i,Slam. Belonging and Difference on Stage in Berlin[1]

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'Islam belongs to Germany'. With these words, a young woman concluded forcefully her performance on the stage as part of the i,Slam Finale, an event held to celebrate the seventh anniversary of i,Slam, a collective of young Muslims, most of whom are slam poets. The jubilee took place in the Bärensaal (Bear Hall) of Berlin's Old City Hall in December 2018. Placed on a high plinth, the bronze sculpture of the bear, Berlin's symbol, overlooked the hall in which the audience gathered to listen to slam poets' recitations. i,Slam often chooses prominent locations for their large public events to amplify their visibility and presence in the city. This was the case with their fifth jubilee, too, during which the i,Slam Kunstpreis (i,Slam Art Prize) was awarded in 2016.[2] The ceremony attended by around 500 people took place in a convention centre in Berlin's Pariser Platz, just at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate. Belonging was also one of the themes addressed in the artists' works presented that evening, as evidenced by the video titled 'Heimkehr' ('Homecoming'), the prize winner. It shows a young Muslim woman hastening through a forest, against a soundtrack of recordings from rallies of the anti-Islam Pegida movement (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident; in German: *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*). At some point, she asks into the camera: 'How can it be that this country, the country of my father, my family, my friends, the country that is my home, that this country is betraying me? And with whom?'[3]

This chapter discusses how young Muslim slam poets negotiate their belonging through explicit and implicit references to Islam. Situating their practices in the current German context, it examines how they can contribute towards a notion of heritage that disrupts the binary of 'here' and 'there' – and, to some degree, of 'now' and 'then' – and that highlights perpetuation over preservation (Shaw 2021), as well as disrupting categories and making connections (Puzon, Macdonald and Shatanawi 2021). I reflect on how i,Slam poets grapple with the dilemma of wanting to be seen as German, on the one hand, and holding on to their 'Muslimness', on the other hand. To this end, I probe into their activity as constitutive of the young Muslim poets' understandings of belonging in Germany and analyse how this is articulated in their slam poetry and the practices in which it is embedded and embodied. In addition, I draw attention to the ways in which Islam is put on stage – literally in the case of i,Slam's events but also more broadly – and what comes into play when this happens. The idea of onstage is especially

salient here because poetry slam involves a contest in which young spoken word artists perform self-written lyrics in public.[4]

As I show below, i'Slam poets deploy certain characteristics of 'Islamic heritage', which can be defined as intangible, and combine them with a contemporary format of poetry performance. This practice exemplifies an embodied form of heritage-making that results in doing a new heritage as a new belonging. Before elaborating on this doing, I first delve into recent political debates on Islam in Germany in order to contextualise i,Slam's activities.

Belonging and recognition

The phrase 'Islam belongs to Germany' has a contested public history. It has been voiced on various occasions, especially by politicians. President Christian Wulff (2010–2012), for instance, famously pronounced that 'now Islam also belongs to Germany' in his 2010 speech delivered during the celebrations of '20 Years of German Unity' (Hildebrandt 2015). In 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel asserted that Islam 'belonged to' Germany at a press conference after the meeting with Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (2014–2016) in Berlin. Wulff's successor Joachim Gauck (2012–2017) broadly agreed, though with some reservations. He spoke about Islam followers, and not Islam, while declaring in a 2012 interview for the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* that 'Muslims who live here belong to Germany' (Hildebrandt and di Lorenzo 2012). Gauck explained his claim by stating that anyone 'who came here and does not only pay taxes but also likes being here, also because here he has rights and freedoms which he does not have there where he comes from, is one of us as long as he obeys the fundamental principles'. He added: 'I can also understand those who ask: Where did Islam shape this Europe, did it experience the Enlightenment, even a Reformation? I understand this as long as such questions do not carry a racist undertone' (ibid.). His references to the European Enlightenment and Reformation confirm the common presumption, at least in Germany, that Islam cannot 'fully' belong to the modern secular world[5] and therefore, cannot constitute a part of its heritage.

