagner's preoccupation with Buddhism, as guided by Schopenhauer. (However, this already represents a distinct path that is set apart somewhat from the actual broad current of Orientalism in German art.) In addition, Gotthelf also adapted Goethe's ballad 'Der Gott und die Bajadere' and the

long history of its critical reception and interpretation. This content stream in *Mahadeva* follows a more clearly contoured, Orientalist riverbed. Since Goethe discovered the legend in a Frenchman's travel account (Wild 1996), it had become a popular exotic subject everywhere in the European theatre.

Franz Schubert set Goethe's ballad to music in 1815 and, since then, the stages of the nineteenth century have swarmed with Indian dancers. By 1830, the subject matter had already been set to music as an opera by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (*Le Dieu et la Bayadère*) and appeared as a ballet (*La Bayadère*) by Léon Minkus in 1877. By 1877 at the latest, however, the idea of a *bayadère* was past the peak of its popularity. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, who had already spent six months working on a new arrangement for Goethe's ballad, ultimately rejected the project because Indian themes were already well-worn.[5] Nevertheless, Gotthelf revisited this subject matter in 1910. To him, the Indian theme seemed to offer renewed promise because the critical reception of Wagner and Schopenhauer had evolved in the years leading up to the First World War.[6] The work of Schopenhauer's adherent Paul Deussen in particular, provided Gotthelf with a new way of thinking about his artistic output. In an essay, Gotthelf described Deussen's influence on his intention once again, in Wagnerian fashion, to connect an unexplored cosmos of mythical figures with an image of social morality—that is, 'to juxtapose a Germanic drama about the gods with an Indian one' (Meister 1910). As Gotthelf (1917) put it:

> He left his draft of the drama *The Victors*, which deals with a Buddhist topic, unfinished because he felt that Buddhism lacks the mystically metaphysical depth, the mystically ecstatic element that is necessary for a more elevated form of representation in music drama. However, he did merge the Buddhist spirit with the Christian and the German in his *Parsifal*. It was only after Wagner's death that the most profound essence of the *Vedanta* became accessible to us Germans, thanks to the translation and philosophical exploration of the *Upanishads* by Paul Deussen. Only now was it possible to follow the path Richard Wagner showed us to the end and to feed the Indian spirit in all its mystical and metaphysical depth into German art.

[5] See Vasily Kiselev's introduction to Tchaikovsky's correspondence with Ippolit Shpazhinsky (Tchaikovsky Research Contributors 1940: 425).

[6] Deussen had written a new translation of the Upanishads in 1895. Based on this, he worked on 'developing Schopenhauer's philosophy above and beyond him.' See Isabella Schwaderer, in this volume.

The reconceptualization of the self and the other, as pursued by Deussen, had implications for the intellectual framework of a work of art. Whereas earlier engagement with non-European intellectual traditions, such as by Goethe, revolved at first only around an interest in exploring the parallels between East and West—recognizing Christian ideas in Buddhist ethics, for example—it was now decidedly a matter of perfecting European thought based on such comparisons and constructing a new, modern universal religion. Indology was thus paving the way for a reintroduction of ethics in art. As Gotthelf (1917) continued:

> Thus, we see in this supreme result of German thought, in accordance with Indian thought, a harmonious reconciliation of religion and philosophy in the offing. The 'standpoint of the reconciliation of all contradictions' has been achieved at this moment. The revival of Greek antiquity presented modern humanity with the reconciliation of sensuality and spirituality; the Indian Renaissance will give it the reconciliation of knowledge and faith.

By 1910, however, the space in which this approach would resonate had already evolved. On the one hand, due to the rapidly growing store of colonial and ethnological knowledge, the 'real' Orient was moving from the realm of the foreign to that of the familiar, and this had far-reaching implications for art. Like the other great scaffolds of alterity—namely history and the natural environment, the imaginary Orient could no longer be used as a blank template onto which to project the effects of artistic alienation because it was no longer distant or foreign enough. Even history as a source of alterity was losing its ability to serve a purpose, for it was inexorably becoming historical. It was being reinvented as a *Zeitgeist* as well as national genealogy. Moreover, in this way, it approached the present to the same extent that the Orient did.

Gotthelf brought together Goethe's and Wagner's storylines in a way that strangely confused the categories. Maya, the dancer, is no longer the young woman Wagner had imagined, who, by falling in love with a Buddhist monk, made it possible for women to be accepted into the monastic community and for Buddha to reach the highest level of redemption, which had been the logic of the plot in Wagner's draft of *Die Sieger*. In Gotthelf's *Mahadeva*, the protagonists from the mythical Orient now intermingled with those of the real one. For example, Hedy Brügelmann, the singer who portrayed Maya, suggested Gotthelf find inspiration for his costumes in an illustrated travelogue by the Schlagintweit brothers—three

German explorers who in 1854 started researching the Earth's magnetic field and flora on behalf of the East India Company. The Schlagintweit brothers also wanted to survey the land in India, photograph its population, and establish a typology of races. Gotthelf himself, however, never visited India. He derived his image of it from reading Goethe, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Deussen, and rounded it off with the body of knowledge that had been amassed through colonial ethnography.

> *André Kassel plays a few bars of Maya's dance in which Gotthelf had notated a progression of three sharps to five flats. For the director, he had left instructions that the dance should become increasingly passionate and ecstatic, but Kassel is unable to detect such an intensification in the music. In his opinion, Salome's dance in Richard Strauss's opera* Salome *is more interesting from a musical perspective. While Kassel says that although he was not a Strauss fan, at least Strauss's composition of the dance was filled with interesting contrasting voices that built up enormous tension not found in Gotthelf's arrangement. He notes that Maya's dance increased in tempo somewhat but always remained stuck in the same harmonic framework.*

An entire history of the subject could be told just through the role of dance. At any rate, Gotthelf embellishes his Orient in Maya's dance to give it an exotic touch. However, given the level of ethnological literacy, one can sense how the metaphorical connotations of the personages, names, and cultural practices that Gotthelf tried to flood with meaning had already evolved. The audiences of 1910 were already familiar with terms such as Upanishads, the caste system, temple dancers, and widow burnings. Indian cosmology had already started to lose its projective power and, instead, become an object of cultural comparison. Moreover, while Salome's dance brings the coexistence of incongruent worlds into focus and intensifies it, in Gotthelf's work, the controversial experiences of colonial knowledge merely accumulate without offering a new perspective.

The Final Threshold

> *André Kassel plays the final chords of the epilogue, which dissolve into a D-flat major chord. Kassel sighs and says that a single unusual note does not constitute a new piece of music. He reminds me that Schönberg was already experimenting with dodecaphonic music at that time and that the composers of the avantgarde were working towards overcoming harmonic boundaries. In 1909, a year before* Mahadeva, *Richard Strauss had premiered* Elektra, *a piece that tested*

the limits of harmony much more radically. However, the following year he premiered Der Rosenkavalier, which, according to Kassel, reverted to the sentimentality of Viennese Waltz. Stravinsky also wrote The Firebird *and* The Rite of Spring, *which were very experimental, in 1910 and 1913, respectively, but then returned to traditional harmony in 1920 with* Pulcinella. *There is a turning point in the evolution of music when one has to make a decision, says Kassel. Going through* Mahadeva, *he saw nothing to suggest that Gotthelf had been musically searching for a new form. The composer had reached a border, but failed to knock at its door.*

In 1910, Gotthelf put considerable effort into ensuring the success of *Mahadeva*'s forthcoming premieres in Düsseldorf and Karlsruhe. He sent the press a scholarly description of the work that Viennese philologist Richard Meister had written for him; the local newspapers published detailed previews of *Mahadeva*; and the director and conductor introduced the work to the audience in the theatre foyer. However, the expectations thus created were not without their reservations.

On Gotthelf's intensive efforts to publicize his forthcoming production, the Karlsruhe *Volksfreund* wrote that 'experience has taught us that what is given excessive self-praise is almost always in need of that praise and, in most cases, works promoted in that way turn out to be in serious need of self-advertising and are seldom long-lived' (*Volksfreund* 1910). Thus, from the start, Gotthelf's opera was subjected to the twin pressures determining the success of a modern work of art—being a nearly original creation through the power of individual genius, yet satisfying the utterly unrealistic expectation of being universally reproducible. According to Wagner's notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, this expectation was further fulfilled through the interplay of poetry, music, stage design, and performance (Fig. 6.3).

In 1910, Felix Gotthelf was working on bringing his *Gesamtkunstwerk* to life and, as Isabella Schwaderer mentions in Chap. 5 of this volume, he spared no expense and used his own funds to pay artist Georg Hacker (1864–1945) to create two Indian landscapes as backdrops (*Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* 1910). Following Gotthelf's instructions, a giant lotus that could open and close mechanically was installed on the Düsseldorf stage. During the rehearsal phase, Gotthelf and the Düsseldorf theatre management found themselves in conflict over the unwinnable battle for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In letters to soprano Hedy Brügelmann, who played the role of Maya, Gotthelf complained that he, as the author, was not given any say in the staging. During rehearsals, he continued to revise the score and had to make numerous cuts. It was in the craftsmanship of the

Fig. 6.3 The opening bars of the *Mahadeva* score. (Source: Felix Gotthelf, 'Mahadeva: Ein Mysterium in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen für die Bühne in Wort und Ton' (Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt Nachfolger, 1909) Saxon State Library – Dresden State Library and University Library (SLUB), music department, https://katalog.slub-dresden.de/id/0-139760414X)

opera production that Gotthelf feared that the work might yet slip away from him. In long letters, he gave Brügelmann his own meticulous stage directions, noting for her, down to the measure, the exact time when she was to sink to the ground, to clasp the knee of her fellow singer, to dance around him while gracefully teasing him—and when what was initially naïve had to turn into a 'great sublime play.' These stage directions give us the best impression of how *Mahadeva* was to be realized as an actual sensual event on stage under the constraints of the theatrical production. In a letter to Hedy Brügelmann, Gotthelf (1910) wrote:

She stands still, absorbed in herself, slowly comes forward, stands still again, etc., as you think appropriate. But do not always crawl around on the floor, as Leffler wants you to. Perhaps at the words: '*Ahnungsschauer*' [shivers of foreboding] (p. 113), you can collapse on the bed by the hut. But at '*Ha, Thörin ich!*' [Ha, a fool am I!] (p. 114), you suddenly rise again and dash into the background, left. At Kama's voice, you flinch and stand still, perplexed; after '*rettungslos verloren*' [hopelessly lost] (p. 115), you try to escape to the other side of the background, but now you run into Kama's arms. Despite your

vehement resistance, he gently leads you back to the foreground and *holds you tight* (you must tell Mr. von Zawilowsky this); he is not allowed to let go of you at first, only at his words, '*Nun! Lass die Frommen*' [Now! leave the pious] (p. 116) does he let go of you, and you remain still. In Kama's words: '*die heiß mich überfluten*' [that overwhelm me with heat] (p. 120 below), he embraces you passionately, but you push him back *violently*. After the words '*O! wäre ich tot!*' [Oh! if only I were dead!] (p. 121 below), you can collapse in pain on the bench on the right. You rise again only at '*Wehe der Lust*' [woe to lust] (p. 136). From the words '*Aus Traum und Trug bin ich erwacht*' (from dream and deception I am awakened) (p. 127) onwards, you take on an increasingly ecstatic posture, absorbed in the memory of the pilgrim Mahadeva.

Onstage in Düsseldorf in March 1910, a giant lotus flower opened before the audience as if by magic. This was to be the striking framing element of the *Mahadeva* stage set, but its hidden mechanism did not always work smoothly and, in the finale, the blossom closed only haltingly, thus diminishing the sublime conclusion of the Indian *Parsifal* that Gotthelf had envisaged. The premiere of *Mahadeva* was nevertheless not a failure. There was ample applause and the press subsequently discussed the composition, text, and orchestral and vocal performances in a nuanced and informed manner, and the *Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* (1910) acclaimed Gotthelf's work as one of the 'most meaningful and stimulating lyrical works from the post-Wagnerian period of music drama.' The audience, however, experienced the performance in divergent ways. Some witnessed a well-executed production in which the 'effective grouping of the masses on stage contributed not insignificantly to winning over the audience and leaving a deep impression on them' (*Volksfreund* 1910). Others saw it as a copy of Wagnerian motifs being stretched out to four and a half hours, whose 'nearly endless solos and duets were more tiring than captivating' (*Volksfreund* 1910) and in which the singers, who were not up to the score, had to fight their way through a 'thorny, impassable undergrowth of harmony' (*Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* 1910).

In evaluating the composer's musical accomplishment, the critics' verdict was downright scathing. 'The musical arrangement does not enhance the very poetic niceties of the libretto. Here, the lack of genuine inventiveness and talent in combining dramatic elements is quite conspicuous,' wrote the *Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* (1910). The Karlsruhe *Volksfreund* (1910) commented:

The pathological obsession of our modernists with imitating Wagner has thus far only been evident in music, but yesterday we also made this observation about the modern lyricist…. He fails where he aims to set the wheels of drama

in motion and unfortunately also where he attempts to capture something like the scent of exoticism. His technique of composition and instrumentation hardly reveals an interesting feature anywhere; characteristic originality and novelty are not to be found at all. All in all, *Mahadeva* is a piece that deserves respect for its noble attitude, but respect that must not be overstated.

And, the *Volksfreund* (1910) offered a gloomy prognosis of whether the work would be a lasting success: 'judging from the performance the day before yesterday, we believe we can already predict with certainty that the same fate seems to be in store for *Mahadeva* as for so many highly modern stage productions.' The *Volksfreund* would be proven correct. Only the final act of *Mahadeva* was to be heard once more—at the *Konzerthaus* in Vienna in November 1916. Two days earlier, the Battle of the Somme of the First World War had begun on the western front, which would kill some 500,000 German and 600,000 allied soldiers. At this point, *Mahadeva*'s redemptive D-flat major final chord no longer resonated as a redemptive utopia but only as a farce directed at the new century.

Conclusion: The Possibility of Revision

André Kassel closes the score of Mahadeva. *He calls Gotthelf's opera a mere product of its time—its gigantomania was characteristic, he says. There were also ideas around at the time to fill in the English Channel and connect England to the continent, as well as to build underground railways to America. Airships filled the skies, and there was absolute faith in technology and in the future.* Mahadeva *is precisely the music for that time. Kassel then mentions that this pathos for the future also touched on the colonialist idea that Germany needed a 'place in the sun' (a contemporary euphemism for German colonial claims in Africa) and territory in the East. This same pathos accompanied those about to enter the First World War. From today's perspective, says Kassel, it is impossible not to hear that history in Gotthelf's music.*

We attempted to listen to Felix Gotthelf's *Mahadeva* from three angles and periods—from that of Richard Wagner's romantic agenda of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, from that of ideological European thought experiments prior to the First World War, and from within the contemporaneous musical canon of classical modernism.

The journey of self-taught composer Felix Gotthelf reveals just how much of a desire there still was in 1910 to mend the known fragility of the world, which in his case he hoped to achieve through the holistic success of his operatic *Gesamtkunstwerk*: in other words, the significant shift of ethical and religious matters into the realm of aesthetic experience was still underway. The

proclaimed artwork of the future was still in the air; and an unwritten Wagnerian opera still seemed possible because the areas of art, religion, and politics were being reshuffled. In the process, the markers of the foreign, the transgressive, and the antecedent were being incorporated into an attempt at an intellectual recasting of Europe. In Hinduism, people were at once finding answers to questions posed by European philosophy, and the possibility of new universalistic ethics seemed nearby. However, such considerations also opened a door in two ethically problematic directions. First, there was the possibility of decoupling Christianity from its Jewish roots and underpinning it with new sources from India, but this logic concealed the latent anti-Semitic aspect of such considerations. Second, this approach paved the way towards giving German philosophy a more privileged position. The inescapable nature of the destiny of the blind volition of the world (Schopenhauer) now became an unconditional predestination to something higher, and the ultimate merging with the oneness of *nirvāna* became an omnipotence of the superior cultural nation and the triumph of instrumental reason. New social inclusion and exclusion criteria were being formed between basing one's identification of the self *on* or *in* the other.

In German cultural discourse, the consequences of this thinking were to go in two directions. On the one hand, they moved horizontally outwards, with the input of non-European ideas continuing to be entangled in romantic, social, and revolutionary thought and an enlightened ethics of compassion. On the other hand, they moved in a vertical, hierarchical direction, in which the ideas of Wagner and Schopenhauer were increasingly being reinterpreted to secure German supremacy in Europe's cultural and intellectual evolution.[7] Here lies the breaking point of the temporalities that account for the success or failure of Gotthelf's work of art.

Is this all that *Mahadeva* has to say? Is a revision possible? The answer is only where the execution of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* still leaves room for flexibility and interpretation. If the music no longer offers any transcendence, then this can only be captured in what is happening on stage. In that case, the pivotal prop would no longer be the lotus blossom floating in a void, silently opening, and closing, in which Mahadeva is serene in the slumber of oneness, but instead, the mechanism that disturbed the seamlessness of that illusion back in 1910. The protagonist in this drama would no longer be the incarnate deity of creation needing redemption, but the autodidactic modern artist of the early twentieth century who can only conceive of a perfect world in terms of the flawlessness of a work of art.

[7] On National Socialist tendencies in the Schopenhauer Society, see Ciracì (2011).

Such a drama would be driven by the artist's emphasis on venturing beyond the known—his embrace of the other and his yearning for a miracle. It would be driven by the inkling of a realm beyond rationality, by a romantic vein—fed by the continued heightened impositions of global modernity, an unrequited longing for wholeness and flawlessness, and a naïve hope in art.

Moreover, the inevitably tragic end would be ushered in by an inability to see the final step, by an inability to internalize the other over and above the self, by the struggle to endure the cool pathos of formal rupture and embrace iconoclasm, and by the sluggishness with which Europe attempts to overcome its hesitation. The antagonists in this piece would be German national sentiment, which arose too late, along with its concurrent claim to cultural supremacy, and the inevitability with which precisely those non-European ideas that guide us to the frontier of Cartesian metaphysics are, in turn, merely infused into the supremacy of the European Logos. Perhaps we can better understand the forgotten nature of Gotthelf's opera against this backdrop in the context of its own temporality—as that final renunciation before the blind will of the world that *Mahadeva* was intended to dramatize on the musical stage.

REFERENCES

Ciracì, Fabio. 2011. Die Neue Deutsche Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft in den Zwanziger- und Dreißigerjahren. *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 92: 175–184.

Düsseldorfer Tageblatt 1910. Stadttheater. Mahadeva. (Uraufführung), Nr 67, 9 March.

Elst, Koenraad. 2008. Manu as a weapon against egalitarianism: Nietzsche and Hindu political philosophy. In *Nietzsche, power and politics*, ed. Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt, 543–582. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Friedrich, Sven. 2012. *Richard Wagners Opern: Ein musikalischer Werkführer*. Munich: C.H.Beck.

Gotthelf, Felix. 1910. *Felix Gotthelf an Hedy Brügelmann, Düsseldorf*. Letter, https://www.iracema-brugelmann.de/deutsch/pers%C3%B6nlichkeit/briefe-von-felix-gotthelf/. Accessed 18 Mar 2023.

———. 1917. Indischer Geist in der deutschen Kunst. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 3: 267–269.

Herzog, Albert. 1910. Großh. Hoftheater zu Karlsruhe. Zum ersten Male: Mahadeva. Ein Mysterium in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen für die Bühne in Wort und Ton verfaßt von Felix Gotthelf. *Badische Presse Generalanzeiger der Residenz Karlsruhe und des Großherzogtums Baden* 26., 28 November (552): 2.

Meister, Richard. 1931. Felix Gotthelf zum Gedächtnis. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 18: 371–374.

Osthoff, Wolfgang. 1983. Richard Wagners Buddha-Projekt 'Die Sieger': Seine ideellen und strukturellen Spuren in Ring und Parsifal. *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 40 (3): 189–211. https://doi.org/10.2307/930822.

Otto, Viktor. 1999. Der Kampf gegen Wagner ist in Wahrheit ein Kulturkampf. Die Wagner-Rezeption in der Wochenschrift Die Schaubühne, Die Weltbühne (1905–1933). *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 56(1): 9–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/931169.

Rancière, Jacques. 2019. *Politics and aesthetics.* English edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Meister, Richard. 1910. Mahadeva. (Zur bevorstehenden Aufführung von Gotthelfs Mysterium 'Mahadeva' am Karlsruher Hoftheater). *Badische Presse Generalanzeiger der Residenz Karlsruhe und des Großherzogtums Baden* 26., 24 November (546): 1–2.

Schuster, Bernhard. 1913. *Die Musik XII (13).* Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler.

Tchaikovsky Research Contributors. 1940. *Bibliography 1940/227.* Tchaikovsky Research, https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Bibliography_(1940/227). Accessed 4 April 2023.

Volksfreund. 1910. Theater und Musik: Hoftheater Karlsruhe: Mahadeva! *Volksfreund.* Tageszeitung für das werktätige Volk Badens, 29 November.

Wagner, Richard. 1953. *Briefe: Die Sammlung Burrell.* Burk: Frankfurt am Main: Herausgegeben von J.N.

———. n.d. *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen: Bd. XI.* Leipzig: Breitkopf et Härtel.

Wild, Reiner. 1996. Der Gott und die Bajadere. In *Goethe-Handbuch*, ed. Regine Otto, 291–292. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Modernism in Disguise? Neglected Aspects of the So-Called Revival of a Classical Indian Dance Form

Sandra Jasmin Schlage

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany and other countries of the Western world experienced an influx of detailed knowledge about India.[1] Although these speculations mainly centred on an imagined static and spiritually charged culture, there occurred profound changes of cultural and religious ideas in India itself at the same time. In this chapter, I focus on the development of Indian arts (especially classical dance in Southeast India), which Western interpretations of Indian cultural practices often influenced and partially facilitated. Furthermore, the posterior scholarly knowledge production on the transformation processes

---

[1] Until 1947, the term India referred to the areas of the Indian subcontinent, including the (semi-)autonomous princely states, ruled by the British crown. Independence in 1947 accepted the partition of the territory into the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which split into Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971 (Spear 2022).

S. J. Schlage (✉)
University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany
e-mail: schlage@uni-bonn.de

in the field of performing arts in comparison to visual arts should be addressed, which either overemphasizes the traditional or the modern aspects while neglecting the impact of the other.

Striking similarities exist between the developments of dance and visual arts during that time, which can be found in India and in Western countries, such as Germany. With respect to the Indian dance traditions of that period being regarded as a 'revival', most dancers and scholars see today's classical Indian dances as a direct continuation of the traditional nineteenth-century dance forms and deny that major changes have occurred. In this chapter, I aim to question established concepts and theories, especially the definition of a so-called revival, by critically re-evaluating the historical development of today's classical Indian dance forms.[2] Classical dance is exemplified by the Southeast Indian dance tradition presently known as *Bharatanātyam*.

Following a brief summary of earlier research on the subject, and with a view to providing a transcultural context, I discuss the impact of Indian-inspired arts on the formation of the modern arts, especially dance, in Western countries. Moreover, I examine the development of Indian dance in terms of the rise of 'modernism' in the Indian visual arts between 1880 and 1947. By drawing comparisons between earlier and later reformulations of the performing arts in South Asia, I question the frequently stressed unique nature of the so-called revival, and round off the chapter with some concluding thoughts about the use of such terms as 'revival' and 'modernism'.

Previous Research and Open Questions

The recent history of classical Indian dances is a subject that is featured in almost any publication on these art forms. However, introductions or guide books for practitioners usually present rather simple accounts of the popular understanding of these developments. Teresa Hubel (2005), however, has written an exemplary account of the complex socio-political developments leading to the imposition of a ban of dance in its original context (performed in a ritual temple setting by *devadāsī*s who are temple

---

[2] The definition of a dance form as classical is based on its assumed connection with the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a manual on the performing arts that is approximately 2000 years old (Miettinen 2018). In the twentieth century, eight dance traditions were acknowledged as classical, but the number remains subject to debate (Meduri 2018: 306).

women and dancers dedicated to the deity). In addition, Anne-Marie Gaston (2005) has undertaken detailed ethnographic research into the transition of the Southeast Asian dance tradition to the modern stage.

Likewise, several publications on the history of the visual arts in India cover the emergence of so-called modern art. For example, in a general survey of Indian art, Vidya Dehejia (1997: 409–24) has devoted an entire chapter to 'Art and Modernity', and Balraj Khanna and Aziz Kurtha's (1998) *Art of Modern India* contains a number of discussions on various exemplary works of art. In addition, Preminda S. Jacob (1999) and Partha Mitter (2008) have studied the concept of modern art and its pertinence to South Asian artworks.

While the above-mentioned works discuss developments in the visual and performing arts in India, there are also studies on India's impact on the development of modern Western art. Two relatively recent examples of these are *A Mediated Magic* edited by Naman P. Ahuja and Louise Belfrage (2019), and an article by Vincent Warren (2006) about the influence of imagined Indian culture and dance on performances in the West.

However, as the discussion of the publications has shown, neither the development of the visual arts nor the performing arts during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century has been studied compared to the respective other genre. In this chapter, I therefore aim to close that gap in the research and contextualize the developments in the classical dance tradition.

In recent decades, dance research has started to question the use of certain terms and labels. In an article written for *Dance Research*, Avanthi Meduri (2008) criticized the use of certain names and regional attributions and, in a later work (Meduri 2018: 301–2), even questioned the applicability of the English term 'dance'. However, she did not discuss the usage of the popular term 'revival'. Parveen Kanhai (2019) thought the term 'recontextualization'[3] more appropriate than 'revival' because she thought it would highlight the artists' agency. However, I believe that it emphasizes the changed settings of the performance while distracting from innovations in the content and stylistic features of the dance, which I take as at least of equal importance.

A theoretical solution to this dilemma might be to adopt a neutral term, which can allude to several processes; for example, the reuse term as coined by Julia A. B. Hegewald (2012: 48).

---

[3] Kanhai (2019) also suggests 'reinvention' or 'reconstruction' as alternatives.

> Re-use is a conscious and selective process in which existing elements are borrowed or salvaged and taken out of their former environment in order to be applied to a new context, or they are left within their old milieu but filled with new meanings, or they get manipulated and react to new external influences.

With this definition in mind, below I discuss the reuse of Indian arts and religious ideas, or what Western artists imagine to be Indian elements, from the late nineteenth century onwards. I then go on to analyse developments in classical dance and visual arts in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, which were partially inspired by, or created in reaction to, Indian elements in Western artistic productions that involve the reuse of traditional Indian arts.

Indian Influences on Western Performing Arts

Given that the emergence of so-called modernism in the West predates similar developments in India, I shall start by looking at references to India and Indian dance in Western, or more specifically German, performing arts. The exchange of ideas between the West and India had a strong effect on almost all aspects of European culture between 1880 and 1930. The Indian influence is apparent in literature, the visual arts and crafts, theatrical performances (especially music and dance), and the sciences (e.g. psychology) (Ahuja 2019: 8). In some respects, references to India can be seen to counter the post-Enlightenment discourse because they often centre on subconscious, intuitive feelings, or supernatural, mystical concepts (Ahuja 2019: 8, 10). Therefore, Indian thoughts on religion or philosophy, or Western ideas about these subjects, fertilized European cultural productions. Moreover, around the dawn of the twentieth century, transnational spiritual organizations such as the Theosophical Society often facilitated exchanges of ideas between India and the Western world (Lubelsky 2019: 70 ff.).

India as a subject and Indian characters in particular have been popular in the Western performing arts, especially operas and ballets, since the seventeenth century, which is prior to the emergence of 'modern' genres. The Indian characters in these performances provide opportunities to show off exotic costumes inspired by Orientalist fantasies. Among the

earliest of these productions in Germany was *Alessandro nelle Indie*, which Jean-Georges Noverre staged in Stuttgart in 1760 (Warren 2006: 98).[4]

Some of the most successful ballets based on Indian motifs were inspired by the German ballad, 'Der Gott und die Bajadere', which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote in 1797 (Goethe 1798). The poem describes how a god disguised as a mortal man tests the love of a professional temple dancer called Bajadere (Feise 1961: 49–50). In 1830, Fillippo Taglioni adapted the work into an opera-cum-ballet called *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*, also known as the *Maid of Cashmere*. The most successful adaptation of the ballad, however, and one still performed today, is Marius Petipa's *La Bayadère*, which premiered in Saint Petersburg in 1877 (Warren 2006: 101, 103). Yet, as in Fig. 7.1, which captures the famous Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova (1881–1931) in the leading role of Nikiya, neither its costumes, music nor dance movements is based on authentic Indian models.

As is typical of the heroines in these Indian ballets, Anna Pavlova is wearing a classical ballet dress and ballet shoes, with only her scarf serving as a visual marker of an Indian subject (Warren 2006: 103). Her influence on the development of dance in India will be discussed later in this chapter. Meanwhile, the first authentic performances in Europe by five *devadāsī* dancers and three musicians took place in Paris and London in 1838 (Meduri 2018: 299). However, it remained rare to see such performances on Western stages and it was only in the early twentieth century that Western dancers started to learn from Indian performers in Europe and later in India itself (Warren 2006: 107 ff.). One dancer who toured Europe extensively between 1936 and 1938 was Leila Sokhey, better known as Madame Menaka (1899–1947). She presented stage productions in an eclectic style which combined Indian influences from classical traditions of North India which became later subsumed as *Kathak* dance and folk forms with Western orientalist aesthetics (Kanhai in this volume).[5]

While the above-mentioned Western productions are essentially ballets, India has also featured large in modern dance, especially since the start of the twentieth century. Modern dancers began to free themselves from the strict conventions of classical ballet and to communicate a different picture

---

[4] Vincent Warren's (2006) article contains a well-researched list of Western performances featuring India between 1626 and 2003.

[5] For a discussion of the differing perceptions of her performances in India and European countries, see Kanhai in this volume.

Fig. 7.1 Anna Pavlova
as Nikiya in *La Bayadère*.
(The original uploader
was Mrlopez2681 at
English Wikipedia.
https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Bayadere_-Nikiya_-
Anna_Pavlova_-1902.jpg,
'Bayadere -Nikiya -Anna
Pavlova -1902', marked as
public domain, details on
Wikimedia Commons:
https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
Template:PD-old)

of India, one less connected to exoticism and more to a spiritual search. Ruth St Denis and her partner Ted Shawn, Mata Hari, and Tortola Valentia are among the more famous exponents of these pseudo-Indian dances (Warren 2006: 105–6).

Between 1906 and 1915, Ruth St Denis[6] based several of the dances she choreographed on Indian themes (Coorlawala 1992: 144), with the emphasis on Eastern religion and spirituality in some of them. In a lesser-known dance called *The Yogi*, and a more famous one called *Incense*, she combined devotional elements with comparatively simple dance steps to convey her spiritually charged image of India (Coorlawala 1992: 144). Ruth St Denis was one of the first Western dancers to perform in India

[6] See Coorlawala (1992) for an in-depth discussion of Ruth St Denis's engagement with Indian dance forms and her contribution to their so-called revival.

and, while the programme for her tour included some Indian dances, she mainly chose items with secular themes (Coorlawala 1992: 142). She performed for mixed Western and Indian audiences and conveyed a positive image of Indian dance in that country (Coorlawala 1992: 123).

Even before touring India, Ruth St Denis had spread her new, spiritually charged image of Indian dance to several Western European countries, such as Germany, which she visited in 1908. As the programme for *Indische Tanzszenen* (Indian dance sequences) at the Hoftheater in Weimar documented, most of her dances had religious themes, including *The Yogi*, *Incense*, and *Radha*, which the programme described as a Hindu temple dance (DNT 1908). Her performances might well have inspired some of the early practitioners of modern dance in Germany who were beginning to introduce similar topics into their works.

German dancers subsequently played a central role in creating and developing modern dance. The impact of Germany on modern dance and especially the importance of this genre in Germany have recently been acknowledged by UNESCO, which declared 'The Practice of Modern Dance in Germany' as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2022. Among Germany's most famous modern dancers was Mary Wigman (1886–1973), and, as the titles of some of her early (1917) works such as *Götzendienst* (idolatry) and *Tempeltanz* (temple dance) imply, she based them on Indian subjects. She also seemed to have experimented with Indian music, as her use of an allegedly Indian tune for *Schatten* in 1919 suggests.[7] Like Ruth St Denis's 'Indian' dances, Mary Wigman's 'Indian' performances seemed to portray religious motifs and to promote the association of India and Indian dance with spirituality.

Hence, as briefly highlighted, the West's imagined idea of Indian culture and thought had quite an impact on Western performing arts, particularly in Germany. Furthermore, inspiration from or the reuse of Indian elements contributed to the development of modern dance. A reoccurring topic, which evolved in ballet but became more prominent during the formation of modern dance, was the association of India, and Indian dance with religion and spirituality.

[7] This information is taken from a catalogue of Wigman's work in the Mary Wigman Stiftung/Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, based on a list Hedwig Müller published in *Leben und Werk der großen Tänzerin* (see Müller 1986).

Developments in India's Performing and Visual Arts

Classical dance in India acquired most of its present characteristics between the early and mid-twentieth century, that is, a few decades after the emergence of modern dance in the West. Most of the classical dances have their roots in the dances performed by specialized artist communities, such as the *devadāsī*s who, for various cultural and political reasons were banned from dancing in temples in 1947. The contemporaneous search for authentic Indian art was also connected to the Indian nationalist movement, which ushered in a fresh interest in traditional dance (Hubel 2005: 122). While dancers and dance scholars labelled the phenomenon a 'revival', the term fails to survive the scrutiny of a critical comparison between developments in dance and the emergence of the so-called modern visual arts in India. Mainstream descriptions of the latter tend to incorporate the so-called revivalists into a broader discourse on modern art. Also, because historical writings since the 1930s have favoured artists from Calcutta and its environs (Handy 1930), the focus of my analysis is mainly on the Northeast region of India.

This case raises the question of how to define 'modernism' in a South Asian context. The question of whether artists in previously colonized countries could then, or can now, participate in the modern art scene on an equal basis has been widely discussed, especially in terms of the imbalance in their power relationships. As mentioned above, contact with other cultures creates an important stimulus for a rise in modern art forms. Nevertheless, cross-cultural borrowing, either perceived as an 'inspiration' when Western artists borrow from non-Western traditions, or judged as an 'imitation' when non-Western artists borrow from Western ones, poses a challenge to one's evaluation of modern artworks in South Asia (Jacob 1999: 50). With this in mind, modernism in both the visual and performing arts should be defined as a radical change in the context, form, and content of traditional art forms, brought about through contact with other cultures inspiring new aesthetics and changes regarding the social relevance of the artworks.

My comparative analysis of the performing and visual arts starts in the late nineteenth century when India shifted from appreciating its own indigenous art to seeing Western aesthetics and values as superior. This not only resulted in Indians devaluing their own visual and performing arts but it also led to a decline in traditional forms of patronage. Regarding performing arts, the eroticism of dance lyrics and the social role of

traditional female performers, *devadāsī*s[8] who lived in matriarchal communities and were dedicated to a temple deity instead of being married to a mortal man, started to trouble Western-educated middle and upper classes. The denunciation of dance performances by *devadāsī*s in newspapers started in 1892 and culminated in the ban of the dedication of new *devadāsī*s and performances in temples in 1947 (Hubel 2005: 126).[9]

Likewise, the visual arts saw a shift towards Westernization in the nineteenth century. Victorian ideals and Western painting techniques were transmitted in art schools, which were founded under British influence in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai) in 1845 and Bombay (Mumbai) in 1857 (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 11). Training Indian painters catered to the British crown's interest in collecting visual information on India, and many graduates from these art schools subsequently went on to work as 'company painters' for the empire (Kraus 2011: 8–9). Figure 7.2 is typical of their painting style. The picture of a female and male circus performer shows the woman stilting on a rope with three pots on her head, while the man accompanies her on a drum, which he carries over his left shoulder. The motif is representative of 'company paintings', which show local animals and plants, architectural drawings, and figural studies, often a woman and a man of different religious or occupational groups (Dehejia 1997: 396). There was no comparative Western training in the field of dance, which was probably because dance was of no practical use to the colonial empire.

In both fields, the reuse of the content through engaging with traditional themes and Indian mythology preceded the reuse of the techniques and aesthetics of traditional art forms. Artists using Western techniques to depict Indian topics were characteristic of the visual arts of the late nineteenth century. In his oil paintings, self-taught artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906), who is considered a forerunner of modern Indian art, combined academic naturalism with Indian topics, such as Hindu mythology or indigenous ideals of female beauty (Kumar 1999: 14). Figure 7.3 of Sarasvatī, the goddess associated with learning, arts, and knowledge in general, is in a realistic style and painted in oils. As is apparent from the preference for a light skin, the painting also conforms to the then current standards of beauty.

---

[8] For more information on *devadāsī*s, especially their social role and artistic heritage, see Kersenboom (1987).

[9] For a detailed discussion of the political positions of supporters and opponents of the anti-nautch movement, see Hubel (2005).
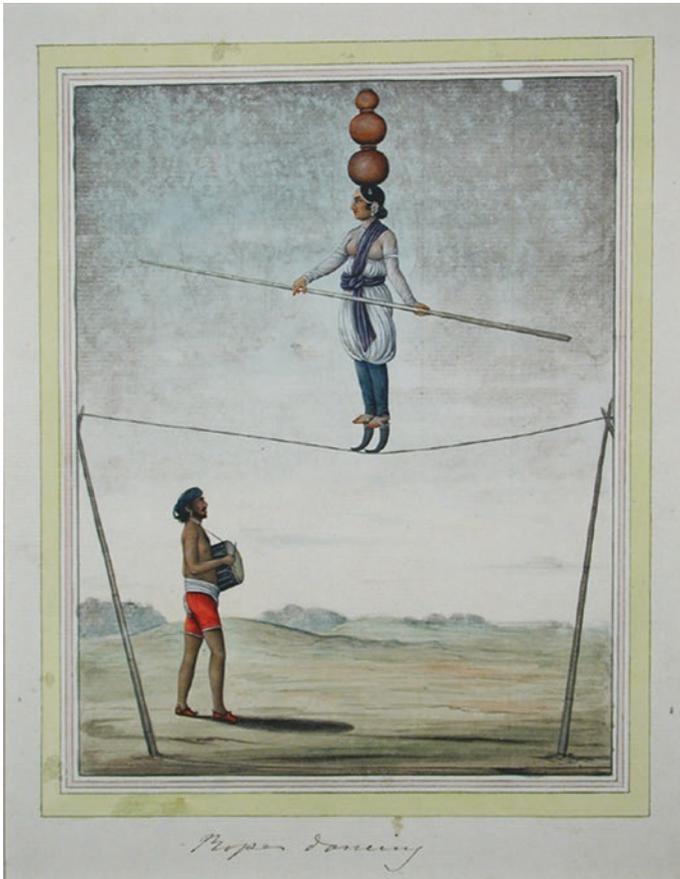
Fig. 7.2 Company painting showing two circus performers. (https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Acrobat on a tightrope, drummer below (6125140408).
jpg, 'Acrobat on a tightrope, drummer below (6125140408)', marked as public
domain, more details on Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/Template:PD-old)

Furthermore, Raja Ravi Varma contributed to the distribution of this
new hybrid form of art by establishing the first oleographic press in India
in 1892 (Dehejia 1997: 409). In addition, the first half-Indian female
painter, Amrita Sher Gil (1913–41), was inspired by the works of Paul
Gauguin; in fact, her depictions of rural Indian women were inspired by
Gauguin's Tahitian paintings (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 18).

Fig. 7.3 Saraswati by
Raja Ravi Varma.
(https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:Saraswati.jpg,
"Saraswati", marked as
public domain, more
details on Wikimedia
Commons: https://
commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/Template:PD-
old. Raja Ravi Varma
artist
QS:P170,Q333453)

Initial Western influences similarly shaped the career in the performing arts of Uday Shankar (1900–77). Although he had no formal training in traditional Indian dance, he developed an eclectic style with influences from both Indian and Western classical dances, folk and tribal genres. In his early career, he choreographed the popular Radha and Krishna duet for Anna Pavlova's ballet *Oriental Impressions*, and partnered her in it (Warren 2006: 107). Figure 7.4 shows a still of this production, taken around 1923.

After this collaboration, Uday Shankar went on to tour the world with his own dance productions based on Indian mythology. Another fact unknown to many dancers is that Rukmini Devi Arundale, a leading figure

Fig. 7.4 Anna Pavlova and Uday Shankar in the Radha and Krishna duet in *Oriental Impressions.* (https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/ File:Uday_Shankar_and_ Ana_Pavlova_in_'Radha-Krishna'_ballet,_ ca_1922.jpg, 'Uday Shankar and Ana Pavlova in Radha-Krishna ballet, *c*.1922', marked as public domain, more details on Wikimedia Commons: https:// commons.wikimedia. org/wiki/ Template:PD-India)

in the so-called 'revival', produced her early dance dramas in an eclectic Western style under the auspices of the Theosophical Society. Her first stage appearance was in a Tamil version of Tagore's *Nalini* produced by Eleanor Elder in 1918 (Khokar 2018).

The trend towards Westernization, which initially affected style and content, but later mostly aesthetics, was soon followed by a countermovement known as either the 'revival', 'reconstruction', or 'renaissance' of Indian arts. In the visual and performing arts, the re-evaluation of traditional or indigenous art forms was closely associated with the anti-colonial nationalist movement (Chakravorty 2000: 110–11). In the visual arts, the process, which started at the turn of the century, was associated with the Bengal (or neo-Bengal) School of Art, whose protagonists became known as 'revivalists' (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 9).

The so-called 'revival' of Indian dance came a few decades after that of the literal and visual arts. However, anthropologist E. S. Craighill Handy seemed to have anticipated a consciously planned 'revival' of dance when he wrote, 'I happen to know a cultured young lady, … who is preparing to devote her life to stimulating a revival in Indian dancing and music' (Handy 1930: 369). In her contribution to this volume, Kanhai describes Kathak performer Madame Menaka as being well aware of the different strategies that artists, especially those associated with the nationalist movement, were consciously pursuing for the 'revival' of Indian art forms. In fact, to this end Madame Menaka deployed different strategies throughout her career. Five years after her initial interest in using ancient sculptures and paintings to identify dance poses, she turned to Sanskrit manuals as an alternative source.

Western artists and art scholars can take some credit for inspiring artists to return to their indigenous traditions. British art teacher E. B. Havell (1861–1934), who taught at the Calcutta Art School, rejected academic realism and encouraged his students, who included the famous painter Nandalal Bose (1882–1966), to search for inspiration in the ancient arts of India (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 9). A similar encounter in the field of dance shaped the life of one of the most eminent protagonists of the dance 'revival', Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–86). Because of her enthusiasm for Anna Pavlova's works, Arundale's initial plan was to study Western ballet. However, Anna Pavlova, who had staged ballets inspired by Indian themes, suggested that, besides mastering certain basic ballet techniques, she concentrate rather on appropriating Indian dance forms (Samson 2010: 70–4). Anna Pavlova had likewise inspired Madame Menaka to learn and perform Indian dances (Kanhai n.d.), and even instructed the British dancer Harcourt Algeranoff to teach her 'Hindu dancing' (see Kanhai in this volume).

