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Special issue

**Islam in the Netherlands: Entering the twenty-first century
Guest editor: Maurits S. Berger**

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From the editor

Inge Genee

In the more than three decades since *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises* began regular publication, it has published three types of issues: regular issues with independently submitted contributions, proceedings issues containing expanded versions of presentations given at our annual conference, and special issues focusing on a particular topic or theme.

The double issue before you belongs in the latter category. It is the result of a close collaboration with guest editor Maurits S. Berger of Leiden University, who kindly responded to our invitation to produce a special issue of our journal on the position of Islam in modern Dutch society. Entitled *Islam in the Netherlands: Entering the twenty-first century*, this special issue discusses a variety of themes relating to the broad topic of Islam in the Netherlands, from the position of specific Islamic sects, anti-Muslim reactions by right-wing politicians, and Islamic law, to mosque architecture and Islamic burial practices. The contributions address issues that are specific to the Dutch context, but in general terms equally relevant to other western societies in which Islam has created a space for itself in the last few decades. As such, they raise questions that are of interest also to other European countries as well as to North America. Canadian readers will easily spot some of the most obvious similarities and differences between the Dutch and Canadian situations.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the very substantial contribution of professor Berger, who assumed responsibility for the intellectual direction of the issue and took charge not only of the initial invitations to the authors, but also of several rounds of internal revisions before the papers were sent out for peer review. I am also pleased to acknowledge the generous assistance of my colleague Dr Atif Khalil of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Lethbridge, who was instrumental in identifying and contacting suitable peer reviewers for most of the contributions in this issue. Finally I am grateful to Dr Basil Kingstone for all French translations.

This issue was produced with in-kind support from the University of Lethbridge Journal Incubator (<http://www.uleth.ca/lib/incubator/>), a joint initiative

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Lethbridge Library.

De la rédaction

Inge Genee

La *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises*, depuis plus de trente ans maintenant, publie trois sortes de numéros : des numéros réguliers avec des communications soumises indépendamment; des actes de congrès, contenant des versions révisées de communications faites à nos congrès annuels; et des numéros spéciaux qui se concentrent sur un sujet ou thème spécial.

Le numéro double que vous voyez devant vous appartient à cette dernière catégorie. Il résulte d'une coopération étroite avec notre rédacteur invité Maurits S. Berger de l'Université de Leyde, qui a bien voulu accepter notre invitation à produire un numéro spécial de notre Revue consacrée à la position de l'Islam dans la société néerlandaise moderne. Sous le titre *L'Islam aux Pays-Bas à l'entrée du vingt-et-unième siècle*, ce numéro discute une variété de thèmes reliés au sujet général de l'Islam aux Pays-Bas, depuis la position de certaines sectes islamiques particulières, les réactions anti-islamiques de quelques politiciens d'extrême-droite, et le droit islamique, à l'architecture des mosquées et les pratiques funèbres islamiques. Les articles traitent d'enjeux spécifiques au contexte néerlandais, mais en termes généraux ils s'appliquent tout aussi bien à d'autres sociétés occidentales où l'Islam s'est créé un espace dans ces dernières décennies. Ils soulèvent donc des questions intéressantes d'autres pays européens de même que l'Amérique du Nord. Les lecteurs canadiens y reconnaîtront facilement quelques-unes des ressemblances et différences les plus évidentes entre les situations néerlandaise et canadienne.

Cela me fait plaisir de souligner la contribution très importante du professeur Berger, qui a pris sur lui la direction intellectuelle de ce numéro et s'est chargé non seulement des invitations initiales aux auteurs, mais aussi de plusieurs séries de révisions internes avant même l'envoi des articles pour évaluation par les pairs. Je tiens à signaler l'aide généreuse de mon collègue le docteur Atif Khalil du département d'Études religieuses de l'Université de Lethbridge : dans la plupart des cas, c'est lui qui a su identifier et contacter des experts pour l'évaluation par les pairs de ces articles. Je remercie aussi le docteur Basil Kingstone d'avoir fait les traductions vers le français.

Ce numéro a été produit avec l'aide pratique du Journal Incubator de l'Université de Lethbridge (<http://www.uleth.ca/lib/incubator/>), organisme conjoint de la School of Graduate Studies et de la bibliothèque de cette université.

Van de redactie

Inge Genee

Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises heeft, vanaf het eerste begin in 1979, drie soorten nummers gepubliceerd: gewone nummers met onafhankelijk aangeboden artikelen, verhandelingen van lezingen gehouden op ons jaarlijkse congres, en themanummers die aandacht besteden aan een specifiek onderwerp.