Public debates on Islam reached another level, so to speak, during the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and 2016, when Islam became an even more contentious subject. In 2018, Horst Seehofer, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior and a stark opponent of Angela Merkel's open-door refugee policy, sparked controversy when he stated: 'Islam does not belong to Germany'. He further clarified a couple of months later at the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*) – a forum for dialogue between the German State and Muslims living Germany[6] – when he said that Muslims residing in Germany belonged in that country. In these ongoing deliberations on belonging, the distinction is made between 'Islam' and 'Muslims'. Namely, discussions revolve around whether the former is or only the latter are part of German society, as well as around disputes over the incommensurability of Islam with a German *Leitkultur* (guiding or dominant culture). This is especially reflected in public statements of the nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, as in the claim of the party's deputy leader, Beatrix von Storch, that 'Islam is

a political ideology incompatible with the German Basic Law' ('Von Storch: "Islam nicht mit Grundgesetz vereinbar"', 2016).

A doing–undoing dynamic is a crucial aspect of these and other debates on belonging, as well as of the politics of recognition or the politics of difference. As Judith Butler notes, 'if the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that "undo" the person by conferring recognition, or "undo" the person by withholding recognition, then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced' (2004: 2). Drawing on Patchen Markell, Schirin Amir-Moazami's (2018) analysis of recognition and Islam in a liberal secular context illuminates how the marking of some groups and individuals is embedded in these schemes. She discusses the problematic dichotomy reproduced of an 'unmarked We' – the majority – and the marked minority and demonstrates how it has operated in Germany in relation to Muslims. This has played out along, though not exclusively, religious lines, casting Muslims as the religious Other, with either a Turk or an Arab standing as the predominant representation of the Muslim. Otherness, and the Other for that matter, is not merely perceived in terms of difference – and potentially as part of a valued diversity – but also positioned as culturally inferior (cf. Argyrou 2000) or as a kind of deviation from the norm (e.g. Fernando 2019). Amir-Moazami posits that a politics of recognition is predicated upon the marked–unmarked dyad as well as the inclusion exclusion dynamic (see e.g. Asad 2003). To make the point, she refers to Joachim Gauck's talk at the newly established Centre for Islamic Theology at Münster University in 2013. He then stated:

> And now Islam is also becoming one of the academic disciplines at our universities. Behind this is a reciprocal act of recognition: our society is changing, because it includes an increasing number of Muslims – just as Islam for its part is developing in contact with our society. This entails demands being imposed on both sides – that is all part of it. Admittedly, some people who are resistant to change try to make mileage out of it. But the majority knows that we can only live in fruitful coexistence if we treat each other with respect and come together in a spirit of openness. The foundations for this is *our* basic rights and freedoms, *our* history and language [emphasis added by S. A.-M.]. (2018: 434)

Gauck's speech[7] raises at least two interesting – yet quite problematic – issues that merit attention. Firstly, by not mentioning the established position of *Islamwissenschaft* (Islamic studies) in Germany, especially given that his talk was held in the context of the recent foundation of institutes of Islamic theology, Gauck ignores over a century-long presence of this academic discipline in Germany (see, e.g. Gräf, Krawietz and Moazami 2018). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, despite his assertion that recognition comes from 'both sides', that is, the majority and the minority, the quote, and especially the last sentence, clearly signals that the rights and history of the majority – the unmarked '*our*' – determine the nature of the recognition of the minority by the majority.

Elaborating on the politics of minorities making a claim for religious freedom in a liberal secular context, Saba Mahmood (2016) attends to the tension implicated in the concept of minority. She propounds that 'on the one hand, a minority is supposed to be an equal partner with the majority in the building of the nation; on the other hand, its difference (religious, racial, ethnic) poses an incipient threat to the identity of the nation

that is grounded in the religious, linguistic, and cultural norms of the majority' (ibid.: 32). As a result, the majority versus minority distinction fixes the role of 'both sides', that is, the non-Muslim majority and the Muslim minority, as well as who recognises whom. In addition, it reinforces the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy by picturing 'the majority' and 'the minority' in somewhat oppositional terms and grouping both separately as part of a collective sameness (Handler 1988). In what follows, I discuss how i,Slam poets challenge this binary logic in a German context by means of embodied heritage-making.

Muslim heritage on stage in Berlin

In 2011, i,Slam started its activity as an explicit response to the controversial book '*Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*' (translated into the English as 'Germany Abolishes Itself: How We Are Putting Our Country at Risk'). Authored by Thilo Sarrazin, former senator of finance for the State of Berlin, the monograph came out in 2010 and was widely criticised as racist and Islamophobic, though it was also positively received by some.[8] Shortly after its publication, many public debates about Muslim youth were held, but 'nobody talked to them', Youssef, i,Slam's co-founder, said disapprovingly. This prompted him to think about poetry slam, with which he had already experimented, as a space where young Muslims could speak for themselves.