Orientalist research on India and the incorporation of Indian themes and aesthetics into Western artworks and scholarship fuelled the shift towards seeing indigenous art traditions in a positive light. These mutual exchanges between East and West had a lasting effect on the visual and performing arts in both regions and stimulated the rise of so-called 'modernism'. Interestingly, popular history has highlighted the contributions of certain selected artists, yet allowed those of other equally successful artists to fade into obscurity. For example, all dancers are still aware of Anna Pavlova's reputation, yet Ruth St Denis is largely forgotten in India, although she toured the subcontinent a year before Pavlova did and had

already awakened a huge interest in (Indian) dance (Coorlawala 1992: 124). One possible reason for this is that St Denis's rather sensual performances did not match the image of classical Indian dance that the 'revivalists' subsequently promoted in that country.

These protagonists in the visual and performing arts usually belonged to the upper classes, or higher castes, so gained access to Western artistic concepts through their education. For example, through his publications, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) popularized the Indian visual arts and became one of India's most influential art historians (Kumar 1999: 15). His contributions provided the theoretical background for a 'revival' that encouraged European-trained artists to turn back to Indian painting styles for inspiration. Foremost among these 'revivalists' was Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951), who chose Mughal elements for some of his works, including his *Arabian Nights* series in the 1930s (Kumar 1999: 15). The painting *Sindbad the Sailor* from this series (Fig. 7.5) reminds the viewer of a Mughal miniature painting; even the script on the upper border is in keeping with this genre. Besides being inspired by Mughal art, Abanindranath Tagore integrated further non-Western stylistic features, such as Persian and Japanese elements, in his personal style (Dehejia 1997: 410).

The 'revival' of classical dance was facilitated by its promotion onto the stages of urban cities such as Madras, now called Chennai. E. Krishna Iyer (1897–1968) combined theoretical and practical approaches. He hosted *sadir*[10] performances at the most prestigious venue, the Madras Music Academy. He not only promoted traditional dancers but also performed himself dressed as a woman (Gaston 2005: 84).

Although leaders of the 'revival' were mainly from upper-middle or high-class backgrounds, they were inspired by and acquired their knowledge about visual arts and dance from artist communities from lower social positions. The best-known example of this in the visual arts is Jamini Roy (1887–1972), who found inspiration in urban Kālīghāṭ paintings and later turned to the rural *paṭuẏā* tradition (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 14). His painting called *Boating* (*c*.1920) can be seen in Fig. 7.6. Stylistic features, such as black outlines, clear colours, flat figures, and motifs, are obviously inspired by rural traditions.

Likewise, the early *Bharatanāṭyam* repertoire was based on the compositions of the *sadir* concert repertoire created by the *icai vēḷāḷar* community (or *isai vellala* in anglicized spelling) whose men were traditional dance

---

[10] *Sadir* was the name given to the *devadāsī* dancers' concert repertoire which later formed the backbone of the classical dance form, *Bharatanāṭyam*. Other regional dance traditions were *chaduru, kelikkai, melam,* and *mejuvani* (Krishnan 2008: 71).
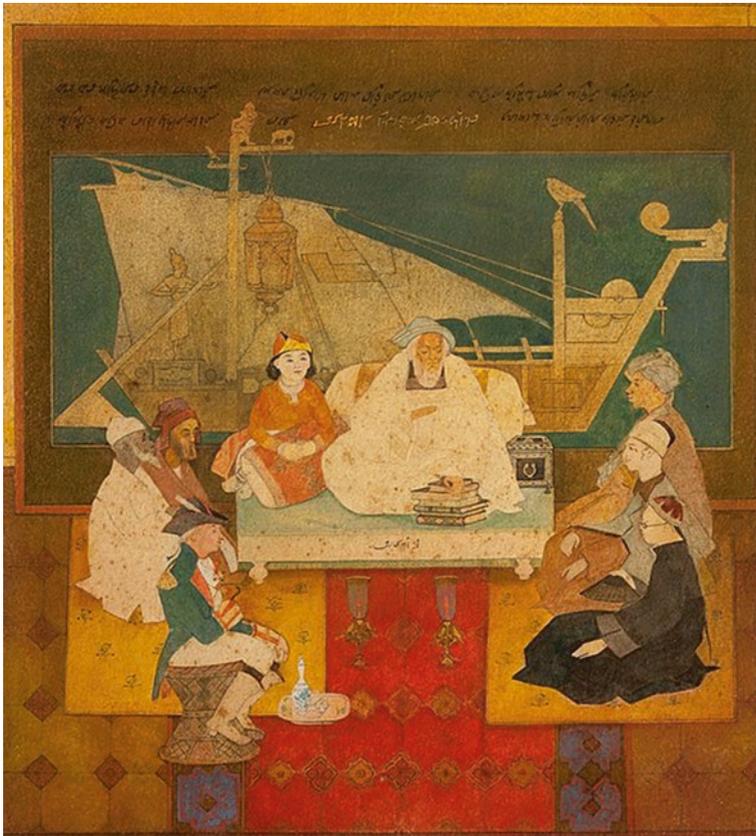
Fig. 7.5 *Sindbad the Sailor* from the *Arabian Nights* series by Abanindranath Tagore. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abanindranath_Tagore_-_Sindabad,_the_Seller,_1930.jpg, 'Abanindranath Tagore: Sindabad, the Seller, 1930', marked as public domain, more details on Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Template:PD-1996. Abanindranath Tagore, creator QS: P170,Q691796)

teachers and conductors of performances (*naṭṭuvaṉārs*) (Gaston 2005: 15). Their role will be discussed further at a later point in this chapter.

The perceived value of these art works was often enhanced by claiming a common Indian or even pan-Asian past. The painter Abanindranath Tagore, a leading figure in the Bengal School of Art, promoted a pan-Asian, anti-Western concept of art rooted in traditional Indian art forms

Fig. 7.6 *Boating* by Jamini Roy. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boating_(6124606361).jpg, 'Boating (6124606361)', marked as public domain, more details on Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Template:PD-old. Jamini Roy English: thesandiegomuseumofartcollection)

and inspired by the Japanese *Nihonga* art movement, which means "Japanese art" in English (Kumar 1999: 16–17). With respect to dance, several scholars have already discussed the initial claim that *Bharatanātyam* constituted a classical dance form for the whole of India—*Bharata*—based on the Sanskrit manual *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which is roughly 2000 years old (Coorlawala 2004: 53).[11]

The new social significance accorded to these art forms brought changes in how the required practical and theoretical knowledge about them was transmitted. At art schools and colleges, group classes modelled along Western lines and with fixed syllabuses often replaced the traditional one-to-one relationship between teacher and student (*guru–śiṣya*). In 1921, the celebrated poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)[12] founded the Visva-Bharati University in the small town of Shantiniketan, where the

---

[11] For a discussion on reinvention of tradition, see Coorlawala (2004).
[12] Although Rabanindranath Tagore is mainly known for his poetry, he started painting in 1929 when he was almost 70 years old (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 16).

famous artist Nandalal Bose was appointed principal of its 'Kala Bhavan', Institute of Fine Arts (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 15). Like many leading figures of his time, Nandalal Bose was involved in the nationalist movement. The Ajanta murals were his early inspiration (Kumar 1999: 16).

In Southeast India in 1936, shortly after her own stage debut as a dancer, Rukmini Devi Arundale founded the 'International Institute of the Arts', a college of music and classical dance, on the premises of the Theosophical Society. Two years later it was renamed 'Kalakshetra'—*kalā* (art) and *kṣetra* (site) (Allen 1997: 73).[13] Figure 7.7 shows dance students at the daily morning assembly under banyan trees at the foundation's new campus.

Kalakshetra (Today Kalakshetra Foundation) and the Visva-Bharati University promote Indian art and, as Kalakshetra's original name implies, are committed to establishing strong international links. Introducing the

Fig. 7.7 Dancers attending the Kalakshetra Foundation's morning assembly. (The picture was taken by the author, Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai, 2012)

[13] See Allen (1997) for a detailed discussion of Rukmini Devi Arundale's relationship with the Theosophical Society, and on the early development of Kalakshetra under the Theosophical Society's auspices.

reformulated dance tradition to international audiences and organizing worldwide tours for the dance company were, from the start, part of the institution's agenda (Allen 1997: 74). The Visva-Bharati University not only employed leading Indian artists but also invited Western scholars to engage in research on literature and arts. The university's motto, which Rabindranath Tagore selected, is 'where the whole world meets in one nest' (Kumar 1999: 17).

At the same time, practising artists began to widen their approach to their art. For example, Rukmini Devi Arundale was an active participant in the theosophical movement and enjoyed special patronage because Annie Besant had selected her as 'World Mother' a female spiritual leader (Allen 1997: 72). As the initial foundation of her dance college on the premises of the Theosophical Society suggests, she combined her cultural activities with the society's agenda (Allen 1997: 74), and most of her works had religious or spiritual themes. Classical dance had traditionally flourished in a religious context, but the spirituality that Rukmini Devi Arundale and other contemporary non-hereditary dancers expressed differed from that of the traditional communities. For example, devotional elements played an important part in Rukmini Devi Arundale's work. She brought a statue of Naṭarāja (the god of dance) on stage, and promoted a worship-centred interpretation of *bhakti* (loving devotion to a deity), while the traditional dancers continued to visualize their devotions far more sensually (Allen 1997: 79). Religious themes were not equally popular in Indian visual arts in the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the search for spirituality and incorporation of devotional acts on stage resembles the approach of modern Western dancers, such as Ruth St. Denis or Mary Wigman.

Their differing interpretations of artworks had a lasting effect on the relationships between the non-hereditary artists and the traditional communities from which the respective art forms had evolved. In the visual arts, Rabindranath Tagore saw art as a form of self-expression, which he wanted to free from the hegemony of tradition (Kumar 1999: 17).[14] With regard to the Kalakshetra Foundation, Rukmini Devi Arundale put an end to the hereditary *icai vēḷāḷar naṭṭuvaṉār*s' monopoly on teaching dance and mounting stage performances by encouraging other performers to

---

[14] Rabindranath Tagore's position on the promotion of Indian art and internationalism has been discussed in detail in Kumar (1999: 17–18).

take on these tasks. As theirs was traditionally an independent profession, the *naṭṭuvaṉār*s were not even required to be able to dance, whereas today's *Bharatanāṭyam* is mainly taught by people who are, or at least were, performers themselves (Coorlawala 2004: 54).

Earlier explanations point to similarities in the developments of the visual and performing arts until 1947, but, surprisingly, each genre uses different terms to describe them. For example, only some visual artists, such as those of the Bengal School, are called 'revivalists' (Khanna and Kurtha 1998: 9), yet the overall process up to 1947 is seen as the emergence of modern art (cf. Dehejia 1997: 409 ff.).[15] On the other hand, such developments in the field of dance are exclusively termed a 'revival' or 'renaissance', which fails to account for the modern aspects and new social context of classical dance forms established during that period.

This approach to history might account for the virtual absence of classical dance forms like *Bharatanāṭyam* from the discourse on modern Indian dance. The common narrative, which is that dance styles and techniques maintained or regained their 'original' qualities throughout the 'revival' points to a high level of conservatism within the classical dance community (Meduri 2008: 231–2). However, an ongoing debate among *Bharatanāṭyam* dancers and dance scholars over whether new contents and ideas are acceptable within the genre suggests that the dance community became more open to innovations at the end of the twentieth century (Prahlad 2008: 98–9).

Modern Indian dance is treated as a distinct genre, although many artists subsumed under this discourse developed their works based on training in at least one of the classical dance forms.[16] The famous Southeast Indian modern dancer and choreographer, Chandralekha Prabhudas Patel (1928–2006), mixed her individual dance style based on *Bharatanāṭyam* techniques with influences from the martial arts and yoga (Kothari 2003: 57). Obviously, because 'revivalist' art is considered part of the wider narrative around modern art, a similar split between 'revived' and 'modern' art forms did not happen in the visual arts, either before 1947 or after

[15] According to Khanna and Kurtha (1998: 16), the development of modern Indian art only started after an initial exhibition of contemporary Western art in 1922.

[16] The most important publication on modern dance in South Asia is *New directions in Indian dance* edited by Sunil Kothari (2003). The chapters by its various authors (many of whom were practitioner scholars) discuss general topics and modern styles based on classical dance forms.

independence. Researcher Siva Kumar (1999: 15) has even questioned whether the label 'revivalist' should be used in the visual arts.

Earlier and Later 'Revivals' of the South Asian Performing Arts

The strong emphasis on the 'revival' process in the history of classical dances, especially *Bharatanātyam*, raises the question whether this process is unique. Therefore, we should examine the Sanskritization process of this dance tradition, which culminated in the change of name(s) from *sadir* and related names of local traditions to *Bharatanātyam* (Meduri 2008: 232).[17] Emphasizing the link to Sanskrit manuals, such as the *Nātyaśāstra*, or the more recent *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, over oral transmission in Tamil, could be seen to accentuate and legitimize the claim to pan-Indian relevance (Coorlawala 2004: 53–4).

Hari Krishnan described a previous Sanskritization process of the Southeast Indian dance tradition a century earlier when social reforms at the court of Thanjavur at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century were already threatening the transmission of *devadāsī* dance practices. In fact, the Thanjavur Quartet's *Sadir Kacheri* repertoire, the 'traditional' one that the twentieth-century 'revivalist' dancers retrieved, was created as a reaction to this perceived threat. Another parallel development at that time, and in the twentieth century, was referring to or scripting the dance in Sanskrit manuals to invoke a Sanskrit dance culture (Krishnan 2008: 85).[18]

As this example demonstrates, the twentieth-century 'revival' of *Bharatanātyam* was not the first of its kind, though previous attempts were never labelled 'revivals'. Furthermore, it was not the last attempt to revive and popularize a former *devadāsī* tradition in Southeast India. Well-known dancer Swapnasundari recently tried to revive a traditional female dance from Andhra Pradesh under the new name of *Vilasini Nātyam*, about which she also wrote a book (Swapnasundari 2010). However, since it never aroused much public interest and was never granted the official

---

[17] The spelling of this new name underwent frequent modifications, along with related claims and associations. Frequently used versions are *Bharata Nātyam* or *bharatanātyam* (Coorlawala 2004: 54).

[18] Krishnan (2008) provides a detailed account of these developments at the Maratha Court during the rules of King Serfoji II (r.1798–1832) and Shivaji II (r.1832–55).

status of a classical dance form, one can but wonder what factors determine whether a 'revival' has a lasting effect. Writing on 'revitalization movements', Anthony F. C. Wallace offered a theoretical explanation establishing his anthropological concept. He argued that being dissatisfied with one's own culture (as in pre-independence India) results in a conscious effort to bestow new social meanings and characteristics on a cultural system (in this case the visual and performing arts) (Wallace 1956: 265).[19] Thus, the reason for the success of *Bharatanātyam*'s revival may partially lie in its link with the nationalist movement in pre-independence India, and partially with the zeitgeist of the time.

A recent example of the development of a traditional Nepalese dance called *Caryā Nṛtya*, which Newari Buddhist priests originally performed exclusively in a ritual context, supports this theory. Since the 1990s, this dance has been made accessible to people outside that community and, in a modified form, it eventually made it onto the public stages. During the course of this development, the dance became linked to 'Indian' Sanskrit dance traditions (Widdess 2004: 13), and it is now promoted as a spiritual art form and Nepal's national classical dance. The performer, teacher, and researcher Raju Shakya is eager to teach the *Caryā Nṛtya* in an institutionalized setting, following the example of *Bharatanātyam*. He strives to introduce practice uniform, structured dance classes, including warm-up, practice of steps and a standardized repertoire for *Caryā Nṛtya*.[20] For example, the musical structure and lyrics of the simple *śloka* (sung verse) known as *Refuge Dance* are conceived similar to those in the so-called *Guru śloka* in *Bharatanātyam*.

The rising popularity of *Caryā Nṛtya* may well be linked to the new wave of nationalism in Nepal following a period of nation building between 1960 and 1990, and the Janajāti movement, which promotes ethnic and religious pluralism in that country (Bhandari et al. 2009: 8, 17).[21] Although, compared with India, Nepal has virtually no colonial past, the particular zeitgeist of the time seems to have produced a similar dance 'revival' alongside cultural nationalism.

---

[19] Wallace (1956) describes the concept and its division into seven distinct stages.

[20] Personal conversations with Raju Shakya, Lalitpur (Patan), 10–12 September 2018.

[21] Further information on political developments in Nepal can be retrieved from Bhandari et al. (2009).

CONCLUSION

Now, for the first time we have seen a brief comparison between the rise of modern dance in Western countries, especially Germany; the subsequent development of Indian dance traditions; and the emergence of modern Indian visual art. Bringing together these three topics in one chapter has highlighted their interdisciplinary and transcultural connections. I started the chapter by looking at the popularity of 'Indian' material and motifs in the Western performing arts, especially during the formulation of modern dance. References to India were often associated with a search for spirituality, which also seemed to be a popular motive among non-hereditary dancers in India during the so-called 'revival'.

This was followed by a comparative analysis of the visual arts and classical dance in India, with the focus on the trends they had in common. The discourses on classical Indian dances, however, seemed to spark strong moral, ethical, and emotional reactions, which led to the ban on dancing in temples in the past and might have promoted the relative conservatism of the classical dance community later on.

We saw that 'revivals' or 'reformulations' are natural processes that occur periodically in the performing arts, and perhaps also in the visual arts; they are necessary developments and they help keep these art forms alive. However, the mainstream discourse on dance history labels these developments as 'revival' or 'renaissance', whereas both terms are much less popular in the history of visual arts in India.

Both terms, 'revival' and 'renaissance', imply a backward orientation and stress a link to an (imagined) classical tradition of the past. Accordingly, they imply that today's classical dances are an unaltered continuation of earlier traditions. Hence, the terms 'revival' or 'renaissance' deny all modern aspects of this process. The initial discussion of the development of performing arts in Western cultures with a focus on Germany showed that similar factors (contact with foreign cultures, perceived unsatisfaction with the present state) likewise led to a reformulation of the dance tradition. However, this development became considered the emergence of modern dance. As a detailed comparison to the rise of modern visual arts in India during the same period further proves the 'revival' of dance contains some modernism in disguise. This point is further supported by documents in the Menaka archive, which showed how differently Madame Menaka's repertoire and work as a dancer were perceived in Western countries like

Germany and in India, especially over her contribution to the 'revival' of Kathak dance.

Considerable emphasis was placed on the importance of being critical about using terms like 'revival' and 'modernism'. As Matthew Harp Allen (1997: 63) explained, 'the term "revival" is a drastically reductive linguistic summary of a complex process' involving the renewal, repopulation, reconstruction, renaming, resituating, and restoration of dance practices. To select one of these terms is to overemphasize one aspect while neglecting or denying others. As I mentioned early on in the chapter, one possible solution may be to apply a neutral term like reuse, which, as Julia A. B. Hegewald (2012: 48) pointed out, can include most of these dimensions while still emphasizing the agency of the art practitioners.

However, the later application of a new term can introduce new complications. Therefore, sticking with the popular terms that emerged through public consent may be the best way forward, so long as it does not conceal or distract from the actual complexity of the history of the performing and visual arts all over the world.

References

Ahuja, Naman P. 2019. Modernism's muse. In *A mediated magic. The Indian presence in modernism 1880–1930*, ed. Naman P. Ahuja and Louise Belfrage, 8–29. Mumbai: Marg.

Ahuja, Naman P., and Louise Belfrage. 2019. A mediated magic. In *The Indian presence in modernism 1880–1930*. Mumbai: Marg.

Allen, Matthew Harp. 1997. Rewriting the script for south Indian dance. *The Drama Review* 41 (3): 63–100.

Bhandari, Ravi, Nanda R. Shrestha, and Dev Raj Dahal. 2009. Rising ethnocultural nationalism in Nepal: Postmodern illusion or democratic delusion? *Sociological Bulletin* 58 (1): 6–24.

Chakravorty, Pallabi. 2000. From interculturalism to historicism: Reflections on classical Indian dance. *Dance Research Journal* 32 (2): 108–119.

Coorlawala, Uttara Asha. 1992. Ruth St Denis and India's dance renaissance. *Dance Chronicle* 15 (2): 123–152.

———. 2004. The sanskritized body. *Dance Research Journal* 36 (2): 50–63.

Dehejia, Vidya. 1997. *Indian Art*. London: Phaidon.

DNT (Deutsche Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar) 1908. Großherzogl. Hoftheater Weimar. (Theaterzettel [theatre programme]). Landesarchiv Thüringen – Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar No. 2118. https://staatsarchive.thulb.uni-jena.de/rsc/viewer/ThHStAW_derivate_00044272/020066.tif. Accessed 22 Dec 2022.

Feise, Ernst. 1961. Der Gott und die Bajadere: Gehalt und Gestalt. *Monatshefte* 53 (2): 49–58.

Gaston, Anne-Marie. 2005. *Bharata Natyam: From temple to theatre*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. 1798. Der Gott und die Bajadere: Indische Legende. In *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1798*, ed. Friedrich Schiller, 188–193. Tübingen: J. G. Cottaische Buchhandlung.

Handy, E.S. Craighill. 1930. The renaissance of East Indian culture: Its significance for the Pacific and the world. *Pacific Affairs* 3 (4): 362–369.

Hegewald, Julia A.B. 2012. Towards a theory of re-use: Ruin, retro and fake versus improvement, innovation and integration. In *Re-use – The art and politics of integration and anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra. New Delhi: Sage.

Hubel, Teresa. 2005. *The high cost of dancing: When the Indian women's movement went after the Devadasis*, 134. Department of English Publications. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/englishpub/134

Jacob, Preminda S. 1999. Between modernism and modernization: Locating modernity in South Asian art. *Art Journal* 58 (3): 48–57.

Kanhai, Parveen. 2019. *Parallel paths*. Menaka-Archive. https://menaka-archive.org/en/notizen/parallel-paths/. Accessed 1 Dec 2022.

———. n.d. *Leila Roy Sokhey ('Madame Menaka')*. Menaka-Archive. https://menaka-archive.org/en/personen/leila-roy-sokhey-madame-menaka/. Accessed 1 Dec 2022.

Kersenboom, Saskia C. 1987. *Nityasumaṅgalī: Devadasi tradition in South India*. Delhi.

Khanna, Balraj, and Aziz Kurtha. 1998. *Art of modern India*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Khokar, Ashish Mohan. 2018. *Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–86)*. Sahapedia. https://www.sahapedia.org/rukmini-devi-arundale-1904%E2%80%9386. Accessed 4 Dec 2022.

Kothari, Sunil. 2003. *New directions in Indian dance*. Mumbai: Marg.

Kraus, Werner. 2011. Indien als Bilderbuch: Einhundert Company-School-Gouachen aus dem Besitz der Kunstbibliothek des Lindenau-Museums Altenburg. In *Indien als Bilderbuch: Die Konstruktion der Pittoresken Fremde*, ed. Lindenau-Museum Altenburg, 7–16. Altenburg: Lindenau-Museum.

Krishnan, Hari. 2008. Inscribing practice: Reconfigurations and textualizations of Devadasi repertoire in nineteenth and early twentieth-century South India. In *Performing pasts: Reinventing the arts in modern South India*, ed. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji, 71–89. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kumar, Siva. 1999. Modern Indian art: A brief overview. *Art Journal* 58 (3): 14–21.

Lubelsky, Isaac. 2019. Theosophy as mediator. In *A mediated magic: The Indian presence in modernism 1880–1930*, ed. Naman P. Ahuja and Louise Belfrage, 70–81. Mumbai: Marg.

Meduri, Avanthi. 2008. Labels, histories, politics: Indian/South Asian dance on the global stage. *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 26 (2): 223–243.

———. 2018. Interweaving dance archives: Devadasis, bayadères, and Nautch girls of 1838. In *Movements of interweaving: Dance and corporeality in times of travel and migration*, ed. G. Brandstetter, G. Egert, and H. Hartung, 299–320. New York: Routledge.

Miettinen, Jukka O. 2018. *Asian traditional theatre and dance. Theatre Academy*, University of the Arts Helsinki. https://disco.teak.fi/asia/. Accessed 30 Nov 2022.

Mitter, Partha. 2008. Decentering modernism: Art history and avant-garde art from the periphery. *The Art Bulletin* 90 (4): 531–548.

Müller, Hedwig. 1986. *Werkverzeichnis.* Mary Wigman Archiv. https://www.sk-kultur.de/tanz/wigman/seiten/werke.html. Accessed 2 Dec 2022.

Prahlad, Prathibha. 2008. Bharatanatyam. In *Dances of India*, ed. A. Raghuvanshi. Delhi: Wisdom Tree. (first edition 2004).

Samson, Leela. 2010. *Rukmini Devi: A life*. New Delhi: Viking.

Spear, T. G. Percival. 2022. *British imperial power, 1858–1947.* Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. https://www.britannica.com/place/India/The-mutiny-and-great-revolt-of-1857-59. Accessed 30 Nov 2022.

Swapnasundari. 2010. *Vilasini Natyam: Bharatam of Telugu temple and court dancers.* Hyderabad: Swapnasundari.

UNESCO. 2022. *The practice of modern dance in Germany.* https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/the-practice-of-modern-dance-in-germany-01858. UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Accessed 2 Dec 2022.

Wallace, Anthony F.C. 1956. Revitalization movements. *American Anthropologist* 58 (2): 264–281.

Warren, Vincent. 2006. Yearning for the spiritual ideal: The influence of India on Western dance 1626–2003. *Dance Research Journal* 38 (1/2): 97–114.

Widdess, Richard. 2004. Caryā and cacā: Change and continuity in Newar Buddhist ritual song. *Asian Music* 35 (2): 7–41.

'The Priestess of Hindu Dance': Leila Sokhey's Repertoire and Its Reception in the Netherlands and Germany (1927–38)

Parveen Kanhai

'Magnificent is Menaka's appearance, each of her steps is a word, each of her movements is language', raved an anonymous Bad Tölz reviewer. Writing for *Tölzer Zeitung*, the mouthpiece of the National Socialist Party, the critic nevertheless concluded that, because it was 'racially bound' (*artgebunden*), the art on display could never 'correspond to his soul' (Anon 1936d).[1] This review is part of the extensive press coverage that 'Menaka's

---

[1] Since the critics remained anonymous, Schwaderer characterized the German newspaper reviews as 'grey sources'. When their writings were signed with initials, it remained impossible to connect an author to the text. By contrast, this did prove possible with the Dutch reviews. The translations from German newspapers are retrieved from the Menaka archive, and Dutch citations were translated by the author.

P. Kanhai (✉)
Schiedam, The Netherlands
e-mail: info@toentezien.nl

Indian ballet' received during her two-year European tour, with around 750 performances.

Menaka is the stage name of Leila Roy-Sokhey (1899–1947), who had made her debut almost a decade before the German performances and who gained recognition as a dancer and choreographer of *Kathak*, which is today one of India's eight classical dances. Sokhey's work is thought to have contributed to the dance reforms spearheaded by anti-colonial nationalists (Schlage, Chap. 7 in this volume).

Earlier studies have pinpointed Sanskritization, or Hinduization, as fundamental in the reinvention of dance under Indian nationalism. Anti-colonial discourses asserted that India's value lay in its ancient customs. Its Sanskrit literary works, plastic arts, and architecture highlighted the equivalence, if not superiority, of India compared with Classical Greece. Dance in particular, was regarded as an embodiment of India's ancient past, for it provided a profoundly spiritual way of engaging with quintessentially Hindu traditions free from any Islamic or European influences (Bhattacharjya 2011: 484; Walker 2014b).

To modify *Kathak*'s choreographic repertoire and renew the movement's vocabulary, the nationalists not only made use of temple sculptures, Hindu rituals, and Sanskrit treatises on dance and music, but also produced a homogenous history that reconstructed the art's connection with an ancient past while distancing it from contemporary performers (Walker 2014b). In her critical historiography of *Kathak*, Walker (2014a) argued that Sokhey adopted an ambivalent approach to her artistry by presenting Hindu mythological themes and stories, but making no apparent attempt to modify or sanskritize the repertoire. Photographs and contemporary films from the 1930s show Menaka ballet productions rooted in Oriental dance in terms of form, concept, and costume (Walker 2014a: 119–21). Oriental dance emerged in the late nineteenth century when Western artists choreographed and performed dances they deemed Eastern in content, movements, costumes, and music. Although Oriental dancers propagated Western colonialist imagery, dance historians include Asian dancers who presented this genre in Europe (Schlage, Chap. 7 in this volume).

In this chapter, I build on Walker's insights into the seeming paradox of Sokhey's works being part of a nationalist project, yet at the same time conforming to the aesthetics of Oriental dance. I start by trying to identify which elements in her trajectory were shaped by Sanskritization and which by Orientalism. While Walker examined Sokhey's productions from 1934

onwards, by consulting the previously unexamined letters she wrote between 1928 and 1930, I shall look into an earlier part of her career. In addition, although already covered by prior research (Schlaffke 2022: 71–7; Walker 2014a: 119–20), I will consider what Sokhey had to say in an essay about her engagement with dance revivalists in the early 1930s.

I then shift the focus to European receptions of the Indian ballet. For the Dutch response, I examine approximately fifty newspaper reviews and, for the German one, I rely on the detailed analyses of Schlaffke (2022: 111–41) and Schwaderer (2023). I address the critics' responses to Sokhey's views on revitalizing an ancient Indian tradition in the two countries in which she performed most extensively. All the sources used here can be found in 'the Menaka archive', an online database dedicated to Sokhey's performances (See Schlaffke, Schwaderer and Kanhai, Chap. 12 in this volume) (Fig. 8.1).

A brief overview of Leila Sokhey's personal and artistic background serves as a starting point for the enquiry. Damayanti Joshi, a member of the Indian ballet company that performed in Europe, wrote the only

Fig. 8.1 Leila Sokhey-Roy. (Figure caption from Allard Pierson, theatre collection, archive number 200000220.000, licensed under CC-BY 4.0)

known biography of her. According to her account, Sokhey had a British mother and high-caste Indian father. As a student at St Paul's School in London, she was a burgeoning talent on the violin, but her father, a practising lawyer, objected to her performing in public. After marrying a military physician and biochemist, Captain Sahib Singh Sokhey (1887–1971), she pursued her dance career in earnest and, following her Indian debut in 1928, travelled to Europe, where she appeared on stages in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. On her return to India, she worked with traditional *Kathak* dance masters, and started to choreograph Indian ballets, which she put on in India, Southeast Asia (1934–35), and Europe (1936–38). Until her premature death in 1947 (Joshi 1989), she continued her career as a dancer and choreographer, and opened a dance school near Mumbai.

INDIAN DEBUT

Sokhey's debut in 1928 was ground-breaking because religious and social conventions forbade public displays of art by upper-caste women. A few weeks after her first stage appearance, she wrote a letter saying that 'even the most orthodox Indian vernacular press from whom I really expected a bad account, as they hate the idea of Indian ladies dancing, even they were most complimentary' (Sokhey, 7 April 1928).

All the retrievable newspaper reviews of Sokhey's debut were written by Kanaiyalal Hardevram Vakil (1890/1–1937). Joshi (1989: 22) claimed that Vakil, an art critic with *The Bombay Chronicle*, was one of Sokhey's main collaborators, although it cannot be confirmed if he was involved in staging her debut. In a long article in *The Modern Review*, Vakil (1928: 691) explained that Sokhey identified three sources as responsible for the 'resuscitation' of dance. The first of these consisted of the Sanskrit treatises on dance and drama—*Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, and *Daśarūpakam*—that Orientalist scholarship had made accessible to the nationalist intelligentsia (O'Shea 2007: 31–2). Between 1862 and 1865, American Orientalist Fitzedward Hall (1825–1901) published the earliest translation of the *Daśarūpakam*, an exposé on dramaturgy. Hall had also been the first to publish four chapters of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a compendium dealing with all theatre-related subjects and generally dated around the second century AD. Sections of the work were discovered in European archives between 1865 and 1890. Besides the works of French Orientalists, a Sanskrit version of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was eventually published in India in

1894, but only the first seven chapters were available to the public before 1936 (Rangacharya 1996: 4). *The Mirror of Gesture* (Coomaraswamy 1917) contains the English translation of the *Abhinayadarpana* by renowned art historian and critic A. K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947).

The second source responsible for the reconstruction of dance came from paintings and sculptures. Here, Vakil claimed that Sokhey believed that the plastic arts contained 'more authentic and direct, and perhaps more fruitful evidence and data' than the Sanskrit treatises. He then buttressed her view with his praise for her dance *Ajanta Darshan*, but it remains uncertain if Sokhey had been influenced by the suite, *Ajanta Frescoes*, that Ivan Clustine had choreographed for Pavlova in 1923 (Bhattacharjya 2011: 486). Vakil regarded the Buddhist rock carvings as the epitome of 'Indian' art, as evidence of a spirituality that had lasted throughout the entire history of the region: 'it lives in the figure and features, costumes and gesture of the Indian woman, alike the source of their inspiration and the triumph of their immortal art' (Vakil 1928: 289).

Vakil both acknowledged and rejected the third source Sokhey had mentioned as being responsible for the revival of dance, namely the performances of women from hereditary communities. Nonetheless, he lauded Sokhey for her 'courage' in reclaiming the 'degraded and scorned' dance of the nautch, the Anglicized term for dancers from the hereditary communities. Dance scholars from the 1980s onward, have considered the marginalization of hereditary artists as a crucial characteristic of the revival movement. While India's regional courts protected the rights of dancers and musicians from hereditary communities, these artists, or courtesans, had an ambivalent social status. That they were versed in literature, poetry, and politics accorded them some influence, but they were stigmatized for engaging in non-marital relationships with their patrons. Concerns about women's social positions evolved into a civilizing and purifying mission under British colonial rule, with the 'anti-nautch movement', in particular, construing these women as lower-class prostitutes. The so-called revival in dance hence entailed a new class of upper-caste urban performers appropriating the cultural practices of hereditary communities in the performing and visual arts (Soneji 2012: 4).

Sokhey regarded temple carvings as the most authentic of the available sources for recovering ancient dance movements. She was initially trained by European teachers, the most notable being British dancer Harcourt

Algeranoff (1903–67),[2] the Russianized stage name of Harcourt Essex who had been a member of Pavlova's company since 1921. In December 1927, Pavlova asked Algeranoff to teach Sokhey the fundamentals of 'Hindu dancing', and his memoirs contain a description of their first lesson. He wrote that she had 'explained that the caste system had made it impossible for her to study in India. … I taught her some footwork, and hip movements and basic positions and movements of the arms. Gradually, she began to master the groundwork of the technique' (Algeranoff 1957: 168).

Algeranoff probably learnt the 'technique' to which he alluded through collaborating with and attending the classes of Uday Shankar (1900–77). Of Bengali descent, Shankar joined Pavlova's company on her return from a tour of India. She wanted to create dances based on authentic Indian sources so, despite his lack of formal training in either Indian or Western dance, she sought his help for the choreography of four of the dances in *Oriental Impressions* (1923). Pavlova and Shankar assumed the leading roles in *Hindu Wedding* and *Radha and Krishna*, while other members of her company performed *Oriental Bride* and *Hindu Dances* (Bhattacharjya 2011: 486). When Shankar left the company in 1924, Algeranoff took over his parts. He called Shankar a 'great friend', and when he established himself in Paris as an independent dancer, Algeranoff attended his classes. In 1928, Algeranoff (1957: 131) wrote about receiving 'some wonderful exercises which I have found invaluable for all kinds of Oriental dancing. Whenever I learnt a new step, he accompanied me himself on the *tablas*, the small drum.'

To Algeranoffs' surprise, Sokhey started to perform in March 1928 after only one course of lessons. No primary sources are available on the steps or choreography of her creations, but from an advertisement and reviews in *The Bombay Chronicle*, one can infer that she put on four dances, of which two had a discernible Oriental theme. She deliberately called her choreographic works *nṛtya*, a Sanskrit term for an expressive dance that expands a storyline (Vakil 1928: 690). She based *Naga Kanya Nritya* on a book called *An Essence of the Dusk* by British writer Francis William Bain (1863–1940). Bain, who was born and educated in England, but who had worked in colonial India for many years and wrote for a European audience, claimed that his novels were directly derived from Sanskrit sources.

[2] See Algeranoff (1930) for a more comprehensive record of his correspondence and related documents.

Although he drew on Indian folktales for some elements of his works, he became widely regarded as a writer of Oriental fantasies (Kair 2018: 27). Sokhey also danced to the lyrics of *Chanson indoue*, which Russian musician Rimsky-Korsakov (1912) composed and which portrayed India as an idyllic paradise: 'Thy hidden gems are rich beyond all measure / Unnumbered are the pearls thy waters treasure / Oh wondrous land!'

While undergoing a second course of classes with Algeranoff in the summer of 1928, Sokhey arranged a joint recital in Mumbai for December of that year. *Chanson indoue* was omitted from the programme, but *Ajanta Darshan*, *Naga Kanya Nritya*, and *Yovana Nritya*, which Sokhey had choreographed, remained. The latter dance depicting the vivacity of youth during Vasanta, the spring festival, ended with a prayer to Shiva in his form of the divine cosmic dancer *Naṭarāja* (Vakil 1928: 691).

Algeranoff and Sokhey collaborated on three new dances. Although there are no notations of their choreography, two revivalist strategies are mentioned in Algeranoff's (1957) memoirs. Consonant with Sokhey's emphasis on temple sculpture, about his *Abhinaya Nritya*, a 'sculptural dance', he wrote: 'I had some excellent books on Hindu sculpture, and began studying the plates seriously, and translating the sculptured poses into the rhythm of dance' (Algeranoff 1957: 183). Also, at least one of his books featured illustrations of the Konark temple in eastern India, which Algeranoff used to portray several of *Naṭarāja*'s postures (Sokhey, 13 June 1930).

Vakil chose the themes of three more dances portraying *bhakti*, or devotion. In fact, with *Bhakti Bhava Nritya* he tried to interpret the spiritual message of India as a whole. Algeranoff (1957: 183) described *bhakti* as 'the omnipresence of God: the kingdom of God is within me, it is in the skies above, in the earth beneath.' Krishna appearing with milkmaids in the dance at the Yamuna in *Panghat Nritya* was very much in keeping with the traditional dance repertoire being embedded in North Indian devotionalism. However, this was not the case with the dance of Usha, the Vedic goddess of dawn, including the part when a young woman visited the temple to perform a *pūjā*.

From the above examination of the source materials, it is apparent that when Sokhey embarked on her dance career, she and her main collaborators were well-versed in the strategies of dance reconfiguration. She acknowledged the importance of Sanskrit treatises yet preferred temple sculpture as a source for dance movements. Nevertheless, the themes of her dances and the technique she performed were rooted in Orientalism.

PREPARING FOR THE EUROPEAN STAGE

The dance 'revival' was mainly for the benefit of Indian audiences, but since Sokhey toured Europe extensively and had to meet the expectations of her European audiences, she could not wholly restrict her choreography to a nationalist agenda. Following her successful season in India, Sokhey planned to make her European debut in the United Kingdom, and British society magazines announced her forthcoming appearance as the star in *Mr Cochran's Revue*, which had been enjoying considerable success throughout the 1920s.

However, when Sokhey presented theatrical manager-cum-impresario Sir Charles B. Cochran (1872–1951) with *Usha*, he insisted the dance be shortened, which meant leaving out the *pūjā* part. Sokhey refused: 'I don't want to produce an imitation of Ruth St Denis or anything like that and ruin all I have worked for. At least our work has the merit of being pioneer work and therefore absolutely original (Sokhey, 15 March 1930). Cochran's response was uncompromising: '[I] have, with the deepest regret, come to the conclusion that the only result of allowing you to appear would be very detrimental to my production and wholly disastrous for yourself' (Sokhey, 15 March 1930).

After Cochran's rejection, Sokhey's debut became a pressing matter. Since she felt a return to India would give her 'enemies a splendid chance to disparage' her, she became adamant about performing in Europe. She assumed that Cochran had succumbed to 'anti-Indian propaganda' and proposed drastic changes to her programme. She suggested adapting Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Chitra* to a ballet, as it would be 'a great attraction in Germany and on the continent' (Sokhey, 27 March 1930). She also conceived of a programme in which the first half would consist of Indian dances, and the second half of Algeranoff and Klara Walthner (1899–*c*.1944), a former student of Mary Wigman, performing 'modern plastique ballet', along with Russian and Japanese dances. Since Algeranoff was on tour at the time and unavailable for classes, Sokhey started taking lessons in '*danse plastique et gymnastique*' with Walthner (Sokhey, 27 March 1930).

Sokhey stayed mostly in Paris, where she saw Uday Shankar perform at a private function. On the whole, she found him 'very limited as to imagination, and all his dances are more or less the same and they get rather monotonous' (Sokhey, 25 December 1929). Sokhey's husband, however, noting Shankar's success in Vienna, Budapest, and Berlin, held a different

view. In relation to Shankar's 'full houses', Sahib Singh Sokhey (1930) wrote:

> What seems to have most appealed to continental audiences was the utter simplicity of themes. … The peculiar charm and naturalness is bound to appeal to the post-war European who is experimenting in that everything … Indian dance does show him something that he did not think out for himself, but is full of merit.

Sahib Singh Sokhey's preference for 'simplicity' was reflected in a turn to folk dance, but with a proviso in that 'at present, the folk dances are very crudely done, and of course, if we do them, we shall have to improve and remodel them a lot' (Sokhey 1930). Meanwhile, Leila Sokhey continued choreographing deeply religious dances. After Usha she dedicated a dance to Lakshmi, a key goddess in Hinduism as well as Vishnu's consort. O'Shea (2007: 119) elucidates Lakshmi's allure for revivalists by describing her as the 'most restrained and least independent of Hindu goddesses', for she exemplifies the qualities of high-caste women, which include respectability and restricted sexuality.

Sokhey substantially changed *Bhakti Bhava Nritya* to depict the sorrow of a widow seeking solace in faith. A photograph printed on the front page of *De Telegraaf* seems to hint that Sokhey performed an actual *pūjā* on stage. She is captured sitting with a white veil covering her hair. She holds a pot with a spout (*kamaṇḍal*) from which she pours water onto a tray (*thālī*) with white flowers (Anon 1931b). She apologized to Algeranoff for her change: 'I am really sorry you are hurt. … I never felt it the way Vakil described it' (Sokhey, 10 August 1930). She assured Algeranoff she had danced the revised *Bhakti Bhava* at parties with *Usha* and *Yovana Nritya*. To her astonishment, *Bhakti Bhava* had the most success (Sokhey, 4 July 1930). The performances for small audiences became regular: 'I have gained a lot of courage and experience as I have danced at many soirées since I have been in Paris. Of course, I refused to dance unless they paid me well' (Sokhey, 23 July 1930).

Sokhey eventually made her Parisian debut in 1930, with Khalil Dedashti, who had also danced in her debut in Mumbai, partnering her. The performance marked the beginning of her first European tour, which would last two years (Fig. 8.2).

In the publicity surrounding her performances, she presented herself as the guardian of an ancient art. For instance, in an interview with Cathy

Fig. 8.2 Leila Sokhey and Khalil Dedashti performing as Menaka and Nilkanta. Westerbroekpark, The Hague, 1932. (Figure caption from Allard Pierson, theatre collection, archive number 200000220.000, licensed under CC-BY 4.0)

Verbeek (1931) of *De Tijd*, alluding to her stage name, she said that 'dance is in a state of decay, and I have taken its rehabilitation on myself. Menaka was the priestess of the deity Indra; I want to be the priestess of Hindu dance.'