Het dubbelnummer dat voor u ligt behoort tot die laatste groep. Het is het resultaat van intensieve samenwerking met gastredacteur Maurits Berger van de Universiteit van Leiden, die zo vriendelijk was in te stemmen met ons verzoek om een themanummer te redigeren over de positie van de Islam in de moderne Nederlandse samenleving. Dit nummer, onder de titel *Islam in Nederland aan het begin van de een-en-twintigste eeuw*, behandelt een aantal thema's die betrekking hebben op het brede onderwerp van Islam in Nederland, van de positie van specifieke Islamitische sectes, anti-islamitische uitlatingen van rechtse politici, en Islamitische wetgeving, tot het ontwerpen en bouwen van moskeeën en Islamitische begraafplaatsen. De bijdragen behandelen onderwerpen die weliswaar specifiek zijn voor de Nederlandse context, maar meer in het algemeen ook van toepassing op andere westerse samenlevingen waarin de Islam zich in de afgelopen jaren een plaats heeft veroverd. De kwesties die aan de orde komen zijn dan ook van belang voor andere Europese landen en ook voor Noord-Amerika. Canadese lezers zullen gemakkelijk de meest in het oog springende overeenkomsten en verschillen herkennen tussen de Nederlandse en Canadese situaties.

Graag maak ik van de gelegenheid gebruik om professor Berger te bedanken voor zijn substantiële rol in het tot stand komen van dit nummer. Hij was niet alleen verantwoordelijk voor de intellectuele directie van dit nummer maar nam ook de verantwoordelijkheid op zich voor het uitnodigen van auteurs en voor de eerste interne herschrijfrondes, voordat de artikelen werden uitgestuurd voor externe review. Ik erken hier ook met veel plezier de genereuze assistentie van mijn collega Dr Atif Khalil van het Department of Religious Studies aan de University of Lethbridge voor zijn hulp bij het vinden en benaderen van externe reviewers met de juiste expertise. Tot slot bedank ik Dr Basil Kingstone voor alle Franse vertalingen in dit nummer.

Dit nummer is tot stand gekomen met assistentie van de University of Lethbridge Journal Incubator (<http://www.uleth.ca/lib/incubator/>), een gezamenlijk initiatief van de University of Lethbridge School of Graduate Studies en de University of Lethbridge Library.

Introduction: Islam in the Netherlands

Maurits S. Berger

The articles in this issue of *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne des études néerlandaises* deal with aspects of Islam in the Netherlands, a novel phenomenon with continuous developments that keeps politicians, media and academics on their toes. The articles in this special issue provide a variety of topics on Islam in the Netherlands, each representing the latest academic insights on the specific issue. Before I introduce and contextualise these articles, we first need to take a brief look at the background regarding Muslims and their Islam in the Netherlands.¹

Key terms: Islam; The Netherlands; Ethnicity; *Allochtonen*; Islamic education; Radicalism.

Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands

While the Dutch academic tradition of the study of Islam goes as far back as the sixteenth century, the study of Islam in the Netherlands is of recent date, because the significant Muslim presence in the Netherlands has only occurred since the 1970s. The first reference to Muslims residing in the Netherlands – that is the Netherlands proper, excluding its colonies Indonesia and Surinam – dates from the late nineteenth century. The census of 1889 mentions 49 ‘Mohammedans’ who had migrated from the Dutch Indies, and until the Second World War their number rose but would never exceed several hundred (Forum 2012). After that, the origins of Muslim migrants stemmed from three sources: the labour force from Turkey and Morocco, post-colonial migrants from Indonesia and Surinam, and refugees from countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan.

Let us therefore briefly review some statistics to get a first impression of our field of interest. In 2012, the Netherlands counted 950,000 Muslims, that is

¹ The following is largely based on earlier overview works in Berger (2010a, 2014).

six per cent of the total population.² This number must be handled with caution however, because the Dutch authorities do not register religion, so that any given number of believers is based on estimates (e.g. Schmeets 2010). The majority of Muslims live in the urban regions of the western parts of the Netherlands, in particular in the large cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, where in some neighbourhoods they constitute a majority of the population.³ Dutch Muslims mainly consist of Moroccans (36 per cent) and Turks (37 per cent), with Surinamese, Afghans and Iraqis coming next with 3-4 per cent each. An estimated 13,000 native Dutch are converts (1 per cent of all Muslims; Forum 2012). In 2012, the Netherlands had an estimated 450 mosques, most of which are existing buildings converted for that purpose (Forum 2012). Almost all mosques were established and are being used by specific ethnic communities so that there are few mosques with mixed ethnic congregations. Their sermons are mostly held in Arabic or the native language of the respective community.⁴