The birth of poetry slam dates back to the mid-1980s when Marc Smith, a writer based in Chicago, initiated a more vibrant and engaging alternative to the format of open mic and other then current modes of poetry performance in the local Green Mill bar. Fairly quickly, this new form of cultural expression appealed to many, especially to minorities and marginalised groups and individuals.

i,Slam poets, mostly aged between 20 and 30 years, are from various ethnic backgrounds. The majority can be denoted as belonging to the Arab or Turkish diaspora, that is, to one or other of the two largest Muslim communities in Germany. i,Slam was the first group self-identifying openly as a Muslim collective on the German slam poetry scene. When I asked Youssef what characterised their activity as Islamic, rather than referring to Islam as a religion, he talked about different forms of discrimination towards minorities. Poems performed by i,Slam are not solely – or even primarily – concerned with Islam or multiple ways of being Muslim.[9] In their texts, the slam poets not only deal with discrimination against Muslims but also are critical of social injustice and 'global racism' more broadly.

Creating a 'stage' on which to present different ideas and views, i,Slam established a public platform through which to speak for themselves. Their Five Pillars of i,Slam, inspired by the concept of the five pillars of Islam (*arkan al-Islam*), reflect the general tenets of poetry slam. These pillars are: respect the poet (every poet gets his or her recognition regardless of their performance); own construction (every poet must ensure that the poems are their own texts – no intellectual theft); no aids (the poet is not allowed to use props such as costumes or musical instruments); time limit (the poet must not exceed the time limit of six minutes, otherwise they lose points); no verbalism (verbal attacks of any kind are prohibited – the Islamic framework must be respected here). Some of these rules resonate with what Jeanette Jouili (2012) terms '*halal* arts' (permissible arts),

which, as she explains,'includes, for instance, the avoidance of vulgarity and insulting speech, and respect for Islamic modesty requirements (the interpretation of these forms may, of course, vary). Often, however, the contents involve topics that reflect a political consciousness and a commitment to social justice' (ibid.: 402).

i,Slam crafted their self-image by drawing on the prominence of oral traditions in Islam. Their idea of slam poetry evokes public recitations, including *qira'at* (Qur'anic recitations), pointing to a well-established practice in Islam, also cultivated by i,Slam, as some of their events open with a recitation of the Qur'an.

Delineating i,Slam's beginnings, Youssef highlighted that the group established a 'symbiosis between their heritage [*Heritage* – he used an English word], legacy (*Vermächtnis*), ancestors (*Vorfahren*) and a modern form of poetry'. This symbiosis plays out in manifold ways. Their catchy name 'i,Slam' not only references Islam but also has the double entendre of 'I slam', which works in German (*Ich slamme*), too. Derived from the verb *qara'a*, which translates as 'read' or 'recite', the Arabic word *iqra'* (recite!) is believed to have been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, marking the beginnings of Islam.Youssef links this revelation to the way in which i,Slam was conceived when he had a Eureka moment and came up with the name *Ich slamme*, subsequently transformed into the neatly anglicised i,Slam. Therefore, the collective's official statement *Alles began mit einem Wort* (It all began with a word), which also features on their T-shirts, refers to both *Ich slamme* and *iqra'*.

13.1 Youssef performing on the stage © i,Slam.

Favouring speech over writing, the format foregrounds the salience of auditory experience and listening in Islam[10] (see, e.g. Hirschkind 2006; Kapchan 2016; McMurray 2021). Moreover, it alludes to storytelling considered an art form in, albeit not only, Mid-

dle Eastern cultures. For a *hakawati* (storyteller in Arabic), a story is important, yet a particular emphasis is placed on its delivery.

In her seminal ethnography, *Veiled Sentiments. Honour and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) mentions 'the social context of *performed* poetry' as vital for oral tradition. In the case of i,Slam, this concerns, among other things, audience participation, which is integral to a live performance. Lauren Osborne's (2016) description of Qur'anic recitations as an 'emergent phenomenon', when the performer and the audience enter into a sort of interaction, also resonates with poetry slam that, as Susan Somers-Willett (2009: 8) notes, is 'best understood by what it means to achieve or effect: a more intimate and authentic connection to its audience'.