In this section, we have seen the strong influence of Western dance on Sokhey's technique and the thematic depiction of an apolitical reality originating from Orientalist imagery on her choreography. Uday Shankar's critical acclaim provided added inspiration for Sokhey's works. In fact, Orientalist sources and their representation of Indian customs exerted a significant influence on the self-perceptions of Shankar, Sokhey, and Vakil.

Constructing Continuity

As mentioned earlier, a pivotal strategy for the dance reform movement was to study Sanskrit treatises. Cultural nationalists in southern India were at the forefront of a rigorous examination of texts on dance, music and dramaturgy. Sokhey partook in the discourse that celebrated a continuity between contemporary dance and its origins in antiquity.

Purkayastha (2012: 72) shows that the nationalist project had various regional manifestations. While in the northern state of Bengal it stimulated the modern arts, in southern India it forged a classical–national narrative. A critical moment was reached with the 1927 inauguration of the Madras Music Academy in the cultural capital of South India. This academy sought to promote classical dance and music by organizing recitals, and it furthered the study of art forms by establishing a library, scholarships, and an annual journal. The scholars associated with it attached huge importance to ancient Sanskrit texts on theatre and performance, and this accelerated the 'textualization' of dance (O'Shea 2007: 37).

In 1930, the Madras Academy stated in its journal that classical dance should accord with the tenets of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. By 1932, the opinions of South Indian nationalist scholars were the most influential in national cultural circles and among many artists (Purkayastha 2012: 72). This was exemplified by an article written by Sokhey and published in *Sound and Shadow*, a Madras-based magazine and later republished as an appendix to Joshi's (1989) biography. V. Raghavan (1908–79), an editor of the magazine, was better known for his contributions as an esteemed Indologist and Sanskrit scholar. Sokhey's essay shows a change in her perspective on dance techniques. In Europe, she had studied ballet and modern dance, but now she declared that 'well-meaning Westerners who undertake to teach us Indian dancing do not realize that their physical build is totally unsuited to do justice to our type of dancing' (Joshi 1989: 54). Since Sokhey's remark was aimed at 'self-styled authorities in Indian dance', it is unclear whether it reflects her thoughts on her training with Algeranoff and, to a lesser degree, with Klara Walthner.

Another fundamental shift occurred in the strategies she found most useful. While in 1928 Sokhey had identified temple sculptures as a prime source in the re-creation of ancient dance movements, five years later, she wrote (quoted in Joshi 1989: 57):

> One cannot superimpose a *mudra* or hand gesture in the dance just by hold-
> ing out one's hands in the positions indicated by the paintings or sculp-
> tures. … Every *mudra* … should be led up to by suitable and strictly laid
> down rules for the movement of the hands, body, neck, eyes and feet.

Sokhey had asked 'Pundit Vishwanath of Baidyanath' to translate a
'Sanskrit text' (Joshi 1989: 54) and her subsequent essay bore the fruit of
his labour in that it is interspersed with technical vocabulary to describe
dance movements. She identified *Lasya Nritya* as an ancient genesis of
Kathak, with *lasya* encompassing delicate, feminine movements: 'the
"*Kathaka*" dance was danced in ancient times by women of the highest
families. Mythologically, it is attributed to Parvati, who is supposed to be
its first exponent' (Joshi 1989: 54). She offered several suggestions on
movement and posture. For example, '"the dancer must have that mag-
netic look that he should be able to evoke and awaken Madan", that is he
should be able to project his personality to the audience in a way that
holds them spellbound' (Joshi 1989: 56). Interestingly, the deity Madan,
also known as Kamadeva, is commonly associated with longing and desire,
yet in her explanation Sokhey carefully avoided any hint of eroticism.

Sokhey did not completely discard paintings and sculpture as sources
for dance. Previously, the Buddhist structures Ajanta and Amaravati had
inspired her; now, she briefly referred to the Chidambaram temple in
South India. The relationship with the *Nātyaśāstra* carried the most
weight for her because she professed that the temple sculptures depicted
the entire fifth chapter of the treatise (Joshi 1989: 56).

It is evident from Sokhey's essay that the nationalist narrative of South
India's intelligentsia had an impact on her approach. Before her stay in
Europe, she turned to temple sculpture for guidance on creating a dance
vocabulary, but on her return, she relied on Sanskrit treatises.

Artistic Individuality

One discursive strategy that the nationalists employed was to construct a
homogenous past in which Indian arts were embedded in ancient tradi-
tions. Sokhey dissociated dance from its court history and diminished the
authority of its traditional practitioners.

When she returned to India after her first European tour, Sokhey
formed a corps de ballet and started training with dance master Sitaram
Prasad. While initially hesitant to learn from hereditary practitioners, in

1929 she wrote to Algeranoff: 'tonight I am to see a so-called master of dance. He is supposed to be a marvel, but I am reserving my judgement till I have seen him. I am hoping against hope that he may be a "friend" and have something to teach us' (Sokhey, 6 March 1929). Joshi (1989: 11) observed that Sokhey's training with her first dance master, or *guru*, reversed the master–pupil relationship. Normally, a pupil would travel to the master's house for lessons, but Sitaram Prasad moved from Calcutta to Bombay to teach Sokhey, and together they choreographed the dance-drama *Krishna Leela* (1934). Subsequently, she learned with Achhan Maharaj (b.1893 or 1896), with whom she created *Deva Vijaya Nritya* (1935), a reworking of several *purāṇa*s on Shiva and Mohini, the female form of Vishnu. Thereafter, Sokhey was under the tutelage of Achhan's brother Lachhu Maharaj (1901–78) (Joshi 1989: 11).

In her 1933 essay, Sokhey reverently referred to the Maharaj brothers as the 'greatest exponents of *Kathak*'. Nonetheless, I would like to argue that she had reservations about their authority because, she continued, 'the difference between these recent exponents and what I believe used to be the dance in olden times is that the dance has now become a mere demonstration of virtuosity and has lost its interpretive and artistic value through the lack of interest in the dance' (Joshi 1989: 56). By emphasizing the physical techniques of the traditional masters, she was underlining her own significance as a female non-hereditary dancer able to elevate the dance to a superior level: 'it needs to be moulded again into a lucid dance, to be made into an expressive and artistic whole and not allowed to stay as a mere demonstration of perfect technique' (Joshi 1989: 56).

In a broader sense, while Sokhey claimed the Vedic origins of the dance, she eschewed its more recent history. For example, in her essay she omitted the lineage of her hereditary gurus. Achhan and Lachhu Maharaj were the sons of Kalka Prasad (d.1910), who, together with his brother Bindadin (d.1918), is credited with developing and perfecting *Kathak* (Walker 2014a: 104). Although their oral family history is not free of contradictions, it is established that the family earned its reputation in Lucknow, the capital of the state of Awadh (1772–1857). After the collapse of Delhi as the Mughal capital, Lucknow became a safe haven for artists. Lucknow was reputed to be North India's foremost cultural centre in the last half century. The paramount figure behind this development was Awadh's ruler Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (r.1847–56) (Katz 2017: 14). Walker (2014a: 106) documented the lineage of the Maharaj dance masters back to the court of the Nawab.

The musicians' positioning in the Indian ballet's orchestra can be interpreted as another concealment of the contributions of Islamic patronage and performers. On 6 July 1934, Sokhey's Indian ballet gave a charity performance for Bombay's *Swadeshi League*, followed a week later by a benefit concert for the *Swastik League* (*Bombay Chronicle* 1934a, b). Whereas *swadeshi* ('one's own land') was founded to promote the production and sale of Indian goods, especially cloth (Trivedi 2007: 34–5), the *Swastik League* was a paramilitary group. It organized drills and prepared for communal riots by attempting to establish a voluntary, paramilitary force for Hindu 'self-defence' against Muslim 'aggression' (Casolari 2011: 133).

Two hereditary musicians made their first appearances in the city—sitarist Hamid Husain Khan (d.late 1950s) and Sakhawat Hussain Khan (1875–1955).[3] The *sarod* player was one of the most eminent musicians of his era and a professor at Lucknow's Marris College of Hindustani Music where he taught hundreds of students from 1927 onwards. Katz (2017) claimed that Khan belonged to a lineage of musicians held in high esteem in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sakhawat Khan's grandfather, Niamatullah Khan (d.1902), had been a Wajid Ali Shah court musician, while his father and uncles earned the utmost regard for their virtuosity on the sitar and *sarod* (Fig. 8.3). Despite Sakhawat Khan's honourable credentials, Ambique Majumdar was the musical director of Sokhey's company. The Bengali was roughly fifteen years Khan's junior and graduated in 1933 from Marris college; in all likelihood he had been Khan's student.

So far, one source containing information on Majumdar has come to light. In the winter of 1937 and summer of 1938, towards the end of the Indian ballet's European tour, he had apparently served as an expert to German musicologist Hans Engel (1894–1970). In an article for a journal of musicology, Engel wrote that Majumdar came from an affluent family of merchants, and had studied history and literature at the University of Calcutta before pursuing further studies in law. 'His musical education began at home at the age of 15, where he had daily lessons for three years with two teachers who came into the house and was completed by

---

[3] Hamid Husain Khan and Sakhawat Hussain Khan were unrelated. The former, a student of Imdad Khan (1848–1920), belonged to one of the most influential sitar lineages of the twentieth century.

Fig. 8.3 The orchestra of the Menaka Ballet. From left to right: Janardhan Abhyankar, Sakhawat Hussain Khan, Sheikh Mehboob Ali, Ambique Majumdar, Kamel Ganguli, and Vishnu Shirodekar (Courtesy Allard Pierson, Theatercollectie, archiefnummer 200000220.000.)

studying singing for five years at the music school in Lucknow' (Engel 1939: 227).

Engel admired the breadth of Majumdar's knowledge and skills. Besides his extensive academic education, he was well-versed in Sanskrit works. Also, without preparation, Majumdar could sing any compositions written between the fourth and fourteenth centuries. The German scholar was amazed: '*Vidyâpati*, fourteenth century, *Nada veda* (*Dhrupada*), *Kalidasa* fourth century, *Gitagovinda*, Sanskrit poem from the eleventh century. … What a cultural asset is still alive here and, what is most important for us, sung!' (Engel 1939: 227).

Based on Engels' account, I would argue Majumdar and Sokhey appear to have had certain things in common. They both belonged to the Bengali elite and to the first wave of non-hereditary art practitioners and both had their music lessons in their own homes rather than having to spend lots of time in their teachers' households.

Sokhey, who clearly challenged the traditional hierarchy between master and student in both dance and music, regarded a non-hereditary practitioner like Majumdar as best suited to compose music for dances rooted in an Oriental tradition. Hence, despite their integration with elements of *Kathak*, she was able to exercise her authority when shaping her own vision of *Kathak*.

An orchestra of six men, including Sakhawat Hussain Khan and Ambique Majumdar, accompanied Sokhey. In addition, two male dancers from the hereditary dance community, Gauri Shankar and Ramnarayan Mishra, joined Sokhey's company for the European tour. Furthermore, three upper-caste girls whom Sokhey herself had trained—Damayanti Joshi, Vimala and Malati, the Hinduized stage names of sisters Siloo and Martina Castellino—were part of the ensemble (Joshi 1989: 11). Folklore dances, dances based on Vedic gods, and dances featuring Hindu gods comprised the first half of the programme and a ballet, either *Krishna Leela* or *Deva Vijaya Nritya*, the second.

WHERE THE GODS ARE NIGH: DUTCH RECEPTION

Menaka's Indian ballet tour started in the Netherlands, where the company performed every evening in February 1936, before impresario Ernst Krauss subsequently programmed it for the German leg of the tour (see Schlaffke, Schwaderer and Kanhai, Chap. 12 of this volume). The Dutch and German press reviews of the performances interpreted Sokhey's work in the context of each nation's ideological configurations and colonial pursuits. Reviewers in the Netherlands, for example, equated Sokhey's Indian ballet with their experience of the Dutch East Indies, albeit strongly coloured by their own colonialist imagery.

Barely twenty years before Sokhey's first European tour in 1931/2, select Dutch audiences had become acquainted with Hindu religiosity being expressed through dance. From 1913 onwards, students from the Dutch East Indian colony would organize performances of dance, music, and drama from different parts of the archipelago. At an *Indische Kunstavond*, an evening featuring displays of art from the colony, Dutch visitors could now admire from up close the cherished 'Hindu Javanese culture' of the colony's largest island (Cohen 2010: 106–9).

One such student—a modern dancer called Raden Mas Jodjana (1893–1972)—achieved widespread acclaim throughout Europe for combining Javanese and Indian interpretations of deities like Shiva, Vishnu,

and Krishna, despite the Javanese tradition being unfamiliar with motifs such as Krishna and the milkmaids. It was his Dutch wife Elizabeth Pop (1888–1981), who had studied in London under Sufi musician Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927), who encouraged him to use Indian themes. Jodjana's dances provided her with a means of communicating Khan's 'Sufi message, expressed in movements but in the Hindu–Javanese idiom' (Cohen 2010: 119) (Fig. 8.4).

The first ever performance of Balinese dance in the Netherlands took place in 1931, shortly after Sokhey's first appearance before Dutch audiences. Its Dutch commentators seeped their reviews in the imagery of the island as 'the pearl of the colonial archipelago'.

Bali's European settlers were instrumental in shaping the island's image. Gregor Krause (1883–1959), a German doctor working for the Dutch colonial government, was of particular note in this respect. He was an avid photographer and his visual record in *Bali: Volk, Land, Feste, Tänze, Tempel* (Krause 1920) inspired his fellow countryman Walter Spies (1895–1942)

Fig. 8.4 Raden Mas Jodjana as Krishna. (Figure caption from Allard Pierson, theatre collection, object number 51xxx2517.027, licensed under CC-BY 4.0)

to move to Bali from Java, where he had been living since 1923. Spies became a primary catalyst in establishing Bali's image as a harmonious community in which everybody was an artist by nature—a veritable paradise on earth. Spies acted as an intermediary between Balinese artists and the Dutch government for European performances (Bloembergen 2003: 130).

The aestheticization of Bali was in alignment with the colonial politics of conservation. Dutch Orientalists had studied Bali as a treasure house of ancient Hindu–Buddhist culture. According to this image, Bali flourished because it remained Hindu, whereas the presence of Islam had caused Java to degenerate. Scholars considered Bali a fragile unity in need of protection from the inroads of modernity. Dutch colonial policy included preserving local culture and promoting Bali as a 'living museum' of Hindu heritage (Vickers 1989: 18, 52–3).

Relying solely on the Jodjana performances they had seen, numerous reviewers drew parallels between Sokhey's work and Javanese dance. Some smaller-town critics, though, conceded that they had insufficient knowledge to evaluate the ballet properly. The *Noord Ooster* critic, for example, wrote that since it was impossible to analyse it analytically through 'Western eyes', the audience should merely surrender to the feelings it conveyed. 'The Javanese dance retains its precision at every level as it alternates between the most sublime and the most lovable, with one reinforcing the other. These dancers combine awareness of the highest-imaginable and most refined cult with childlike open-mindedness, and extreme sophistication with pure innocence' (Erenst 1936).

Several commentators provided their readers with a more precise religious interpretation. The reviewer for the Protestant newspaper *De Nederlander*, for instance, explained that, 'according to the teachings of the East, everything originates from Brahma and must eventually return to him. … That evening was also an expression of the *Veda*. Instead of an unfoldment, it was a descent, a return to the most essential – Brahma' (G. van R. 1936).

Having served for seven years in the infantry division of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, Jouke Broer Schuil (1875–1960) became a drama critic and playwright, and shared his musings in the *Haarlems Dagblad* on the 'deeper meanings' of some Indian ballets. He wondered whether before coming on stage, the members of the company would perform a *ranga pujah*—'a ceremony to invoke the blessings of the angels of beauty in which those who forsake them will be ruined'. In Ramnaryan's

Sanhar Nritya, he described Shiva as 'akin to a fire that permeates all worlds and affects life on Earth most intensely. In his dance, he creates all the planets, and rules amid an ever-moving myriad of stars. And, likewise, *Krishna Leela* includes a cosmic dance of the sun and the planets' (Schuil 1936).

Leading critics in Amsterdam and The Hague tended to concentrate more on the dancers' techniques, but Werumeus Buning (1891–1958), who had been a faithful visitor to the East Indies art evenings, was critical of how European cultures separated religion, science, politics, art and labour into distinct categories. He compared the West, which he saw as rational and insensitive, with 'the world of dance' in the ancient cultures of India, Egypt, and Greece, where sacred sentiments were evinced through movement, and gods were represented as dancers (Bloembergen 2003: 135). He wrote numerous reviews of Sokhey's performances on her European tours. In 1931, for example, he wrote that 'this Hindu dancer' cannot match 'the grand Javanese (dramatic) dance style'. 'To put it bluntly', he went on, 'compared with Jodjana's depictions of deities and knights, her dances are without meaning, and lack the foundation of a transmitted language of expression' (Werumeus Buning 1931). Conversely, he praised the lyricism of her folk dances, and in her appearance in *Lakshmi Darshan* 'as a celestial nymph in an Indian fairy tale she was lithe and beautiful, gesture after gesture, movement after movement, verse after verse … a grace like this needed centuries of refinement to develop and become immortal' (Werumeus Buning 1931).

During her second European tour, Sokhey's company put on three performances in The Hague. As the country's capital, it was where the Ministry of Colonies and several government departments associated with colonial administration were located. It was also where colonial officials on leave resided, and private companies operating in the colony established their headquarters. The local newspaper, the *Haagsche Courant*, published two articles on the similarities and differences between Hindu dance and dance from the Dutch East Indies (Anon 1931a, 1936b). Although not confirmed, these articles were probably written by Ben van Eysselsteijn (1898–1973), who was the newspaper's art critic for almost thirty-five years (Karels 2008: 109).

Van Eysselsteijn had got to know Jodjana and his fellow dancer Raden Mas Noto Soeroto through the East Indies art evenings, and they had become friends. Soeroto, who had written a biography of Tagore and translated his work into Dutch, applied Tagore's synthesis of East and

West to the Dutch East Indies. In his view, the Netherlands and West would benefit from adopting the arts and philosophy of the East, especially given that cooperation and cultural exchanges on equal terms, as opposed to unification or assimilation, advanced political development (Cohen 2010: 112; Karels 2008: 135). In fact, it was Noto Soeroto who first introduced van Eysselsteijn to Chinese philosophy and *vedānta* (Karels 2008: 211).

To return to the review, van Eysselsteijn observed that the public had followed *Krishna Leela* breathlessly and clearly with a deep understanding of the work. As he put it, 'Hindu dance is not foreign to us Dutch; it derives its motifs from the same ancient source from which Javanese and Balinese dance draw their repertoire – the partly heroic, the partly mystical religious stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*.' He also noted various similarities and differences between the two forms. A strong rhythm marked by the orchestra's percussion instruments and the feet of the dancer was characteristic of both forms. Also, the dancer's 'head swaying softly like a flower on its stem', the hand positions symbolizing ideas, and the 'finger positions (*mudra*s), which are familiar to us from Hindu and Buddhist sculpture, are equally important in Javanese dance'. He noted, however, that the 'exuberant and bold' style of Sokhey's dances was very different from the 'subdued chastity of Javanese dance, which therefore reaches a completely different level. … For those who are familiar with Javanese dance, it is the most perfect, noblest and most important dance art of the East' (Anon 1936b).

Another writer based in The Hague expanded on van Eysselsteijn's observations. In a letter to the editor, former military officer, painter, and dance critic Théodore van Lelyveld (1867–1954), following Coomaraswamy's example, resorted to specialist terms to back his arguments. Observing the distinction between *nṛtta*, rhythmic movement devoid of meaning, *nṛtya*, centred emotions, and *nātya*, danced drama, van Lelyveld claimed that *nātya* was no longer practised in India, but Javanese dance was pure *nātya*, thus in strict accordance with the *Nātyaśāstra*. The Indian ballet company's dances were called *nṛtya* for a reason: it was because they were the personal creations of Menaka as an individual artist. The female Javanese dancers, by contrast, are of an 'aristocratic sensitivity and distinction that is unsurpassed in the world' (Lelyveld 1936).

At the time of Sokhey's debut in Europe, critics were already of the firm belief that the passage of time had so thoroughly crushed Indian dance

that it could not be revived. As van Eysselsteijn explained, 'it remains an open question which influence was greater, that of the Hindus on the Javanese or vice versa. Modern scholarship leans towards an explanation that in Java and Bali, old Hindu traditions have been preserved, stylized, and sublimated in Javanese style, which was lost among the Hindus themselves' (Anon 1931a). Weremeus Buning (1931), on his part, resorted to poetic analogy to describe the grandeur of Javanese dance—'Indian dance and Javanese dance germinated from the same root before it was transplanted to Java where it reached its greatest bloom.'

The author of a 1936 article in *Op de hoogte* magazine stated the origins of Hindu dance lay in India, and that it was from there that it spread to Thailand, Cambodia, the coastal areas of Java, and its final destination Bali. The author likened Hindu dance in its country of birth to a partly erased manuscript, a sculpture eroded by the sandstorms of time. Dance in Cambodia was in a comparatively clearer handwriting, but it had suffered imaginatively from technical virtuosity and ornamentation. In Java, however, it had reached full maturity: 'the movement is stronger and larger, and much more a means to an end: the envisioning of divine and worldly stories'. The youngest addition to the repertoire, Balinese dance, was imbued with a natural playfulness and idyllic elegance. 'In the dances of Menaka, the gods have ascended to distant heavens. In Bali, the gods are nigh, they walk the earth' (Anon 1936a: 88–91) (Fig. 8.5).

'Noble Grace in the Highest Perfection': German Reviews

The German performances took place in the wider context of the so-called synchronization (*Gleichschaltung*) of political, social, and cultural institutions. On assuming power, the national socialist regime prioritized identifying, excluding, and persecuting its cultural adversaries. As early as April 1933, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service directed against civil servants of non-Aryan descent was being widely enacted in state-run theatres, orchestras, and opera houses (Kant 2003: 84). As a result, numerous musicians, actors, opera singers, and staff members were forced to retire, with Jewish employees being expelled from several of the prestigious opera houses and city theatres in which the Indian ballet was being staged (Schlaffke 2022: 135–6).

Fig. 8.5 Dancer Ramnarayan Mishra. (Figure caption from Allard Pierson, theatre collection, archive number 200000220.000, licensed under CC-BY 4.0)

The *Gleichschaltung* was also extended to publishers and editors. Schwaderer (2023) shows how the freedom of journalists and art critics to express their opinions were being restricted, especially any who opposed the government. At the same time, she argues, authors were imbibed with particular images of India produced in academic and more popular publications. The onset of German colonialism gave rise to new constructions of India that countered the notion of Europe's geopolitical unity with the British Empire at its core. Novels, translations of Buddha's *sūtra*s and the *Ṛgveda*, artefacts and travel accounts gave everyday Germans a sense of authority while at the same time perpetuated older stereotypes (Manjapra 2014: 59; Marchand 2010: 18).

The reviews tended to contain recurrent references to India as a 'wonderland'. For example, the author of an unsigned review in the *Tübinger Chronik*, which had been a National Socialist Party publication since 1933, wrote of being transported to 'some Indian village on the Ganges, or in the city of Benares', where he could watch the natives in the 'wonderland of India, with its thousand riddles, pagodas, temples, elephants, fakirs and priests' (Anon 1936e).

Writing for the *Rendsburg Landeszeitung*, Flod (1936) described the 'wonderland' as 'the district of Buddha and Brahma possessing inherited lines of centuries-old cults'. The reviewer for the *Regensburger Anzeiger*, however, wondered if, 'when Gauri Shankar dances the *Pavan Nritya* … and lets his arms, bent in the elbow joint, whirl, is it not as if the figure of a hundred-armed Buddha had materialized before our eyes?' (Anon 1936c).

Overall, apart from reflecting on the origins of the dances, the German press churned out lengthy reviews on various other aspects of the performances, including their music, costumes, and the public's reaction to them. The critic for the *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten*, since 1935 the *NS-Volksblatt*, for example, acknowledged that although Sokhey had redesigned Indian dance, it still belonged to the ancient world because of the authenticity of the Indian people's lineage. 'Extraordinary is the impression of the racial purity of these delicate youths and girls, heightened by the strict segregation of the caste to which they belong' (Hav 1936). Ethnographic descriptions like these can be seen as covertly promoting Nazi ideas of ancestry, race, and exclusion (Schwaderer 2023).

Their awareness of the meaning of the Sanskrit word *arya*, originally associated with distinguished social standing, was apparent from the frequent appearances in their reviews of the adjective 'noble' (*edel*, *vornehm*, *adlig*) (See Hauser, Chap. 3 in this volume). Indeed, in their promotional announcements, the newspapers invariably mentioned Sokhey's aristocratic lineage, which many reviews reiterated and which no doubt enhanced the audience's appreciation of the dance. Martin Koegel, the critic for the *Braunschweiger Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, described the physical control that Sokhey and Ramnarayan, who were both of *brahmin* descent, exercised over their movements as 'noble grace of the highest perfection' (Koegel 1936). Thus, as Schlaffke, Schwaderer, and Kanhai have pointed out in this volume, the German reviews were steeped in the notion that Indian dancers were Aryans.

This was clearly related to a preoccupation in the German Indological research of the time with exploring a shared ancestry between Germans

and (Ancient) Indians (see Hannemann, Chap. 10 in this volume). These claims to a common heritage enabled German citizens to distinguish themselves from the other European nations surrounding them and, moreover, to exclude their fellow Jewish citizens from the category (Schwaderer 2023).

Despite its purported Indo–Aryan origin, German culture nonetheless claimed to retain some superior qualities. For example, the *Rheinische Landeszeitung* critic saw no contradiction between describing Sokhey as 'extremely noble, even majestic', and holding 'fundamental racial characteristics' responsible for Indian art being tied to play and children's games (S. 1936).

Potter (2016) states that, despite its harrowing thoroughness, the national socialist agenda did not totally control cultural productivity. She disputes, among other things, the notion of 'aesthetic Nazification' enforcing guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable art (Potter 2016: 9). This fits with Schlaffke's claim that various discourses underpinned the German press reviews of the Menaka ballet (Schlaffke 2022: 111–12).

The reviewers differentiated between dances about 'Indian folklife' and those with mythological themes. Various reviewers regarded dances like *Kreeda Nritya*, which depicted girls fetching water, as genuine representations of village life, and they detailed the movements they recognized. The *Meissener Tageblatt*'s description of the excitement of flying a kite in *Patang* is exemplary. 'One experienced the playful, industrious making of the kite, the fixing of the lines, the flying of the kite, the keeping of the lines taut, the releasing, the floating, falling and climbing of the kite' (G. 1936).

Dances with a mythological theme, however, were appreciated very differently. The critic for the *Eislebener Tageblatt* echoed the views of many other newspaper reviewers when he stated that the dances of the deities Usha, Shiva, and Vayu were especially appreciated because the European audiences understood them (Anon 1936g). By contrast, the ballet *Deva Vijaya Nritya* prompted many critics to discuss to what extent a European audience could understand the art on display in all its depth. The *Braunschweiger Allgemeiner Anzeiger* reviewer remarked that, 'at the end of the ballet, of which there were three parts, the whole house, including the director, remained seated because no one had noticed that it was over' (Koegel 1936).

Ignorance about the ballet's form and content were cited as the main reasons for the misunderstanding. While praise for the hand gestures was

unanimous, it remained unintelligible because of its stylization and symbolism. Jacobs (1936) wrote in the *Kölnische Zeitung*: 'Indian dance is certainly anything but "primitive"; its sign language has wonderful variety and subtlety, which not only reflects spiritual impulses but also has a specific content that expresses something precise, which, despite all explanations, must remain incomprehensible to us.'

The critics perceived this predominance of spirituality and mysticism as consistent with Sokhey's narrative that she had revived the dance by connecting it to its ancient origins. A paragraph from the *Geraer Zeitung* (Anon 1936f) exemplifies the elusive unity of body and spirit that journalists tried to capture:

> We suspect that every gesture, every movement has its own special meaning, that there is more than grace in the wonderful play of the soulful hands, that the supple body expresses spirituality, and that the minute, barely noticeable waves that surround the figures and tremble through the muscles are an expression of spiritual ideas that lie deep within these people.

In the end, Sokhey's emphasis on basing her choreography on religion and enacting myths proved to be a barrier to full understanding.

Conclusion

Leila Sokhey-Roy celebrated her successes with European audiences as part of a movement primarily known as the Indian dance revival. Anticolonial nationalists sought to reinvigorate a pride in the Indian arts by asserting that they had maintained contact with their roots and had preserved their original form since antiquity.

From the very beginning of her career, Sokhey pursued a revivalist agenda, as her 'sculptural dances' inspired by Buddhist temples and poses of Shiva show. She also interwove religious practices such as ceremonial veneration (*pūjā*) into dances that focused on a Hindu god or goddess and those that portrayed everyday village life. Furthermore, devotion was a central motif in dances associated with Krishna, who features strongly in North Indian religiosity.

Mastering the technical vocabulary of centuries-old Sanskrit treatises (*śāstra*s) became a key factor in the reconfiguration of dance. Sokhey thus undertook extensive research on the terminology in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a Sanskrit compendium that nationalist scholars in South India considered

important. In addition, she drew on the *purāṇa* genre of Indian literature for ancient myths and information on Hindu deities. Sokhey then transformed these into solos, duets, and dance ensembles, which she referred to as 'Indian ballet'.

Sokhey's allegiance to a lineage of hereditary dance masters associated with Lucknow reinforced her authenticity. However, since her version of *Kathak* history overlooked the flourishing period of dance at the Lucknow court in the nineteenth century, the Islamic benefactors of North Indian dance and music remained hidden. Moreover, by refusing to accept the traditional importance in the Indian performing arts of instructional lineage over artistic individuality, and by failing to adhere strictly to traditional techniques, she exercised her creative licence to the full. In short, she fitted the nationalist discourse to her conception of artistic dance and to her role as a female artist from a non-hereditary background.

In that the idea that traditions are unchanging and based on antiquity is rooted in British scholarship, a colonial discourse clearly permeated Sokhey's work. As a member of the Indian nationalist elite educated in Great Britain, Sokhey internalized the intellectual legacy of Orientalism. Hence, her themes of folklore and deities reiterated European assumptions used to essentialize Indian culture. Therefore, one could attribute the predominance of Oriental dance in her work to her arduous training with European performers, her indigenous Orientalism, and her desire to achieve artistic success in Europe.

As the examination of reviews showed, onlookers invariably identified Sokhey's Indian ballet with primordial spirituality. In the Netherlands, the audience's appreciation of her repertoire was defined by the colonial gaze, for the Hindu–Buddhist culture of Java and Bali figured prominently in colonialist imagery. Dutch critics concurred that the ancient tradition Sokhey sought to revive had been corroded past retrieval. India might have been the cradle of Hindu dance, but it could only have reached its pinnacle in the Dutch East Indies.

Since national socialist control of cultural institutions curtailed the German critics' freedom of expression, colonial tropes and national socialist ideology were propagated in their reviews, the latter in covert terms. The synchronization (*Gleichschaltung*) of the press, however, did not result in a single unified point of view. Authors differed in their appreciation of the music, costumes, and movements. For several reviewers, the sanskritized repertoire elevated the dance beyond their comprehension.

References

Algeranoff, Harcourt. 1930. Algeranoff, Harcourt, Papers 1830–1967, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 2376. Series 3, General Correspondence, 1927–1929 (File 2), General correspondence 1930 (File 3). The Menaka Archive.

———. 1957. *My years with Pavlova*. London: William Heinemann Ltd.

Anon. 1931a. Uday Shan-Kar dansgroep. *Haagsche Courant*, 1 December. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1931b. De Hindoe-danseres Menaka in de hoofdstad, *De Telegraaf*, 20 March. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936a. Menaka's Indische Balletten. *Op de hoogte*, February, 88–91. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936b. Het Menaka Ballet. *Haagsche Courant*, 13 February. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936c. Review. *Regensburger Anzeiger*, 15 April. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936d. Review of Menaka's Indian Ballet. *Tölzer Zeitung*, 16 June. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936e. Indische Rhythmen, Das Gastspiel der Menaka und ihrer Tanzgruppe. *Tübinger Chronik*, 25 August. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936f. Indische Welt. *Geraer Zeitung*, 13 October. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1936g. Gastspiel Menaka. *Eislebener Tageblatt*, 16 November. The Menaka Archive.

Bhattacharjya, Nilanjana. 2011. A productive distance from the nation: Uday Shankar and the defining of Indian modern dance. *South Asian History and Culture* 2: 482–501.

Bloembergen, M. 2003. 8 juni 1931: De Balinese gamelangroep 'Gong Peliatan' treedt op in het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Balinese dansen in Nederland: sprookje of pure kunst? In *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland*. *Kunsten in beweging 1900–1980*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Maaike Meijer, 127–142. The Hague: SDU Uitgevers.

Bombay Chronicle. 1934a. Menaka's dance recital: Help *swadeshi* propaganda by attending it. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 6 July. The Menaka Archive.

———. 1934b. Menaka's new art enterprise: 'Kathakali' surprises city. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 July. The Menaka Archive.

Casolari, Marzia. 2011. *In the shade of the swastika: The ambiguous relationship between Indian nationalism and Nazi-fascism*. Bologna: I libri di Emil.

Cohen, Matthew Isaac. 2010. *Performing otherness: Java and Bali on international stages 1905–1952*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda. 1917. *The mirror of gesture*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Engel, Hans. 1939. Über indische Musik. *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 4: 202–229. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Erenst. 1936. Een avond van opperste schoonheid. *De Noord-Ooster*, 7 March. The Menaka Archive.

Flod. 1936. Menaka, das Indische Ballett, *Rendsburg Landeszeitung*, 27 October. The Menaka Archive.

G. 1936. Menaka, Gastspiel des indischen Balletts und des indischen Orchesters. *Meissener Tageblatt*, 3 April. The Menaka Archive.

G. van R. 1936. Menaka met Indisch orkest. *De Nederlander*, 12 February. The Menaka Archive.

Hav. 1936. Indiens mystlisches Lächeln. *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichte*, 7 March. The Menaka Archive.

Jacobs, W. 1936. Opernhaus in Köln. Indisches Tanzgastspiel Menaka, *Kölnische Zeitung*, 27 April. The Menaka Archive.

Joshi, Damayanti. 1989. *Madame Menaka*. New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Kair, Tabish. 2018. Indian ghosts: A love affair. In *The Routledge handbook for the ghost story*, ed. Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston, 270–279. New York: Routledge.

Kant, Marion. 2003. *Hitler's dancers: German modern dance and the Third Reich*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Karels, René. 2008. *Mijn aardse leven vol moeite en strijd: Raden Mas Noto Soeroto, Javaan, dichter, politicus, 1888–1951*. Amsterdam: Dissertation University of Amsterdam.

Katz, Max. 2017. *Lineage of loss: Counternarratives of North Indian music*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Koegel, Martin. 1936. Landestheater: Indisches Ballet Menaka. *Braunschweiger Allgemeinder Anzeiger*, 11 May. The Menaka Archive.

Krause, Gregor. 1920. *Bali: Volk, Land, Tänze, Feste, Tempel*. Hagen: Folkwang Verlag.

Lelyveld, Théodore van. 1936. Javaansche danskunst. *Het Vaderland*, 16 November. The Menaka Archive.

Manjapra, Kris. 2014. *Age of entanglement: German and Indian intellectuals across empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Marchand, Suzanne. 2010. *Orientalistik* and popular Orientalism in fin de siècle Germany. In *After one hundred years: The 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' reconsidered*, ed. Andrea Lermer and Avinoam Shalem, 17–34. Leiden: Brill.

O'Shea, Janet. 2007. *Bhatayanatyam on the global stage: At home in the world*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishing House.

Potter, Pamela. 2016. *The art of suppression: Confronting the Nazi past in histories of the visual and performing arts*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Purkayastha, Prarthana. 2012. Dancing othernesss: Nationalism, transnationalism and the work of Uday Shankar. *Dance Research Journal* 44: 68–92.

Rangacharya, Adya. 1996. *The Natyasastra: English translation with critical notes.* New Delhi: Munshiram.

Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai. 1912. *Chanson indoue.* New York: G. Schirmer. https://content.lib.auburn.edu/digital/collection/pianobench/id/26/. Accessed 5 April 2023.

S. 1936. Indisches Tanz Gastspiel. *Rheinische Landeszeitung.* 14 March. The Menaka Archive.

Schlaffke, Markus. 2022. *Die Rekonstruktion des Menaka-Archivs: Navigationen durch die Tanz-Moderne zwischen Kolkata, Mumbai und Berlin 1936–1938.* Weimar: Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. https://doi.org/10.25643/bauhaus-universitaet.4706.

Schuil, Jouke Broer. 1936. De beteekenis van den Indischen dans. *Haarlems Dagblad*, 22 February. The Menaka Archive.

Schwaderer, Isabella. 2023. "Exotic Sensation" or "Völkisch Art"? Press Reviews of the Indisches Ballett Menaka (Menaka Indian Ballet) on Tour Through Germany, 1936–1938. N.T.M. 31, 333–356. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00048-023-00362-1

Sokhey, Leila. Letters of various dates between 1928 and 1930 as shown in text. In Algeranoff, Harcourt, Papers 1830–1967, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 2376. Series 3, General Correspondence, 1927–1929 (File 2), General correspondence 1930 (File 3).

Sokhey, Sahib Singh. 1930. Correspondence. 11 April. In Algeranoff, Harcourt, Papers 1830–1967, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 2376. Series 3, General correspondence 1930 (File 3).

Soneji, Davesh. 2012. *Unfinished gestures: Devadasis, memory, and morality in South India.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Trivedi, Lisa. 2007. *Clothing Gandhi's nation: Homespun and modern India.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Vakil, Kanaiyalal H. 1928. Dancing in India: A new era. *The Modern Review* 1: 689–692. The Menaka Archive.

Verbeek, Caty. 1931. Menaka. *De Tijd*, 5 April. The Menaka Archive.

Vickers, Adrian. 1989. *Bali: A paradise created.* Singapore: Periplus Editions.

Walker, Margaret. 2014a. *India's Kathak dance in historical perspective.* Farnham: Ashgate.

———. 2014b. National purity and postcolonial hybridity in India's Kathak dance revival. In *The Oxford handbook of music revival*, ed. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, 205–227. New York: Oxford University Press.

Werumeus Buning, J. W. F. 1931. Dansavond Menaka, *De Telegraaf*, 19 March. The Menaka Archive.

Roaming Between East and West: In Search of Religious Ecstasy in the Interwar Period

Gerdien Jonker

In 1927, Irma Gohl (1906–64), a young woman studying astronomy and Egyptology at the University of Munich, published a poem called 'Weltraumschiff' ('spaceship') in *Die Rakete* (*The Rocket*) magazine (Gohl 1927: 144). As the mouthpiece of the newly founded association for space travel (*Verein für Raumschiffahrt*), the *Rocket*'s readers were German enthusiasts who dreamt of flying through space and, in return, would receive a wild assortment of ideas about other worlds, interplanetary travel, and technical inventions. Among the societies' members were also university engineers and amateur technicians experimenting with gliders and aluminium-propelled rockets. Apart from creating a new body of talent that the Nazi regime would soon tap, their attempts to shoot missiles into the sky inspired fantasies like Fritz Lang's film *The Woman in the Moon* and Irma Gohl's poem (Smith 2014: 227).

The poem attracted the interest of fifteen-year-old Wernher von Braun (1912–77) and inspired him to join the society and undertake technical

G. Jonker (✉)
Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany
e-mail: gerdientje.jonker@fau.de

193

experiments. Braun grew up to become a famous, if controversial, rocket engineer who put his talents to work for the Nazis before joining the Americans. With others, the mere idea of space travel triggered all sorts of associations with science fiction and speculations about divine matters. Irma Gohl's poem was eventually translated into five languages and launched into space to celebrate what would have been von Braun's one hundredth birthday (ESA 2011; Institut Rabe 2012).

This chapter is essentially about the lives of Germans in search of religious ecstasy as a means of escaping the anger and dissent in their society following the First World War. Although Germany had started the war, it refused to take the blame for it. Instead, leading German thinkers diagnosed serious ruptures such as social fragmentation, loss of meaning, uprooting, the end of civilization, the death of God, and, not least, spiritual homelessness (Gordon 2013; Graf 2000; Marchand 2013). As a result, many Germans experienced severe psychological problems, and young people invented numerous escape mechanisms. They would probe such things as the vastness of the universe, the depths of history, and Eastern religions, and speculate endlessly about what might lie in outer space. Needless to say, the market in alternative religions boomed.

As the chapters in this book show, Germany has a long tradition of tapping into 'Eastern wisdom'. Enlightenment thinkers perused Eastern religions to expand their understanding of the Bible (Simon Wiesgickl). Around 1900, the appropriation of India by theology (Matthias Turner), opera (Isabella Schwaderer and Marcus Schlaffke), and food (Julia Hauser) had become a widespread phenomenon. Academics engaged in philological studies to explore Indian religions (Marchand 2009). The middle classes turned to theosophy and travelled to the Orient (Bigalke 2016). The generation born around 1900 could choose from a wide range of options to achieve the out-of-body experience that scholar of religion Rudolph Otto (1869–1937) called *mysterium tremendum* (Otto 1917). In fact, it was common knowledge among young people growing up after the First World War that it manifested as a piercing light and bodily tremors. In this state, Otto said, one could merge with 'God' (or alternatively, 'the spiritual world', 'the universe', or 'the divine'). The speed and intensity with which people pursued such experiences were, as shown below, another reflection of the deep crisis into which Germany had fallen (Rabinbach 2013).

By tracing such experiences, I examine the individualization of religion undertaken by the 1900 generation. From a sociology of religion

perspective, such individual approaches only became a feature of Western religion after 1945, when Christian religious institutions began to change (Luckmann 1967). However, as I show in this chapter, forms of religious individualization were taking place in the 1920s and 1930s, although these were associated with Islam rather than Christianity.

While conversion to Buddhism was widespread in Germany, turning to Islam was not. Stemming from the same geography and rooted in the same textual tradition as Judaism and Christianity, Islam had always forced Europeans to distinguish between 'us' and 'them'. In the 'dynamics of negation' (Koselleck 1985: 217, see also the Introduction to this volume), Muslims were assigned the role of Europe's negative counterpart.

However, the First World War had brought German soldiers into close contact with Middle Eastern countries in ways that, when Muslim Indians built a mosque in Berlin and offered Islam to the German capital as a genuinely 'Indian' religion, the time had come for some to exchange the lens of the 'barbarians' with that of the keepers of 'Eastern wisdom' and to include Islam in their explorations (Jonker 2016). That some of the future converts to the Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque also belonged to the Mazdaznan religious movement may have further helped smooth the way. In her chapter in this volume, Julia Hauser explains how this movement forged a bridge to Aryan identity without considering Hindus. Her observation sits nicely with the fact that, after the president of the convert community, Hugo Marcus (1880–1964), fled to Basel in 1939 because of the war, Dr. Devrient (dates unknown), president of Mazdanan Berlin, took his place (Devrient n.d.).