Nationality, ethnicity and religion

Most Muslims in the Netherlands hold Dutch nationality, although many also maintain the nationality of their country of origin (often, as in the case of Turkey and Morocco, because this nationality cannot be abandoned unilaterally by its nationals). Interestingly, Dutch nationality was rarely used in governmental, public and political vocabularies when referring to these Muslims. Until 1996, the general denominator for migrants was their country of origin: one spoke of Moroccans and Turks, sometimes making further distinctions on the basis of ethnicity, so that one spoke of (Turkish) Kurds, (Moroccan) Berber, (Surinamese) Javanese, Creole or Hindu (the latter being Muslims whose ancestors had migrated from India to Surinam and who refer to themselves as “Hindustans”). In 1996, the government concluded that the number of naturalizations had increased to such an extent that nationality as an indicator of ‘foreignness’ had lost its meaning,⁵ and that new terminology was needed. In addition to the

² Statistics on Muslims in the Netherlands are predominantly produced by two semi-governmental institutions, the Socio-Cultural Planning Office (*Sociaal-Cultureel Planbureau*; SCP) and the Central Office for Statistics (*Centraal Bureau Statistiek*; CBS). Both institutions also publish elaborate annual reports as well as thematic studies on all issues related to immigrants.

³ In 2011, non-Western so-called *allochtonen* (see next paragraph for explanation of this term) – a term that includes most Muslims – made up 28 per cent of the Amsterdam population and 37 per cent of Rotterdam (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, communiqué of 25 May 2011).

⁴ An exception is the so-called ‘Polder mosque’, established in 2008 by young Muslims of mixed ethnic background with the express purpose to speak in Dutch and focus on the issues typical to Dutch Muslims. It closed in 2010 due to a lack of financial means.

⁵ Observation made by the government itself: <http://www.nationaalkompas.nl/bevolking/etniciteit/wat-is-etniciteit>.

distinction between Dutch nationals and aliens, the government introduced a further division among Dutch nationals, between so-called *autochtonen* and *allochtonen*. *Autochtonen* (plural) are defined as Dutch nationals whose parents are both born in the Netherlands, and *allochtonen* as Dutch nationals of whom at least one parent is born outside the Netherlands.⁶ According to these definitions the coming (third) generation of Muslims in the Netherlands will be mostly *autochtonen*. However, it appears that the term *allochtoon* has become equated with being coloured (for instance, most members of the Dutch royal family are *allochtonen*, but are never referred to as such). While it is still politically correct to speak of *autochtonen* and *allochtonen* (although these terms are increasing criticized), with the turn of the millennium it has become common in public and political discourse to also speak of 'Muslims' as a singular ethno-religious category. Muslims themselves also often identify themselves with that terminology.

Muslim identity

There is a clear divide between the first and second generations of Muslims in the Netherlands in their relation to Islam (in the case of the Indonesians, one must add the third generation since they arrived earlier). The first generation identifies mainly with ethnicity and nationality: to them Islam has mostly cultural value. The second generation, on the other hand, identifies less with ethnicity or nationality, but much more with Islam, both as a religion and as an identity marker. Indeed, the second generation generally is more pious, to the point of being strict in their observation of the rules of Islam and their search for an authentic or 'pure' Islam (Koning 2008), that is an Islam based on its theological sources and devoid of cultural practices (e.g., Bartels 2000, Buijs et.al. 2006, Buitelaar 2006, Korf et al. 2007, 2008, Nabben et al. 2008).

However, research shows that the multiple identities of Dutch Muslims – nationality, ethnicity, religion – are being used interchangeably, depending on the circumstances: the Dutch nationality is often used in conflicts with parents, the ethnic and religious identities to differentiate between the in-group and out-group, and the religious identity also in case of real or perceived loyalty conflicts with the *autochtone* society (Phalet & van der Wall 2004).

If we combine these observations with the fact that the second generation is socio-economically much better integrated into Dutch society than the first generation, then this divide is a veritable generation gap (Harchaoui 2006). This may also explain the fact that, in the late 1990s and early twenty-first

⁶ Definitions available on the website of the Central Office for Statistics (CBS): www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/menu/methoden, under 'begrippen'.

century, the second generation visited the mosque less than the first generation (Phalet & van der Wall 2004), because the latter dominate and regulate these mosques, which, as a consequence, do not provide the source of religious and societal answers that the second generation is craving. Gradually, however, the second generation is establishing itself also as a congregation as well as organizing authorities of mosques (Maliepaard & Gijsberts 2012).