Despite appearing improvised, slams are meticulously prepared shows. Drawing on performance art and rooted in oral traditions, they combine several elements, such as writing, performance, competition and audience participation. The last characteristic is crucial for the format of poetry slam because the audience actively participates by giving each poem a score, and is thus engaged in developments on the stage and reacts to them, which entails applauding or booing those who perform. The principles on which i,Slam relies specify that anyone can act as a judge (Somers-Willett, 2009). During one of their events, for example, a stand-up performer left the stage after some audience members had interrupted his guest show because they had disapproved of his remarks about the headscarf. Although the format is known for its open-door policy which stipulates that everyone is welcome to participate or perform, i,Slam's events are mostly attended by members of Muslim communities.

Founded in Berlin, the collective has now grown into a network of about 300 performers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (its German-speaking part).[11] In Germany, their activity is not limited to Berlin, as local groups operate in several cities, for instance, in Cologne, Mainz, Hamburg, Munich and Stuttgart. In Europe, and more globally due to i,Slam's connections with groups in Tunisia, Egypt, Malaysia and Singapore, the collective became part of what Annelies Moors and Jeanette Jouili have named 'Islamically inspired artistic scene' (2014; see also, e.g. Herding 2013; Jouili 2019). Other genres are represented too, such as rap and hip-hop which influenced the popularity of spoken word and slam poetry in those circles.

Through the genre of slam poetry, intentionally unsettling of stereotypes, i,Slam engages in 'undoing' Islamophobic myths, as well as striving to challenge those about gender, race, nationality, ethnicity and religion. By means of parody, they disrupt simplistic depictions of Islam in Germany and play on fears of Muslims and other Others (on parody in slam poetry, see, e.g. Hoffman 2001).

Somers-Willett (2009: 8) describes poetry slams as 'laboratories for identity expression and performance'. In this respect, i,Slam's activity emerges as a practice which transpires in the immediate context of performing poems and represents an embodied form of heritage-making that favours perpetuation over preservation (Shaw 2021). Wendy Shaw distinguishes between 'objective heritage preservation' and 'embodied heritage perpetuation'. The former, which applies to any religion or culture, suggests that Islam can be identified by means of certain categories, norms and sets of elements, whereas the latter deals with Islam as perpetually producing its identity by reconstructing the past and looking towards the future. The past–future connection is well

encapsulated in Youssef's ensuing declaration about i,Slam: 'we do it for what comes after us and what came before us'. In order to understand better the role of belonging in this, I reflect below further how i,Slam's practices challenge not only the us-versus-them logic but also the binary of 'here' and 'there'.

'It is always good to see *Heimat*'

'It is always good to see *Heimat*', Youssef said to me after casting a glance at the Aleppo Room and the display of the legacy of the Umayyad Caliphate at the Museum of Islamic Art. Both the Room, with inscriptions of poetry on its wood panels (*'ajami*), and the Umayyads, the Muslim dynasty (661–749) established in Damascus, made him think of *Heimat*, by which he meant Syria, and in particular Aleppo where he was born. He was heading towards the room where the panel discussion 'Art as an escape from a faulty system?' was held. The event was organised by i,Slam as part of the Muslim Cultural Days in order to converse about the meaning of art in practices of marginalised groups in the current political climate.[12]

13.2 Panel discussion during the 2019 Muslim Cultural Days at the Museum of Islamic Art. Photograph by Katarzyna Puzon. Reproduced courtesy of Staatliche Museen Berlin and i,Slam.

The German word *Heimat* has no equivalent in English and roughly means home, homeland or a sense of belonging. Youssef considers the city of Aleppo his first home (*Heimat*), his place of origin and a foundational part of his identity. In 2002, he moved with his family to Germany, and 2 years later, when he turned 12, he started writing po-

ems to 'have better access to the German language'. Berlin became his second home but, as he emphasised, not his *Heimat*. He told me: 'I have Arabic culture and there is lot of German culture in me'. 'Too much of it', he added laughingly. 'But when', he carried on, 'this Germany tells me that I am not German, I do not feel German'. He experiences this not only when he hears public pronouncements, such as those of certain politicians, but also when he, for example, receives threatening letters, as well as in everyday situations. For this reason, he associates *Heimat* first with Syria, and then partly with Germany, because 'such feelings depend on one's surroundings'.