Sources and Steps Ahead

After the First World War, Indian Muslims from Lahore settled in Berlin with a view to promoting the Ahmadiyya Reform Movement. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1846–1908), who founded the movement in the British Indian Punjab around 1900 to defend Islam from the aggressive attacks of Christian missionaries, presented himself as the *mujaddid* (reformer of the century). Later, he also claimed to be a *zilli nabi* (a prophet in the shadow of the Prophet). After his death in 1908, the movement split into two factions. The Lahore Ahmadiyya group dropped the *zilli nabi* claim, and henceforth presented themselves as liberal intellectuals wanting to advance the modernization of Islam through scholarly engagement with European thinkers. Conversely, the Qadiyani Ahmadiyya faction, the Ahmadiyya

Muslim Jamaat (AMJ), continued to view its founder as a messiah and prophet who incorporated and renewed the experiences of previous prophets (Jonker 2016: 12–35).

In 1923, mirroring the Christian mission structures with which it had grown familiar in Northern India, Lahore-Ahmadiyya targeted Berlin as its mission aim, and commissioned the missionary Maulvi Sadruddin (1880–1980) to build a mosque and attract a convert community. Having performed the task with fervour, he was soon able to hand over a thriving community to his successor Sheikh M. Abdullah (1898–1957). In institutionalizing the mission, Abdullah set up a sophisticated mosque administration and kept records of the seekers' experiences (Jonker 2022).

The mosque's archive shows that the missionaries' main aim was to create a 'bridge' between the European and Indian world rather than to bring about a state of ecstasy. The mission journal *Moslemische Revue* (sic) not only made ample room for conversion narratives, but also offered glimpses into the community life that the missionaries had created, which included intense intellectual exchanges, extending European networks, and encouraging intercultural marriages, for which the journal offered solid pieces of advice. The missionaries especially supported the search for a 'religion of the future', which, in harmony with the ideals of the Lahore-Ahmadiyya Reform Movement, would lastingly graft Western traditions onto the Eastern ones of Islam.

The mosque's archive and mission journal, *Moslemische Revue*, proved invaluable as sources. In some cases, it was possible to compare them with the private papers of some of the mosque's actors, including some of Irma Gohl's papers. In fact, Irma Gohl's remarkable life never received the attention it deserved and can be revealed here for the first time.[1] The private archives of Lisa Oettinger (1908–2006) and Hugo Marcus (1880–1964), I have dealt with elsewhere already. They will only be consulted in passing (Jonker 2018, 2020). The files in the Register Office of Berlin-Charlottenburg (1925–), the political archive of the Foreign Office (1936–39), the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom in Frankfurt am Main (1933–45), and the National Archives of Australia, all helped to complete the picture.

---

[1] I thank David Kelly for sharing his knowledge with me on Safiya Heuser in Queensland, Australia. In one of those rare research adventures in which luck and generosity play equal parts, comparing our sources brought us to the conclusion that Irma Gohl and Safiya Heuser were one and the same person.

I start this chapter with the thought that a religious experience needs to find expression in words, actions, and physical deeds before it can form part of social reality. To get a sense of what the seekers did towards achieving that goal, I shall describe Irma Gohl's journey in detail and place it against the backdrop of the experiences of her peers. Although the focus is on the 1900 generation, to deepen our understanding of what the younger generation was doing, I shall contrast their activities with those of the generation born around 1880. I end the chapter by looking at the religious experiments from the missionaries' point of view and tracing how they steered their way towards blending Western rationality with the 'Wisdom of the East' and, thus, reforming Islamic tradition.

'A Sea of Ecstasy'

Irma Gohl (1906–64) was a true seeker. As the only child of Christian socialist parents, she grew up attending Wurttemberg's Lutheran Church (*Evangelische Landeskirche*), which was renowned for its orthodox and rebellious stance. However, her parents allowed her to explore the world around her and make her own decisions. Like many of her generation, she took to the task with fervour. Among the first women to study at university, she examined the traditions of her church and her family while trying to reach a spiritual state that would free her from the conventional constraints surrounding her and her generation.

At the age of fourteen, Irma Gohl (1932) launched headlong into the unknown. About that time, or so her narrative holds, she experienced an unhappy mixture of 'doubt', 'instinctive discomfort', 'disappointment', and 'longing'. This urged her to seek the 'truth', which she envisioned as 'light', or at least as something she would recognize when she saw it. At first, she joined the anthroposophical movement, a German back-to-nature branch of theosophy, where she came across the writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–91) and Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986). But soon, they bored her, and she turned to studying the religions of India instead. Having worked her way through the accepted canon, including Buddhism, Manicheism, the teachings of Confucius and Tao, and Shintoism, she experienced a period of serious doubt, in which she saw religion as a 'mistake and form of auto suggestion' (Gohl 1932: 57).

In 1925, Irma Gohl entered university, not, as she took great care to point out, with a professional aim in mind, but quite the contrary to feed her 'search for God'. She chose astronomy, not to become a physicist but

to discover 'the laws of God in the stars' (Gohl 1932: 58). Admitting that her parents sometimes despaired of her choices, she steadily crafted a university package centred on the discovery of the self in relation to the transcendent world. Some years later, while standing on the gangway of the ship that brought her to Australia, she would declare to be a 'student of astronomy and astrology, and also a writer' (*Courier-Mail* 1936). The width of her claim once again underlines the importance she ascribed to exploring the unseen.

Her astronomy classes coincided with the publication of the poem 'Cosmic Ship', mentioned at the start of this chapter. As a matter of course, Irma Gohl joined the Society of Spaceship Travel the moment it was founded. The poem, in free rhyme, betrays how the blow of national degradation and the longing for salvation mingled in her search. Taking the rocket as a symbol of flight, the poem contains a string of superlatives that conjure up the image of a nation lifted in fire and propelled to the outer world with the help of superhuman master minds: 'Upon the fiery wings of the rocket / The dreams of curious man will conquer / proudly and boldly, far away worlds. / The glorious work of the Human Spirit / Will master the supreme power of the Cosmos' (quoted in Smith 2014: 227) (Fig. 9.1).

Irma Gohl looked upon herself as a poet, but how many poems she wrote escapes our knowledge. All we know is that in 1938, while in exile, she sent a book manuscript to the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom in New York called *Mira, Kind des Uranus* (Mira, Child of Uranus). From the letters the American Guild wrote to her—she now called herself Safiya Heuser and used Kassandra as her nom de plume—we learn that the guild sent the manuscript to Thomas Mann (1875–1955), the famous German writer in exile in New York, for review. When Mann rejected it, the guild sent it back to her. A short note written by the secretary on duty betrays that the gentlemen judged Irma Gohl/Safiya Heuser's work to be 'a biography of the self, consisting of highly dilettante poems' (Berman 1938).

From Irma Gohl's own letters to the guild, we learn that her flight from Nazi Germany landed her in a desperate situation. Living in a primitive hut in the Australian outback, she cared for four young children and a sick husband while writing at night to earn a living for her family (Heuser 1938a, b, 1939a, b). Although the guild had been set up precisely to support Germans like her, it chose to treat her with disdain and even the manuscript seems to have gone missing in the exchange.

Fig. 9.1 *Die Rakete: Zeitschrift für Raumschiffahrt. January–July 1927.* The subtitle reads: 'In 1½ hours around the earth'. (Source: Wikipedia. Author: Spaceship Association (closed in 1934))

Fortunately, the letters still divulge some key information on the manuscript's contents. *Mira, Child of Uranus* seems to have served as Irma Gohl's alter ego, and a receptacle for the unrest that drove her on. Astrologically, Uranus stands for the difficult balance between stability and renewal, love of freedom and revolution, change and recklessness (Questico 2023). We do not know in which month she was born, but it is easy to imagine that the poetess understood her zodiac sign in relation to Uranus as an invitation to pursue her own relation to the forces of eternity.

Like many of her generation, Irma Gohl pursued parallel pathways, trying out several approaches simultaneously without giving up one for the other. In addition to astronomy, she enrolled in a course on Orientalism, in which she was taught Egyptology and Arabic literature. On reading the

Quran she experienced a shivering, elated state, 'a light shone in my soul' (Gohl 1932: 58). This she understood to be the sign she had been looking for all along, bestowing on her the sudden revelation of some divine presence. Next, an Egyptian student at Munich University whose government had sent him to study Orientalism in Germany, taught her 'the true spirit of Islam', in terms of what she described as a mix of ethics and practical behaviour. The student, Muhamad Sayed Abd-Elaal (dates unknown), also advised her to write to Sheikh M. Abdullah, imam of the mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, which is what she did.

In 1931, after a thorough study of Islam, she presented herself at the mosque in person with a request to speak the Muslim creed, not in a quiet moment but in a highly audible and visible manner, as an announcement to the public at large. She must have made quite an impression because memories of the ceremony survive in the *Moslemische Revue*, in the imam's private photo collection, and in a description of the mosque's history by the Ahmadiyya chronicler Nasir Ahmad (2006: 33; LAB n.d.-a).

The occasion the imam deemed worthy to offer her was the official reception of the Druze Sheikh Shakib Arslan (1869–1946), secretary general of the Syrian–Palestinian Congress at the League of Nations in Geneva, to which the Muslim ambassadors in Berlin and the German minister of culture were also invited. Her transition from one world to the other thus became a widely visible affair that was also broadcast on the radio. As Ahmad (2006: 33) reported it:

> In early 1931, the German Muslim Society hosted a tea party in honour of Shakib Arslan during his visit to the mosque. Among the distinguished guests were the Afghan and Iranian ambassadors and the Berlin Minister of Culture, who paid tribute to the Jamaat's activities in spreading Islam. This year, a one-hour program on Eid al-Fitr was broadcast on the radio throughout Germany for the first time. On this occasion, a PhD student at the University of Munich embraced Islam; she was given the Muslim name Safiyah.

During the ceremony, Irma took the Muslim name Safiyah, 'the Radiant One'. In her account of her conversion, Gohl (1932: 59) describes how becoming a Muslim immediately filled her with light and made her soul radiate:

> It felt like … an ocean of ecstasy, like the dawn announcing a new day. And
> as my name Safiyah means rays, so now flames radiate through my soul and
> call out loudly as with tongs of fire: 'You peoples of the earth! Gather under
> the sign of the crescent moon!'

In this way, Irma Gohl's search for light ended in a cosmic experience in
which the study of the stars mixed with the knowledge of Oriental reli-
gions. Figure 9.2, from Sheikh M. Abdullah's private album, shows her
posing for the official photograph in front of the mosque after the cere-
mony, alongside the imam and the official guests.

Fig. 9.2   After the conversion ceremony. Seated left to right: Irma Safiyah Gohl,
S. M. Abdullah, the ambassadors of Afghanistan and Iran and the German minister
of culture. (Source: LAB D Rep 920-16/Photos Nr. 9)

THE CONVERT REGISTER

Irma Gohl's life plan can be described as thoroughly modern (Gumbrecht 1978: 26). To escape the German dilemma, she turned to Eastern religions that had become fashionable since the nineteenth century. Unlike previous generations, who organized themselves into theosophical lodges to access all the foreign religions (see below), she made unorthodox connections. She attached cosmic mathematics to fantasy rockets, chained astrological secrets to Egyptian hieroglyphics, and used the Quran to achieve an out-of-body experience. Since ecstasy was the exit, Irma Gohl turned her parents' ambition for her to become a professional woman on its head and instead developed a bricolage of religious individualization. In addition to the strange, she also built on speed and grasped everything that crossed her path. She finally found the rapturous state she sought in Islam because it was, as she put it, 'the most positive of all religions' (Gohl 1932: 59). As we shall see, she was not the only one who acted as she did.

So much for Irma Gohl's life path, but how did it differ from the life paths of her peers? While most of the sources for this information have already been mentioned, before they are consulted, it might be useful to recall that, in his role as imam, Sheikh M. Abdullah had carefully kept a register in which the names and dates of all the converts who had gone through the ceremony were entered. While the new Muslim would be given the original certificate to take home, a copy of each was filed in the mosque archive, and each bore a number. Among the early converts, the certificate of the president of the community, Hugo Marcus, was number 23 (Abdullah 1925); and painter Lisa Oettinger was number 81 (Abdullah 1933). In 1935, the imam wrote in an internal report that he had counted a total of 106 'New Muslims' alongside 400 'friends'.[2] In the following year, during a police raid that turned the mosque upside down, the register was confiscated, never to be returned.[3] However, because some conversion documents survived in private archives, we are familiar with their design and what information they contained (Fig. 9.3).

---

[2] 'How many Germans embraced Islam in our mosque? In the past, we depended on estimates, but I think we estimated correctly. Today we keep a register, so everybody can convince himself that we are long past 100. In fact, we count 400 friends and 106 German Muslims' (Abdullah 1935).

[3] To establish a person's 'race', the *Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung* collected genealogical data, for which conversion and marriage registers offered important sources (Ehrenreich 2007).
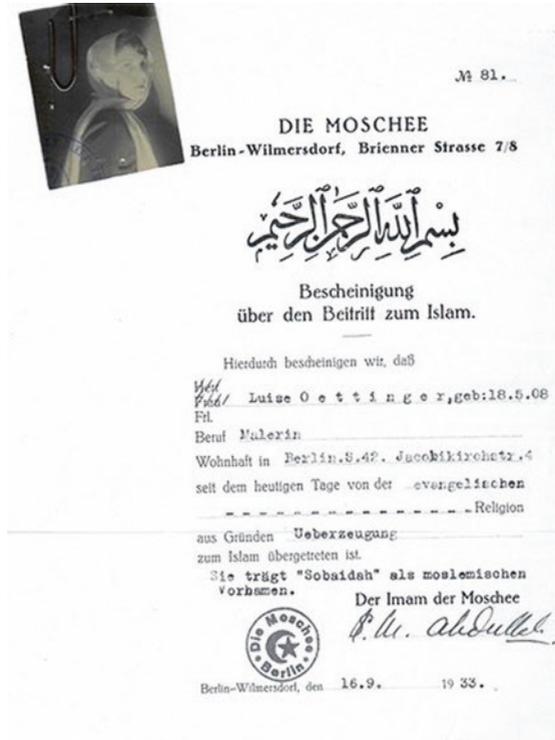
Fig. 9.3 Lisa Oettinger's conversion certificate (Courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin, D Rep. 920-16 Photos, 77)

We thus know that throughout the 1930s, a trickle of conversions were bolstering the mosque community. We encounter life reformers on the left of the political spectrum alongside conservatives and Nazis on the right. Also, in the frenzy following Germany's declaration of war on the rest of Europe, young recruits would convert to Islam just before parting for the front, leaving another trickle in the mosque archive. Numbers were never spectacularly high, but they rose steadily. On returning to Berlin in 1947, Sheikh M. Abdullah could announce that shortly before the war, the mosque had counted a total of 206 'New Muslims' along with 600 'friends' (NN 1947).

It is important to recall that the mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf was only one of many places in which Germans could become Muslims. In Berlin, the Ottoman, Afghan, and Persian embassies were popular venues, as were the Islamic Community of Berlin and the Islamic Institute. French scholar Bernard Vernier (dates unknown), who travelled through Germany in 1938 studying the position of Muslims in that country, found that about 2000 Germans had converted to Islam in 1938 alone (Vernier 1939: 38). Apart from Berlin, Vernier names Vienna (*Islamischer Kulturbund*) and Munich (*Islamischer Studentenbund*) as hotspots for conversion. Finally, some of those who had met at the Berlin Mosque travelled to North Africa and the Middle East in search of an 'authentic' Oriental mosque in which to convert.

Whatever their path, what marks these seekers as a group is their inner search for 'truth' and the highly unorthodox patchwork they forged to find it. This distinguished them from people who embraced Islam for political reasons, either to support the colonial struggle or because they bought the Nazi view of Islam as a religious warrior religion (Jonker 2020: 182–211; Motadel 2017). While politics seemed largely to have taken place outside the mosque, strong pro-Nazi sentiments nonetheless developed, even among the non-political Orientalists who gathered there.[4]

Tracing them was a complex task. Of the men and women who gave the *Moslemische Revue* their photo and/or their conversion report, so were therefore affiliated to the mosque and German Muslim Society, we counted a total of thirty-three names. However, these only partly overlapped with the names in the correspondence between the German Muslim Society and the Berlin-Wilmersdorf registry office recording attendances of board members at their annual meetings. A census revealed a further twenty-two names (LAB n.d.-b). The conversion certificates and field numbers of the German recruits who hastily converted to Islam before leaving for the front tended to be scattered here and there. We were able to locate about a third of the 206 German Muslims whom Abdullah claimed had belonged to his community before the Second World War. Group photos in front of the mosque suggest that there were more women than men.

---

[4] On 31 August 1936, Sheikh M. Abdullah wrote to the Foreign Office: 'Our President Mr. Boosfeld is a member of the Opfer-Kreis of the NSDAP. Our second secretary Dr. Klopp von Hofe is a member of the NSDAP and SS. The treasurer Mr. Schubert is a member of the Arbeitsfront, and first assessor Mr. Beyer is a member of the NSDAP' (Abdullah 1936). An attempt to align Islam with national socialism was clearly underway (Fischer 1934).

Determining people's ages was another challenge. Sometimes birth dates are given in conversion reports, as well as in the few obituaries of deceased members found scattered throughout the journal, but often enough not. Wherever members appear only in lists, there is no way of knowing how old they were when they joined the community. In a few cases, information from private archives could fill the gaps. Regarding age, the photos provided by the private photo albums are our best informants (LAB Berlin n.d.-c).

When you look at these photos, you see the faces of very young people. In the journal, they are pictured both individually and in the community. The private photo albums show groups of friends on outings, praying together in the mosque or celebrating a wedding. Together, they suggest that while not every convert in the mosque was from the generation born around 1900, the majority were young. Older members were rare and can be counted on two hands. They include Albert Seiler (1876–1937), Johanna Schneider (b.1867), Emilia Oettinger (1876–1954), Hugo Marcus (1880–1946), and Amin Boosfeld (1880–1937). Since detailed records of some of these lives exist, these will help in identifying differences between the generation of 1900 and the previous one.

Parallel Experiences

When the First World War ended, Hanns Lohbauer was 22; Rolf Ehrenfels 17; Hildegard Scharf 14; Irma Gohl and Egon Greifelt 12; Lisa Oettinger 10 and her sister Susanna only 8. Lohbauer was in the trenches during the First World War, an experience that shook him and intensified his urge to 'find the truth' (Lohbauer 1926). Susanna Oettinger, by comparison, with her down-to-earth material interest in things spiritual, seemed more settled (Jonker 2018: 123–7). For the purposes of this chapter, these two actors were taken as the outer limits of the age group under consideration. It is unclear how much of the chaos and disobedience that broke out in the aftermath of the defeat they experienced, but at some point, they all searched for words to express their loss. Hanns Lohbauer put his 'shivering soul' on record (Lohbauer 1926). Egon Greifelt (dates unknown) used the word 'trembling' (Greifelt 1924), Herman Khalid Banning (b.1890) spoke of 'shame' (Banning 1925), and Lisa Oettinger never tired of reciting Goethe's famous poem about the elf king—'Who drives there so late through the dark, gloomy night? It is a father and his child so dear' (Jonker 2018: 177–208).

Whatever drove them, they all took steps towards trying to escape their emotional torment, and the phases through which Irma Gohl passed were fairly characteristic of most. Each contained three stages—turning towards the self, confronting the alien, and linking deep emotional experiences with proximity to the divine. In passing through these phases successfully, speed seemed to have been of the essence.

Between 1924 and 1939, the *Moslemische Revue* published almost eighty articles written by German Muslims. The first-person narratives were mainly published in the 1920s when the people concerned were still young. Over time, the contents changed, and later autobiographical accounts can still be found.

Incidentally, the explorations of the self under consideration here make for difficult reading. In these texts, dots, dashes, brackets, and semicolons serve to mark the unspeakable, sometimes to convey to readers that a soul is wrestling on the edge of the abyss, sometimes that the merging with the divine, the deepest of feelings, cannot be put into words. To call these contributions exalted would be an understatement. On their way to the *mysterium tremendum* that awaited them at the end, the writers carefully hinted at their feelings with the typography at their disposal. The literary technique, already used by nineteenth-century writers, offered the seekers a ready-made tool with which to express themselves (Kammasch 2009).

In his contribution 'On the Way: A Confession', a text saturated with whole regiments of dots and dashes, Hanns Lohbauer started with the observation that people usually consult maps to orient themselves when they plan a journey. But, on their way to death, he muses, nobody seems to know the way (Lohbauer 1927: 37). The writer navigates magnetism, spiritualism, Buddhism, and Hinduism to find that hidden road. Finding that insufficient, he also contemplates the eternal cycle of fire and gas, compression and cooling down, earth, stone, and life. What keeps it all together, or so he concludes, is the energy that swings from the below to the above, from Man to the spiritual. Lohbauer (1927) calls this energy 'prayer'. For him, it presents the escape route.

Based on *Gestalt* therapy, Rolf Ehrenfels (1930) took a similar path. Rolf Omar Baron von Ehrenfels (1901–80) grew up in a Prague household in which *Gestalt* was a common theme, and of which his father Christian von Ehrenfels (1859–1932) was an architect. Belonging to the wide field of psychoanalysis, *Gestalt* follows the theory that the sum of the parts presents a different outcome from the parts themselves (Ehrenfels 1890). In line with this, Christian von Ehrenfels also developed a grand

vision of the 'religion of the future' being an opera. In a radio broadcast, he declared that God himself would conduct the opera, performing a cosmic drama that would leave the Wagner operas far behind. Even his experimental listeners found this too much, which is how we interpret the many questions to the newspapers about whether Ehrenfels planned to write the opera himself (Ehrenfels 1929).

More prudently, the son tried to achieve unity with the divine by means of sacred architecture, an experiment for which he chose the great mosque of Istanbul as a vehicle. Sitting on the venerable carpets, he allowed himself to be uplifted by 'the organic dimensions and rhythms of the ornament', 'the sober ascending lines' and 'the silence of the dome'. Floating higher and higher and losing himself in architectural details that almost eluded his gaze, he finally felt 'his senses flying upwards like iron filings' (Ehrenfels 1930). Iron filings? According to Rolf Ehrenfels's understanding of *Gestalt*, a magnet beyond his field of vision inevitably pulled up the superfluous parts of his inner self and transformed them into something completely different.

Like Irma Gohl's path, these spiritual journeys led inexorably upwards, from the bottom to the top, from the profane to the sacred, from the cursed to the blessed, from darkness to light. What was it that the seekers so desperately wanted to escape? Apart from describing bitter and gloomy feelings at the beginning of the path, Lohbauer never went into detail about what had actually happened down there but had conversations with the dead. Rolf Ehrenfels preferred to leave familiar geography behind for his search and seek out a place that was foreign to him and one onto which he could freely project.

Saladin Schütz (dates unknown) called this method 'Orientalization', which he practised with great pleasure (Schütz 1929). Whenever Schütz applied the term, it indicated a steamy mixture of adapting to one's surroundings—preferably in or near a mosque in North Africa or the Middle East—and simultaneously experiencing a thousand-and-one-night feelings. By confusing his private longing with the world outside, he thought the Orient was 'a fairy tale'. Other travellers to the Orient, such as Hans Ellenberg (1877–1949), an Orientalist and much-respected speaker at the mosque in Berlin, seem to have used the same technique (Ellenberg 1929). Abdullah Robert (dates unknown) initially turned to the Hindu way of life, but its rich and opulent forms proved too much for him. Longing for clarity, he too fell in love with the sober forms of a mosque (Robert 1930).

Unlike the men, the women scoured the literature and looked for a 'real' Muslim who could give them the information they needed. Their goal seems to have been emotional, professional, and financial independence as modern women. In this respect, Irma Gohl can be placed in a series with Hildegard Scharf (dates unknown), Johanna Schneider (1867–1938), Dorothea Schumacher (dates unknown), Maryam Hesselbach (dates unknown), and others (Schneider et al. 1931; Schumacher 1932). Latifa Roessler (dates unknown), who had studied Eastern religions and married a Muslim, did not see the Muslim world as a fairy tale, but quite the opposite, as a 'field of work for European Muslim woman', the modern woman in intercultural marriage who could bring the blessings of 'European civilization' to the ignorant (Roessler 1934).

Emilia Oettinger and her daughters Lisa and Susanna read about the mosque in the daily newspaper and befriended the Abdullah family for the rest of their lives. Lisa Oettinger embarked on an Oriental journey and travelled from Berlin via Sarajevo, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Baghdad to Lahore with her fiancé, Assistant Imam Aziz ur-Rahman Mirza (1904–37). When Lisa saw the veiled women of Sarajevo, the Orient had begun. As she perceived the misery and backwardness of the women and thought about what kind of lives they had to lead, she wondered for the first time in this adventure what would await her at the other end of the journey (Jonker 2018: 177–208).

What bonded the seekers of the 1900 generation was the patchwork they created to achieve that sublime feeling they called ecstasy, which they saw as the vehicle with which to free themselves from the family and societal conventions that still held them down. This was the elusive state imagined as merging with blinding light, merging with the magnet called 'God' or flying up to it. The descriptions vary. What they have in common is the intense appropriation of the foreign through creating a binary code that the seekers recognized as the essential crossroads to that goal. Using pairs of words like down/up, dark/light, and profane/sacred, the crossings represented the moment when the seekers entered another landscape of the soul, a hidden place where 'it' was about to happen and which only they could perceive. For them, the essence of religious communication was a form of transgression, a way of going beyond the known world, what sociologists of religion call transcendence.

When discussing Irma Gohl's biography, I indicated that this was the decisive moment when the seekers could loosen not only the shackles of ecclesiastical or synagogical traditions, but also everything that hindered them in terms of family conventions. With this act, they were on the cutting edge, even if sociologists of religion do not consider this time to have come until later. Thomas Luckmann, who observed forms of (Christian) religiosity around 1960, noted that 'in the social form of religion now emerging in modern industrial societies, potential consumers have direct access to an assortment of religious representations, … which makes religion a phenomenon of the private sphere' (Luckmann 1967: 146). Looking at Christian youth in the 1980s, Peter Beyer (2006: 299–301) identified crossroad codes as the core of modern religiosity. The explorations of the self presented in this contribution locate their beginning in the turbulent world after the end of the First World War, when Germans were searching in multiple directions for answers to pressing questions, thus creating an ever-increasing tension between them.

The religious explorations studied here show how the seekers of the generation around 1900 ventured into the unknown and operated without the conventional demarcations that characterize established religion. There were no well-worn liturgies with readings, movements, songs, and prayers for them. There was no dress code, dogma, or institutional structure, and nothing external to guide them. Instead, they explored the terminology of movement, paths, trails and itineraries. Once on the road, nothing was certain except the moment of crossing, followed by the final realization, which the texts confirm consists of chills, goosebumps, lightning, and blinding light. Hanns Lohbauer (1926: 36) described the search for this uncertain destination as an 'essentially limitless cross of paths leading high into the sky and into the depths of history, further, further still'.

The other characteristic distinguishing them as a group was their impatience to achieve this state. When reading these texts, one does not encounter leisurely walks with interesting vistas, as the previous generation did (see below). Rather, the explorations give the impression that there is no time to lose. Irma Gohl's rocket metaphor conjures up the image of a rapid ride to the powers of the universe. Hanns Lohbauer makes his way through a feverish landscape of souls, trying to free himself from the powers of the underworld. Hans Ellenberg, Rolf Ehrenfels, and Saladin Schütz were restless travellers who sought to get lost in foreign landscapes. But whatever the vehicle, it had to be now.

The 1880 Generation

A short view of the experiences of the previous generation corroborates this. To illustrate their otherness, the biography of Albert Seiler (1876–1937), a Lutheran Christian bookkeeper in the imperial mint in Berlin, is narrated in some detail.

Seiler was of stable Lutheran stock, baptized and confirmed in the dome in the centre of Berlin, the church where the emperors lay buried, and that the Kaiser himself attended. At a young age, he took a lively interest in the activities of his parish, especially 'in our mission in the German colonies' (Seiler 1933: 31). Here, he heard about the existence of foreign religions for the first time in his life. Next, the Association of Young Christian Men set him on the track of theosophy, encouraging him to learn 'about the religions of all peoples and ages' (Seiler 1933: 30). For the rest of his life, foreign religions became Albert Seiler's hobby. For forty years he tried to feel what others felt in the Catholic, Greek-Orthodox, Methodist, and Mennonite Churches, sharing time with the Salvation Army, the Christian Scientists, the Serious Bible Scholars, and the Jewish-Christian Witnesses to Israel. He visited Mazdaznan, Jewish, Baha'i, Freethinker, and Monist meetings, but Albert Seiler never thought of leaving his own church.

In 1912 he was baptized again by the Latter-day Saints by submerging himself three times in the muddy waters of the Spree. In doing so, he reaffirmed his Christian faith in the city of his birth. Albert Seiler was, above all, a Berliner and a Lutheran. In 1923, he joined Berlin's Muslim community, not to change his Lutheran affiliation but to live up to his conviction that 'Islam is the oldest Protestantism' (Seiler 1933: 35). Albert Seiler appropriated the foreign by recognizing 'the other' as part of his own and by incorporating the Muslim into the Christian tradition. One searches in vain for urgency in his life's journey. Rather, he described his adventures as 'spiritual wanderings' and towards the end of his life expressed deep satisfaction about the 'wonderful path on which I have been led' (Seiler 1933: 30).

Albert Seiler's path is similar to that of his contemporaries in the mosque community. Johanna Schneider (b.1867), who wanted to continue her beloved Christian tradition, embraced Islam 'as a member of the Christian church' (Schneider et al. 1931: 56). Emily Oettinger (b.1874), who embraced a mixture of hiking, vegetarianism, sunbathing and nude swimming before meeting Imam Abdullah, became a 'friend' of the

mosque and supported the community without feeling the need to convert (Jonker 2018: 63–93). Hugo Marcus (b.1880) regarded Islam as a continuation of the Jewish faith. Being simultaneously 'German, Jewish, Muslim and gay' did not bother him. Only when the Gestapo forced him to leave the Jewish community did he demand his exit papers (Baer 2020; Jonker 2020: 129–51). The generation of the 1880s was far more relaxed about life. Continuity is the term that fits all their biographies. Reading their narratives, one gets the impression that they were never particularly inclined to seek out-of-body experiences. All they wanted was to embellish their lives, gain certain personal freedom and deepen their understanding of the world outside the boundaries of their own religion (Bigalke 2016: 145–246).

Debating the Future of Religion

What did the gentlemen from Lahore think of the spiritual adventures under their roof? After all, they had taken the initiative by travelling to Europe, building a mosque and 'conversing' with Europeans. Whatever they expected of them, the people they attracted were of a very special disposition, combining German romanticism and Orientalism with the desire to free themselves from a German condition that was stifling them. How did these missionaries deal with the seekers, and to what end?

Maulvi Sadruddin was the first Muslim missionary sent to Europe by his Ahmadiyya headquarters in Lahore. He had previously studied education at the University of Lahore and worked as a lecturer. He was a religious layman who aspired to reform the Muslim tradition, which he saw as hopelessly outdated. With this goal in mind, he came to Europe to establish a network of loyal friends and partners and to discuss the issue that was high on the agenda of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, namely the future of religion. Sadruddin was a man with a mission. While overseeing the mosque's construction on the outskirts of West Berlin, on 1 April 1924, he launched the mission journal *Moslemische Revue*, in which he introduced himself to the Berlin public with a photograph. It features a man with a determined face, framed by gold-rimmed spectacles and a gold-threaded turban, sitting arm in arm with two German Muslims and bearing the subtitle of 'East and West united in Islam' (Fig. 9.4).

The missionary who had come to Berlin only the year before could not have guessed that the men he was embracing were two mutually exclusive opposites who would soon polarize his mosque community and all of

MOHAMMED TAUFIQ KILLENGER   MAULVI SADR-UD-DIN   DR. KHALID BANNING
DER OSTEN UND DER WESTEN IM ISLAM VEREINIGT

Fig. 9.4 East and West United in Islam. From left to right: Manfred Freiherr von Killinger, Maulvi Sadruddin, Herman Khalid Banning. The caption reads, 'Der Osten und der Westen vereinigt im Islam' (Courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin, D Rep. 920-16, 42)

Europe. Manfred Freiherr von Killinger (1886–1944), a senior naval officer, had become a Muslim while stationed in the Middle East during the First World War. He supported the Nazi revolution, became a member of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) in 1931 and joined the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) about ten years later (Sprenger 2019). On the other hand, Attorney General Herman Khalid Banning converted to Islam after the First World War as a protest against Zionism in Palestine. He died in 1927, a Jew who upheld the traditions and decency of Prussian Germany (Banning 1925).

But whoever came knocking, Sadruddin had a way of introducing Islam to Germans that was seductive precisely because it offered a wide-open door that was completely unobtrusive. In every issue of the journal, he placed the following statement (see, e,g,, Sadruddin 1925):

Becoming a Muslim requires no ceremony. Islam is not only a rational, widespread, and practical religion, it is also fully in tune with the natural human disposition. Every child is born with it. Therefore, there is no need

for conversion to become a Muslim. One can be a Muslim without telling anyone. The profession of Islam is only a formality for the organization. The basic creed of the Islamic faith is: There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his messenger.

This missionary was not promoting the profound change his parishioners were trying to impose. On the contrary, the Ahmadiyya mission from Lahore believed that Germans interested in Islam had always been Muslims, regardless of their religious upbringing and political convictions. They only needed to acknowledge it. Therefore, no ceremony, conversion, or even confession was required to join the community. Instead, visitors were offered the option to 'be Muslim without telling anyone'. To reinforce this option, Sadruddin also introduced a status of religious affiliation that was a novelty in Germany, that of 'friend' of the community. Lowering the threshold in a country where one had to be baptized and confirmed before being accepted as a church member, was indeed a new approach.

Given the steadily growing number of 'friends' and 'New Muslims' Sheikh M. Abdullah mentioned at various points, the missionaries' approach seemed to have been successful. Rather like modern mass parties with their surplus of sympathizers, the circle of friends provided the necessary creative sediment. A broad spectrum of knowledge, ideas and viewpoints emerged—from Judaism to Christianity, from left to right, from male to female. In this way, the debate in their mosque acted like a great combine harvester, collecting everything useful for the missionaries' goal of reforming Islam.

For the debate on the future of religion, which his successor Sheikh M. Abdullah began, the broad German involvement in the mosque soon bore fruit. Like Sadruddin, Abdullah was a religious layman, a physicist by profession, who enrolled at Berlin University after his arrival to complete his dissertation in chemistry. Endowed with a cool and methodical mind, he never spoke much himself. He let others have their say and carefully collected their thoughts and texts for further evaluation. The traces he left in the mosque archives reveal the movements of a good organizer and an even better communicator. He kept correspondence, drew up lists of members, guests and possible speakers, and selected Quranic verses to accompany each topic.

His preferred topic was the future shape of religion, and it fell on fertile ground. In German religious circles, the future of religion had been

topical since the mid-nineteenth century (see Mathias Thurner in this volume). For the rest of the century, Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews used the topic to discuss internal reforms in their own communities. With the rise of theosophy in the 1880s, the debate lost its traditional moorings. Until then, it had attracted outsiders, speculative philosophers like Christian von Ehrenfels and German Buddhists who recommended Buddhism as the appropriate model for national socialism (Zotz 2017). So, when Abdullah initiated a debate on the future of religion in 1930, he was moving on old, well-trodden religious terrain.

What was significant about the Ahmadiyya approach was that the debate compared neither holy texts nor religious thought traditions, as is often the case in inter-religious debates today. Instead, participants searched for the exact spot in which to embed Islam in European civilization or, in the language of that time, the place where East and West could be 'fused' or 'moulded' together. Both Indians and Germans agreed that, for such an intimate measure, only the soul could qualify.

Because it was intimate, the participants were also unanimous in this respect. The president of the German Muslim Society, Hugo Marcus, made a head start in 1930 with his article, 'The Religion and Man of the Future', suggesting that a merging of souls would only take place 'in the sacred sphere of erotic experience' (Marcus 1930). The following year, Rolf Ehrenfels (1931), who experienced religious ecstasy in an Istanbul mosque, extended this to 'the phenomenological participation of the human body in interiors and architecture'. In contrast to these speakers, Johanna Schneider (1932) emphasized an approach to the divine that was at the core of the Christian experience, namely the contemplation of suffering.

The person who propelled the debate, however, was neither German nor Indian. Born in Iran in 1884, Hosseyn Kazemzadeh (1884–1962), called *Iranschär* (Land of Iran), attracted the largest audience (Jonker 2016: 91 ff.). Originally a Persian revolutionary in the service of German war propaganda, after the First World War had become a thing of the past Kazemzadeh stayed in Berlin and became a Sufi master. He quickly rose through the ranks of the Inayat Sufi lodge, joined a theosophical lodge (Behnam 2006), and developed a heady religious vocabulary that glossed over cultural differences. After he became famous as a Sufi master, he spoke in the mosque on topics that were balm for the souls of seekers. His talks included topics such as 'The Healing Power of Silence' (1930), 'The Master and his Followers' (1931), 'How Shall We Meditate?' (1932),

'Rumi' (1933), 'The Life of a Sufi Master' (1935), and 'Know and Desire Your Soul' (1935).

As a missionary produced by the local situation, Kazemzadeh was able to tap into the complicated emotions that dominated interwar Berlin. His contribution to the debate was to integrate the breadth of religious experimentation into the mosque community. In doing so, he did not specifically address a German audience. Rather, amid acute political strife, he sought to transform 'Aryans' from East and West, be they Persian, Indian or German, into a chosen people who would fuse their bodies and souls to create that novel human species called 'New Man'.

Kazemzadeh's appearances at the mosque must have been a godsend for the Ahmadiyya missionaries, for 'self-purification' and intermarriage were their chosen means of transferring Western tradition to the 'wisdom of the East'. When he left Berlin in 1936 to install his own *école mystique ésotérique* in Switzerland, he took the debate with him, propagating personal renewal and world harmony against all odds.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have traced the lives of Germans who sought spiritual escape after the First World War. In the process, they created highly unorthodox religious mixes in which early forms of religious individualization and crossovers between Christianity and Islam played a part. The Ahmadiyya from Lahore, who were looking for ways to reform their own religion, were instrumental in bringing Islam within the reach of Germans. With their help, Islam was included in the German package of 'Eastern wisdom', a popular speculative field that played an important role in appropriating foreign traditions.

The sources consulted for this story revealed that the missionaries and the missionized represented two perspectives. From the missionaries' viewpoint, members of the Indian-educated elite needed to go to Berlin after the First World War to find friends and allies and to develop lasting structures for the future independence of their country. Among the many invitations to the German public to join the Indian cause, theirs took the form of a religious calling. Equipped with a thorough secular education, the Ahmadiyya missionaries wanted to reform the Muslim tradition and sought the help of German intellectuals to discuss where East and West might best benefit from each other. They practised a policy of inclusion and kept the threshold low.

The German perspective on the mission was different. While the Indians sought to serve the goals of the future Indian nation, the German seekers interpreted their offer as an escape route. While the mission aimed to attract the German intelligentsia, it gathered around it a young generation in search of a way out of the misery stifling their lives. While the missionaries tried to develop a religion of the future that would serve global aims, their German friends took this as an invitation to enter highly individualistic, soul-searching terrain. While the Germans used the German language to try to express the inexpressible, the Lahore Ahmadiyya missionaries promoted the rational language of secular Islam (Datla 2013).

That more German women than men felt drawn to the attractions of the missions meant that they probably sought the religious experience to assert their independence as modern women. Lisa Oettinger described Islam as the most rational, Irma Gohl as the most positive of all religions. Latifa Roessler even saw a 'work field for the European Muslim woman'. How did these women use their conversion to Islam to promote their independence? A final look at Irma Gohl's life after her conversion may provide a tentative answer to this question.

In her last letter to the American Guild, dated 4 May 1939, Irma Gohl described her life as a writer in the Australian outback as one of extreme poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. She asked the guild to help her approach at least one German publisher and said that she was working on a volume of poetry, short stories, a screenplay, and a novel on the theme of 'human rights'. 'If I could publish one of these manuscripts', she wrote, 'that would be a prerequisite for me to continue working. Could you help me in this regard?' (Heuser 1939c). Despite the guild's refusal, Irma Gohl was not discouraged.

In 1943, she described her situation to the magistrate of her parish. By this time her typewriter was already broken, so she wrote by hand at weekends while doing war work in Brisbane during the week. She was asking the magistrate for permission to move to Brisbane so that she could finish a manuscript that had been 'as good as accepted' by a publisher in Sydney (Heuser 1943). The letter portrayed a woman who coolly set out the steps that were necessary to support the war effort and, at the same time, meet the demands of a writer who had to support her family. What happened to this manuscript, we do not know, but a year later we see Irma Gohl putting her signature to a letter to the League of Nations (LAB 1944). The other signatory is none other than Muhamad Sayed Abd-Elaal, the student at the University of Munich who taught her the spirit of Islam. Despite the war, they must have found ways to build working relationships. The letter contained a precise account of the Italian genocide in

Tripoli. It enumerated the atrocities and the number of victims, and named the Muslim dignitaries and ambassadors who corroborated the report's contents. It is an impressive document that miraculously survived in the stacks of the mosque's archive. It is also evidence of the huge efforts she put into breaking through the lies of an aggressive, warmongering country that disguised its atrocities as legitimate military action.

The scant facts reveal that the single-mindedness with which Irma Safiyyah Gohl strove for the 'truth', culminating in a metamorphosis of the self, was transformed to assert herself as a professional woman in a hostile environment. Her appropriation of a foreign religion seemed to have consolidated her position and helped her strengthen her resilience. It is one of the miracles of the twentieth century that Indian Muslims from Lahore were able to support her in this quest.

References

Abdullah, Sheikh M. 1925. *Certificate 23. Box 1. Private Archive Hugo Marcus. Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque archive 1939–1944.* Zentralbibliothek Zürich: Sammlung Corti.

———. 1933. Certificate 81. Private Archive Lisa Oettinger. Woking, UK.

———. 1935. Internal report. Nr. 368. LAB (Landesarchiv Berlin) Rep 920–16. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. The Mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

———. 1936. Letter. *Archive of the Foreign Office, AA PA Islam* 104 (801): 1936–1939.

Ahmad, Nasir. 2006. *A brief history of the Berlin Muslim Mission.* Berlin: The Berlin Mission.

American Guild for German Cultural Freedom EB 70/117-D.04.56 (Safiya Heuser aka Kassandra). Deutsche Nationalbibliothek/Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933–1945, Frankfurt am Main.

Archive of the Foreign Office. 1936–39. AA PA Islam R. 104.801.

Baer, Marc. 2020. *German, Jew, Muslim, gay: The life and times of Hugo Marcus.* New York: Columbia Press.

Banning, Khalid. 1925. Die Religion des Schwertes. *Moslemische Revue* 2: 20–24.

Behnam, Jamshid. 2006. Iranschär and Iranshär, Hosayn Kazemzada. *Encyclopædia Iranica* 13: 535–539.

Berman, Martin. 1938. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive). December 2.

Beyer, Peter. 2006. *Religions in global society.* London: Macmillan.

Bigalke, Bernadett. 2016. *Lebensreform und Esoterik um 1900. Die Leipziger alternativ-religiöse Szene am Beispiel der Internationalen Theosophischen Verbrüderung.* Würzburg: Ergon.