Religious authorities

The main problem that the second generation of Dutch Muslims encountered in its search for the aforementioned ‘pure Islam’ was the lack of political as well as religious authorities within their community. This is typical for the Dutch context – as opposed to that in Germany, France or the United Kingdom –, since the overall majority of Dutch Muslims are from a working class background of *gastarbeiders* (temporary foreign workers, literally: ‘guest workers’) who lacked both the need and the capacity to have such authorities. With the exception of a few knowledgeable imams, there are therefore hardly any Islamic scholars or institutions in the Netherlands with sufficient knowledge of Arabic and Islamic theology to serve as sources of authority among the Muslim community to serve as a centre of knowledge (Boender 2007).

Dutch society and government often overrated the authority and influence of imams; although imams are mostly respected within their community, their counsel is limited to religious affairs and does not usually extend to societal or other practical matters. Almost all imams in the Netherlands are from abroad, and most are recruited on a temporary basis: imams from Morocco are approached by individual mosques in the Netherlands, while imams from Turkey are sent by the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) under the coordination of the Turkish embassy in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 1997-98; Rath et al. 1996; Sunier et al. 2011). Only the Surinamese imams tend to stay longer or even permanently, due to the former colonial relations between the Netherlands and Surinam.

In the second generation this lack of any centralized form of religious authority in combination with a thirst for knowledge of ‘pure’ Islam has developed into a phenomenon called Muslim ‘Protestantism’ or ‘cut-and-paste Islam’: young Muslims search for answers, mostly on the Internet, while lacking a basic knowledge of the theological framework of Islam that would otherwise guide them through the wealth of information that they encounter (De Koning 2008; Sunier 2010; Vellenga et al. 2009). The role of the Internet seems important to young Muslims. Several Dutch sites, such as www.Maroc.nl, www.Nieuwemoskee.nl (‘new mosque’) and www.Wijblijvenhier.nl (‘We remain

here') are well visited, as they provide information on religious as well as social matters related to Islam. In addition, chat rooms and similar social media provide enclosed spaces where Muslims, in particular those who adhere to *Salafi* Islam, exchange views on theological issues, many of which relate to the problems of living in Dutch society (Becker 2009, 2013). To date, very little research exists into the cyber activity of Dutch Muslims on foreign sites (de Koning 2008), except when pertaining to radicalism (Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst 2012).

It must be noted that the preference of young Muslims to develop an individual piety and to find their own answers, detached from the mosque or clergy, is a phenomenon that has also been observed within the Dutch religious landscape (Becker & de Hart 2006; Ter Borg & Borgman 2008; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2009; Van de Donk et al. 2006). The question as to whether these two similar developments are coincidental or causal is yet to be answered.

Religious, political and other organizations

The Muslim community encompasses numerous civic organizations that are fragmented on the basis of ethnic, local (municipal), religious and leaders' personality differences. For instance, one will find Moroccan, Surinamese and Turkish organizations, secular as well as religious, in each municipality, some of which are united in larger regional umbrella organizations (Landman 1992; Shadid & Koningsveld 1997). Among the second generation, on the other hand, ethnic differences are gradually being replaced by a single 'Muslim' identity, and the higher level of integration and education of these youngsters makes them more skilful in formulating their needs, finding funds and engaging with society and politics (Bartels & De Jong 2007; Maussen 2006; Rath 2008; Sunier 2009, 2010).

In a similar manner, the government in 2001 invited the Muslim community (as well as the Hindu and Buddhist communities) to form a single and representative body on religious basis that could act as a communication channel with the government. Such consultation platforms for religious communities already existed for the Catholics, Protestants and Jews, and the intention was to create similar bodies for the 'new' religions. The divisions among the Muslim organizations were such that it took three years of intensive internal negotiations to finally establish, in 2004, not one but two Islamic umbrella organizations to participate in this platform.⁷ However, these bodies appear to have relatively little clout in terms of lobbying on a political level or in responding to incidents or media reports. The reason for this weakness may be found in a conjunction of different factors, such as a lack of experience and

⁷ CMO (*Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid*) and CGI (*Contact Groep Islam*).

funds, as well as lack of representation since they represent mosques rather than Muslim organisations at large.