The term *Heimat* is negatively tainted due to its connotations with Germany's Nazi era and is regarded as an exclusionary construct (Bausinger 1986). As a way of reclaiming it, some propose the use of *Heimaten*, the plural of *Heimat*, and others study *Heimat* as a process or *Beheimatung* (homing), a 'feeling at home' embracing belonging and being at home not limited to the place of origin (Binder 2010; Göb 2019; Greverus 1979; Römhild 2018).

To Youssef, *Heimat* is not a problematic word. 'I have nothing to do with the Nazis', he remarked. His place of origin plays a crucial role in his self-identification, including in his interpretation of heritage, which to him denotes much more than just his *Herkunft* (origins). Youssef refers to it as *Vermächtnis* (legacy) that he inherited from past generations and views as empowering. He therefore makes a distinction between heritage as a place, which he identifies more in terms of *Herkunft*, that is, his place of origin, and heritage that builds on his ancestors' legacy and constitutes a kind of resource, which underpins his current activity.

Understanding heritage as composed of multiple parts, he looks at this legacy as something that he embodies and that is 'the result' of various components and of 'socialising which I have enjoyed and which my father enjoyed'. Youssef 's conception of heritage is a positive one, that sees it not as a constraining 'cultural *baggage*' (Jouili 2019) but as having liberating potential to express oneself. By mixing up different heritages, he crafts his own one that affords him creativity. This partly resonates with what Sharon Macdonald calls 'transcultural heritage' wherein 'transcultural', approached as assemblage, entails 'bringing together elements from different cultures and fusing these in what becomes a new form, though it may retain identifiable elements of previous assemblages' (2013: 163; see also Macdonald 2014). The mixing and fusion of cultures – or differences – may take multifarious forms and generate different constellations, as i,Slam's practices aptly illustrate, and is perceptible in other art forms which they promote. Calligraffiti, with which i,Slam's office in Berlin's Wedding district is embellished, constitutes one example. It merges modern graffiti styles with classical Arabic calligraphy, which is used to convey ideas and as decoration and is in fact associated with different faiths in the MENA region. Calligraffiti references Islamic heritage due to the fundamental role of Arabic calligraphy in Islam – and Islamic art for that matter.

Building upon the notion of transcultural processes of heritage-making, the next section is concerned with forms of belonging – and non-belonging – addressed in i,Slam's poetry and with some of the themes it invokes.

Being German and being Muslim

Poems performed by Leila, an i,Slam member born in Germany, do not primarily attend to Islam or her religiosity as a Muslim woman, but centre on what it means to be German, or a Muslim German in particular. In one of her poems, she says: 'She calls me a foreigner, she calls me a migrant, she calls me a person with migration background, and now I am a New German'. The term 'migration background' (*Migrationshintergrund*), which she mentions, is officially used to identify those who were not born as German citizens or who have at least one parent who was not born a German citizen. 'New German', or 'New Berliner' for that matter, is a name applied by some to those who arrived seeking refuge in Germany during the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and 2016 (see e.g. Bock & Macdonald 2019). Leila's poems bring to focus the distinction made between those who are seen as German and those who are considered conditionally German. She is concerned not just with the fixed categorisation of Muslims but also with the constant relabelling of those deemed not 'fully' belonging in Germany.

In his study on citizenship and exclusion, anthropologist Damani Partridge notes that 'the process of "foreign" incorporation is not one of normalisation, but one of differentiation' (2012: 18). This mechanism plays out along the lines of what he calls 'a politics of exclusionary incorporation', which suggests that despite being formally (German) citizens, some cannot exercise their citizenship fully. Practices of naming and renaming fall within these 'technologies of exclusion' (ibid.: 19) and serve as conventional ways of managing the difference of Islam – or Muslimness. They are tantamount to practices of integration that represent a perpetual process of 'becoming' German, a sort of never-ending gestation period, or what Abdelmalek Sayad has termed an 'indefinite temporariness' (1999; see also Fadil 2019). The tedious process of 'becoming' German is well captured in the following excerpt from Leila's poem:

> But when I tell you that I would just like to be German, I mean that I would like to be unconditionally German, without a footnote, without an exception, without scandal and without patriotism. But with the same rights, standards and brands.