Courier-Mail. 1936. Women with varied interests arrived on board the Ormonde. *Courier-Mail Brisbane* 12 May. p 16. National Archives of Australia (NAA) BP25/1, Heuser S 1 – German.

218   G. JONKER

Datla, Kavita S. 2013. *The language of secular Islam: Urdu nationalism and colonial India*. Honolulu: University of Hawa'i Press.

Devrient, Dr. n.d. *Letters between Dr. Devrient and Hugo Marcus, Private Archive Hugo Marcus. Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque archive 1939–1944*. Zentralbibliothek Zürich: Sammlung Corti.

Ehrenfels, Christian von. 1890. Über Gestaltqualitäten. *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 14: 249–292.

———. 1929. *Die Religion der Zukunft: Zwei Funksprüche und ein offener Brief an den Präsidenten der Čechoslowakischen Republik T. G. Masaryk*. Prague: J. G. Calvesche Unniversitäts-Buchhandlung.

Ehrenfels, Baron Omar Rolf. 1930. Andacht in der Moschee. *Moslemische Revue* 3: 98–105.

———. 1931. Der Islam und die junge Generation in Europa. *Moslemische Revue* 3: 81–90.

Ehrenreich, Erich. 2007. *The Nazi ancestral proof: Genealogy, racial science, and the final solution*. India Polis: Indiana University Press.

Ellenberg, Hans. 1929. *Orient*. Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag.

ESA. 2011. ESA PAO Memorial items: Wernher von Braun and Edoardo Amaldi, 6. www.institut-rabe.de/images/sampledata/rabe/Dokumente/gedenkmappe.pdf.

Fischer, Faruq Hans. 1934. Ist der Islam unmodern? *Moslemische Revue* 2: 62–73.

Gohl, Irma. 1927. 'Weltraumschiff'. *Die Rakete* (January–July): 144.

———. 1932. Wie ich Muslim wurde. *Moslemische Revue* 2: 56–59.

Gordon, Peter E. 2013. Weimar theology: From historicism to crisis. In *Weimar thought: A contested legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, 150–178. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Graf, Wilhelm Friedrich. 2000. Alter Geist und neuer Mensch. Religiöse Zukunftserwartungen um 1900. In *Das Neue Jahrhundert: Europäische Zeitdiagosen und Zukunftsentwürfe um 1900*, ed. Ute Frevert, 185–228. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Greifelt, Egon. 1924. Mein lieber Hanns. *Moslemische Revue* 3: 147–148.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. 1978. Modern, Modernität, Moderne. In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland, Band 4*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, 93–131. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Heuser, Safiya. 1938a. Letter. 16 September. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive).

———. 1938b. Letter. 30 December. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive).

———. 1939a. Letter. 4 May. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive).

———. 1939b. Letter. 6 July. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive).

———. 1939c. Letter. 4 May. American Guild for German Cultural Freedom (archive).

———. 1943. Letter. 28 February. National Archives of Australia (NAA) BP25/1, Heuser S 1 – German.

Institut Rabe. 2012. Raketenentwicklungen/Start einer Ariane 5 am 23. März 2012 vom Weltraumbahnhof Kourou. www.institut-rabe.de/index.php/rake-tenentwicklungen; www.institut-rabe.de/index.php/aktuelles/95-start-einer-ariane-5. Accessed 7 January 2023.

Jonker, Gerdien. 2016. *The Ahmadiyya Quest for religious progress: Missionizing Europe 1900–1965*. Leiden: EJ Brill.

———. 2018. *Etwas Hoffen muß das Herz: Eine Familiengeschichte von Juden, Christen, und Muslimen*. Göttingen: Wallstein.

———. 2020. *On the margins: Jews and Muslims in interwar Berlin*. Leiden: EJ Brill.

———. 2022. Overviewing a century: The Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque archive in Berlin. *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 11 (3): 297–315.

Kammasch, Tim. 2009. Der Gedankenstrich. Stille Ekstase. In *Punkt, Punkt, Komma, Strich? Geste, Gestalt und Bedeutung philosophischer Zeichensetzung*, ed. Christine Abbt and Tim Kammasch, 119–140. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 1985. Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe. In *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, 211–259. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

LAB (Landesarchiv Berlin). 1944. Nr. 371. LAB D Rep 920–16. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. The Mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

———. n.d.-a. Photos Nr. 9. LAB D Rep 920–16. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. The Mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

———. n.d.-b. Deutsch-Moslemische Gemeinde (1930–1955). VR B Rep. Nr. 8769.

———. n.d.-c. Photos Nr. 19–24, 77–81. LAB D Rep 920–16. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore. The Mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

Lohbauer, Hanns. 1926. Die Wahrheit. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 34–38.

———. 1927. Unterwegs: Ein Bekenntnis. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 32–37.

Luckmann, Thomas. 1967. *The invisible religion: The problem of religion in modern society*. New York: Macmillan.

Marchand, Suzanne L. 2009. *German Orientalism in the age of empire: Religion, race, and scholarship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marchand, Suzanne. 2013. Eastern wisdom in an era of Western despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe. In *Weimar thought. A contested legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, 341–360. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marcus, (Hugo) Hamid. 1930. Die Religion und der Mensch der Zukunft. *Moslemische Revue* 2: 65–74.

Motadel, David. 2017. *Islam and Nazi Germany's war*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NN. 1947. Allahs Haus in Berlin. *Neue Zeit* 15 February, p. 3.

Otto, Rudolph. 1917. *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. Breslau: Trewendt & Granier.

Questico. 2023. Astrologiewissen: Der Uranus im ausführlichen Überblick. https://www.questico.de/astrologie-wissen/uranus. Accessed 7 April 2023.

Rabinbach, Anson. 2013. The aftermath: Reflections on the culture and ideology of national socialism. In *Weimar thought: A contested legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, 394–406. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Register Office Berlin-Charlottenburg. 1925–. 94 VR 4635 Sufi-Bewegung.

Robert, Abdullah. 1930. Warum ich aus der römisch-katholischen Kirche austrat. *Moslemische Revue* 4: 106–108.

Roessler, Latifa. 1934. Ein Arbeitsfeld für die muslimische Europäerin. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 13–15.

Sadruddin, Maulvi. 1925. Wie wird man Moslem? *Moslemische Revue* 1: 20.

Schneider, Huda. 1932. Stimme der Einkehr. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 29–30.

Schneider, Johanna, Hildegard Scharf, and Irma Gohl. 1931. Drei Europäerinnen bekennen sich zum Islam. *Moslemische Revue* 2: 53–59.

Schumacher, Dorothea. 1932. Europa als Erbe maurischer Kultur. *Moslemische Revue* 1 (2): 39–44.

Schütz, Saladin. 1929. Wie ich Muslim wurde. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 37–40.

Seiler, Albert aka Khalid Chan. 1933. Bekenntnis zum Islam. *Moslemische Revue* 1: 29–39.

Smith, Michael G. 2014. *Rockets and revolution: A cultural history of early spaceflight*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Sprenger, Matthias. 2019. Der Kampf als Perpetuelle Sinnstiftung. In *Landsknechte auf dem Weg ins Dritte Reich. Zu Genese und Wandel des Freicorpsmythos*, ed. Matthias Sprenger, 181–208. Leiden: EJ Brill.

Vernier, Bernard. 1939. *La politique islamique de l'Allemagne*. Paris: Édition Paul Hartmann.

Zotz, Volker. 2017. Zum Verhältnis von Buddhismus und Nationalsozialismus. *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 25 (1): 6–29.

Negotiating Germanness with Indian Religious History: Transfers of Academic Knowledge and Notions of *völkisch* Belief

Tilman Hannemann

Negotiations about what it means to be 'German' proceeded in stages throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and engaged the attention of various actors in politics, literature, the arts, and academia.

Religion entered the debate from the very beginning, both at the level of individual experience and in the search for collective roots. An example of the former would be what Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) described as a sense and taste for the infinite and which Friedrich Schlegel's (1772–1829) description of the Dome of Cologne captured for the nation. An expression of the latter, for example, was Jacob Grimm's (1785–1863) *Teutonic Mythology* (1880–1886), which inspired Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) to use the original meaning of 'the sun' as the face of the gods for the 'Teutonic nations' and in the Indian *Veda*s (Müller 1868: 87). Indian religion, whether as an alternative or as common

T. Hannemann (✉)
Oldenburg University, Oldenburg, Germany
e-mail: tilman.hannemann@uol.de

ground, could enhance subjective levels of experience and contribute to a collective construction of national identity. With the scientification of race in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the success of the German Youth Movement at the turn of the century, tensions between the two approaches increased.

Ulrich Linse gave four propositions for why the Youth Movement had felt the need to adopt an alternative culture. According to him, Asian religiosity was needed (1) to increase 'physical … and spiritual potential'; (2) to resist moves towards a mass society by raising people's consciousness of themselves as individuals and cultivating a stronger sense of subjectivism among them; (3) to allow a 'new spiritual aristocracy' to wrest control from party politicians; and (4) as 'a political act of resistance' (Linse 1991: 337, 345, 350, 354). A strong emphasis on people's education (*Volkserziehung*), especially in literature, the arts, theatre, and through the popularization of science, characterized the Youth Movement's subjectivist leanings.

Georg Biedenkapp (1868–1924), a school teacher who introduced the reformist Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920) to a wider German public, proclaimed the pedagogical value of prehistoric research for modern society. As he (Biedenkapp 1906: 5) put it, 'even those who stand entirely on the ground of modern science … need to remember the earlier promoters of mankind, the unknown cultural heroes, and to encourage their children to remember and thereby be grateful'. When the deities of the *Ṛgveda* are used as role models for negotiating German culture, many interpretations become possible. In my discussion in this chapter on the relevance of religion in determining national identity, I trace the ambiguous relationships between race, experience, scientific knowledge, and aesthetic enactment.

The social performativity of academic language and access to Indian religious history highlights the role of German Indology in this discussion because various actors either exceeded the boundary between university institution and religious field and/or based their argument on Indological research for religious ends.

In the following section, I outline the discipline's sensitive position in the social and philosophical discourse on the role of religious history and the evaluation of religious experience. When the paradigm shifted from historicism to *Lebensphilosophie* and the phenomenology of religion, the religious field expanded significantly to encompass any emotion, experience, or everyday practice capable of religious meaning. This discursive formation was open to different modes of objectifying religious life,

including the racial life ethics that saw life's fulfilment in the German nation's religious self-realization.

I then focus on two actors—Herman Wirth (1885–1981) and Walther Wüst (1901–93). The former resorted to Indological research in his pursuit of original experience, the latter personified the knowledge of Indology in public debates about collective meaning. In the institutional landscape of the national socialist regime, they both prominently represented the ideology of Heinrich Himmler's (1900–45) *Ahnenerbe Stiftung* (Ancestral Heritage Foundation). However, to get a better idea of both their impact on public notions of 'Germanness' and of the differences in their approaches to this question, I shall concentrate on Wirth's elaboration of original meaning, the rendering of this meaning in the experience of sensational forms, and the reception of the message in a place called Atlantis House, well before these actors—including a third one, Julius Evola (1898–1974)—began to converge around the SS-organization. In my conclusion, I present a systematized overview of their approaches that also applies to other domains of *völkisch* belief.

Indology, Nazism, and Germanness

Knowledge of the Other for One's Own Changing Society

Throughout the nineteenth century, Western academic knowledge of large-scale societies and cultures from outside Europe was organized in various disciplines assembled today under the headline 'Orientalism'. The role of religion as a social factor in Europe was downplayed and subjected to fundamental criticisms, which led to the 'disambiguation of religious and secular perspectives' (Eßbach 2011: 180–3). As a result, it also led to university disciplines like political science, economics, and sociology, which tasked themselves with explaining modern Western society, to presume that all that was neither modern nor Western, 'to be thoroughly in the grip of religion' (Masuzawa 2005: 16). This turned text-oriented Orientalist scholarship into a privileged *lieu de savoir* about alternatives to Christianity—as well as into a vast resource of topics for the critique of contemporary culture and the negotiation of social bonds.

Kippenberg (2002: Chapter 1) points to several pivotal philosophical concepts in this debate, such as society, nature, the world, or the individual. Among them, both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770–1831) and Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788–1860) notions were, in different ways,

informed by Indology. The social relevance of Orientalist knowledge was amplified at the turn of the twentieth century when secular sociologists like Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920) relocated religious cult and prophecy at the origins of sociality and social meaning. The experience of modern society as a worldly affair, implying the free and unpredictable association of individuals, contributed to a general 'sense of the uncanny' that posited 'the problem of the insertion of the individual into the society … inside the horizon of religion' (Eßbach 2011: 184). The psychologist Ernst Jentsch (1867–1919), who coined the term in 1906, begins his exposition of 'uncanny' with the '*lack of orientation*' that the word *unheimlich* suggests in the German language: 'someone to whom something "uncanny" happens is not quite "at home" or "at ease"' (Jentsch 1997: 8, emphasis in original).

Indology, the academic discipline that ploughed through the ocean of Indian history and collected stocks of manuscripts from the subcontinent, was not free of contradictions. Although most of its members cultivated the ideal of the disinterested armchair philologist exclusively focused on language and textual tradition, the more publicized Indologists always featured imprecise demarcations, shifting designations and multiple crossovers. The famous first university chair of August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) from 1818 was not titled Indology, but Literature and Art History. This fact could actually serve as an argument in a recent debate on the connection between Indology and the romantic movement (Franco 2020; Grühnendahl 2015; Michaels 2015). Friedrich Max Müller, who edited the R*gveda* as well as fifty volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East*, is 'generally considered the founder of comparative religion' (Klimkeit 2004: 31), which he himself preferred to call 'science of religion' (on Müller, see Molendijk 2019). The Protestant backgrounds of many scholars stimulated an approach that turned Hindu texts into 'testimonies of deep and ancient wisdom that could now also be attained by the Western world' (Ahlstrand 2020: 85). A student of Indology with science-related career aspirations could not be sure where he (in an exclusively male domain) would end up. Adluri and Bagchee (2020: 91n.3) offer a non-exhaustive list of eight 'competing terms that have been in use for the discipline', among them 'Indo-Germanic' and 'Aryan' studies.

The above two terms, Indo-Germanic and Aryan, originally referred to broad categories of linguistic relevance, but they had potential for other uses as well. These derived from Friedrich Schlegel's classification of Indo-European languages within a single tradition (Adluri and Bagchee 2020:

91; Franco 2020: 90–1; Kontje 2004: 105–8) and Müller's classification of language and religion along Aryan, Semitic, and Turanic lines (Masuzawa 2005: Chapter 7). In the context of this study, however, they direct our attention to the era of national socialism and to representatives of the discipline who obviously combined their research with political and religious activities. Such people, for example, would include Walther Wüst, Indologist and professor of studies in Aryan culture and language (*Arische Kultur- und Sprachwissenschaft*), who was appointed rector of the University of Munich in 1941 and who delivered an inaugural speech carrying clear religious undertones in its title—'Indo–Germanic Confession' (Wüst 1942). Another is Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962), a Protestant missionary in India, who then became an Indologist and scholar of religion, and as such became head of the Aryan Seminar/Institute at the University of Tübingen from 1940 to 1945 (on Wüst, see Junginger 2008, 2017b; Schreiber 2008; on Hauer, see Junginger 1999, 2017a; Poewe 2006). Hauer and Wüst both participated, to different extents, in SS and SD operations; Hauer chose for himself the role of scientific consultant, and Wüst replaced Herman Wirth as leading scientific curator of Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*. However, given that Hauer also engaged in religious ritual and took on a leadership role in the German Faith Movement, one could raise concerns about the theoretical foundations of German Indology, which made it 'so susceptible to being harnessed for the most diverse and the most inhuman ends' (Adluri 2011: 259).

However, still missing is a genealogical approach that traces the use of both terms, 'Indo-Germanic' and 'Aryan', from their apparent linguistic origins, through to the institutionalization of German academia and its links to the racist turn in the second half of the nineteenth century, and then on to the anti-Semitic angle of national socialism. Over the past few decades, several debates have emerged within and about German Indology, gravitating around topics such as Romanticism and Orientalism (Poewe and Hexham 2015) and estimating the respective weight of scientific method and scholarly biography within the self-negotiation of the discipline (Adluri and Bagchee 2020: 101). They attest to the significance of an ongoing problem.

Example of History or Pre-Eminence of 'Life'? Religion, the Social Bond, and the Individual

Without diving into a vast body of primary literature, it is important to address the crisis of historicism that restructured the negotiation of religion at the beginning of the twentieth century by introducing a scientific factor into the equation, although not in a way that limited it to a German national discourse. Historicism, an interdisciplinary school of thought that considered contemporary values and norms in the light of their historical development, took ground in the heyday of the Romantics between 1792 and 1815. In distancing itself from the societal ideal of the French Revolution and natural law, the historicist narrative favoured a genetic approach that formed 'identity by mediating permanence and change to a process of self-definition' (Rüsen 2005: 15) and thus instructed social and political orientation. According to Müller (1883: 31), who applied the genetic approach to comparative religion, historical education provides

> an education which will enable a man to do what the French call *s'orienter*, that is, 'to find his East', 'his true East', and thus to determine his real place in the world; to know, in fact, the port whence man started, the course he has followed, and the port towards which he has to steer.

In Müller's language, historicism reached out from the plane of nationalism to embrace the spiritual and ethical knowledge of the world's religions. Such language, however, conceals the fact that the study of religious history, particularly Indological research, had already evolved into a 'battlefield for the religion of the future' (see Thurner, chapter 4 in this volume). Comparing religious traditions served the contemporary objective of competing for social meaning within a teleological framework. However, as the abundance of religious texts from all of human history replaced the reasonable revelation of the Enlightenment, in Müller's day, the study of history faced severe criticisms precisely because of its lack of orientation. The historicist balance between permanence and change, closely attached to features deemed essential to nations and/or religions, was no longer able to guide its way through a present that needed, in the opinion of the philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926), 'inner solidarity of conviction', and offered 'no thought-world which embraces the human soul' (Eucken 1914: 71; cf. Kippenberg 1996: 92–3). It was another philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who asked in his 1874 essay, 'The Use

and Abuse of History', for the 'natural relation of an age, a culture and a people to history' as a premise of 'how history can serve life' (Nietzsche 1909: 30). The current state of the science, according to Nietzsche (1909: 31), entirely disregarded this natural connection, with catastrophic results for the modern individual:

> Life is no more dominant, and knowledge of the past no longer its thrall: boundary marks are overthrown, and everything bursts its limits. The perspective of events is blurred, and the blur extends through their whole immeasurable course. No generation has seen such a panoramic comedy as is shown by the 'science of universal evolution', history. … Let me give a picture of the spiritual events in the soul of the modern man. Historical knowledge streams on him from inexhaustible sources, strange incoherencies come together, memory opens all its gates and yet is never open wide enough, nature busies herself to receive all the foreign guests, to honour them and put them in their places. But they are at war with each other: violent measures seem necessary to escape the destruction [of] oneself.

Nietzsche's flowery call to make academic knowledge relevant to everyday life did not remain unanswered, and the 'crisis of historicism' gained full momentum after the end of the First World War in 1918. Kippenberg (1996: 96–9) describes how Nietzsche's notion of life as the will to power directed German *Lebensphilosophie* and the phenomenology of religion to conceive of religion as a mystical experience. Max Scheler (1874–1928) returned to Nietzsche in 1913, by pointing to a reading that could open many doors. 'Life is not something that "adapts" itself or is "adapted". To live is rather a tendency to shaping, to the formation, even to the lordly overwhelming and inclusion of a material' (Scheler 1972: 315, quoted in Kippenberg 2002: 133; see also Renger 2021: 223–9 on Scheler's *own* construction of mysticism between the sociology of knowledge and phenomenology).

At the same time, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) saw 'the problem of religion' in terms of a 'conflict between the claims of the great religions of revelation and reconciliation having power over the soul' on the one hand, but as 'culture separating into independent areas of life—worldly affairs, art, poetry, science, [and] philosophy' (Dilthey 1994: 289) on the other. This constellation significantly expanded the religious field and included competing players, namely the various dimensions of 'life', being able to express religious meaning. According to Dilthey, any effective connection

with this meaning, its life-oriented causal connection (*Wirkzusammenhang*), takes place first on the level of subjective experience and secondly through its scientific recreation in the form of objectivation. 'A comprehension of religious creations through recreation allows for an objective knowledge of religion' (Dilthey 1994: 289). In the light of Dilthey's approach, religious history could be used to provide practical options for the contemporary critiques of modern civilization (Kippenberg 2002: 135), with further consequences.

The objectivation of religious history within the phenomenology of religion contributed to the methodological lead of *Lebensphilosophie*. The first print of Rudolf Otto's (1869–1937) *Das Heilige* (1917) included a portrayal—it was dropped in later editions—that intended to provide the reader with a first-hand Hindu experience of the goddess Durgā, introduced by Otto as 'the great mother of Bengal'. While this attribute is not obvious, it could originate from Otto's comparisons (Das 2021: 136) that depict 'the dreadful' as an expression of the numinous (Fig. 10.1). Otto's commentary evokes an emotion based on an aesthetic assumption and transforms it, leading to another notion of the object that might acquire practical relevance to life knowledge: 'the abominable and the dreadful, in primitive images of gods that seem so often repelling to us nowadays, have the effect of prompting genuine emotions of authentic religious awe on the primitive and the naive, even today, and even occasionally among us' (Otto 1917: 65).

Grounded in an appeal to the reader's emotions directed by the knowledgeable authority figure of the phenomenologist of religion, Otto's approach contained a fundamental flaw because, in the discussion on orientation by history, it discarded the explanation of religion out of ethical considerations entirely. Kippenberg (1996: 99–102) points to Weber, who presented a contemporary alternative to *Lebensphilosophie* as he 'determined divergent maxims of methodical life conduct' within 'a limited number of intellectually justified responses to the world', which he systematized from the findings of religious history (Kippenberg 1996: 101). Weber's approach presented a methodological perspective that called for the historian's 'reflection on the means that were *proven* in practice' (Weber, quoted in Kippenberg 2002: 188, emphasis in original). He thus directed the analytical focus on competing narratives about meaning, on how communicative strategies were employed for generating plausibility, and on how successful meanings continued to provide 'options with the status of consistent foundations of conduct of life in the disenchanted

Fig. 10.1 According to Rudolf Otto, this image represents Durgā. The Victoria and Albert Museum (London) identified her as Kali. (Sources: R. Otto, Das Heilige (1917, p. 66); https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O432470/kali-painting-unknown/)

Durgā.

world' (Kippenberg 2002: 172). At the height of the historicism crisis, subscribing to either Otto's or Weber's position could represent an anticipation of one's own practical life options (Kippenberg 1996: 101–2).

The Self-Realization of Life Through a Racist Evaluation of Religious Experience

Another voice in the debate, however, combined *Lebensphilosophie* and its Nietzschean outlook with an ethics that takes life itself as the supreme value. 'The victory of life is the meaning of the world' (Krannhals 1936: 3) is a dictum philosopher Paul Krannhals (1883–1934) came up with in 1928, and which was widely publicized between 1933 and 1945 in poetry, on postcards, in journal titles, or in military pamphlets. 'Krannhals's …

writings on religious problems have been influential in wide circles of the German public and have had an impact on religious ideas and, not least, on political developments' (Flasche 1993: 44). Nonetheless, given the extent to which Krannhals's works have been popularized, research on him is virtually non-existent. Flasche (1993: 44–6) summarizes a monograph that appeared in an NS party-affiliated publishing house of the Nordic movement, the Armanen-Verlag (Krannhals 1933), and places him in the field of a national religion. Gossman (2009: 39) sees in Krannhals a 'political theorist and sociologist' and situates his 'immanentist view' in the circles around Alfred Rosenberg's (1893–1946) *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930).

Subjective experience and the scientific recreation of 'life' proceed, according to Krannhals, through the 'experience of the whole of nature as an organism … through its parts' (Krannhals 1936: 404). This sensual notion is strongly reminiscent of a narrative in eighteenth-century pietist discourse that paraphrased the 'gaze … into the heart and innermost nature of all creatures'—Abraham von Franckenberg (1593–1652) on a vision of Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) quoted in Faivre (2019: 82)—as *Zentralschau* (holistic intuition) and inspired 'nature language', or romanticist ideas about transcendence. The pietist topic of the *Zentralschau* of nature could attract evidence from the sensual modes of certain bodily experiences, for example in mesmerism, and could affect how to conceive social relationships (Hannemann 2020b: 56–7).

Krannhals emphasized the significance of experience as an 'absolute value' of 'religious consciousness' that 'subjects the entire tangible world to its evaluative power' (Krannhals 1933: 1) on the one hand—and, on the other hand, he categorizes the quality of the experience in relation to its scientific evaluation. Scientific knowledge cannot replace the original experience. However, the 'sense and purpose of the organization of knowledge is to bring us to the living experience of the idea of the whole' (Krannhals 1936: 404). The organization of knowledge provides for a 'scientifically based experience of unity' that surpasses 'the primitive, prescientific mythical experience of unity' (Krannhals 1936: 403n1). Knowledge facts, if properly arranged around the 'experience of nature as unity', clarify the experience: they create 'diversity awareness' and allow for the experience to 'become more and more vivid, to emerge more and more from the blurriness that is called mystical' (Krannhals 1936: 404). In Otto's *Mysticism East and West* (1926), the texts of Śaṅkara (*c*.788–820) reveal 'at their core, the view of unity that we stand for'; however, 'as the

ideas of form that lie within it have not yet unfolded', they belong to the preceding stage of 'pure mysticism' (Krannhals 1936: 404–5). Otto's construction of mysticism unfolds through a contrasting comparison between Śaṅkara and Eckhart (*c.*1260–1328) (see Brück 2021: 237–43).

In the first 1928 volume of *Das organische Weltbild*, Krannhals (1936) organizes scientific knowledge with respect to (a) sociology: social bonds within mechanistic society and organic community; (b) political science: the organic state as realization of the German will for life; (c) economics: based on either money or blood as measure and value (see also Gossman 2009: 176n2), with ample reference to Henry Ford's (1863–1947) *Today and Tomorrow* (1926); and (d) the place of science vis-à-vis the soul in the concretization of value judgements. The German soul addresses 'the innermost being of the world as irrational', affirms Krannhals (1936: 325), thus echoing Otto's idea of the holy with both an immanent and a *völkisch* twist. However, since 'our own law of life is form', and even more, 'the essence of the whole cosmos announces itself in its form' (Krannhals 1936: 331), the soul leads from the perception of form, to its evaluation, to will and aspiration (Krannhals 1936: 354). For Krannhals (1936: 353), life ethics favourably evaluates 'everything that is useful for the preservation of the individual … the species or the intermediate stages', which means groups such as the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Krannhals 1936: 371) or races—the 'interdependence of Nordic and Eastern soul' set against Judaism, (Krannhals 1936: 453–4). Accordingly, the second volume features the organization of the experience of nature (a) in the German homeland and (b) in an 'organic history' of German arts and architecture. Considered in this framework, (c) religion as worldview and active belief formation through aesthetic experience realizes the self-awareness of nature in reshaping the German consciousness. 'It is … as if nature, acting upon us as objective destiny, in its unconscious reasonableness, were striving towards our conscious reasonableness, towards our conscious reason, that is, towards its own consciousness' (Krannhals 1936: 753).

To sum up, Krannhals's organic worldview takes up a crucial point of romantic epistemology: the 'subject's awareness of an object develops and realizes the powers of the object'. It assigns to the 'artist and philosopher' who accomplish the 'self-awareness of nature' (Beiser 2003: 148), the role of religious experts who guide nature and its organic components towards a teleological fulfilment of meaning. Romantic epistemology derived from a specific discussion that led to an 'internal teleology' residing in the concept or essence of nature itself (Beiser 2003: 142–3), thus opening up a

wide range of possibilities to project one's own ideas of salvation into the fuzziness of natural objects. The nationalist leanings of someone like Friedrich Schlegel, for instance, are beyond question—see Tzoref-Ashkenazi (2004); on his view of nature and the transcendence of the German nation in Gothic architecture, see Hannemann (2020a: 106–9). However, the combination of religious history as experience and national socialist ideas of salvation expressed through destructive *völkisch* anti-Semitism with the aim of total annihilation, as well as in the apocalyptic designation 'Third Reich', and its Christian connotations that played out ambiguously (on Adolf Hitler, see Auffarth 2021: 140–3), provided a framework in which a limited number of topics related to Indology could be chosen. Namely those considered meaningful for that particular social and intellectual setting. The question then is not so much to what extent the Romantics gave a leg up to national socialism, but, more in line with Weber's 'intellectually justified responses to the world', how this setting favoured a 'type of human being that it gives the best chances of becoming dominant, by way of external selection or inner selection of motives' (Weber 2012: 321), within a world of relationships essentially conceived as struggle.

HERMAN WIRTH AND THE 'ARCTIC VEDAS': CONSTRUCTING PRIMORDIAL ARYAN EXPERIENCE AND SENSATIONAL FORMS

The Artist-Philosopher-Prehistorian from Youth Movement to Ahnenerbe Foundation

Herman Wirth was not an Indologist at all, and there had been a wide consensus in his time that 'the maverick Dutch scholar' (Gossman 2009: 46) better not be considered part of the scientific establishment (for short biographies see, Pringle 2006: 57–61; Wiwjorra 2017). However, neither his chequered reputation among colleagues nor the apparent 'conceptual depth' (Mees 2008: 142) of his claim about the birth of monotheism out of Atlantis, nor the more exhausting intricacies of *Sinnbildforschung* (literally the study of meaningful imagery or symbols), a term that Wirth himself introduced for the collection and systematization of paleo- and ideographic signs, will be discussed in particular detail (for relevant literature, see Staudenmaier 2013: 28n9). My focus is instead on Wirth's involvement in non-academic contexts, on how he produced meaning,

and on the significance of India-related research topics for his work. Wirth attended courses in German studies, history, folk studies, and music at the universities of Utrecht and Leipzig. In 1910, he submitted his PhD on *Der Untergang des Niederländischen Volksliedes* (The Decline of the Dutch Folk Song) in Basel (Wirth 1911). After serving in Belgium for the German army during the First World War, for which he incidentally received the title of honorary professor, he joined the Youth Movement in the Netherlands to renew his musical studies and promote Dutch awareness through the *Landsbond der Dietsche Trekvogel*s (Fig. 10.2). In 1924, he migrated to Germany where he initially settled in the university town of Marburg.

In the early 1920s, Wirth was already directing his attention to the study of prehistoric 'primordial writing' (*Urschrift*). In 1928, with the financial support of Ludwig Roselius (1874–1943), a coffee trader in the port city of Bremen, he published his principal book, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit* (The Ascent of Mankind), which ran to a second edition and several reprints until 1934. A series of books and articles followed in quick succession, accompanied by intense lecture activity and plans to open a monumental prehistoric open-air show or 'auratic space' in which to

Fig. 10.2 Herman Wirth as a *Trekvogel*, front row, second from right. (Source: H. Wirth, What is what about the Dietsch *Trekvogel*? (1920: frontispiece))

experience his 'interpretation of prehistoric intellectual and religious history' (Wiwjorra 2017: 904). While Wirth's museum project failed to materialize, his interests in prehistoric culture soon yielded employment opportunities for him as they inspired the creation of the *Ahnenerbe* Foundation in 1935. He was given his own department, the 'Pflegstätte für Schrift- und Sinnbildkunde' (Support Centre for the Study of Writing and Symbols). However, after a brief rise to honorary president, he was replaced in 1938 by Walther Wüst, whose academic credentials turned out more favourable in the eyes of the powerholders.

How to Draw Religious Knowledge from the Dawn of Mankind: India and Indology as Resources for Human Experience

In conveying his research to a larger audience, Wirth suggested adopting a primordial monotheism in which nature converges on Christian belief, in the 'trinity of God the Father, [that is] His revelation in the three seasons' (Wirth 1931: 30). The triad of the deity has certain attributes or modes that are highly changeable according to the interpretative context—God the Father, the Son of God or Lightbringer, the Mother Deity, or the All-Mother Earth (Winter 2010: 163–4). Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–87) and his theories on prehistoric mother right have undoubtedly contributed to this matriarchal notion (Löw 2016: 222–4; Winter 2010: 168). However, the influence of the Swiss historian goes far beyond that and enters the methodology of Wirth's *Sinnbildforschung* (symbol research) itself. Bachofen's method of deciphering symbolic language distinguished between an original natural symbol depicting material activities and later attributions introducing new readings. 'Later times did not create further natural symbols, but they instilled them with a new intellectual meaning' (Kippenberg 1984: xv). Wirth did not hold to the reasoning that 'symbols refer both to the human realm of drives and a prophetic overcoming of everything natural' (Kippenberg 1984: xv); instead, he adopted a widespread anti-intellectual understanding of Bachofen that favoured the original meaning. This step forced him to adjust the entire repertoire of symbolism known to contemporary archaeology, palaeography, linguistics, anthropology, and history of religions to the supposed qualities of the primordial source, hence his generally elusive and sometimes capricious readings of the material. He applied 'identical content to … cultural elements selected on the basis of their external similarities, for he assumed a supposedly unbroken continuity with their tradition' (Löw 2016: 183).

If that is the case, where did the original model or conjecture come from? In his introduction to *The Ascent of Mankind*, Wirth highly estimates 'the Vedic philosophers of India, who, as forest hermits, returned to an ancient Stone Age primitiveness of lifestyle' (Wirth 1934: 12) and thus made an example for today's artist-philosopher. Accordingly, the study of Vedic texts would enable the latter to access the prehistoric era of mankind. Academic research on the age of Vedic language, however, carried the 'inherited burden of a humanistic–theological view of history', which resulted in the 'scientific working hypothesis of an Eastern origin of the "Indo-Germanic" original people' (Wirth 1934: 428). Tilak's (1903) 'groundbreaking study' (Wirth 1934: 69n1), *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, assumed a pivotal role in integrating India's religious traditions into Wirth's primordial model, in which the origins of both the Indo-Germans and the Americans were located in the north Arctic, the seat of Atlantis. Tilak's interpretation of the 'Vedic dawns' picks up the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 4.3.11, which speaks of 'Three Maidens' and 'Thirty Sisters' or thirty dawns divided into 'five groups' (Tilak 1903: 116–17). These metaphors provide Wirth with similarities to northern motifs in grouping them alongside the three Norns of the Edda and associating them both with the winter solstice and the 'Ur-Nordic division of the month into six weeks of five days each' (Wirth 1934: 79). The observation of the sun's path across the year establishes the primordial horizon of experience which, in the first step of his argument, functions to lend historical plausibility to Wirth's arrangement of symbols: since twilight reigns in the polar circle for sixty days, a dawn of thirty days implies a 'more southern origin of that tradition' (Wirth 1934: 79), thus drawing the attention of the reader away from the ambiguities of interpreting two different textual traditions and towards the supposed evidence of a moment of separation between north and east at some point back in history (Fig. 10.3).

The second step of the argument merges the Indian god Agni with the Old Norse god Heimdall into the manifestation of God's son within the divine triad, namely the Lightbringer, who is assigned the task of performing the regeneration of life at the winter solstice. Based on the common ground of Nordic–Eastern experience, Wirth confidently unfolds the 'complete similarity of the myth of Agni with that of Heimdall as local variant[s] of the Atlantean-Nordic mysterium of *Yule*' (Wirth 1934: 380, 1936: vol. 1, 442–3). A narrow selection of titles by German Indologists (Deussen 1921; Grassmann 1876, 1877; Kirfel 1920; Oldenberg 1917) changes into an enchanted garden of references, offering the reader a

THE VEDIC DAWNS.
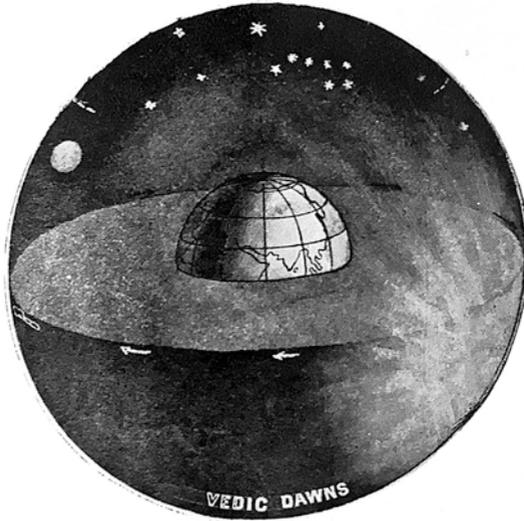
The sun is abont 16° below the horizon; and
the morning lights will go round and round the
horizon (one round being completed in 24 hours)
in the direction of the arrow-heads, until the
sun appears above the horizontal plane.
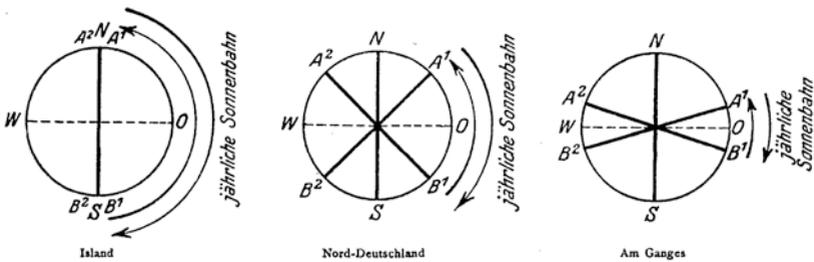
Fig. 10.3   Primordial Aryan experience inferred from observation of the sky: an
explanation of the Vedic dawns and the changing orientation of the ecliptic in
Iceland, North Germany, and India. (Sources: B. G. Tilak, The Arctic Home
(1903); H. Wirth, The Rise of Humanity (1934: 69))

plethora of countless fruits from the trees of mythology, etymology, and ideography. However, their juxtaposition often yields a mixed basket, as, for example, the *yātudhāna* of *Rig-Veda* 10.87.10 ('triple tear the magic spirit's root'; translated in Grassmann 1877: 367) turns into a *rakṣa* (demon) mentioned three lines before, for the sake of heroic scenery at 'the battle against Rakṣasa Indra', which is yet another instance of the 'struggle of light with the force of wintry darkness', or 'the much-glorified winter solstice myth'. Hence, 'Agni, the Rakṣa slayer, is asked to tear the triple root of the Rakṣa: the triple root of the tree of life ⅄ is the winter course of the sun' (Wirth 1934: 164).

How to Pass on Religious Knowledge in Sensational Forms: Readings of the Rising Sun

The tree of life was a prominent and much-discussed feature of Atlantis House in Bremen. An example of expressionist architecture, the use of this building could be adapted to fulfil multiple functions, whether as a modern centre of science and culture, a gym, or a sanctuary for primordial religions. It was financed by Wirth's patron Ludwig Roselius and designed by the artist and architect Bernhard Hoetger (1874–1941) in 1930/1. One's attention is drawn to the Nordic head of the gods, which, in keeping with Hoetger's treatment of Wirth's ideas, hangs against the tree of life beneath a metal disk of the sun—a wounded, crucified wooden figure of perhaps Jesus, or perhaps the Agni Lightbringer. In a radio feature, Jacobi (1932: sec. 9, 2) describes how 'Odin, dying every year at the *Yule* solstice, establishes a new life. The theme of self-sacrifice for a new life, for a great thought, recurs in all religions'. Marie Adelheid of Lippe (1895–1993), a friend of Roselius and later secretary of the blood and soil ideologist Walther Darré (1895–1953) also expressed the idea of self-sacrifice when quoting Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) 'Die and become!' (Lippe 1921: 49). This topic is about 'the new transcendence of the national religion' and a religious reinterpretation of the First World War that transformed 'senseless death on the battlefield' into 'a sacrifice' on the 'altar of the fatherland' (Auffarth 2023: 202).

On entering Atlantis House between the 'mighty oak beams' (Jacobi 1932: sec. 9, 1) of the triple root and performing the ascent of mankind by climbing an 'unreal' staircase infused with 'undersea mood' lighting (Jacobi 1932: sec. 11, 1), the visitor enters the Sky Hall and proceeds into

a 'dramatic culmination' (Uhl 2014: 83) of symbolic progression. The aesthetic narrative engages the public because Hoetger's expressionist depiction of transcendence produces an architectural space of sensational forms that can not only accommodate *völkisch* thought and phenomenology of religion but can also connect them with the ancient Nordic heritage. As Meyer (2011: 30) put it, the 'notion of sensational forms does not assume the primacy of senses as harbingers of religious experience, but calls to focus on authorized forms that organize such experience'. This, she claims, is because they are received embedded in 'semiotic ideologies' that 'identify significant categories of signs and define their relations to reality in particular ways that organize the material world'.

Wirth distinguished between three different arm postures of the Lightbringer (Fig. 10.4)—the horizontally spread arms at the summer solstice forming a cross, the downward hanging arms in the 'sinking half of the year', and the raised arms, either stretched out in the manner of the light prayer of Fidus or bent into a circle over the head, as a symbol of 'the restorer of all life' who appears at the winter solstice and rises during the spring (Wirth 1931: 14–15; see also Uhl 2014: 86). Originally, in 1928, he associated another 'characteristic' and 'cultic' posture with the winter solstice—'one hand raised, the other lowered' (Wirth 1934: 386, 603). This form is later either missing or listed under a cross form (Wirth 1936: vol. 2, 303, plate II). The sensational forms of the Sky Hall featured both variants of the raised arms, with the following description focusing on the circled head. 'On the shimmering silver front of the Sky Hall there is a relief, the central element of which is a gilded round disc' (Uhl 2014: 84). See Fig. 10.5.

It encloses another small circle and rests on a pedestal that appears to hover above the horizon; a series of rays emanating from the disk remind
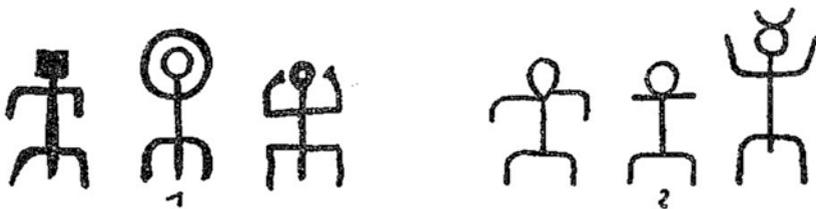
Fig. 10.4 The three arm postures of the Lightbringer, examples from North America (1) and Brazil (2). (Source: H. Wirth, What is German? (1931: Pl. III))
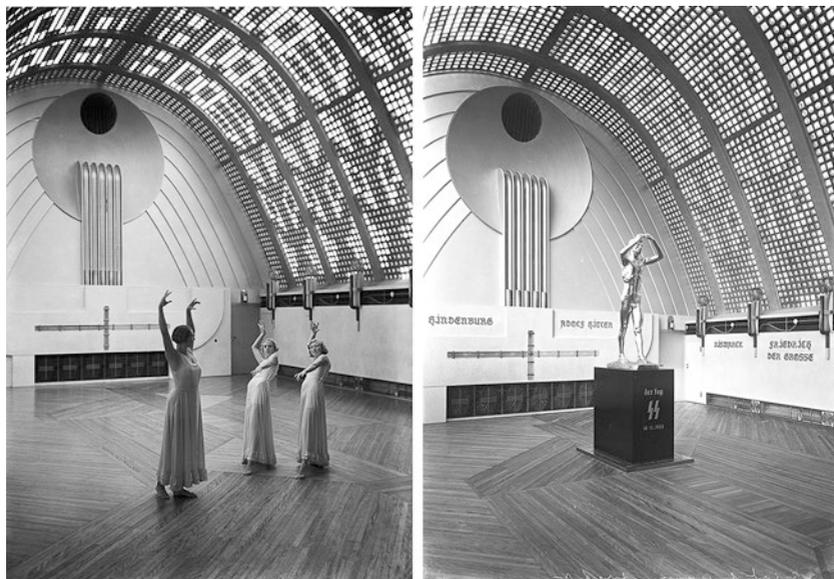
Fig. 10.5 The Sky Hall in Atlantis House with Hoetger's relief of the Lightbringer in the background. Art Dance (*c*.1932) and Setup for the 'Day of the SS' (1933). Photographs by Rudolph Stickelmann. (Source: Staatsarchiv Bremen 10,B FN 7 370-014; 10,B FN 7 1219-045)

one of the movement of an eclipse. One way of appreciating the significance of Hoetger's relief is to recognize that it is an expressionist rendition of a pictograph captured at Laguña Creek, Arizona, in 1914 and thus a symbol that had been taken from its original social context and instilled with new intellectual meaning (Kidder and Guernsey 1919: 194, plate 90, j; Uhl 2014: 86–8). Its significance within the arrangement of the Sky Hall adheres to Wirth's statement that in 'runic writing', ⸸ _ and Ⱨ provide alternate forms 'for the Son of God as "year-man", exactly as in prehistoric North American rock drawings' (Wirth 1931: 15).

