PART III

COMMUNITIES AND IDENTITIES
The recognition of Muslims in Germany is an issue on a number of different levels. First, there is the question of self-description and of ascription. On the one hand, Muslims must describe and constitute themselves as a social group; on the other hand, they must be identified as such by the majority—the dominant sociopolitical actors in German society. The rather young history of Muslim immigration to Germany demonstrates that this social process of description and ascription defines the framework of public debate and institutional inclusion of Islam in the country’s political structures. A second level of recognition refers to the socio-political inclusion of Muslims as a group. Once identified and constituted, recognized groups must be integrated into specific, nationally defined institutional orders. This political form of recognition involves a process of negotiation; that is, the Muslims constituted as corporative actors are not only the objects or victims of rules and laws, they also intervene in this negotiation. They can promote, reject, or magnify certain institutional mechanisms. Thus the “struggle for recognition” is a process in which the arguments brought forward by one side correspond implicitly and indirectly to the reasoning of the other. We would misconceive the dynamics of recognition as a mutual process if we perceived these positions to be indicative of established and immobile states of being.

The following text aims to explore these abstract introductory considerations on the recognition of Muslims in Germany in greater detail.

* I thank Paula Bradish for translating my text into English and helping to clarify it in the process.