The excerpt raises a number of questions pertinent to what it means to be identified repeatedly as a non-German or not fully German. It draws attention to various ways of marking those who do not belong and shows how this operates through 'extra' descriptors, such as a 'footnote' or an 'exception', which classify someone as 'different'. Although especially the excerpt's last sentence partly invokes the notion of 'the right to have rights' (Arendt 1973), the text implies a 'call for equality', which, I suggest, corresponds with Hegel's *Gleichgültigkeit*, translated as indifference or equivalence. Its literal meaning conveys the idea of equal validity or equality. It is this equal validity, I contend, that Leila addresses in her poem.

This resonates with the issues voiced by anthropologist Mayanthi Fernando's French interlocutors. She points outs that 'Muslim French argue that they are not "different", but French. Moreover, they argue that the demands they make are claims to equal citizenship and justice rather than to difference, claims made by citizens with as equal a right to France as any other citizen' (Fernando, 2019: 266). A similar 'call for equality' is discernible in i,Slam poets' practices and is conveyed in their reflections on Heimat and belonging, as

mentioned above in the 'Heimkehr' video, for example. Their 'call for equality' epitomises a call for being a German citizen 'without a footnote', as Leila notes in her poem, and thus someone who does not need to earn belonging more than others. Like Fernando's French interlocutors, i,Slam poets challenge the image of Muslims as non-German and consider their Muslimness as already German.

Making connections

Slam poetry remains the chief form of i,Slam's cultural expression. They also support and collaborate with those who are involved in other kinds of creative work and artistic production through which various cultural, political and social issues are addressed (see, e.g. Puzon 2016). For example, in the case of the i,Slam Kunstpreis, a contest for socially engaged art, artists were awarded in seven categories: singing/hip-hop, music, photography, literature, poetry, design and film. In addition, i,Slam experimented with various formats, for instance when they held a series of flash mobs called i,Slam for Justice in four German cities in 2013.

The 2012 i,Slam – we,Slam event provides an example of broader collaborative endeavours and making connections, in that case among young poets representing three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The rationale behind this was to create a stage on which they could speak together openly about their beliefs. A key idea of i,Slam is that 'being on the stage' will encourage young people to raise questions that are vital to them and will, therefore, empower them. The stage 'is for those who have something to say', as Youssef put it. His statement did not just point to self-expression but also to the group's credo 'we don't want any superstars in i,Slam'.

Organised under the slogan '*Ver-Bindungen schaffen*' (Making Bonds and Connections), the 2019 Muslim Cultural Days constituted their attempt to collaborate with others. The event covered different parts of Berlin, and meetings and performances took place across the city over 4 days. The aim was to showcase the diversity of Muslim communities and reach out to those who might not be familiar with Islam, as well as reflecting on past developments and future possibilities of forming alliances. Flagging up 'connections' as a leading theme of the Muslim Culture Days, the focus was on Berlin's Muslims, with the intent to 'invite all non-Muslim citizens to learn about the Muslim life and cultural diversity'.[13]

The launch event was dedicated to possible cooperation between organisations representing marginalised groups in Germany. The following ones were invited as speakers: the Initiative Black People in Germany, the Academy of the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB), the Archiv RomaniPhen, a feminist association of Sinti and Roma women, and GLADT – an organisation of black and PoC lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans*[14], inter* and queer people. The subject of alliances was the focal point of the meeting. One speaker called for the need to adopt a multilayered approach, along with an intersectional one, and highlighted that marginalised groups do not embody one community. A former representative of the JMB brought attention to the problem of *Hierarchisierung* (creating hierarchies) that often hampers collaborative efforts because some groups are given more consideration, especially those deemed more important historically and thus more relevant in the Ger-

man context. She meant the Jewish community, and drew on her experience as a leader of the Migration and Diversity Programme and the Jewish-Islamic Forum at the JMB's Academy.

In their endeavour of making connections, i,Slam deals with the Othering of Muslims and strives to bring about a change. This necessitates altering the focus – orientation – by drawing attention to what is not instantly visible[15] and fostering diverse connections, as well as looking at Muslim heritage as not just belonging elsewhere but also as part of the past, present and future in Germany.

Conclusion

In German, there is a distinction between the following two words indicating belonging: *Zugehörigkeit* (belonging to) and *Zusammengehörigkeit* (belonging with, in the sense of togetherness) (see also Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011). This distinction resembles the divergence between differences brought together to embody a fixed category and differences that are constantly negotiated. In the former case, rather than maintaining heterogeneity, differences are often turned into a sameness. The category of 'the Muslim' epitomises this tendency, as the debates on Islam belonging or not belonging discussed here illustrate. The process of granting equal validity to Muslims or those with a 'migration background' resembles 'conditional belonging' with respect to becoming a German citizen; in this case, a German Muslim who never seems to belong enough.