In this overall setting, indistinct notions of restoration, self-sacrifice, and the immanence of life were evoked and acted upon, using speech, gesture, or material reproductions that responded to a given context. The traditionalist Julius Evola rejoiced in the sight of the Sky Hall: 'Sunniness, solar fire, light, lucidity, glory are leitmotifs wherever the memory of the primordial home of a Nordic race in the Far North is preserved' (Evola

1934: 95; Sedgwick 2004: 98–109). The mimetic appropriation of the arm postures of the Lightbringer took up a 'main impulse of expressive dance: to grasp the body as the centre of the synthesis of mysticism and modernity' (Schwaderer 2020: 151). This was to make an Apollonian point against the ecstatic current of art dance, in anticipation of linking the subject with the recreation of original collective meaning rather than enacting its desire for primal orgiastic experience (Fig. 10.5 left; Brunotte 2017: 178–9). A statue of the Lightbringer by Hoetger, now lost, adopted the head-encircling gesture on 'The Day of the SS' in November 1933 (Fig. 10.5 right) and set the heroic tone for a motley gathering of academics who followed Roselius's call to the second Nordic '*Thing*' (assembly) in May 1934. A few hundred guests, including the Reich minister of food and agriculture Walther Darré, attended the event.

Conflicting Evaluations of the Origins at the Conference of the Coffee Magnate

After publication of Wirth's (1933) counterfeit edition of *The Ura Linda Chronicle*, presented as the 'Oldest Testament' of the North, his research methods were heavily criticized. He consequently, only a few days before the meeting in Atlantis House, became the subject of a panel debate in Berlin, from which Walther Wüst surfaced as his principal defendant (Simon n.d.). Junginger (2008: 114–19) ascribed Wüst's support as resulting from a personal conversion. Wirth did not attend the Bremen conference, but two who did, Evola and the folklorist Hans Naumann (1886–1951), mentioned his name while distancing themselves in the same breath. Roselius framed the aims of the conference in terms of a romantic quest for knowledge, to 'search for distant lands and [to] seize them', he addressed the 'men of science, men of art, and men of bold action' before him, encouraging them 'to proclaim the essence of the Germanic race' (Roselius 1934: 7–8). However, the proceedings of the conference show a polyphonic register of differing voices. Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), a 'devoted ethnographer and disgruntled patriot' (Marchand 1997: 153), gave an insight into his speculative *Ur*-histories of the culture circles he placed all over the globe to correlate North and South, East and West in shifting configurations. However, he passed over in silence the location of Atlantis that he had established near the West African coast. Instead, he expected the culture circles to fade away amid the 'present emotion' that had emerged among the German people, 'equal

to the creation of a new religion' (Frobenius 1934: 214). Walther Wüst's *Ur*-religion features the Kafiri tribes of the Hindukush, who 'preserved pieces of Indo-Germanic culture that we can grasp with our hands' and their creator god Imra who is meant to have revealed 'basic themes of the ancient Indo-European, Stone Age mystery of the course of the sun' (Wüst 1934: 161).

His assessment corresponds with mainstream German racial research that the Indologist had adopted in his defence of Wirth (Schreiber 2008: 41–2, 47–8). In general, the Kafiri were supposed to 'give an idea of the direction in which one may think of the Aryan Indians from India's early history as deviating from the characteristic image of today's Hindu populations' (Günther 1934: 80). As Evola and Wüst were the only contributors who incorporated Indological knowledge into their respective arguments, we will briefly discuss their versions of Aryan primordialism and how they relate to and differ from Wirth's approach.

Evola's thought evolved with the early traditionalist school of René Guénon (1886–1951), which, in the wake of the latter's *The King of the World* (1927), detected significant traces of 'Indo-Aryan memory' of Atlantis in the myth of *Śvetadvīpa*, the 'White Island' (Evola 1934: 95; Godwin 2011: 161). Located in the north and 'surrounded by the White or Arctic Sea', Evola associates it with a selection of symbols—*swastika*, throne, and lion—which, in his view, all point to 'the transcendent authority of the empire'(Evola 1934: 95). While at first glance this approach seems to be related to Wirth's *Sinnbildforschung* and likewise draws on Bachofen's categories, Evola turns both the method and the substantive conclusions upside down (Sedgwick 2004: 100). Wirth's great error, he states, was in 'attributing the mother cult to the Nordic and the Nordic-Atlantean culture' (Evola 1935: 192). However, the 'primordial concept of the rite is most closely associated with the ideal of *transcendent masculinity*' (Evola 1934: 96, emphasis in original). Thus, he stresses the origin of symbolic meaning 'in the transcendent, beyond humans, peoples, and history' (Hakl 2019: 59), not in the material activities of human beings. His understanding of the transcendent included the leitmotif of male virility and the *kṣatriyaḥ* ethos as a foundation of holy war. In this sense, the *Bhagavadgītā* refers, according to Evola, to the 'solar origin' of 'the doctrine of liberation through the pure deed', which translates the motive of self-sacrifice into 'death and victorious resurrection' (Evola 1935: 118).

Junginger (2008: 127–8) points to the growing interest that Wüst took in Evola's statements at a time when it was obvious that Wirth's position

at the head of the *Ahnenerbe* was compromised. Wüst's shift 'from the *voelkish* narrow-mindedness of a Herman Wirth to Evola's aristocratic idea of an imperial Reich' (Junginger 2008: 135) shows a disregard for ideological consistency—a significant observation that leads us to question the validity of his academic arguments in public. Wüst began his contribution to the second Nordic '*Thing*' by placing himself within the linguistic parameters of his discipline as expressed in the pairing of Friedrich Schlegel and Franz Bopp (1791–1867). Besides, with the inclusion of Schopenhauer, Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866), Goethe and Richard Wagner (1813–83), he referred to the 'leading spirits of the German nation' (Wüst 1934: 155). Making a case for Roselius's question about, as the title states, the 'Indo-Germanic components of the *Ṛgveda* and the problem of primal Indian religion' required not just the philological skillset of Indological research but also an appeal to India-related protagonists of German 'art religion' and 'national religion'—an 'antagonistic pair of twins' (Eßbach 2019: 10)—to assist in the following proceeding.

Wüst's consideration of Indo-Germanic themes in the *Ṛgveda* calls for dramatic dialogue, since 'the root of the drama lies in ancient Indo-Germanism' (Wüst 1934: 157), from the heroic fight and demarcation of religious-ideological differences, to an echo of Nietzsche's admiring statement about 'those Brahmans [who] believed … that the priests were more powerful than the gods' (Nietzsche 1997: 54), and thus the 'absolute power' of the priests 'within this combat area' (Wüst 1934: 157). In the next step, he establishes a methodological framework for textual analysis, presented as a tentative systematization of Hermann Oldenberg (1854–1920), 'the master of Vedic mythology' (Wüst 1934: 159), and his initial study of the *Veda*s: consanguineous, collateral, elementary, independent, and coincidental parentages build five strata of origin in line with racial proximity. Conceptually, these categories organize philological and historical knowledge by patterns of ancestry: 'the consanguineous stratum is by and large identical with the Indo-Germanic-Aryan stratum' (Wüst 1934: 158). Rhetorically, they prepare the listeners to receive Adalbert Kuhn's (1812–81) 'famous, not to say infamous, example of κλέος ἄφθιτον' (Katz 2010: 361), or *ákṣiti śrávah*, the 'imperishable fame' attributed to the hero both in Homer's Iliads and in the *Ṛgveda* – Wüst refers to *Ṛgveda* 1.9.7 '*pṛthú śrávaḥ … ákṣitam*' and integrates the supposed analogy into his argument as a 'striking example of the consanguineous stratum within the Vedic language' (Wüst 1934: 158).

The attempt to objectify Indo-Germanic religion proceeds by assigning the Indian gods to one of the five strata. The association of Indra, 'the personification of the Indo-Aryan will to war', and Agni, 'the ancient Aryan god of fire', with 'the actual Indo-Germanic stratum' is 'a more or less known fact', Wüst (1934: 159) tells his audience. Passing to his own findings, he then outlines an 'ancient Indo-Germanic, Stone Age, monotheistic Wheel religion … which used to be erroneously listed under the category philosophy' and manifested itself with the Sun Chariot of *Ṛgveda* 1.164, in the *cakra* or wheel, the sun, and the swan that represents 'according to the ancient Indo-Aryan view nothing other than the human soul' (Wüst 1934: 159–60). The series of apodictic statements continues with a rather unexpected translation as the 'universal preaching [of the Buddha] is no more than letting the word *cakra*, the German word *Jul*, be heard' (Wüst 1934: 160). These readings are no doubt based on Wirth's commentary on the *Ura Linda Chronicle*, in which the latter, referring to an invented deity of that book, contemplates the Indian remnants of Indo-German origins. 'In Indian cult symbolism, the motif of the swan escorting the boat with Wralda's *Yule*, the … *cakra*, has remained popular to this day' (Wirth 1933: 279). Wüst's reasoning leads to the above-mentioned religion of the Kafiri, in which Wirth's mysterium of the winter solstice is performed by the 'Godfather' Imra, who, in 'cutting off the head of a large snake in the spring', assumes the role of the Lightbringer. 'The latest measurements' bolster the argument with the authority of race theory by 'showing that a high percentage of these people have blond hair and blue eyes' (Wüst 1934: 161). Unrelated in content but quite relevant to the structure of the argument, the presentation concludes with a tedious calculation of the age of the *Ṛgveda* texts.

The strategies Wüst adopted in his defence of Wirth drew only partially on the symbolic hermeneutics that ordered the experience of nature in the latter's work. More important was a salient feature of German Indology, that is 'how German Indologists constantly invoked the rhetoric of *Wissenschaft*' – a strategy, however, that in the given context did not limit itself to 'claims of German precedence in Indology' (Adluri 2011: 277). Wüst deployed several registers of scientific discourse—philology and linguistics, race theory and biology, literature, and arts—to promote life ethics centred on heroism, battle, and the will to dominate. The authority of science was also invoked to elevate the speaker's position and put him on par with the leading figures, both of his discipline and of the national religion. The furnishings of the Sky Hall underlined this form of

self-exaltation, from the names of Germanic 'men of will and action' (Roselius 1934: 7) affixed to the walls—including Martin Luther (1483–1546), Wagner, Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934), and Hitler—to the accompanying exhibition *Väterkunde*, which featured, among other artefacts, a replica of the Thrundholm sun chariot, to Hoetger's rendering of the Lightbringer dominating the background.

Conclusion

In the tension between collective community building using national religion and a more individualistic orientation towards art religion and sensational forms, Wüst structures the former when he assembles scientific tropes within racial categories. At the same time, he assigns the meanings of the latter rather arbitrarily, for they seem to fit into his line of reasoning. Wirth and Evola represent different approaches because they try systematically to regulate the experience of sensational forms by setting an original activity that is displayed through the symbolic form, or by the essential determination of the form backed by the unquestionable authority of transcendence. These three ways of objectifying religious life—scientific classification in racial rhetoric, subjective experience embedded in a supposed original meaning, and boundaries drawn along unconditional antagonisms—reflect the condition of the subject facing the control mechanisms of power (Foucault 1982), put into radical effect by the choices available within the political system. The rhetorics of Wüst, Wirth and Evola coexisted, intertwined and in competition with one other, as legitimizing strategies within the national socialist regime, and as a discursive formation that relied on the contemporary debates of *Lebensphilosophie*, phenomenology of religion, and racial life ethics. Considered as modes of governmentality and as such expressions of national religion, they contrasted sharply with the self-experiments of subjective religiosity so common in the generation of the German Youth Reform Movement (cf. Jonker, chapter 9 in this volume). Nonetheless, the men claimed to address the same need for replacing a sense of profound alienation.

   Given the aesthetics of knowledge (Borrelli and Grieser 2019) that branded Atlantis House a location of science, arts and the progress of mankind in the service of people's education, the dialogue at the conference performed science on a stage while the messages about German origins were simultaneously passed on as body knowledge at the level of sensual and bodily experience in search of a lost continent that could be

regained by ascending to Sky Hall (for different, but related strategies of bodily practices, see Hauser, chapter 3 in this volume).

Knowledge about religion in India was key for the various actors competing for relevance, but for different reasons. While Wirth's vision of the Arctic homeland of mankind could easily focus on European and North American artefacts alone, which for the most part he preferred to do, integrating Indological studies not only allowed him to connect his ideas about Germanness to mainstream linguistic research, but, with Tilak's 'Arctic Vedas', it also gave him a welcome foundation on which to build the original experience of mankind and thus the basis of Indo-Germanic religion. It is even likely that Wirth was already aware of Tilak's book before he started his own research around 1920 (Biedenkapp 1906), thus prominently displaying the entangled histories of Indian anti-colonialism and the German Youth Reform Movement. As a review in 1904 states, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* had a limited but favourable reception in German Indology: 'it is to be recognized that, from the perspective of an Arctic homeland, Indo-Aryan traditions, particularly the oldest ones, appear in a completely different light from that of the current point of view' (Klemm 1904: 283).

Obviously, however, Wüst is uneasy with this particular voice. Favouring the leading authorities of the discipline, he passes over in silence the prime evidence of Wirth's endeavour. His public and career-oriented approach plays out by wielding the authority of scientific method and of fact in general, thus emphasizing the role of Indology, and not least his own expertise, in the construction of those national values that emerged under the conditions of a multi-voiced German discussion about building the components of religious identity and social purpose.

References

Adluri, Vishwa. 2011. Pride and prejudice: Orientalism and German Indology. *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 15 (3): 253–292.

Adluri, Vishwa, and Joydeep Bagchee. 2020. German Indology and Hinduism. In *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen and Ferdinando Sardella, 90–122. Leiden: Brill.

Ahlstrand, Kajsa. 2020. Protestant views on Hinduism. In *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen and Ferdinando Sardella, 78–89. Leiden: Brill.

Auffarth, Christoph. 2021. Mysticism in modernity, a longue durée and innovations: The idea of the Third Reich between Lessing and Hitler. In *Constructions of mysticism as a universal: Roots and interactions across borders*, ed. Annette Wilke, Robert Stephanus, and Robert Suckrok, 137–151. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

———. 2023. *Opfer: Eine Europäische Religionsgeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Beiser, Frederick C. 2003. *The romantic imperative: The concept of early German romanticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Biedenkapp, Georg. 1906. *Der Nordpol als Völkerheimat: Nach den Ergebnissen der prähistorischen, etymologischen und naturwissenschaftlichen sowie insbesondere der Veda- und Avesta-Forschungen Tilaks dargestellt*. Jena: Costenoble.

Borrelli, Arianna, and Alexandra Grieser. 2019. Aesthetics of knowledge. In *The Bloomsbury handbook of the cultural and cognitive aesthetics of religion*, ed. Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens, 33–46. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Brück, Michael von. 2021. Polyvalence and equivalence: Object language and metalanguage about the notion of 'mysticism' in Buddhist–Christian–Hindu discourse. In *Constructions of mysticism as a universal: Roots and interactions across borders*, ed. Annette Wilke, Robert Stephanus, and Robert Suckro, 235–248. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Brunotte, Ulrike. 2017. The performative knowledge of ecstasy: Jane E. Harrison's (1850–1928) early contestations of the textual paradigm in religious studies. In *Aesthetics of religion: a connective concept*, ed. Alexandra Grieser and Jay Johnston, 161–187. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Das, Soujit. 2021. In search of the prototype: An art historical enquiry into the evolving form of pratimas in Kumartuli, West Bengal. In *The making of goddess Durga in Bengal: Art, heritage and the public*, ed. Samir Kumar Das and Bishnupriya Basak, 131–154. Singapore: Springer.

Deussen, Paul. 1921. *Sechzig Upanishad's des Veda*. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. 1994. Das Problem der Religion. In *Die geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Zweite Hälfte: Abhandlungen zur Poetik, Ethik und Pädagogik*, Wilhelm Dilthey, Collected Writings Vol. 6, 7th ed., 288–305. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Eßbach, Wolfgang. 2011. *Die Gesellschaft der Dinge, Menschen, Götter*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

———. 2019. *Religionssoziologie 2: Entfesselter Markt und artifizielle Lebenswelt als Wiege neuer Religion*. Paderborn: Fink.

Eucken, Rudolf. 1914. In defence of morality. In *Collected essays of Rudolf Eucken*, ed. Meyrick Booth, 55–71. New York: Scribner's Sons.

Evola, Julius. 1934. Die 'nordische' Tradition in der Mittelmeerwelt. In *Zweites Nordisches Thing*, ed. Ludwig Roselius, 94–101. Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag.

———. 1935. *Erhebung wider die moderne Welt*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

Faivre, Antoine. 2019. The imagination … You mean fantasy, right? In *Hermes explains: Thirty questions about Western esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter J. Forshaw, and Marco Pasi, 80–87. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Flasche, Rainer. 1993. Vom deutschen Kaiserreich zum Dritten Reich: Nationalreligiöse Bewegungen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland. *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 1 (2): 28–49.

Ford, Henry. 1926. *Today and tomorrow*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Page.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4): 777–795.

Franco, Eli. 2020. Die Gebrüder Schlegel aus Sicht der gegenwärtigen deutschsprachigen Indologie. In *Wege durchs Labyrinth: Festschrift zu Ehren von Rahul Peter Das*, ed. Carmen Brandt and Hans Harder, 73–108. Heidelberg: CrossAsia.

Frobenius, Leo. 1934. Schicksalskunde. In *Zweites Nordisches Thing*, ed. Ludwig Roselius, 204–221. Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag.

Godwin, Joscelyn. 2011. *Atlantis and the cycles of time: Prophecies, traditions, and occult revelations*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.

Gossman, Lionel. 2009. *Brownshirt princess: A study of the 'Nazi conscience'*. Cambridge: Open Book.

Grassmann, Hermann. 1876. *Rig-Veda*. Vol. 1. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

———. 1877. *Rig-Veda*. Vol. 2. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

Grimm, Jacob. 1880–1886. *Teutonic mythology. 4 vols.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grühnendahl, Reinhold. 2015. 'Romantische Indomanie' oder 'Orientalische Renaissance'? Zu einigen Erklärungsmustern für das Entstehen der Indologie in Deutschland. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 165 (1): 185–210.

Guénon, René. 1927. *Le roi du monde*. Paris: Bosse.

Günther, Hans F.K. 1934. *Die Nordische Rasse bei den Indogermanen Asiens: Zugleich ein Beitrag zu der Frage nach der Urheimat und Rassenherkunft der Indogermanen*. Munich: Lehmanns.

Hakl, H. Thomas. 2019. Julius Evola and tradition. In *Key thinkers of the radical right: Behind the new threat to liberal democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick, 54–69. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hannemann, Tilman. 2020a. Die Vermittlung der Transzendenz in die Immanenz: Zur Gotik-Rezeption um 1800 vom Straßburger Münster zum Kölner Dom. *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 28 (1): 86–111.

———. 2020b. Körper, Geschichte, Nation: Die romantische Entwicklung der Wahrnehmung von Transzendenz. In *Finden und Erfinden: Die Romantik und ihre Religionen 1790–1820*, ed. Daniel Cyranka, Diana Matut, and Christian Soboth, 55–70. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Jacobi, Julius. 1932. *Die Böttcherstraße in Bremen*. Hamburg: Norddeutsche Rundfunk AG. Radio script, Böttcherstraße Archive.

Jentsch, Ernst. 1997. On the psychology of the uncanny (1906). *Angelaki* 2 (1): 7–16.

Junginger, Horst. 1999. *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft: Das Fach Religionswissenschaft an der Universität Tübingen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Dritten Reichs*. Stuttgart: Steiner.

———. 2008. From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan tradition. In *The study of religion under the impact of fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger, 107–177. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2017a. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 274–279. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.15496/publikation-35433.

———. 2017b. Walther Wüst. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 925–933. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.15496/publikation-35430.

Katz, Joshua T. 2010. Inherited poetics. In *A companion to the ancient Greek language*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, 357–369. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kidder, Alfred Vincent, and Samuel J. Guernsey. 1919. *Archeological explorations in north eastern Arizona. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, bulletin 65*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.

Kippenberg, Hans G. 1984. Einleitung. In *Johann Jakob Bachofen: Mutterrecht und Urreligion*, ed. Hans G. Kippenberg, ix–xl. Stuttgart: Kröner.

———. 1996. Die Krise der Religion und die Genese der Religionswissenschaften. In *Vom Weltbildwandel zur Weltanschauungsanalyse: Krisenwahrnehmung und Krisenbewältigung um 1900*, ed. Volker Drehsen and Walter Sparn, 89–102. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

———. 2002. *Discovering religious history in the modern age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kirfel, Willibald. 1920. *Die Kosmographie der Inder nach den Quellen dargestellt.* Bonn: Schroeder.

Klemm, Kurt. 1904. Indologie. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 58: 283–293.

Klimkeit, Hans-Joachim. 2004. Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900). In *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*, ed. Axel Michaels, 29–40. Munich: Beck.

Kontje, Todd. 2004. *German Orientalisms.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Krannhals, Paul. 1933. *Religion als Sinnerfüllung des Lebens.* Leipzig: Armanen-Verlag.

———. 1936. *Das organische Weltbild. 2 vols.* Munich: Bruckmann.

Linse, Ulrich. 1991. Asien als Alternative? Die Alternativkulturen der Weimarer Zeit: Reform des Lebens durch Rückwendung zu asiatischer Religiosität. In *Religionswissenschaft und Kulturkritik*, ed. Hans G. Kippenberg and Brigitte Luchesi, 325–364. Marburg: Diagonal.

Lippe, Marie Adelheid zur. 1921. *Gott in mir.* Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag.

Löw, Luitgard. 2016. *Gottessohn und Mutter Erde auf bronzezeitlichen Felsbildern: Herman Wirth und die völkische Symbolforschung.* Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

Marchand, Suzanne. 1997. Leo Frobenius and the revolt against the West. *Journal of Contemporary History* 32 (2): 153–170.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mees, Bernard. 2008. *The science of the swastika.* Budapest: Central European University Press.

Meyer, Birgit. 2011. Mediation and immediacy: Sensational forms, semiotic ideologies and the question of the medium. *Social Anthropology* 19 (1): 23–39.

Michaels, Axel. 2015. Replik: Reinhold Grünendahl: Romantische Indomanie oder orientalische Renaissance? Zu einigen Erklärungsmustern für das Entstehen der Indologie in Deutschland. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 165 (2): 481–485.

Molendijk, Arie L. 2019. Multiple personae: Friedrich Max Müller and the person of the oriental scholar. In *Scholarly personae in the history of Orientalism, 1870–1930*, ed. Christiaan Engberts and Herman Paul, 45–63. Leiden: Brill.

Müller, Friedrich Max. 1868. *Chips from a German workshop: Vol. II.* New York: Scribner's Sons.

———. 1883. *India: What can it teach us? A course of lectures.* London: Longmans, Green & Co.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1909. *The complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol. 5: Thoughts of the season, Part II.* London: Allen & Unwin.

———. 1997. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the prejudices of morality*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.Trans. R. J. Hollingdale.

Oldenberg, Hermann. 1917. *Die Religion des Veda*. Stuttgart: Cotta.

Otto, Rudolf. 1917. *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. Breslau: Trewendt & Granier. English translation J. W. Harvey. 1923. *The idea of the holy: An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*. London and New York: Milford and Oxford University Press.

———. 1926. *West-östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*. Gotha: Klotz; English translation B. L. Bracey. 1932. *Mysticism east and west: A comparative analysis of the nature of mysticism*. New York: Macmillan.

Poewe, Karla. 2006. *New religions and the Nazis*. New York: Routledge.

Poewe, Karla, and Irving Hexham. 2015. Surprising Aryan mediations between German indology and Nazism: Research and the Adluri/Grünendahl debate. *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 19 (3): 263–300.

Pringle, Heather. 2006. *The master plan: Himmler's scholars and the Holocaust*. New York: Hyperion.

Renger, Almut-Barbara. 2021. The allure of the mystical from the fin-de-siècle to the interwar years: Troeltsch, Scheler and the social construction of mysticism. In *Constructions of mysticism as a universal: Roots and interactions across borders*, ed. Annette Wilke, Robert Stephanus, and Robert Suckro, 215–233. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Roselius, Ludwig. 1934. Begrüßungsrede. In *Zweites Nordisches Thing*, ed. Ludwig Roselius, 7–8. Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag.

Rosenberg, Alfred. 1930. *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*. München: Hoheneichen.

Rüsen, Jörn. 2005. *History: Narration, interpretation, orientation*. New York: Berghahn.

Scheler, Max. 1972. Versuche einer Philosophie des Lebens: Nietzsche – Dilthey – Bergson. In *Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. 3: Vom Umsturz der Werte*, ed. M.S. Frings, 313–339. Bern: Francke-Verlag.

Schreiber, Maximilian. 2008. Walther Wüst: Dekan und Rektor der Universität München 1935–1945. In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München 3*. Munich: Utz.

Schwaderer, Isabella. 2020. Die Pose des Kreisbogens im Ausdruckstanz im Spannungsfeld religiöser Ekstase und imaginierter Gemeinschaft. In *Annäherungen an das Unaussprechliche*, ed. Isabella Schwaderer and Katharina Waldner, 129–156. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Sedgwick, Mark. 2004. *Against the modern world: Traditionalism and the secret intellectual history of the twentieth century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Simon, Gerd. n.d. *Himmlers Bibel und die öffentlichkeitswirksamste Podiumsdiskussion in der Geschichte der Germanistik*. Part 1. https://homepages.uni-tuebingen.de/gerd.simon/himmlerbibel.pdf. Accessed 9 April 2023.

Staudenmaier, Peter. 2013. Nazi perceptions of esotericism: The occult as fascination and menace. In *The threat and allure of the magical: Selected papers from the 17th Annual Interdisciplinary German Studies Conference, University of California, Berkeley*, ed. Ashwin Manthripragada, Emina Mušanović, and Dagmar Theison, 25–58. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Tilak, Bâl Gangâdhar. 1903. *The Arctic home in the Vedas, being also a new key to the interpretation of many texts and legends.* Pune: Kesari.

Tzoref-Ashkenazi, Chen. 2004. The nationalist aspect of Friedrich Schlegel's *On the language and the wisdom of the Indians.* In *Sanskrit and 'Orientalism'*, ed. Douglas McGetchin, Peter K.J. Park, and Damodar SarDesai, 107–135. New Delhi: Manohar.

Uhl, Katharina. 2014. *Januskopf Böttcherstraße: Kulturelle Erneuerung, gebaute Utopie und nationale Identität.* Berlin: Lit.

Weber, Max. 2012. The meaning of 'value-freedom' in the social and economic sciences. In *Max Weber: Collected methodological writings*, ed. Hans Henrik Bruun and Sam Whimster, 304–334. New York: Routledge.

Winter, Franz. 2010. Die Urmonotheismustheorie im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Rassenkunde: Herman Wirth im Kontext der religionswissenschaftlichen und ethnologischen Diskussion seiner Zeit. *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 62 (2): 157–174.

Wirth, Herman. 1911. *Der Untergang des Niederländischen Volksliedes.* Berlin: Springer Dordrecht.

———. 1920. *Wat is en wat wil de Dietsche Trekvogel?* Gravenhage: Landbond der Dietsche Trekvogels.

———. 1931. *Was heißt Deutsch? Ein urgeistesgeschichtlicher Rückblick zur Selbstbesinnung und Selbstbestimmung.* Jena: Diederichs.

———. 1933. *Die Ura Linda Chronik.* Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang.

———. 1934. *Der Aufgang der Menschheit: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Religion, Symbolik und Schrift der Atlantisch-Nordischen Rasse.* Jena: Diederichs.

———. 1936. *Die heilige Urschrift der Menschheit: Symbolgeschichtliche Untersuchungen diesseits und jenseits des Nordatlantik. 2 vols.* Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang.

Wiwjorra, Ingo. 2017. Herman Wirth. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 902–907. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Wüst, Walther. 1934. Die indogermanischen Bestandteile des Rigveda und das Problem der 'urindischen' Religion. In *Zweites Nordisches Thing*, ed. Ludwig Roselius, 155–164. Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag.

———. 1942. *Indogermanisches Bekenntnis: Sechs Reden.* Berlin: Ahnenerbe.

CHAPTER 11

Hakenkreuz, Swastika and Crescent: The Religious Factor in Nazi Cultural Politics Regarding India

Baijayanti Roy

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the 1990s, when transnational history emerged as a methodological tool that transcended nation-centric history writing, the study of Nazism and Fascism has also shifted beyond nation states. Historians continue to provide accounts of the links and flows of political ideas and agendas pertaining to the Nazi and/or Fascist ideological repertoire through the movement of people, knowledge as well as financial capital and products across borders (Alcade 2020: 243–252). However, scholars have turned relatively recently to investigate the phenomenon of propaganda or influencing public opinion, which was an important element in such transnational exchanges.

B. Roy (✉)
Goethe-University Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
e-mail: roy@em.uni-frankfurt.de

The roots of Nazi propaganda aimed at foreign countries belong to the sphere of external "cultural politics" (*Kulturpolitik*) pursued by Germany after the First World War (Michels 2005: 18). Cultural politics in this case refers to the dissemination, through friendly overtures, of "cultural assets" like language, art, and scientific advancements in foreign countries. Such "soft power" was intended to compensate for the loss of Germany's political influence in the world after the First World War (Roy 2021).

In the initial years of its rule, the Nazi regime did not have any coherent direction as far as external cultural politics was concerned. However, it understood the importance of such politics from the very beginning. Thus, the Department of Culture at the Foreign Ministry was renamed the Cultural Political Department (*Kulturpolitische Abteilung*) in 1933. Often, the Nazi government made use of the "cultural political projects" that had started during the Weimar period. Also, many pre-existing institutions began to feel the need or the compulsion to conduct cultural politics on behalf of the Nazi state in the hope of receiving the regime's approval and resources (Gesche 2006: 73–78).

The factor that became common to most organizations conducting cultural politics after 1933 was the influence of Nazi ideology, which they tried to propagate in different countries. This entailed emphasizing the purported glories of the new "Reich" and conveying the impression that the latter was a friendly state, contrary to the inimical impression it generated. Another aspect of external cultural politics during the Nazi period was that the German diasporas around the world were expected to contribute to such propaganda (Gesche 2006: 73–78). Here, the term "cultural politics" has been used instead of the more widely accepted "cultural policy" since, to my mind, the word "policy" does not express the full range and scope of the Nazi *Kulturpolitik*.

This chapter attempts to examine one strand of Nazi cultural politics conducted in the Indian subcontinent, namely the use of different religions in trying to spread Nazi propaganda between 1933 and 1939. However, this chapter does not claim to provide a complete study of the deployment of religion in Nazi propaganda in India. It will take up some of the issues mentioned in Eugene D'Souza's essay on Nazi propaganda in India (D'Souza 2000: 77–90) and throw light on other little-known aspects of the use of religion in spreading such propaganda. This chapter will limit itself to a few case studies pertaining to three religions practised in the Indian subcontinent: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

The chapter is based primarily on underutilized archival materials from the India Office Records as well as the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The choice of archival materials is dictated as much by the availability of colonial surveillance records as by the near absence of the voices of most of the propagandists and their audiences. This implies that the narrative and analyses offered in this chapter are refracted through the prism of the colonial gaze that vilified every expression of self-reliance by Indians and saw in every non-commercial contact between the Germans and the Indians a threat to the British Empire.

On the other hand, the surveillance conducted by the colonial government, though by no means unbiased, maintained a certain level of detachment from the process of propaganda and reception. Also, the surveillance officials, enjoying the power and resources of the state, were in a position to delve deep to collect information, which of course may not have been always and completely trustworthy. Therefore, attempts have been made wherever possible to supplement the findings from the colonial archives with records from German archives as well as secondary literature.

The Nazi Network in India

Incentives or, in some cases, political pressure for conducting Nazi propaganda in India came from Germany. Propaganda literature, mostly emanating from Germany, was distributed through a cobweb-like Nazi network that evolved in India after 1933. This network included the different units of the Nazi party that existed in the Indian subcontinent, German commercial firms operating in India, German consulates and last but not the least, a number of German as well as Indian intermediaries.

The evolution of a Nazi network was tied to Germany's commercial interests in India. German business engagements in India date back to the nineteenth century (Lubinski et al. 2021: 72–97). However, all commercial activities undertaken by Germany in India were suspended from 1914 to about 1925 due to the First World War and its immediate aftermath. The British were wary of German presence in the Indian subcontinent after the war, since the German Foreign Ministry had encouraged Indian anti-colonialists in Berlin to pursue anti-British propaganda and activities during the period of conflict (Barooah 2004; Liebau 2019a).

Germany officially resumed diplomatic relations with India in 1922. In that year, a German consulate was opened in Calcutta, followed by the

ones in Bombay and Madras. The primary interest of the German diplomats was to revive the earlier business practices (Barooah 2018: 2–3).

Following the reopening of the Consulates, a number of German firms began to conduct business in India. The employees of such firms became the founding members of an offshoot of the Nazi party (*Stützpunkt*) in India, which was established in July 1932. The "headquarters" of the party was in Bombay with "branches" in different cities. Most members of the newly set-up Nazi party belonged to Havero, which was officially a Dutch concern but actually a disguised subsidiary of the German conglomerate IG Farben. Havero had its head office in Bombay and branch offices in various other cities (Schnabel 1968: 14–15).

Following the *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization) of the German state and the Nazi party, the official representatives of the German state, that is, the diplomatic missions were increasingly filled with Nazi party loyalists (Koop 2009: 39). Not only were the diplomatic personnel expected to pay their respects to National Socialism, they were also to make sure that every expatriate German did so as well. The Nazi party units in foreign countries also began to indulge in propagating the "achievements" of Nazi Germany and spying on their guest countries (Koop 2009: 51). Nazi groups in India thus began to include German diplomats in addition to the employees of commercial firms.

Cultural Politics as Nazi Propaganda: *Deutsche Akademie*'s India Institute

An organization dating from the 1920s which emerged as a leading propagandist of Nazism in India was the supposedly non-political concern, the Munich-based *Deutsche Akademie* or DA.

The DA, established in 1925, ascribed to itself the role of a cultural mediator between Germany and other countries through committees set up for particular nations (*Länderausschüsse*). The *Indischer Ausschuss* or India Institute was the first of such committees. It came into existence in 1928, through the efforts of the Indian nationalist Taraknath Das (1884–1958) and Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), a professor of Geography at the University of Munich. Das was a formerly militant anti-colonialist who had participated in anti-British activities under the India Independence Committee in Berlin during the First World War (Liebau 2019a).

Haushofer was a conservative German nationalist who had developed an antipathy towards the British (Roy 2021).

The India Institute was therefore connected to Indian anti-colonialism since its inception. This was also the time when German Foreign Ministry developed some sympathy for the Indian anti-colonial movement (Barooah 2018: 54). During this time, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which was a front for the scholarship program of the Foreign Ministry, started collaborating with the DA to jointly provide scholarships to Indians, with the aim of attracting sympathy for Germany. The ideal candidates were elite, moderately nationalist Indians who were acceptable to the British colonial establishment. The India Institute also honoured Indian icons from different fields. The Institute realized that these pre-eminent Indians were likely to be the best conduits for propagating Germany's views and interests in India (Roy 2021).

The advent of the Nazi government in January 1933 added other dimensions to this brand of cultural politics. The DA (and the India Institute) reacted to the new regime through *Selbstgleichschaltung* (voluntary synchronization with Nazi politics) in the hope of securing some much-needed funds (Michels 2005: 105). One of the "tasks" that the India Institute took upon itself after 1933 was to defend the Nazi regime against allegations about the rising racism in Germany, which adversely affected the Indians living there. The Nazi ruling elite did not have much respect either for Indians or for their nationalist aspirations. Hitler (1889–1945) was openly dismissive about the Indian anti-colonial movement. He admired the British Empire, which he hoped to emulate in "the Russian area" (Kuhlmann 2003: 38–40). Hitler, as well as the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, derided the Indians as a fallen race, the product of miscegenation between the racially superior, white Aryan invaders and the inferior dark-skinned original inhabitants of India (Kuhlmann 2003: 44–45). The derogatory attitude of the Nazi political elite allegedly led to increased assaults on Indians in Germany as well as anti-Indian propaganda in the German media. Such incidents were reported in the Indian press, leading to widespread protests (Framke 2013: 122–123).

Among the measures adopted by the India Institute to deal with the bad press in India, one was to spread the virtues of Nazi Germany to different groups of Indians. Religion, particularly Hinduism, figured prominently in these approaches.

NAZISM, HINDU REVIVALISM AND ARYANISM

The India Institute set out to influence the Hindus, the majority community of India, through analogies based on Aryanism. The idea of Aryanism in India, as the chapter by Julia Hauser in this volume shows, exerted great influence on some individuals and groups in Germany who dreamt of a regeneration of the German nation through the "Aryan Orient."

Aryanism formed an overarching subject of scholarly interest among some of the German scholars connected to the India Institute.[1] After 1933, a few of them, like Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962) and Walther Wüst (1901–1993) used their knowledge of "Aryan India" to provide scholarly legitimacy to certain racialized notions favoured by the Nazis (Junginger 2017a: 274–279, 2017b: 925–933). The chapter by Tilman Hannemann in this volume points to some of the ways in which Wüst invoked the discourse of "Indo-Aryanism" to promote Nazi tenets like glorification of martial qualities as well as the "will to conquer."

Scholars like Wüst rightly inferred that Aryanism would appeal to educated Hindus since they also regarded themselves as descended from Aryans. The notion of "Aryan origin," which reached educated Indians through the works of European Indologists like Max Muller in the nineteenth century, had significantly influenced various Hindu revivalist groups (Roy 2016). A common goal shared by these otherwise disparate groups was to revitalize Hinduism by taking it back to its supposedly glorious Vedic Aryan roots (Roy 2021).

The India Institute was partial to different sects connected to Hindu revivalism even before 1933. Taraknath Das, one of the founders of the India Institute, as well as a number of scholars belonging to its committee were drawn to a Hindu revivalist sect that developed around the Bengali mystic Ramakrishna (1836–1886) and his internationally famous disciple Vivekananda (1863–1902). Das, as well as some of these German academics wrote articles for the journal *Prabuddha Bharata* (Awakened India), the mouthpiece of the Ramakrishna Mission founded by Vivekananda.[2]

---

[1] Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (BayHstA) Munich: MK 40443\1120. Records of a meeting of the Institute in February 1932 show that India Institute included a number of Indologists in its administration.

[2] BayHstA: MK 40446: In an issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, published in December 1932, Walther Wüst wrote on Buddhism and Christianity in ancient western India and Taraknath Das wrote on Asian origin of Mayan civilization.

From 1933, the India Institute increasingly offered propaganda platforms and scholarships to individuals associated with different Hindu revivalist sects which glorified Aryanism. The intention of the institute was to use these individuals as agents for spreading Nazi propaganda among Hindus.

The Gaudiya Order: Krishna Worship and Nazi Propaganda

A Hindu revivalist guru favoured by the Institute was the monk Bhakti Hriday Bon, born a Bengali called Narendra Nath Mukherjee (1901–1982). The India Institute invited him to Munich in December 1934. Karl Haushofer, the then head of the Institute, personally welcomed the monk belonging to the revivalist *Gaudiya* order. This neo-Hindu sect tried to "Aryanize" and "modernize," which in this case implies infusing a kind of spirituality that would also speak to a western audience, a medieval strand of popular, non-Vedic cult of Krishna worship (cf. Sardella 2013).

In Munich, Bon spoke in English on "The Aryan Indian's path to god." The lecture was very well attended and enthusiastically applauded.[3] The monk, who also toured Berlin and a few other German cities, admired the "new Germany of Adolf Hitler" and thought that "the German people were the most suited of all western peoples for an understanding of the Indo-Aryan religion" (Poewe 2006: 73).

The Nazi authorities in Berlin were however not particularly enthusiastic about Bon's growing popularity which, in the paranoid totalitarian mindset of the ruling elite, seemed to threaten the messianic appeal of the "Führer." Bon's worldview also contradicted the racial politics of the Nazis. In 1936, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*The People's Observer*), the newspaper of the Nazi party, proclaimed in an article that the universalist *Gaudiya* order, which saw all human beings as spiritual parts of Krishna, had no place in the "Third Reich" since the latter believed in racial hierarchy (Sardella 2019: 81). This difference in attitude between the authorities in Berlin and the institute in Munich indicates that the Nazi regime did not yet have a coherent approach to propaganda as far as India was concerned.

Nevertheless, the connections between Nazi Germany and the *Gaudiya* order continued through the person of Ernst Georg Schulze (1908–1977),

---

[3] *Mitteilungen* (the journal of the DA), March 1935. First issue, p. 157.

a German disciple of Bon. Schulze was fascinated by Bon's lecture in Berlin and decided to follow him to India in 1935. He had already converted to Hinduism in 1934, assuming the name Sadananda Das Brahmachari.[4]

Colonial surveillance records suggest that Schulze alias Sadananda functioned as a link between the *Gaudiya* Mission and the Nazi network in India. Schulze travelled widely in the Indian subcontinent, ostensibly to preach the cult of Krishna among English-educated Indians. The colonial security apparatus however suspected that under cover of his religious engagements, Schulze was networking with the Nazi party and the German consulates in India to propagate Nazism among Indians.[5]

In April 1939, surveillance agents intercepted a packet sent to Schulze from Germany. It contained issues of the *Völkischer Beobachter* and some cuttings from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.[6] The censoring officer reported a number of photos of Hitler and other pro-Nazi materials in these papers.[7] The packet was addressed to Schulze, care of Emile Dubey, the principal of a women's college in Lucknow. In August 1939, surveillance officials got hold of a letter written by the said Emily Dubey to Schulze, expressing her satisfaction that he wanted to return to Germany and offering to pay his fare. She asked him to meet Hitler, in order to congratulate him for his great achievements for his country and to give him the message that he had some admirers in India, too.

On 26 August 1939, surveillance officials recorded that one E. Schulze withdrew the sum of 482 Florin (Netherlandish currency) and transferred it to Amsterdam.[8] It is probable that Schulze bought a ticket to Europe, but before he could embark on his journey, he was arrested in September 1939 as an "enemy alien," like all Austrian and German males in the Indian subcontinent.

During the search of Schulze's belongings that followed his arrest, an account book was found that included references to his subscription to a German newspaper as well as his "own German money." These references contradicted Schulze's claims of having renounced his inheritance and having severed all connections to Germany except for occasional

---

[4] National Archives of India (NAI) New Delhi: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21-165.

[5] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21-165. Note dated 22.7.1945.

[6] West Bengal State Archives (WBSA) Kolkata. Sl. No.244. File No. 234/39 (1). Potentially hostile foreigners who are objects of particular suspicion, p. 131.

[7] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21. Confidential note. 13.3.1940, p. 165.

[8] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 160–161.

correspondence with his mother. Schulze's address book also contained contact details of several Germans in India who were known to be prominent Nazis, for which Schulze could not offer any satisfactory explanation.[9]

In the multiple interrogations that followed his arrest, Schulze tried to project himself as a travelling mendicant who had no interests in worldly affairs. However, his statements make it clear that he was in touch with the two German lectors sent to India by the DA: Horst Pohle and Alfred Würfel (1911–2011), who taught German in Calcutta and Banaras, respectively. Both were known to the colonial surveillance as Nazi propagandists.[10]

Schulze admitted to receiving *Der Deutsche in Indien* (The German in India) the journal published by the Nazi party in India from 1936 to 1938.[11] He also confessed to knowing Dr. Hans Sommer who worked for the German insurance company, Allianz and Stuttgarter. Sommer reportedly visited the *Gaudiya* Mission temple in Delhi.[12] Allianz and Stuttgarter was in the black book of colonial surveillance since it allegedly financed various Nazi ventures in India, including an organization called the Indo-German News Exchange which engaged in Nazi propaganda and espionage. Dr. Sommer supposedly controlled this organization from the background.[13] Schulze also divulged that he had met G. L. Leszczynski, the commercial head of the Nazi party in India and a leading Nazi propagandist, at Sommer's house.[14]

Another example of Schulze's role in connecting the *Gaudiya* Mission and the Nazi network was the presence of the German Consul of Calcutta, Eduard von Selzam (1897–1980), who was known for promoting Nazi views, at a gathering arranged by the *Gaudiya* Mission at its temple in Calcutta in 1935.[15] The *Gaudiya* Mission temples in different parts of India seemed to have functioned as meeting points for the Nazi network.

[9] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 160.

[10] About Pohle: WBSA: Sl. No.244. File 234/39 (1). Hostile foreigners. Pohle is described as a 'silent and active worker' who carries on Nazi propaganda among students. Alfred Würfel's propaganda activities: Bundesarchiv Berlin (BA Berlin) R51\10128.

[11] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 165.

[12] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 164.

[13] India Office Records (IOR) British Library, London: IOR/L/PJ/12/505. Survey of the activities of Germans, 18.2.1939, p. 2.

[14] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 165.

[15] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21. Schulze's statement, p. 164. About the German consul in Calcutta: IOR/L/PJ/12/505: Report by DIB, May 1939, p. 6.

Schulze was also acquainted with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), the foremost ideologue of Hindutva or political Hinduism. Hindutva represents a majoritarian, anti-minority and Hindu supremacist ideology which emphasized on the "racial inheritance of Hindu blood" (Bhatt 2001: 95). Savarkar was a leading member of the Hindu *Mahasabha*, a Hindu nationalist party formed in 1921 "to protect and promote Hindu interests" (Bhatt 2001: 60). Savarkar remains infamous for publicly endorsing the racial politics of the Nazis and their idea of a homogeneous national community (Casolari 2000: 222–225; Bhatt 2001: 105–108; Framke 2013: 131–134). Savarkar tried to reinterpret the Aryan race theory propagated by European scholars who claimed that the Vedic civilization was founded by white-skinned (European) Aryans. Savarkar maintained that the consanguinity of Aryan and non-Aryan blood in India gave rise to the Vedic Hindu civilization. For Savarkar, "it was the infusion of the Aryan blood, ideas and culture that provided the basis of Hindu nationhood" (Bhatt 2001: 88).

Surveillance records note that Schulze took "a keen interest in Hindu Mahasabha affairs."[16]

Apart from admiring Aryanism and its connections with Nazism, the Hindu Mahasabha and the *Gaudiya* Mission shared a disavowal of the secular and pluralist anti-colonialism promoted by the Indian National Congress (INC). Schulze maintained that he tried his best to be loyal to the British government.[17] If this claim had any truth in it, then this was also a trait that he shared with the Hindu nationalists who stayed away from the anti-colonial movement (Bhatt 2001: 104–105). One of the surveillance records perceptively summed up Schulze's role in India, claiming: "Schulze is genuine in his religion but has not entirely renounced his interest in politics."[18]

Playing the Aryan Card: The *Arya Samaj*

A prominent Hindu revivalist organization that had ties to the Nazi regime was the *Arya Samaj* ("The society of Aryans"). It was founded by the philosopher and social reformer Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883) in

[16] Ibid. P.133.
[17] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 165. Schulze's statement to the colonial authorities, 22.7.1945.
[18] NAI: Home Pol. ZW 1939 NA-f-21, p. 165. Undated note.

Bombay in 1875 and in Lahore in 1877. The *Arya Samaj* believed in the supremacy of the ancient Vedic Aryans and considered modern-day Hindus to be their degenerate successors. The *Samaj* envisioned bringing the Hindus back to the "true faith" of Vedic monotheism (Bhatt 2001: 16–17). The racially charged "Aryan content," along with the majoritarian and authoritarian character of this movement made the *Arya Samaj* compatible with certain racist and disciplinarian aspects of Nazism, including an eugenicist dimension (Gould 2004: 157–158).

The *Arya Samaj* also stressed on patriotism, which made it attractive to upper-caste, middle-class Indians (Bhatt 2001: 20). The *Samaj* catered to the educational needs and aspirations of these groups of Indians through the establishment of "Dayanand Anglo Vedic" (DAV) schools and colleges. As the name suggests, the institutions aimed to combine "modern knowledge" with Vedic traditions, an amalgamation that appealed to the tastes and ambitions of the emerging middle classes (Fischer-Tiné 2013: 390–391).

The colonial authorities kept a tab on the activities of *Arya Samaj* since it was evident that the latter was training a generation of elites who could eventually challenge the British colonizers (Fischer-Tiné 2013: 390–391). The kind of young men trained in the DAV institutions were of interest to the India Institute, which astutely foresaw that many of them would be susceptible to propaganda combining Aryanism, subtle anti-British sentiments and Nazism.

Apart from the young minds trained by *Samajist* schools, some members and leaders of *Arya Samaj* proved to be highly receptive to Nazi propaganda. A surveillance record claims that on 20 August 1935, at a meeting that took place in the Himalayan foothills of Kumaon, Swami Satya Dev or Satya Deva (1879–1961) a *pracharak* (preacher) of the *Arya Samaj*, made a speech full of references to Hitler. One of his contentions was that "the Führer" had saved Germany from the debilitating war indemnity. In November 1935, the preachers Jaimani Mehta and Brahmanand publicly claimed that the Germans were descended from Aryan *brahmin*s and this was proved by the "Om" sign on their uniforms (Gould 2004: 158). Most probably, the *Hakenkreuz* was verbally construed, deliberately or otherwise, as the Hindu holy sign, *Om*. The aforementioned Mehta was known for his support for eugenicist thinking (Gould 2004: 157). He allegedly had good contacts with the journal

Milap, a mouthpiece of the *Arya Samaj* that articulated pro-Nazi views before the war.[19]

During their meetings in the north Indian city of Lucknow in July, 1939, *Arya Samajists* reportedly used the example of Hitler's Germany to demand the introduction of military education in India (Gould 2004: 158).

The entanglements between the *Arya Samaj* and the Nazis had different dimensions. In March 1939, the preacher Satya Dev or Satya Deva visited Berlin. He requested the German Foreign Ministry to provide him materials on the principles of race (*Rassenlehre*), which he could disseminate in India. He also offered to give lectures on "Aryan religion." He was greeted well by the Foreign Ministry, which expressed satisfaction at the monk's promotion of "the new Germany for years." Bernhard Breloer (1894–1947), professor of Indology at the University of Berlin, was asked to arrange for such lectures.[20] Breloer was a high-ranking SS officer and a fanatic Nazi (Framke 2014: 89–128). The positive reception of Satya Deva by the Nazi establishment in Berlin demonstrates that the regime now felt secure enough to welcome Hindu mendicants who could be used as emissaries for propagating Nazism.

Surveillance records further claim that during his visit to Germany, Satya Deva broadcasted pro-Nazi messages in Hindustani in German radio's propagandistic programmes aimed at India, which began from January 1939. After returning to India, he addressed a meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha in Allahabad where he supposedly spoke more about Hitler and Germany than on the Hindu Mahasabha.[21] Satya Deva remained loyal to the Nazis till at least May 1940, when he publicly praised the Nazis and advocated their emulation by Hindus.[22] Interestingly, another surveillance report from November 1939 stated that Hiralal Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), had addressed two meetings of the *Arya Samaj* in Bihar on 4 and 5 November, and in course of one meeting, he had claimed that Hitler supported the *Arya Samaj*.[23]

The DA, which had become thoroughly Nazified by the mid-1930s, also promoted the *Arya Samaj* in various ways. In 1937, Walther Wüst, then-professor of "Aryan culture and Linguistics" at the University of

---

[19] IOR/L/PJ/12/506. Survey 15, 1939.
[20] Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA-AA): R10477. Auszeichnung, 7.3.1939. Unsigned.
[21] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey number 9, 1939, p. 6.
[22] IOR\L\PJ\12\507. Report for the week ending May 18, 1940.
[23] IOR\L\PJ\12\506, p. 169. Report for week ending on 25.11.1939.

Munich, became the head of the India Institute (Roy 2021). He was not only a member of the Nazi party but also the SS. In 1937, Wüst became the president of the *SS-Ahnenerbe*, Heinrich Himmler's organization for pseudoscientific "ancestral research" (Junginger 2008: 9).

As already mentioned, Wüst tried to use his knowledge of "Aryan India" to legitimize Nazism. He also attempted to link the India Institute of the DA, the *Arya Samaj* and the University of Munich. In 1936, he established a position of a lector of Indian languages at his department, to be occupied only by a scholarship holder of the India Institute. The two occupants of this position were Dhirendra Kumar Mehta and Aryendra Sharma (1910–), respectively.[24] Both had received scholarships, which were jointly provided by the India Institute and the Humboldt Foundation, to write their dissertations under Wüst. Dhirendra Kumar Mehta was from the Gurukul University, established by the *Arya Samaj*. Through his thesis, Mehta tried to provide academic validity to the religious education provided by the *Arya Samaj* in the schools that it controlled.[25] Aryendra Sharma completed his PhD on Vedic lexicography in 1940.[26] In the same year, he published a laudatory article on "The *Arya Samaj* and its founder" in the journal of the DA.[27]

Wüst also tried to integrate India Institute into the network of the SS and the *Ahnenerbe*. In 1938, under Wüst's leadership, *Ahnenerbe* collaborated with India Institute in organizing an essay competition for post graduates of Indian Universities on "Symbols and signs in India: Meaning, Development and Life." Wüst announced at a meeting of the India Institute in 1938 that this subject was chosen "to take the Indians back to their roots."[28] In March 1939, another essay competition was advertised in the Indian newspapers, on the more unabashedly propagandistic title of

[24] Journal of the DA, *Mitteilungen*, July 1936, p. 330 mentions Mehta's occupying the position. *Mitteilungen*, April 1940 mentions Sharma as a lector, p. 147.

[25] *Mitteilungen*, July, 1936, p. 330. The title of Mehta's dissertation: *Methoden und Richtungen der religionspsychologischen Forschung der Gegenwart und ihre Bedeutung für das indische Bildungswesen (Methods and directions of contemporary research on religious psychology and its significance in the Indian education system)*.

[26] DA's journal *Deutsche Kultur im Leben der Völker* (DKLV), successor to *Mitteilungen*, April, 1940, p. 147. The title of Aryendra Sharma's dissertation: *Beiträge zur vedischen Lexikographie: Neue Wörter in Bloomfelds Vedic concordance (Contributions to Vedic lexicography: New words in Bloomfeld's Vedic concordance)*.

[27] DKLV. April, 1940. Aryendra Sharma: *Der Arya Samaja und sein Gründer*, p. 228–235.

[28] Leibnitz Institut für Zeitgeschichte, München. MA1190. Meeting of the India Institute on 27.10.1938.

"Aryan origin of the Swastika and its common usage in India and Germany" (Framke 2013: 74).

A surveillance report from September 1939 claimed that the German consulate in Calcutta worked closely with the DA in collecting nominations for a scholarship in Philology in Germany. Candidates who were members of the *Arya Samaj* or approved of its "Aryan world view" were preferred. Such candidates, the Consul General reportedly claimed, would later be of advantage to German Indian relations.[29] Horst Pohle, the German lector sent by the DA to Calcutta, seemed to have been the link between the *Arya Samaj* and the German Consulate in Calcutta.[30]

Occasionally, faculty members in science subjects also wrote to the DA to plead for scholarships for their students and attesting to the candidates' closeness to *Arya Samaj*. For example, S.N.Mukherjee, a lecturer of Physical Chemistry at the University of Calcutta, wrote to the DA on 25 August 1938, recommending his student Anil Bhusan Nandy Majumdar. The latter was a researcher in Chemistry and a "bona fide member of the *Arya Samaj*," a criterion that was confirmed by Lakshmi Prasad, General Secretary of the *Arya Samaj* in Calcutta.[31]

A surveillance record from October 1939 quoted Vidyanand Vedalankar, the secretary of *Arya Samaj* as having admitted to his connections to the German Consul in Calcutta through Horst Pohle, who allegedly instructed the *Arya Samaj* "to penetrate student and youth organizations," presumably with the agenda of promoting Nazism.[32]

The surveillance records also state that the other lector sent by the DA to Banaras, Alfred Würfel, had a close relationship with the *Arya Samaj* there.[33]

Hindu Mahasabha and Nazism

The surveillance records indicate that the Nazis attached more significance to the *Arya Samaj* as an instrument to propagate Nazism among the Hindus than the Hindu *Mahasabha*.[34] Nevertheless, the records repeatedly note that the Nazi propagandist G.L. Leszczynski was in touch with

[29] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey number 7 of 1939.
[30] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey number 20, 23.9.1939.
[31] WBSA: IB File 583/39. SL. No.350, p. 3031.
[32] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Undated, October 1939.
[33] IOR\L\PJ\12\506.Survey number 7, 1939, p. 14.
[34] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey Number 15, p. 3.

Savarkar. Leszczynski supposedly took "considerable interest in forwarding the Nazi approach to Hindus," presumably through the *Mahasabha*.[35] He was also instrumental in transmitting Hindu nationalist views to the Nazi ruling elite, probably to give the Hindu *Mahasabha* a feeling of being taken seriously by the "Third Reich." Thus, Leszczynski not only cabled a note on Roosevelt written by Savarkar to a German news agency but he also sent a copy of it to Hitler.[36] The Nazi propagandist was also instrumental in getting a pro-Nazi speech by Savarkar published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 30 November, 1938 (Casolari 2000: 223).

Hindu *Mahasabha*'s connection with the Nazis was not limited to the person of Savarkar. A letter from Indra Prakash, secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha to Leszczynski, unearthed by the colonial police after the latter's arrest in 1939, hinted at a close relationship between the two and a belief in their "common cause."[37] Prakash also requested Leszczynski to send him "interesting materials" for the papers *Daily Hindu* and *Hindu Outlook*. The latter, edited by Prakash, was known for publishing pro-Nazi views.[38]

Nazi propaganda evidently had a great effect on Padmaraj Jain, Honorary General Secretary of the Hindu *Mahasabha*, who wrote a glowing statement about Nazi Germany to the German consulate in Calcutta in March 1939. He claimed that Nazi Germany's revival of the Aryan culture, its glorification of the Swastika, its patronage of Vedic learning and championing of Indo-Germanic civilization have been welcomed by the Hindus.[39] The facets mentioned by Jain were in all probability the propaganda tropes used by the Nazis in their attempts at influencing the Hindus.

Buddhist Anti-Colonialism, Aryanism and the Nazis

It is relatively little known that the Nazis tried to influence the Buddhists who were (and still are) a politically insignificant minority in India. However, Buddhism was widespread and consequently a politically relevant force in neighbouring Burma (present-day Myanmar) and Ceylon

[35] IOR/L/PJ/12/509. Survey dated 4.11.1939.
[36] WBSA: File No. 234–39 (1): Hostile foreigners who are objects of particular suspicion, p. 131.
[37] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey Number 7, 1939, p. 7.
[38] IOR\L\PJ\12\506. Survey Number 10, 1939, p. 3.
[39] PA-AA: R10477. Report dated 25.3.1939.

(Sri Lanka) where the German consulates and Nazi party units had an entangled presence. The intermediary allegedly chosen to approach the Buddhists was the German intellectual and artist Ernst Lothar Hoffmann (1898–1985), who had assumed the name Angarika Govinda after converting to Buddhism (Fig. 11.1).

Hoffmann was born in Waldheim in Saxony.[40] He became passionately interested in Buddhist philosophy and art while studying archaeology in Italy in his early youth. In 1928, he embarked on a journey to Sri Lanka, arriving in the island in 1929. Subsequently, he met the Buddhist scholar and monk Nyanatiloka, originally a German named Anton Gueth (1878–1957). The latter would become his abbot (Winkler 1990: 13–15).

In the next few years, Hoffmann wandered extensively in the Himalayas. In the course of his travels, he met the Tibetan monk Tomo Gesche Rimpoche (1866–1936), under whose influence he founded the Buddhist order, *Arya Maitreya Mandala* in 1933 (Hecker 1995: 86–87). Meanwhile, in 1931, Hoffmann had joined the teaching faculty of *Vishwa Bharati*, the university founded by the Indian poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) at Shantiniketan near Calcutta.[41] Hoffmann taught European languages and Buddhist philosophy at this university. He

Fig. 11.1 Lama Govinda in an internment camp in India during the Second World War. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lama_Govinda_in_an_internment_camp_during_World_War_II.jpg, marked as public domain, more details on Wikimedia. Unknown author Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Template:PD-India)

[40] NAI: Home Political-EW-1941 -10-103.
[41] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155.

continued his travels in the Indian subcontinent, including a trip to Sri Lanka with Tagore (Winkler 1990: 39–41). Hoffmann claimed in a letter to Nyanatiloka that during this trip, he lectured on Buddhism at different venues in order to raise funds for establishing a Buddhist University at Sarnath in north India, a project which was doomed to be unsuccessful due to inadequate financial backing (Hecker 1995: 170–171).

The role of Hoffmann as Nazi propagandist seemed to entail encouraging Buddhist nationalists with pronounced anti-British leanings to think that they had the support of Germany. The police in Calcutta claimed that during his visit to Sri Lanka in April 1934, Hoffmann had in all likelihood met several "agitators," which was the colonizers' epithet for radical anti-colonial activists. In August of the same year, Hoffmann travelled to Banaras where he allegedly associated with a Buddhist monk named Bhikshu Saranankara, who had been expelled from Bengal after being detained under the infamous Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Act of 1932.[42] This law was frequently used by the British to clamp down on militant anti-colonial activists (cf. Ghosh 2017).

The verdict of the Calcutta Police on Hoffmann was that the monk was "a political firebrand, clever and scheming." Hoffmann apparently had connections with the Indian anti-colonial movement as well. Surveillance records stated that he visited the Indian National Congress committee in Lucknow on one occasion. The colonial authorities suspected that the monk was on friendly terms with Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) and his family since Nehru's daughter Indira (1917–1984) was his student at Vishwa Bharati University.[43]

A particularly serious allegation of the colonial authorities against Hoffmann was his "strenuous attempts to obtain passport facilities" for sending U. Okhtama, "the well-known Burmese revolutionary" to Germany.[44] Okhtama was probably the same as U. Ottama (1879–1939), also known as Uttama, a politicized Buddhist monk who urged the common people of Myanmar to oppose the British government for its adverse treatment of the Buddhist monks and the ordinary people who supported Buddhism. He emerged as the leader of the GCSS (General Council of *Sangha Sameggi*), an association of monks that became a major political

[42] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155.
[43] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155.
[44] NAI: Home Political EW-1941-NA-F-10-103.

force in Myanmar. Uttama was imprisoned several times by the colonial authorities (Taylor 2009: 183–184).

Notably, Uttama was close to the Hindu *Mahasabha*. This is not surprising since an influential circle within this party, including Savarkar, envisioned Asia as a "Hindu-Buddhist continent" from which other religious groups were to be excluded (Framke 2013: 291). Uttama was elected President of the Kanpur session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1935. In his Presidential address, Uttama claimed that Buddhism was an offshoot of Hinduism (Prakash 1966: 53). This was also the view propounded by Savarkar, who considered Buddhism to be integral to Hinduism since it had originated in India. However, he considered Buddhism to be a weak and emasculated form of the masculine Aryan Hinduism (Bhatt 2001: 89).

Another aspect that Buddhism in Sri Lanka and the Hindu *Mahasabha* had in common was the trope of Aryanism. In Sri Lanka, Aryanism was often used to reverse colonial stereotype by claiming that Buddhists were superior Aryans, while Europeans (especially the British) were *mlechha*, the Sanskrit pejorative for "non-believers," that is, barbarians (cf Anningson 2021). Thus Aryanism formed a bridge between Hindu and Buddhist nationalisms, which Nazi propaganda was keen to exploit. However, despite Hoffmann's efforts, the colonial government of Myanmar steadfastly refused to grant Uttama a passport.[45]

Hoffmann also had ties with the Nazi network in India. In 1935, he became involved in negotiations with Horst Pohle as well as Franz Thierfelder (1896–1963), the General Secretary of the DA. Pohle and Thierfelder were considering Hoffmann for the position of a teacher of German in the prospective Buddhist University at Sarnath. Hoffmann allegedly tried to use Pohle's connections to retrieve his money, a significant sum of 10,000 Reichsmark, from a bank in Dresden. Hoffmann promised to donate 5000 Reichsmark to the DA if he received the full amount. The issue reached the Consul-General of Calcutta, who asked Pohle to write to the bank at Dresden to send the money to Hoffmann, claiming that the latter's work was important for the DA, which, by then, had emerged as a major organ of Nazi cultural politics. Hoffmann did receive some initial payments before the war intervened.[46]

---

[45] NAI: Home Political EW-1941-NA-F-10-103.
[46] NAI: Home Political EW-1941-NA-F-10-103. Secret Note: File 10/103/41.

After his internment in October 1940, Hoffmann concealed his negotiations with the DA since the colonial authorities considered it to be the most important vehicle for Nazi propaganda in India. The Buddhist monk also downplayed his close association with the two agents of the DA, Horst Pohle and Alfred Würfel, both of whom corroborated Hoffmann's statement that he was anti-Nazi. However, one of the surveillance records, which maintained that the three men were close associates, claimed: "If Pohle and Würfel, out and out Nazis, really thought that Govinda was anti-Nazi, they would not have taken the trouble to try and shield him as they did."[47]

This statement is not without its merits. Though membership of the Nazi party was not officially required for the lectors of the DA in the early days of Nazi rule, it was nevertheless expected that these young men should be sympathetic towards the politics of the German state (Michels 2005: 95–96). Thierfelder informally advised potential candidates to join the NSDAP, or at least National Socialist Teachers' Association (*NS Lehrerbund* or NSLB) (Scholten 2001: 98). Pohle was a member of the NSDAP and Würfel had joined the NSLB in 1934, just before coming to India.[48] It is unlikely that Hoffmann alias Govinda would have been considered for the position of a German lector of the DA if he was known to be in any way opposed to Nazism.

Hoffmann's links to the Nazi network are beyond doubt, even though material concerns probably played a greater role than ideological motivation on his part. In August 1939, surveillance intercepted the Nazi propaganda magazine *News in Brief* being sent to Hoffmann in Banaras from the German Consulate in Calcutta.[49]

An exhibition related to Buddhist religion, arranged by Hoffmann in Delhi in 1939, was co-organized by a certain Mrs. Siddiqi who was on friendly terms with both Leszczynski and Sommer, two active members of the Nazi network.[50] According to the surveillance record, her husband was Abdul Rahman Siddiqi, who could have been identical with Abdur

[47] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155.

[48] Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv or BA) Berlin: R51\144. Pohle's correspondence shows that he was a part of the Nazi network in India. BA Berlin: R51\10128: Würfel's biographical note submitted to the Ministry of National Education, Saxony. 19.2.1939.

[49] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155. The 'News in Brief' was supposedly the mouthpiece of the Nazified *Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst*, as stated in IOR/L/PJ/12/506. Survey 11, 1939, p. 3.

[50] NAI: Home Political EW-1941-NA-F-10-103.Secret note: File 10/103/41.

Rahman Siddiqi (1887–1953), one of the founding members of the All India Muslim League. This seems probable since the record in question mentions that Siddiqi was a member of the working committee of the All India Muslim League, which demanded a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims. The record states that Siddiqi received regular visits from Horst Pohle, pointing to the Nazi outreach towards Indian Muslims, an aspect we will discuss soon.[51]

Hoffmann, who had become a naturalized British citizen in 1938, was nevertheless detained in the internment camp for Germans throughout the war, since the colonial authorities believed that he "possessed excellent opportunities for cloaking any activity on behalf of the enemy with his religion."[52] Interestingly, Hoffmann had not renounced his German citizenship even after becoming a naturalized British citizen.[53]

The episodes concerning Ernst Schulze and Ernst Hoffmann make it clear that Hindu and Buddhist religions could be used in different ways by Nazi propagandists in India. One could, as a wandering Hindu *sannyasi* or a Buddhist *Bhikshu*, travel the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent and meet Indians from all social classes without arousing too much suspicion. A mendicant or a monk enjoyed special respect among wide sections of Indians, with which the colonial establishment did not want to interfere.

For an European convert, there was an added aura of power, since in colonial India Europeans, were perceived by both the colonial authorities as well as by the indigenous people to be a part of the ruling elite, a view that the European community strove to reinforce (Framke 2021: 103–135). Thus, as holy men and Europeans, Schulze and Hoffmann had excellent opportunities to function as mediators between the German core of the Nazi network and the indigenous elites whom Nazi propaganda aimed to reach.

Nazi Propaganda and Islamic Nationalism

Eugene D'Souza has pointed out that while the Nazis tried to appeal to Hindus on the basis of a supposedly shared Aryan element and the Swastika, they reached out to the Muslims in India by offering praise for

---

[51] IOR/L/PJ/ 12/506. Survey 9, 1939, p. 6.
[52] NAI: Home Political EW-1941-NA-F-10-103.
[53] NAI: Home Political EW-1939-NA-F-155.

their presumed martial tendencies and by raising the issue of Palestine and the Jews. The common elements in Nazi propaganda towards all religious communities were the anti-British, anti-communist and anti-democratic sentiments (D'Souza 2000: 81–82).

Colonial surveillance records claimed that Nazi propaganda was more positively received by "Muslims" than by the "Congress."[54] By "Muslims," the colonial apparatus probably meant those affiliated to the All India Muslim League, which called for a division of the Indian sub-continent in order to establish a homeland for the Indian Muslims. This separatist agenda led the Muslim League to engage in a deepening conflict with the Indian National Congress, which professed to envision an undivided, secular and pluralist India.

The "German Society" of the Aligarh Muslim University

One group which seems to have been particularly susceptible to Nazi propaganda based on Islamism was a circle of Muslim academics at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in north India. This group called itself the "German Society." Its declared aim was to spread German language and culture. Colonial surveillance however referred to it as a "Nazi cell."[55]

The German Society was founded in 1932 by Otto Spies (1901–1981), a German scholar of "Islamic" (Arabic, Turkish and Persian) languages who joined the Arabic department of the AMU in October 1932, and Sattar Kheiri (1885–1945), the German lector at this university. Sattar and his brother Jabbar had spent a considerable length of time in Germany and Europe, in course of which they transitioned from Indian anti-colonialists and pan-Islamists into proponents of an "Indian Muslim nation" (Liebau 2019b: 358).

An idea of the activities of the newly formed German Society can be found in a letter written by Otto Spies in 1933 to the University of Bonn, which had given him a lien to join the AMU. In the letter, Spies claimed that since he belonged to "the movement" from around 1930, he saw it as his task to form a "German Society" together with Kheiri. The aim of the society, according to Spies, was to espouse the "New Germany" and

---

[54] IOR/L/PJ/ 12/505. Note on the Nazi Auslandsorganisation in India. 24.4.38, p. 6.
[55] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40. 'Nazi cell' in Aligarh Muslim University.

counter all the "slander" that the British were allegedly fabricating in India about the Nazi regime.[56]

After Spies returned to Germany in 1936, Kheiri emerged as the undisputed leader of the German Society. Surveillance records mention three other prominent members of the German Society, all professors at the AMU: Babur Mirza, Zafar Ul Hasan and Abid Ahmed Ali. All four of them had studied in Germany and three of them (except Abid Ahmed Ali) had German wives.[57]

Through popular lectures and through its journals, the society projected Germany to be sympathetic to the Islamic separatism advocated by the Muslim League. This propaganda trope was presumably approved by the Nazi regime since, as we have noted, Horst Pohle was also making overtures to the Muslim League. In 1939–40, the German Society also openly engaged in anti-British propaganda and activities, for which Kheiri was arrested in July 1940. His arrest signified the formal end of the German Society.[58]

By mid-1930s, the German Society attracted attention from the colonial administration for its propagation of Nazism. In 1937, the Calcutta-based British newspaper, *The Statesman* reported a "Nazi activity" organized by the German Society: Sattar Kheiri led a parade of "brown shirts" in the AMU to celebrate the birthday of the prophet Mohammad.[59] "Brown shirts" referred to the SA (*Sturmabteilung*), the notorious paramilitary unit of the Nazi party, who wore brown shirts as their uniform.

Incidentally, the German Society was not the only channel that Kheiri used to promote Nazism. Kheiri was the president of the All India Muslim League at the university and used this influential position to assert that the Germans were better disposed towards the Muslims than the British. The Muslim League of the AMU also published a pro-Nazi lecture delivered by Babar Mirza in March 1939. The title of the text was "Modern Germany: A lesson to India."[60] Several surveillance records state that Kheiri received financial support from the German Consulate in Calcutta, indicating that he was considered by the Nazi regime to be an intermediary

[56] Archive of the University of Bonn: 1033\PFPA: Letter of Spies to the curator of the University, 19.9.33.

[57] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40. 'Nazi cell' in Aligarh Muslim University, p. 52.

[58] Ibid.

[59] NAI: Home Political NA 1939-F21-65-39. Consideration of the steps to be taken to combat the Nazi activities in the Aligarh Muslim University, p. 3.

[60] Ibid.

between the Nazi network and the Islamic separatists in India.[61] Kheiri was also associated with the DA, particularly towards the end of the 1930s.[62]

Notably, one of the members of German Society, Niaz Ahmad Khan, had received his PhD in Engineering from the Technical University of Munich in 1933 with help from Franz Thierfelder of the DA. Thierfelder justified this help to Karl Kapp (1889–1947), then German Consul General in Bombay, by claiming that Ahmad would turn out to be a useful intermediary between the DA and the Indian Muslims.[63] Niaz Ahmed seemed to have fulfilled this expectation, since a surveillance record described him as a "pro-Nazi propagandist."[64]

Apart from financial assistance, Kheiri also received books from Germany through the German consulate in Calcutta. The library of the AMU contained a large number of books about the ideological premises of Nazism, which Kheiri allegedly distributed among his students so that he could impress upon them that Nazism and Islam were compatible.[65]

The combination of Islamic nationalism and Nazi propaganda, as articulated by the German Society, was best illustrated through the journals it published. These were *The Journal of the German Society*, which appeared from 1934 to 1936, and its successor, the *Spirit of the Time*, which was published in 1938–1939.

The objectives of the German Society, including the political aspect, were stated in the editorial of the first issue of journal, published in December 1934. The editorial claimed that the society aimed at the study and furtherance of the German language and culture, and it aspired to "enlighten the readers about the great forces which are now at work in changing the world-outlook in Germany."[66]

Outright propaganda of Nazi Germany began from the second issue (January 1935) through articles such as "What is Hitler Youth" and "Germany's 'Labour Service.'"[67] Most of the articles were written by

[61] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 55. Also, PA-AA: R64198. Kheiri's acknowledge of the receipt of 300 Reichsmark from the German Consulate in Calcutta.

[62] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 55–56.

[63] BA Berlin. R51\16. Notice on Niaz Ahmed Khan's PhD. Dated 16.8.1933. Thierfelder's letter to Consul General Kapp, 19.8.1933.

[64] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 94.

[65] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 57.

[66] Journal of German Society, Vol.1, No.1. December 1934, p. 3.

[67] Journal of German Society, Vol. 1, No.2. January 1935. What is Hitler Youth? p. 5–6. 'Germany's 'Labour Service' and 'House of Comradeship'.' p. 7–8.

Kheiri. He not only attempted to establish parallels between Nazism and Islam but also tried to relate the concerns of the Indian Muslims to those of the "New Germany."

Every subsequent issue of the journal was replete with articles glorifying National Socialism. Many of these texts were written by Kheiri. Articles by German authors, evidently adapted and translated from German publications, also appeared regularly. The German texts received by Kheiri came from the German Consulate of Calcutta and sometimes directly from various agencies in Germany. Such literature included the Nazified magazine, *Geist der Zeit* to which the successor to the journal, *Spirit of the Time* probably owed its name (Fig. 11.2).[68]

It is not clear why the successor to *Journal of the German Society*, appearing after a hiatus of two years, was called the *Spirit of the Time*. Fatma Khanem, the German wife of Sattar Kheiri who had converted to Islam, was officially the editor of the *Spirit of the Time*. Using her name was probably an eyewash to avoid unfavourable attention from the colonial authorities.[69]

Unlike its predecessor, the *Spirit of the Time* focussed more on Islamic nationalism as it played out in India. The journal was quite pronouncedly anti-democratic and anti-Communist. It was not directly anti-British till about the middle of 1939, when it started to critique the British Empire not only in respect to India but in the spirit of pan-Islamism. Such critique included the Nazi propaganda that the British were inflicting "the pest of the Jews" on Palestine.[70]

The *Spirit of the Time* also openly championed the Muslim League's political agenda. Incidentally, in 1936, the Muslim League had passed a resolution on Palestine, expressing its solidarity for the Arabs and criticizing the British for their policy (Roland 1998: 199). This resolution was not made under the influence of the Nazis, but it played in the hands of the Nazis who made good use of it in the propaganda aimed at Muslims in India.[71]

The connection of the Nazi network in India with the German Society is evident from the advertisements published in the magazines. All the

[68] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 54.
[69] Ibid., p. 55.
[70] Spirit of the time. No. 9, Vol.1. April, 1939. 'Thou Hypocrite!' p. 141–142, here: p. 141.
[71] NAI: External Affairs Dept (EAD). F.No. 665-X\38. Note by DIB on an examination of the activities of the Auslandsorganisation of the NSDAP generally and in India, p. 13.

Fig. 11.2 *Spirit of the Time*, September 1938 (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schwarze_Sonne)
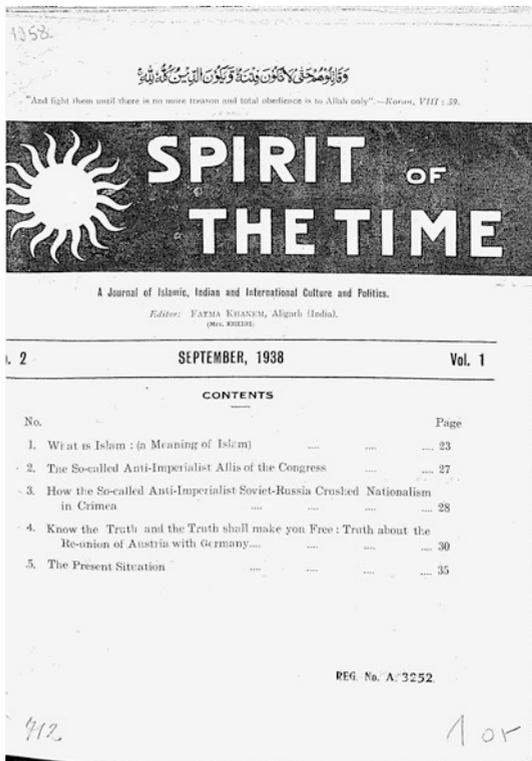
advertisements were from German firms operating in India, like Allianz and Stuttgarter, AEG and Siemens. Considering that the subscription of these magazines was restricted to a very limited circle of Muslims and Germans in India and abroad, the colonial authorities assumed that these commercial organizations were under political pressure to spend on this particular vehicle of propaganda.[72] It is also possible these firms supported the mouthpiece of the German Society out of ideological conviction since many of their employees were Nazi party members. However, commercial rationale soon triumphed over politics. The German firms refused to invest

---

[72] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 2; In November 1938, only 250 copies of the magazine were circulated. The same record explains the investment of the firms in this paper by pointing to 'political pressure,' p. 59.

in the *Spirit of the time* from July 1939, since they were apprehensive of the imminent war. This led to an end of the publication.[73]

DECLINE OF RELIGION BASED PROPAGANDA

It is evident that except in the case of Buddhist nationalists, religion-based Nazi propaganda emphasized more on the virtues of Nazism than on anti-colonialism. This began to change from 1939, when German radio broadcasts from Berlin started calling for Hindu-Muslim unity and urged both communities to fight the British colonialists together. From September 1939, German broadcasts began to denounce the Muslim League's call for a separate homeland—Pakistan, calling it a ploy of the British to divide the Hindus and Muslims. By then, the Muslim League had officially condemned the "aggressive campaigns" of Germany.[74]

This change in German policy resulted from a conscious redirection of German propaganda under the foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946), who assumed office in 1938. Under his influence, German propaganda began to express its strategic support for the Indian anti-colonial movement led by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (Kuhlmann 2003: 69–70). This was ironical, since in March 1939, the INC officially declared its opposition to imperialism and fascism alike (Framke and Tschurenev 2018: 74). This open rejection was ignored by the German propaganda.

Nazi Germany's change of policy was partially due to Ribbentrop's anti-British predilections but mainly due to political pragmatism. The INC, led by Gandhi, was in a unique position to arouse mass-based political disturbances, which could impede the British Empire's war efforts against Germany. Nevertheless, at least during the initial years of the war, religion-based propaganda sporadically entered different areas of India, often in the form of posters and pamphlets. In 1940, posters displaying Nazi Swastika or *Hakenkreuz* and urging the people to join the INC appeared in different areas of Bombay. Surveillance records claim that they were printed in Germany and posted from Greece.[75] Also in 1940, bulletins dispatched from Greece to the editors of various newspapers in

---

[73] NAI Home Political NA-F-111-40, p. 55.
[74] IOR/L/PJ/12/507. Survey No. 6, 1940.
[75] IOR/L/PJ/12/507. Report ending on 27.1.1940.

Myanmar described how Lawrence of Arabia and the Muslim world were let down by England during the last war.[76]

Occasional pamphlets containing Nazi propaganda based on Islam kept entering India for a longer time during the war than the propaganda aimed at other religious groups. Such propaganda in print was actually not meant for India. They were spin-offs from the Nazi propaganda based on Islam, which was intended primarily for countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Motadel 2014: 49).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide some glimpses into how religion-based approaches figured in Nazi propaganda in India from 1933 to 1939, after which the deployment of religious tropes was no longer considered politically rewarding by the Nazi authorities. The variety in the propaganda tropes used to attract diverse religious communities is not surprising, since it is well known that Nazi propaganda could transform itself, chameleon like, to suit its target audience.

The chapter has pointed to several uses of Hindu and Buddhist religions by Nazi propaganda in India. One is the role of Aryanism, which was used by Nazi propagandists to appeal to various Hindu groups as well as Buddhist nationalists. This strategy had some effect among the more militant, right-wing elements in the *Arya Samaj* and the Hindu *Mahasabha*, who belonged to the extreme right of an Indian political spectrum dominated by the INC. For historians, the significance of such propaganda lies not in their effectiveness but in their crafty association of Aryanism, Hindu revivalism, political Hinduism and Buddhist nationalism for promoting Nazi Germany.

Another, apparently less successful strategy of the Nazi network was to use religion to disguise political propaganda among Indians and Sri Lankans. The efforts to include educated Hindus in the Nazi network through the *Gaudiya* Mission did not appear to be very productive. The purported endeavours of Hoffmann to spread Germany's influence among the nationalist-minded Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka were rendered unsuccessful by the colonial government.

Nazi propaganda resonated well with the German Society of the Aligarh Muslim University. However, though the society tried—and to some extent succeeded—to connect Nazi propaganda with the politics of

[76] IOR/L/PJ/12/507. Survey number 3, 1940, p. 3.

Muslim separatism in the Indian subcontinent, this success did not last long, as we have noted.

This chapter thus points to the complex entanglements—voluntary or otherwise—of ideological and material concerns on the part of the Nazi network and its associates in embarking on a brand of cultural politics that made use of different religions in the Indian subcontinent. This brand of cultural politics, as the chapter shows, was fully dependent on the priorities set by the Nazi regime.

Finally, it is imperative to remember that most Indians rejected the Nazi propaganda overtures, irrespective of the religious or secular garbs in which they were presented. It is a significant and proud heritage that today's India would do well to call to mind.

References

Alcade, Angel. 2020. The transnational consensus: Fascism and Nazism in current research. *Contemporary European History* 29: 243–252.

Anningson, Ryan. 2021. *Theories of the self, race and essentialization in Buddhism. The United States and the Asian 'other', 1899–1957*. New York: Routledge.

Barooah, Nirode K. 2004. *Chatto: The life and times of an Indian anti-imperialist in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2018. *Germany and the Indians: Between the wars*. Norderstedt: BoD.

Bhatt, Chetan. 2001. *Hindu nationalism: Origins, ideologies and modern myths*. Oxford: Berg.

Casolari, Marzia. 2000. Hindutva's foreign tie-ups in the 1930s: Archival evidence. *Economic and Political Weekly* 35 (4): 222–225.

D'Souza, Eugene. 2000. Nazi propaganda in India. *Social Scientist* 28 (5/6): 77–90.

Fischer-Tiné, Harald. 2013. Arya Samaj. In *Handbook of Oriental studies*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst and Angelika Malinar. Leiden: Brill.

Framke, Maria. 2013. *Delhi—Rom—Berlin: Die indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus 1922–1939*. Darmstadt: WBG.

———. 2014. Die Rolle der Berliner Indologie und Indienkunde im Dritten Reich. In *Indologie und Südasienstudien im Berlin: Geschichte und Positionsbestimmung*, ed. Maria Framke, Hannelore Lötzke, and Ingo Strauch. Berlin: Trafo.