By situating the question of belonging in the current German context, the primary purpose of this chapter was that of examining i,Slam's practices and the ways in which young Muslims negotiate differences by claiming their place in Berlin – and in Germany more generally. i,Slam poets' identification as Muslims is no different than their self-positioning as Germans. This is manifest in their call for recognition as Muslims, as well as recognition as Turkish or Arabic, for example, all as part of being German citizens without footnotes.

As I have shown, i,Slam poets do not necessarily conform to a certain 'bridge of understanding' (Winegar 2008) with which the 'majority' could feel comfortable. In so doing, they do not eschew their religion to make themselves more relatable or to fit the image of the 'good Muslim' – one that is 'westernised' and secular (Mamdani 2005). Rather, their practices, representing an embodied form of heritage-making, offer a lens through which one can rethink the relationship between Islam and heritage in Germany. By virtue of this, i,Slam poets question what it means to be German – and a Muslim German in particular. Combining oral traditions of 'Islamic heritage' with a contemporary format of poetry performance, this model of heritage heightens translocal elements (Puzon 2019) and accentuates connections. i,Slam's practices thus reveal doing a new heritage as a new belonging which attends to diverse articulations of Islam not only in Germany but also across Europe and beyond.

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Notes

1 This chapter is an adaptation of the chapter 'Germans without Footnotes: Islam, Belonging and Poetry Slam' published in Islam and Heritage in Europe: Pasts, Presents and Future Possibilities (Routledge, 2021).
2 The prize was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women, and Youth as part of the Living Democracy programme.
3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
4 Despite sharing many qualities, the two forms of poetry, slam and spoken word, differ mainly in this way that unlike the latter, the former is staged as a competition which involves audience participation.
5 The 'framework of the "West"', as Wendy Shaw (2020) shrewdly argues, 'is less the recognition of a secular cultural geography than a legacy of the universalisation of Protestant values through the occlusion of religion as a visible agent. Such ghosts may be the most difficult of all agents to battle, as they can always claim that they were never there'.
6 http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de. For a critical account of the Conference, see Bayat (2016).
7 For a full text of Gauck's speech, see http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/ Downloads/DE/Reden/2013/11/131128-Themenbesuch-Islam.pdf;jsessionid=FD02305F80AD576C432C050A167AFA8C.1_cid362? blob=publicationFile
8 It even became a bestseller in the category of non-fiction literature (Sachbuch) and enjoyed this status from mid-September 2010 to early February 2011 (see Stein, 2012).
9 For more on different ways of being Muslim, see Osella and Soares (2010); Fadil & Fernando (2015); Özyürek (2015).
10 For example, Kristina Nelson points out that 'the Qur'an is not the Qur'an unless it is heard' (2001: xiv), which positions oral and auditory qualities of the Qur'an as being of primary importance.
11 The Berlin-based group runs a Youtube channel called Erklaeriker. See their website https://www.i-slam.de/erklaeriker/
12 Apart from organising slams, workshops and other public events, i,Slam poets have performed in museums. In Berlin, this was, for instance, the case with the Neukölln Museum's Festival für Demokratie und Vielfalt (Festival for Democracy and Diversity) that accompanied their 2017 exhibition Die Sache mit der Religion (The Case of Religion). The collective has also been involved in the project TAMAM – Das Bildungsprojekt von Moscheegemeinden mit dem Museum für Islamische

Kunst (TAMAM – The Mosque Communities' Education Project with the Museum of Islamic Art) run by the Museum of Islamic Art in cooperation with the Institute of Islamic Theology in Osnabrück.

13 https://muslimische-kulturtage.de/programm-2019/

14 An asterisk after 'trans' or 'inter' indicates an umbrella word that encompasses a wide range of gender variations. See also, for example, Stryker (2008).

15 The 2019–20 exhibition Re:Orient – The Invention of the Muslim Other at the GRASSI Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig addressed this subject. Its aim was to 'reorient visitors towards what is all too often left unseen when they look at "the others"'. See https://grassi-voelkerkunde.skd.museum/en/exhibitions/reorient/

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