———. 2021. Nationalsozialismus, antikolonialer Widerstand und Exilerfahrungen: Deutsch-indische und deutsch-deutsche Begegnungen in Britisch-Indien der 1930er und 1940er Jahre. In *The Bombay talkies limited: Akteure-deutsche Einflüsse-kulturhistorischer Kontext*, ed. Jörg Zedler, 103–135. Munich: GmbH.

Framke, Maria, and Jana Tschurenev. 2018. Umstrittene Geschichte. (Anti-) Faschismus und (Anti-)Kolonialismus in Indien. *PROKLA Zeitschrift für Kritische Sozialwissenschaft* 40 (158): 67–83.

Gesche, Katja. 2006. *Kultur als Instrument der Außenpolitik totalitärer Staaten: Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut 1933–1945*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Ghosh, Durba. 2017. *Gentlemanly terrorists: Political violence and the colonial state in India 1919–1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gould, William. 2004. *Hindu nationalism and the language of politics in late colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hecker, Helmuth. 1995. *Der erste deutsche Bhikkhu: Das bewegte Leben des Ehrwürdigen Nyanatiloka (1878–1957) und seine Schüler*. Konstanz: University of Konstanz Press.

Junginger, Horst. 2008. From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan tradition. In *The study of religion under the impact of fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger, 105–177. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2017a. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 274–279. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.15496/publikation-35433.

———. 2017b. Walther Wüst. In *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Akteure, Netzwerke, Forschungsprogramme*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch, Ingo Haar, and Alexander Pinwinkler, 925–933. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.15496/publikation-35430.

Kheiri, Sattar. 1934. Editorial. *Journal of the German Society* 1 (1): 3.

———. 1935a. What is Hitler Youth? *Journal of the German Society* 1 (2): 5–6.

———. 1935b. Germany's 'labour service' and house of comradeship. *Journal of the German Society* 1 (2): 7–8.

Koop, Volker. 2009. *Hitlers Fünfte Kolonne: Die Auslands-Organisation der NSDAP*. Berlin: BeBra Verlag.

Kuhlmann, Jan. 2003. *Subhas Chandra Bose und die Indienpolitik der Achsenmächte*. Berlin: Hans Schiler.

Liebau, Heike. 2019a. Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen: Das Berliner Indische Unabhängigkeitskomitee in den Akten des Politischen Archivs des Auswärtigen Amts (1914–1920). *MIDA Archival Reflexicon*. https://www.projekt-mida.de/reflexicon/unternehmungen-und-aufwiegelungen-das-berliner-indische-unabhaengigkeitskomitee-in-den-akten-des-politischen-archivs-des-auswaertigen-amts-1914-1920/. Accessed 18 December 2022.

———. 2019b. Navigating knowledge, negotiating positions: The Kheiri brothers on nation and Islam. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45 (3): 341–361.

Lubinski, Christina, Valeria Giacomini, and Klara Schnitzer. 2021. Internment as a business challenge: Political risk management and German multinationals in colonial India (1914–1947). *Business History* 63 (1): 72–97.

Michels, Eckard. 2005. *Von der Deutschen Akademie zum Goethe Institut: Sprach- und auswärtige Kulturpolitik 1923–1960*. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Motadel, David. 2014. *Islam and Nazi Germany's war*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Bellknap Press.

Poewe, Karla O. 2006. *New religion and the Nazis*. New York: Routledge.

Prakash, Inder. 1966. *Hindu Mahasabha: Its contribution to Indian politics.* Nagpur: Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha.

Roland, Joan G. 1998. *Jewish communities of India: Identity in a colonial era.* London: Routledge.

Roy, Baijayanti. 2016. Friedrich Max Müller and the emergence of identity politics in India and Germany. *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 85 (2/3): 217–228.

———. 2021. India Institute of the Deutsche Akademie (1928–1945). *MIDA Archival Reflexicon.* https://www.projekt-mida.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Roy-Baijayanti-India-Institute-of-the-Deutsche-Akademie-1928-45.pdf. Accessed 20 December 2022.

Sardella, Ferdinando. 2013. *Modern Hindu personalism: The history, life and thought of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2019. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and ISCKON. In *Modern Hinduism*, ed. Torkel Brekke. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schnabel, Reimund. 1968. *Tiger und Schakal: Deutsche Indienpolitik 1941–1943.* Vienna: Europa Verlag.

Scholten, Dirk. 2001. *Sprachverbreitungspolitik des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Taylor, Robert H. 2009. *The state in Myanmar.* London: Hurst.

Winkler, Ken. 1990. *A thousand journeys: The biography of Lama Anagarika Govinda.* London: Element Books.

CHAPTER 12

Curating the Fragments of Local Modernities: The Menaka Digital Archive from the Perspective of Ongoing Research

Markus Schlaffke, Isabella Schwaderer,
and Parveen Kanhai

The Menaka-Archive (www.menaka-archive.org) is a digital meta-archive that collects, links and researches documents related to the choreographic works of Leila Roy-Sokhey (1899–1947), better known under her stage name 'Madame Menaka'. The collection focuses on materials from the broader context of the Menaka ballet's European tour of 1936–38. A

M. Schlaffke (✉)
Bauhaus-University Weimar, Weimar, Germany
e-mail: markus.schlaffke@uni-weimar.de

I. Schwaderer
University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany
e-mail: isabella.schwaderer@uni-erfurt.de

P. Kanhai
Schiedam, The Netherlands
e-mail: info@toentezien.nl

283

collaborative group of authors from different research fields run the archive project (Schlaffke and Schwaderer 2021). Since 2019, the project's database has been publicly accessible as a website. It links digital holdings from various international archival institutions (for example, the Dutch digital library *Delpher*, numerous German state archives, or regional newspaper archives and collections). At the same time, previously non-indexed documents in private ownership have been digitized and mapped in the context of the Menaka-Archive group. The website also contains a research blog inviting authors to document and comment on their engagements with the findings in the Menaka Archive.

The collection is a repository for all documents on the tours of the 'Menaka Indian ballet' through Europe and South Asia. Moreover, it hosts international dance history research focusing on the post-colonial history of the arts in India and the reinvention and rediscovery of traditional performance arts, for example *Kathak* and *Bharatanātyam*, in the course of national cultural reform in India and their transnational history of entanglement (Bakhle 2005; Qureshi 2006; Schlage, Chap. 7 in this volume; Soneji 2012; Walker 2016).

The Menaka Archive also provides a framework in which to explore new forms of digital archiving. The findings on modernizing international dance in the 1920s and 1930s, including the role of the relationship between India and Europe in it, thus call for a much broader examination of the constitution, modalities, and epistemology of the tangled archive on modernism. The structure and practicality of the digital collection make it necessary to reflect critically on the archive's productivity, namely its collecting, registering, ordering, curating, and publishing practices.

The way in which the memorabilia of Menaka's Indian ballet are scattered around the world and embedded in the most diverse archival institutions and individual memories is gradually making apparent what we are trying to grasp with notions such as multiple modernities, heterogeneous temporalities, and local modernities.

Here, digital archiving should not only be understood as preparatory work for historiographical research but also as a research method in and of itself. This helps to classify the complex political, geographical, and artistic impact of the dance avant-garde in the context of transcultural, postnational and colonial historical narratives in a nuanced way. Some ideological links between India and Germany presented in this publication intersect with those in the Menaka archive, for example, the ethical–aesthetic arguments and the spiritual or racist categories in which dance was discussed in the first half of the twentieth century.

Since the publication of the digital collection of the Menaka Archive, a number of items in the archive's collection have been examined by a range of international researchers from several different disciplines (Cradduck 2022; Fernando 2022; Sawjani 2021; Vargas-Cetina 2020; Vargas-Cetina and Kang 2020; Zedler 2021).

Some of the research in this volume on references to India in German art and philosophy in the lead-up to the First World War has drawn on the preliminary work done in setting up the Menaka Archive (see Schwaderer's and Schlaffke's Chaps. 5 and 6 in this volume). Parveen Kanhai succeeds in placing the actual dance repertoire of the Menaka ballet in the context of the international dance world of the inter-war years by connecting Dutch and German sources in the collection (see Kanhai, Chap. 8 in this volume).

These studies trace the Indian dance avant-garde backwards and thus bring into view a far-reaching perspective of entangled Indian–European art history. This shows, for example, how much the perception of Indian artists in 1936–38 was anchored in the continuity of a distinctively European discourse before the First World War. To illustrate these connections, in this chapter, we offer a brief overview of the methodological approaches of the Menaka Archive and some results of the ongoing research (Fig. 12.1).

Building the Archive

The Menaka ballet's tour of Europe lasted from 1936 to 1938. With five other dancers and a supporting orchestra of six musicians, Leila Sokhey's ensemble performed at hundreds of German theatres over three years. The tour mostly covered France, Belgium and the Netherlands, but there were occasional performances in northern and eastern Europe as well. As it turns out, this extensive programme is well-documented but needs to be researched. Apart from the biography of Menaka's student, Damayanti Joshi, who took part in the tour as a thirteen-year-old girl (Joshi 1989), little was known about the international activities of Indian ballet. For national dance research in India, Sokhey's work has been considered essential to the revival of the traditional *Kathak* repertoire. However, there was little further research on this because no coherent heritage survived Sokhey's premature death in 1947. The numerous documents in European archives on the reception of the Indian ballet were difficult to access and had not been indexed. Hence, the initial idea of creating a
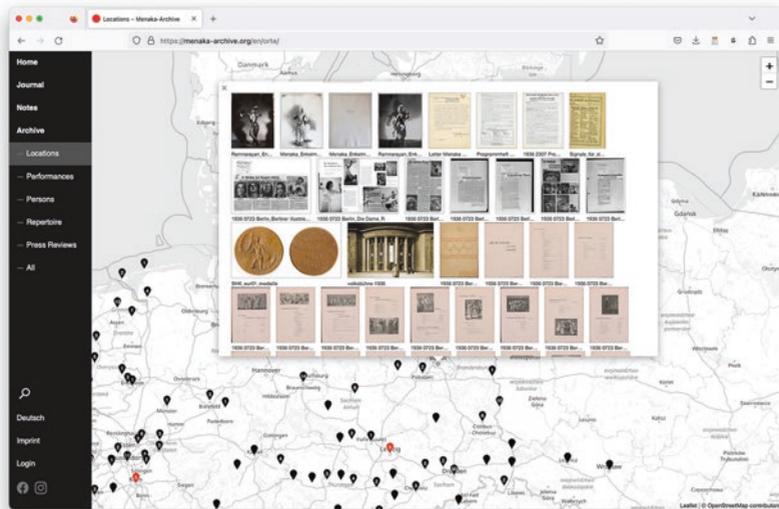
Fig. 12.1   Menaka-Archive website interface, www.menaka-archive.org, © Markus Schlaffke

digital Menaka collection was to compile the documents that could be found in Europe and make them accessible to international research on an open-source basis. The collection, therefore, primarily represents Sokhey's artistic activity over a period of more than twenty years, as mainly anchored in the avant-garde of international dance and in the aesthetic discourses of European modernism.

When research for the Menaka Archive's digital collection began in 2015, it initially seemed as if the Menaka ballet's tour of Europe would forever remain a mystery because only fragmentary sources were available. These were mostly *ad acta* documents, random testimonies and marginal footnotes from European sources. From the scattered findings, only a very rough picture could emerge—a newspaper article, a programme, a ticket, or a faded photograph. In the history of international dance, a seemingly marginal event like the Menaka tour had yet to promise new insights. As irritating as the presence of Indian artists in Nazi Germany shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War may have seemed at first glance, it fitted with the dazzling kaleidoscope of exotic decor that characterized the

end of the 1930s, without which neither the entertainment industry, avant-garde art, nor fascist aesthetics could have survived.

However, with each additional finding, the overall picture of the tour became exponentially denser. The Menaka Archive was initially designed to store material associated with Sokhey's 1936–38 tour. At present (beginning of 2023), the website has approximately 1400 documents stored in its database. These cover the entirety of Sokhey's journey, including her initial performance in 1928, her 1931/2 tour of Europe, and her productions staged in India between 1938 and 1947. The collection has reached a critical mass of documents, thus allowing the real face of the dance tour to emerge. Today, we have a clearer view of the outlines of the local modernity that provided the context in which Leila Sokhey created her Indian ballet.

A first glance at some exemplary items in the Menaka archive reveals the often-surprising order of global interconnections:

- In a cupboard, among other personal documents in Irfan Muhammad Khan's family home in Kolkata, are mementoes from the *sarod* virtuoso, Sakhawat Hussain Khan's (1875–1955) career. For three years, Sakhawat Khan had performed what he considered to be India's national cultural heritage on stages in Nazi Germany. His repertoire was that of the Muslim musicians cultivated in the Moghul courts of northern India in the eighteenth century. The story of these Muslim musicians, however, was never fully absorbed into the vast nation-building project of India's cultural transformation. Sakhawat Khan's memoirs of his travels through Germany keep alive a remnant of the Indian musician's self-image as embedded in the transformation of the cultural landscape that seized Germany from 1933 onwards.
- Almost every local newspaper archive pertaining to the Menaka ballet contains announcements, preliminary reports, and often detailed reviews of the Indian ballet's performances. These scattered pieces of text are in a special way representative of the fragmented nature of the Menaka sources. Only a few of the holdings in the German newspaper archives have been digitized (unlike those of many neighbouring countries), so research on the other texts had to be carried out in a detective-like and painstaking manner. Other archive holdings were lost in the war, such as the estate of the Mannheimer Konzertdirektion, the agency that organized the Menaka tour in Germany from 1937

onwards and whose records were destroyed in a bombing raid. Those newspaper scraps that could be located and have been carefully added to the Menaka Archive database provide valuable information on performance venues and dates and make it possible to mark the Menaka ballet tour and its cross-references on a map of the world. The newly digitized edition of *The Bombay Chronicle* allowed for even more interesting findings such as the performances in North India at the beginning of Menaka's career, as well as interesting comparative data on other artists related to Menaka in India.

These texts cover a range of discourses, some loosely connected, some not. Renowned art critics paid detailed attention to Leila Sokhey's choreography and incorporated it into the discourse of modern dance, in the process irritatingly blurring the semantics of aesthetic, political and ethnographic knowledge. The spectators and writers seem obsessed with the beauty of the dancers—their flexible bodies, slender silhouettes, bronze skin, the intricate play of their hands and fingers, and their always noble faces that are never disfigured by too much emotion.

Such remarks are, however, never simply neutral observations of what is seen on stage, but, on the contrary, reconnect to a broader discourse that connects the notion of India to a hierarchically structured framework of separate races of people. Thus, in 1936, a debate continued in the shadow of national socialist cultural policy that had been in vogue since before the First World War but had remained unanswered by the avant-garde. It now gained new impetus in the context of the *völkisch* (racialized) reorganization of the German cultural landscape and raised many questions about the nature of the modern artwork that the progressive avant-garde had also put forward. Unintentionally, the Indian artists provided ample illustrative material for an ongoing quest of German society from the perspective of 're-rooting' the national culture in Germany based on *völkisch* and racist principles (see Schlaffke and Schwaderer 2021).

- In the theatre archive of the Allard Pierson collection in Amsterdam, we come across the estate of the German impresario Ernst Krauss (1887–1958), who helped shape cultural life in the Dutch capital in the 1920s and 1930s. Krauss used his extensive network in the German theatrical world to create a space for the avant-garde of European expressive dance and modernist folklore from India and Southeast Asia. Despite being forced to conform to Ministry of

Propaganda guidelines, Krauss continued to organize performance after performance of the Menaka ballet—whether in provincial health resorts or on the grand stage of international dance at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.

The German impresario's work still resonates in romantic nineteenth-century Amsterdam. Krauss belonged to the generation born around 1880 that grew up in the full pathos of the romantic image of the artist—Ernst Krauss had dreamt of being an artist (Schlaffke 2020) and abandoned his merchant education to become a poet. Although he did not achieve a breakthrough as a writer, he wrote poems throughout his life, sensitive little observations about nature and emotional stirrings irritatingly published between the *völkisch* propaganda articles of a German newspaper during the war and the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. They remind us of how art interferes with the gears of political power. As in the case of the Munich–Gladbach doctor Felix Gotthelf, who around 1900 gave up his medical practice to write an opera of the future (see Schlaffke, Chap. 6, and Schwaderer, Chap. 5 in this volume), in Ernst Krauss, we are dealing with one of those modern individuals who put their bourgeois existence on the line for the sake of an artistic self-invention. Moreover, everywhere, the threads of the non-European world weave into the rupture of such lives. Today, Ernst Krauss's romantic poems about nature languish in archive folders alongside a black-and-white photographic portrait of Sokhey, alias 'Madame Menaka'.

- From London, the British collector Ian Sawyer sends documents from Adolf Hitler's (1889–1945) private office to the Menaka Archive. It is an exchange of letters between Madame Menaka and Hitler's secretariat. It contains an invitation personally written by Leila Sokhey to the German chancellor of the Reich to attend a performance of her Indian ballet in Berlin. A translation of the invitation from English to German and a polite refusal by Hitler's secretary is enclosed with the documents (Schwaderer 2022).
- An orange and gold skirt from Sokhey's collection of costumes, which many German newspapers had mentioned as a shining requisite of Menaka's dance of Usha, the goddess of dawn, surprisingly appears in Vancouver, Canada. It is in the possession of the dancer/historian Karen McKinlay Kurnaedy (see McKinlay Kurnaedy 2021), who is the keeper of the Hanova sisters' estate. Gertrud (1903–2002) and Magda (1905–92) Hanova (their German name was Hahn, but

they adopted the Czech form for professional purposes), were two German-Jewish dancers from what is now Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad). They studied dance in Europe and ran a successful school in their hometown. In the 1930s, they fled from Europe to Bombay just in time to escape the Holocaust. They continued teaching dance there and for several years worked with Leila Sokhey. Their joint programmes show that Menaka's Indian ballet extended well beyond the boundaries of the national Indian dance renaissance and that she had always kept a foot in the international world of modern dance. Menaka and the Hanova sisters' shared vision ended with Menaka's death in 1947, for that was the year that brought India both independence from colonization and partition, along with its bloody conflicts. The Hanova sisters left India for England and later Canada, where they opened a dance school that flourished for decades. The costume Menaka wore for her tour in Germany, which the Hanova sisters brought with them when they moved to Canada, is one of the few artefacts to have survived from among the dancer's personal possessions (Schwaderer 2021). Here, we find a trace of materiality, a medium of the archive's ideological interconnections (Fig. 12.2).

Scholarly Approaches and Focus of Research

Artistic Research

In his dissertation on modernism in dance in Kolkata, Mumbai and Berlin, Markus Schlaffke (2022) realized that the findings from the Menaka tour of 1936–38 could only be examined as constituents of an entangled archive that could not be systematized but at best navigated from different directions. The aim of the study was to bring substantial and inconsequential traces into contact with each other. These, for example, would include recordings, texts, sounds, memories of fleeting performances, oral traditions and how they are still reflected today in gestures, habitus, ways of speaking, and archival orders. Various documentary methods and experimental layouts of artistic research practices were at this moment used. The intention was to consider the history of Indian ballet not only as a historical case but also as an active cultural field in which situated knowledge and embodied memories continue to affect the present. For example, the Khan family archive in Kolkata represents such a transversal memory to national historiography. Material from sixteen generations of professional musical

Fig. 12.2 Paper clippings from German dailies, www.menaka-archive.org, © Markus Schlaffke

activity is collected there by the descendants of a significant Indian musical family (Lucknow–Shahjahanpur–Gharana). The biographies of the *gharana* musicians reflect all the major political transformations of modern India. These musicians not only passed on their repertoire and artistic self-representation in an unbroken genealogy of oral tradition but also documented them in their writings. This family memory is still active, for example, in the person of Irfan Khan, who embodies the repertoire and the *gharana* style—and who constitutes a counternarrative of Indian musical history (Katz 2017).

During research on the Menaka Archive, Schlaffke (2016) made a documentary film of Irfan Khan retracing the stages of his grandfather Sakhawat Hussain Khan's travels with the Menaka ballet in Germany. The film also documents Irfan's concert performances at selected stops along the route of the tour, which act as productive memory triggers. Such documentary techniques make it possible to address the archive from the perspective of its present agency. In the documentary film's format, a complex interplay of memory is situated, for example, in a scene that records how

Irfan Khan accidentally discovers some shellac discs in the German Broadcasting Archive that contained sound recordings of the Menaka ensemble. These recordings, made in 1937 during a performance at the Volksoper in Hamburg, and in which Irfan can identify his grandfather's input, are the only surviving sound recordings of the Menaka ensemble. By relistening to the audio document, the contingency and structural continuity of history merge and resonate in Irfan's musical memory.

This again illustrates how the power of archives and the juxtaposition of different memory media constitute history. It is evident wherever a retrospective collection of documents for the Menaka Archive turns up in surprising localities. Sophisticated reviews of the Indian ballet in the German feuilleton, German news propaganda in which we subsequently see the steps towards the Second World War, as well as advertisements for washing powder, sausages and hair pomade create an unchangeable coexistence in which something of that 'historical simultaneity' appears, which historian Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2003), for example, is only able to reconstruct as *hypertext* in his description of the year 1926.

The findings of the Menaka archive also form such a hypertext, which can be read from the edges, the gaps, but above all from its mediality, which the only known film recordings of the Menaka ballet vividly illustrate. These were made in 1938 for the German feature film *Der Tiger von Eschnapur*, directed by Richard Eichberg (1938). The Menaka ballet can be seen in a short sequence, performing part of the repertoire that was also performed in German theatres. *The Tiger of Eschnapur*, on the other hand, is an important document of German cinema history. The material is deeply rooted in the popular exoticism of the German imagination of India and goes back to the beginnings of the German film industry. Based on the novel *The Indian Tomb* by Thea von Harbou (1918), the material was filmed a total of three times—in 1921 by Joe May, a pioneer of German monumental cinema, in 1938 by Richard Eichberg, and in 1959 by Fritz Lang, who had already created *Metropolis*, one of the icons of modern cinema.

The film series thus forms a dense historical sediment of cinematographic history. As in a drill core, the layers of time shortly after the First World War, shortly before the Second World War and in the German postwar period reveal how current ideological questions are negotiated and continued in the subject of Indian dance. Here, the medium of the film creates one of the irritatingly vibrating neighbourhoods where colonial

exoticist curiosity and the elitist discourse on the nature of modern art-work unfold in the ever-refracted gaze of the spectator (Schlaffke 2020).

Aryan Bodies on Stage

The digital archive collection has, for the first time, made the broad dis-cursive reception of Indian ballet in Europe accessible for reading in con-text. In Indian art history, Menaka's work is acknowledged as a contribution to revitalizing the north Indian *Kathak* dance. Meanwhile, in Europe, the idea of a national resurgence through art and culture, prominently fea-tured by Menaka's Indian ballet, was compatible with social-revolutionary discourses and aesthetic utopias. Especially in Germany, the Indian ballet provided a special 'platform in projecting modern longings for a return to one's origins' (Baxmann 2008: 42). Particularly in the 1930s, dance per-formances from Asia met with widespread interest because they 'seemed to refer to bodily knowledge that had been lost in Europe' (Baxmann 2008: 42). Such considerations about cultures and origins were a pan-European phenomenon, but the blending of folklore and racial ideology in Germany was almost inevitable (Schlaffke and Schwaderer 2021).

Hundreds of newspaper articles meticulously collected from local news-paper archives at the German venues of the tour, show how very specific German cultural issues were addressed in relation to the Indian dancers. Isabella Schwaderer is working on a critical analysis of underlying dis-courses in the data with a view to establishing which elements of knowl-edge and what stereotypes (for example, Orientalist, racist-ethnic, ideological) emerge from the articles, and how the various groups involved in writing and reading them contribute to their existence. This includes a linguistic analysis of selected articles on what role the performances played in actualizing specific knowledge about India. This specific knowledge was based on, first an assumed consanguinity of Indo-German peoples, and second a vision of history as a realization of a cultural utopia that could manifest in the appropriate orientation of artistic production. A recon-struction of the semiotic sphere connected to notions of the 'self' and the 'other' shows how an Indian theatrical event served to consolidate a *völkisch/*racialized perception of art in general, above all of music (Schwaderer 2023).

The omnipresence of the Aryan in German descriptions of the Indian artists constitutes a field of research in itself. In what ways do the texts reveal an Aryan focus, or ideas about Aryan origins? What do the texts say

about the performers' visible features—their bodies, postures, movements and skin shade? Contrasting these with descriptions from the Netherlands and other European countries shows similarities and differences in perceptions of Indian dance (see Kanhai, Chap. 8 in this volume).

From this perspective, the theatre reviews not only reveal something about how the Menaka ballet was perceived in Germany but they also shed light on the broader cultural knowledge of India in German-speaking Europe. Among other things, the reviews show how closely the public discourse matched political attempts to create a master narrative of a racially homogeneous and spiritually oriented social utopia: what happened on stage on a particular evening was only to a lesser extent documented. More to the point, the German theatre critics, compared with those from other European nations, helped to construct a specifically German identity.

Overviewing the data in the Menaka archive, it becomes clear how blurred and imprecise public ideas about the kinship of peoples and the racially motivated ideologies that developed from them must have been, at least at the time when Menaka's ballet was performing in Germany. Overall, the reviews offer a diverse picture of how themes on India, academic knowledge, and race theories were addressed. Nevertheless, a racist view of cultures was constantly present in the background in the form of exoticism and racism on the one hand, and ideas of kinship, closeness and foreignness, on the other.

Debate on the 'Revival' of Indian Classical Dance

The 1930s saw crucial developments in what was later labelled classical Indian dance styles. In this volume, Schlage (Chap. 7) describes how national circumstances caused a shift in the relationship between non-hereditary artists and the traditional communities in which the Southeast Indian classical dance tradition known as *Bharatanāṭyam* had evolved. What is still missing is an in-depth description of similar shifts in North Indian *Kathak*. The developments in music have been studied through a close collaboration with the descendants of Sakhawat Khan (Katz 2017). With the digitization of Indian newspapers like *The Bombay Chronicle*, completely new insights into performance culture and art criticism are now possible. One example might be Sokhey's collaboration with *The Bombay Chronicle*'s art critic Kanaiyalal Hardevram Vakil (1890/1–1937) (see Kanhai, Chap. 8 in this volume). Other South Asian and South East

Asian newspaper archives, such as the Singapore Newspaper Archive (https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/) could provide further insights into the performances of dancers and musicians in Asia. Articles from the years 1933–35 and 1938–47 reveal how Sokhey responded to contemporary debates and developments in classical dance and how audiences in India and beyond received her work.

Digital data collected for the Menaka Archive prompted more traditional archival research by Parveen Kanhai. For example, an analysis of newspaper advertisements revealed that, in 1932, Krauss had acted as an impresario for Sokhey and that Uday Shankar's performances at an exhibition in France the previous year had been well received. Again, in 1936, although their paths never crossed, both artists performed separately in various cities in the Netherlands and Germany. On this tour, Hugo Helm (Salomon Hugo Hellmann, 1884–1943) acted as Shankar's impresario, which suggests some coordination between different impresarios, though the available sources cannot verify this. Furthermore, Helm's involvement with Shankar was previously unknown. This connection acted as a catalyst for further research into the Jewish Czech impresario, whose name is forgotten, but an attempt is being made to build a comprehensive overview of his career and life in the Netherlands (1924–40). Sources for this include programmes from his theatre in The Hague as well as digitized data from the Arolsen Archives (https://arolsen-archives.org), the world's largest archive on the victims and survivors of the Nazi regime, and the war archives of the Netherlands Red Cross. The latter can be accessed only on request at the Dutch national archive.

Some Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the Menaka Archive collection and research work. The project uses the new potential of digital collecting and networking to map, link and research historical documents on the artistic work of Leila Sokhey, aka Madame Menaka. The open, collaborative nature of the digital archive offers some new methodological approaches to historiographical research and casts a fresh light on some of the topics presented in this volume.

The Menaka Archive collection focuses on data from the broader context of the Menaka ballet's European tour of 1936–38. Documents on the Indian ballet's performances just before the start of the Second World War reveal a wide range of ideological, political and material links. The

anti-colonial cultural reforms in India, the political landscape in Germany shifting towards national socialism and the discourse of aesthetic modernism in Europe that goes a long way back, all played their part in determining the shape of the dance performances from India.

The particular shape of the collaborative digital collection opens up different perspectives on an interwoven global history: on the one hand, it underlines the fragmentary character of the objects it contains. Interconnections thus become visible precisely where random findings seem at first glance to be lying unconnected next to each other. Various documentary and artistic research methods are engaged in describing this aspect of the Menaka collection as the productivity of the archive and as bringing different aspects of memory into play with each other.

The focus on the temporally circumscribed framework of the Menaka tour in Europe from 1936 to 1938 offers the possibility of a pointed analysis of broader cultural discourses of the period. In the many German press reviews of the Indian ballet's performances, we can see how the discussion of Indian dance deals with a still open question about the essence of modern German artwork. This is the question of the eventual reconnection of cult and culture, or art as a potential response to alienation in the modern world. Such considerations already appear throughout Richard Wagner's operatic work, all the way to his imitators such as Felix Gotthelf, who, even during the First World War, thought of demonstrating to modern humanity the reconciliation of knowledge and faith employing the 'Indian renaissance' (Gotthelf 1917; Schlaffke, Chap. 6 and Schwaderer, Chap. 5 in this volume). In the whole range of reviews, a specific discourse of the body can gradually be deciphered that runs between the coordinates of exoticizing racism, determination of the 'self' and 'other' and latent anti-Semitism.

One approach we have taken in previous attempts to unlock the archival material has been to bundle diverse voices into small, incomplete stories. The work with contradictory resources is devoted more to illustrating small but coherent narratives than to providing a blanket explanation. Looking, for example, at the variety of religious allusions in the texts, it is difficult to avoid assigning a spiritual dimension to Indian culture in general, yet at the same time associate dance with a new spiritual anchoring of the human being. Rather, what seems to be common to all is that religion functions as a repository of knowledge and ideas; it is where individuals develop their sense of belonging and meaning, shape their sphere of action, interact with each other and become creative.

When we speak of global or entangled history, we are acknowledging that the narratives of national historiographies still need to be settled. The concept of entangled history emphasizes that history is made at the margins, at the contact zones, in ambiguity, where genealogies blur, and where power is not only perpetuated but also reconfigured. 'Entangled history' points beyond the narrow horizon of Eurocentric colonial narratives. It promises to bring the periphery of shared experiences into view. At the same time, it carries the deceptive promise that the entanglement of the archive could be unravelled if only all memories, pieces of the collection and traces were first identified and then transferred to their rightful places.

With respect to the Menaka archive, we face a tableau of scattered fragments and entangled memories that can hardly ever be moved to their rightful places but are only available in the guise of another memory. This suggests that they might be able to fill some gaps in the established narratives of modernity. For example, the history of modern dance would be complete if it contained narratives on the special ways in which modern locals thought about and shaped the world, but the Menaka Archive complicates such narratives. The potential of the digital collection thus lies in the points of contact between the objects, which cannot seamlessly be laid out end to end. It is where local history truly condenses into global history.

REFERENCES

Bakhle, Janaki. 2005. *Two men and music: Nationalism in the making of an Indian classical tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baxmann, Inge. 2008. Ein Archiv des Körperwissens: Ethnologie, Exotismus und Mentalitätsforschung in den Archives Internationales de la Danse. In *Körperwissen als Kulturgeschichte. Die Archives Internationales de la Danse (1931–1952)*, ed. Inge Baxmann, 27–48. Munich: Kieser.

Cradduck, Lucinda. 2022. *Spiritual dimensions in the music of Edmund Rubbra*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Eichberg, Richard, director. 1938. *Der Tiger von Eschnapur*. Motion pictures. Movie gems. Adventure gems of cinematic history.

Fernando, Anujah. 2022. [Projekt PADB] Wissensmodul: Antikoloniale Vernetzung von Inder:innen im Berlin der Zwischenkriegszeit. *korientation* (blog), 16 December. https://www.korientation.de/padb-wissensmodul-inderinnen-berlin-zwischenkriegszeit/. Accessed 11 April 2023.

Gotthelf, Felix. 1917. Referat über den Vortrag: Indischer Geist in der deutschen Kunst. *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 3: 267–269.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. 2003. *1926: Ein Jahr am Rand der Zeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Harbou, Thea von. 1918. *Das indische Grabmal*. Berlin: Ullstein.

Joshi, Damayanti. 1989. *Madame Menaka*. New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Katz, Max. 2017. *Lineage of loss: Counternarratives of North Indian music*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

McKinlay Kurnaedy, Karen. 2021. *Our love affair with dance*. Altona: FriesenPress.

Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt. 2006. Female agency and patrilineal constraints: Situating courtesans in the twentieth-century India. In *The courtesan's arts: Cross-cultural perspectives*, ed. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon, 312–331. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sawjani, Paavan. 2021. *Geographies of Indian dance: Mid-twentieth century Kathak on stage and on screen*. MRes thesis, University of Nottingham. http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/65186/.

Schlaffke, Markus, director. 2016. *The albatross around my neck – retracing echoes of loss between Lucknow and Berlin*. HD. Dokumentarfilm.

———. 2020. Produktionslogiken ästhetischer Erfahrung. In *Annäherungen an das Unaussprechliche*, ed. Isabella Schwaderer and Katharina Waldner, 199–224. Bielefeld: Transcript.

———. 2022. *Die Rekonstruktion des Menaka-Archivs: Navigationen durch die Tanz-Moderne zwischen Kolkata, Mumbai und Berlin 1936–38*. Dissertation Bauhaus-University Weimar. https://e-pub.uni-weimar.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/4706.

Schlaffke, Markus, and Isabella Schwaderer. 2021. Navigating the Menaka-Archive: An interdisciplinary platform on entangled histories of modern dance across India and Europe. In *Archival Reflexicon*, ed. Anandita Bajpai and Heike Liebau, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2022-00030. Accessed 11 April 2023.

Schwaderer, Isabella. 2021. Dance beyond boundaries: Menaka and the Hanova sisters. Menaka-Archiv. https://menaka-archive.org/forschung/dance-beyond-boundaries-menaka-and-the-hanova-sisters/. Accessed 11 April 2023.

———. 2022. Did Menaka dance for the Führer? Menaka Archive, https://menaka-archive.org/en/forschung/did-menaka-dance-for-the-fuehrer/. Accessed 11 April 2023.

———. 2023. "Exotic Sensation" or "Völkisch Art"? Press Reviews of the Indisches Ballett Menaka (Menaka Indian Ballet) on Tour Through Germany, 1936–1938. N.T.M. 31: 333–356. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00048-023-00362-1

Soneji, Davesh. 2012. *Unfinished gestures: Devadasis, memory, and morality in South India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vargas-Cetina, Gabriela. 2020. India and the translocal modern dance scene, 1890s–1950s. *Review of International American Studies* 13 (2): 39–59. https://doi.org/10.31261/rias.9805.

Vargas-Cetina, Gabriela, and Manpreet Kaur Kang. 2020. Cosmopolitanism, translocality, astronoetics: A multi-local vantage point. *Review of International American Studies* 13 (2): 29–38. https://doi.org/10.31261/rias.9804.

Walker, Margaret E. 2016. *India's Kathak dance in historical perspective*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Zedler, Jörg. 2021. *The Bombay Talkies Limited: Akteure – deutsche Einflüsse – kulturhistorischer Kontext*. Munich: Utzverlag.

Glossary

Terms in Indian Languages

Abhinayadarpaṇa (Sanskrit) 'Mirror of Gestures', a manual attributed to Nandikeshvara

advaita vedānta (Sanskrit) oldest extant tradition of the orthodox Hindu school Vedānta

ákṣiti śrávaḥ (Sanskrit) 'imperishable fame' (attributed to heroes)

Atharvaveda (Sanskrit) Vedic scripture

atman (Sanskrit) self, breath, concept of the universal self

bhakti (Sanskrit) Devotion

Bharatanāṭyam South East Indian classical dance form

Bhagavadgītā (Sanskrit) Hindu scripture; part of the epic *Mahābhārata*

bhikṣu (Sanskrit) monk

brahman (Sanskrit) unchanging, infinite, and transcendent reality

brahmin (brāhmaṇa) (Sanskrit) a varna (section) Hindu caste system as well as its members

cakra (Sanskrit) wheel, circle

Caryā Nṛtya (Sanskrit) Nepalese dance tradition

cāṇḍāla (Sanskrit) communities and its members considered below the four sections (varnas) of the Hindu caste system

Daśarūpakam (Sanskrit) treatise on popular theatre (tenth century)

devadāsī (Sanskrit) female ritual specialist, commonly associated with artistic proficiency

Eid al-Fitr (Urdu) Festival to end the fast of Ramadan

ganja (Hindi/Urdu) marihuana

gharana (Urdu) system of social organization linking Hindustani musicians or dancers by lineage or apprenticeship

guru–śiṣya (Sanskrit) (teacher–student) relationship

icai vēḷāḷar (isai vellala) (Tamil) Southeast Indian hereditary artists

Jamaat (Urdu) Muslim Community

kāma (Sanskrit) desire, longing

kamaṇḍal (Sanskrit) water pot with a spout

karma (Sanskrit) concept of action and its effects

Kathak (Sanskrit) North Indian classical dance form

kṣatriyaḥ (Sanskrit) varna (section) in the Hindu caste system associated with warrior aristocracy

Mahābhārata (Sanskrit) epic poem

māyā (Sanskrit) illusion, magic; appearance in Hindu philosophy

mleccha (Sanskrit) people of foreign extraction in ancient India

mujaddid (Arabic) a reformer who brings renewal to the religion each century

Naṭarāja (Sanskrit) king of dance (Shiva)

nattuvaṉār (Tamil) teacher of South Indian dance

Nāṭyaśāstra (Sanskrit) theatre manual

nāṭya (Sanskrit) dance and theatrical play

nirvāna (Sanskrit) concept in Indian religions denoting liberation from suffering and the cycle of birth and rebirth

nṛtta (Sanskrit) technical aspect of dance

nṛtya (Sanskrit) expressive of dance

om sound, syllable, mantra, invocation

paṭuẏā (Sanskrit) scroll painting

pūjā (Sanskrit) Hindu ritual

purāṇa (Sanskrit) genre of Indian literature

Rāmāyaṇa (Sanskrit) epic

ranga pujah (raṅgapūjā) (Sanskrit) cluster of rites practised before a performance

rakṣa demon

Ṛgveda (Sanskrit) ancient Indian collection of Vedic hymns

Sadir concert repertoire of *devadāsī* dancers

Sadir Kacheri   the Thanjavur Quartet's concert repertoire

saṅgha (Pali) Buddhist community

saṃnyāsī (Sanskrit) Hindu religious mendicant

sarod (Urdu) string instrument

satyagraha (satyāgraha) (Sanskrit) form of nonviolent resistance or civil resistance

Śakuntalā (Sanskrit) theatrical play by Kalidāsā

śāstra (Sanskrit) treatise or text

śloka (Sanskrit) sung verse

śvetadvīpa (Sanskrit) 'White Island', a mythical place

swadeshi (svadeśi) Movement for national independence in India (boycotting foreign goods and encouraging the use of domestic products)

swaraj (svarāj) 'self-rule', a popular slogan in Indian nationalism

swastika (svastika) symbol of divinity and spirituality in Indian religions, appropriated by the Nazi party

Taittirīya Saṃhitā (Sanskrit) seven books of Vedic/Sanskrit hymns and mantras

tat twam asi 'that are you', widely used by Schopenhauer as a euphemism for Hindu/Buddhist ethics

thālī (Sanskrit) metal plate

tṛṣṇā (Pali) thirst (for existence)

Vāyu (Sanskrit) Hindu 'wind' god, concept in Yoga

Veda (Sanskrit) a large body of religious texts

vedānta (Sanskrit) Hindu philosophical tradition

Vilasini Nāṭyam (Sanskrit) female dance tradition from Andhra Pradesh

vinayapiṭaka (Pali and Sanskrit) canonical collection of scripture of Theravada Buddhism

yātudhāna (Sanskrit) group of deities

zilli nabi (Islamic) prophet in the shadow of the Prophet Muhammad

Terms in the German Language

Ahnenerbe Ancestral heritage, SS think-tank active in Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1945

Ahnungsschauer 'shivers of foreboding'

Bayreuther Blätter journal founded by Richard Wagner

Bühnenweihfestspiel stage pageant

Deutsche Akademie an association for research and dissemination of German culture and language abroad

Deutschtum Germanness
Führererziehung education for (male hierarchic) leadership
Gesamtkunstwerk total work of art
Gestalt 'form', a technical term in psychoanalysis
Gleichschaltung coordination (of the public sector in the Nazi era)
Hakenkreuz swastika
Indischer Ausschuss India Institute
Kulturpolitik cultural politics
Kulturpolitische Abteilung cultural political department
Kunstreligion art religion
Lebensborn 'Source of Life', SS-run homes for the breeding of ideal 'Aryan' children
Lebensphilosophie philosophy of life, a dominant philosophical movement of German-speaking countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
Mittgart 'The abode of the Gods', an experimental vegetarian commune for the breeding of ideal 'Aryan' children
Morgenland Orient
Nationalgeist national sprit
Rassenkunde racial science in the Nazi context
Schauspiel spectacle
Selbstgleichschaltung voluntary self-coordination (of the public sector in the Nazi era)
Sinnbildforschung study of symbols related to *Ahnenerbe*
Thing Nordic Assembly (in Nazi context)
Unheimlich the uncanny
Ur- German prefix indicating 'original, earliest, primitive'
völkisch 'related to the people', racialized expression
Volk ethnos
Volksgeist national spirit
Volksgemeinschaft national community
Vormärz pre-March, the period preceding the March Revolution of 1848 in the German Confederation
Wirkzusammenhang causal connection; philosophical term
Wissenschaft science
Yule winter festival, historically observed by Germanic people
Zentralschau intuition, a pietist term
Zeitgeist spirit of the time

Index of Names[1]

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

Index of Terms[1]

A

Abhinayadarpaṇa, 156, 166

Abraham, 21

Agni, 235, 237, 243

Ahmadiyya, 40, 200, 214
  Lahore, 195, 211, 213, 215, 216
  missionaries, 215, 216

Ahmadiyya Reform Movement, 5, 195, 196

Ahnenerbe, 9, 223, 225, 234, 242

Alterity, 18, 19, 118, 128

American Guild for German Cultural Freedom, 196, 198

Ananda, 123

Anthropomorphic gods, 79

Anti-colonial, 4, 7, 10, 46, 164, 187, 296

Anti-Muslim, 47
  violence, 38

Anti-nautch movement, 167

Anti-Semite, 38, 42

Anti-Semitic, 38, 47, 108, 134, 225

Anti-Semitism, 38, 42, 44, 96, 107, 108, 296

Arctic, 232–244
  homeland, 235, 245

Art, Western, 155n15

Aryan, 4, 7, 10, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 48, 77, 78, 80, 82, 96, 100n1, 106, 183, 185, 195, 215, 224, 241, 242, 293–294
  ancestry, 185, 242
  bodies, 7
  culture, 80, 84, 225
  experience, 232–244
  heritage, 4, 10, 34
  India, 8
  Indian, 80
  origin, 186, 293
  primordialism, 241
  purity, 34, 42
  race, 7

---

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

311