In contrast to the many and fragmented civic organizations of Muslims, there is little interest among Muslims to organize politically. The few Muslim political parties that have participated in municipal elections in several of the larger cities did so with very little success. At the moment of writing, only one local Islamic party has a seat in The Hague.⁸ At the national level, it is relatively easy for small parties to gain access to parliament, due to proportional representation and the relatively low number of votes required to gain a seat; however, no initiatives in this direction have been taken so far by a political party with an Islamic programme. This does not mean that Muslims are politically inactive. In the parliamentary elections of 2010, 77 per cent of the *autochtonen* voted and 69 per cent of the non-Western *allochtonen* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2010), with a distinct preference for the Social Democratic party *Partij van de Arbeid* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2010; Brasse & Huinder 2011; Koenen 2011). With regard to active political participation, all large political parties – Socialists, Social Democrats, Liberals, Greens, Christian-Democrats – have several Muslim candidates in parliament as well as in numerous municipal councils.⁹

Islamic education

Religious education in the Netherlands can be provided by private institutions like mosques or by private religious schools. Little research has been conducted into religious education in mosques, but three case studies indicate that their educational methods are relatively child friendly and related to the Dutch context (Doğan et al. 2006; Lahri & Madkouri 2006; Pels et al. 2006). Private religious schools – primary as well as secondary – are established by private organizations, and are free to determine their own religious upbringing and education, but are required by law to adhere to the national standards of education. In the Dutch educational system all private religious schools receive

⁸ This is the *Islam Democraten* ('Islam Democrats'), established in 2006 with a distinct local (The Hague) programme and constituency.

⁹ There is little use in naming these candidates because as politicians they come and go, but two Social-Democrats have become seasoned politicians and administrators: Ahmed Aboutaleb served as alderman in Amsterdam, as under-secretary of social affairs in the 2007 government and became mayor of Rotterdam in 2008; Nebahat Albayrak served as under-secretary of justice in the 2007 government and belongs to the top of the Social Democrat party. Both are children of migrant workers who had moved to the Netherlands, and both were born abroad, respectively in Morocco and Turkey, and their double nationality has led to protests from the aforementioned PVV party against their appointment as under-secretaries.

state funding equal to that of public schools. At the time of writing, there are 41 Islamic primary and two Islamic secondary schools in the Netherlands (e.g., Shadid 2006).

From the moment of their establishment, these Islamic schools have received a lot of public and political criticism on a number of grounds, including the alleged lack of quality of the education they provide, but mostly that the 'Islamic education' would impede the integration of the pupils or even indoctrinate them against Dutch society. This debate was rekindled after 9/11, with the Dutch national security agency BVD reporting in 2002 that the teaching programmes of these schools were not contributing to, and sometimes even advocating against the integration of their pupils in Dutch society (BVD 2002). These allegations were refuted on several occasions by the School Inspection of the Ministry of Education, which judged these schools quite positively in their focus on 'social cohesion' (*Inspectie Onderwijs* 2002, 2003, 2009). However, the Inspection concluded on several occasions that many of these schools indeed had problems related to the overall quality of their education and the poor management by their school boards (*Inspectie Onderwijs* 2008).

Headscarf and burka

The headscarf has been a source of discrimination, such as abusive words in the streets or refusal to be allowed in cafes or restaurants, but also on the labour market: sometimes applicants were rejected because they wore a headscarf, and sometimes employees were fired because they started to wear one (see the annual *Racism Monitor* by Donselaar & Rodrigues, in particular 2008). In the latter situation several women raised their case – with varying success – in court or, more often, with the *Commissie Gelijke Behandeling* ('Commission for Equal Treatment'; CGB 2003-2011).¹⁰

According to a recent quantitative research (Motivaction 2011), six out of ten Dutch Muslim women of Turkish and Moroccan origin (the survey does not distinguish between the two ethnic groups) between 15 and 35 years wear a headscarf; nine out of ten does so out of her own free will; one out of ten experiences pressure from parents or peer groups. Two thirds of the women wearing a headscarf do so because it is a religious obligation, 40 per cent consider it (also) a part of their cultural tradition. But the primary identity of the overall majority of these women (83 per cent) is that of 'Moslima'.

¹⁰ This commission was established in 1994 to uphold the Equal Treatment Act (*Wet Gelijke Behandeling*). Although its rulings are formally 'recommendations' without any legal force, they are often adhered to by the parties.

While the wearing of the headscarf is practiced by an estimated 60 per cent of young Dutch Muslim women, as we saw above, according to another study an estimated 500 women in the Netherlands also wear the full-face veil, known as *niqab*, but in popular parlance as *burqa* (Moors 2009). The study estimated that 100 women wear the *niqab* “full time”, and “no more than 400” wear the *niqab* “part time”, i.e. on certain occasions. The majority (60 per cent) of the interviewed women are Dutch *autochtone* converts, while the remainder is exclusively Moroccan. Most of these women are younger than 30 years of age, and the remainder is not older than 40.

Islam and government policy

From the 1980s onwards, religion in general and Islam in particular became subject of government attention, for a variety of reasons. Already in 1983 the government stated in its *Minderhedennota* (‘Minority Paper’) that religion has a function for the development and strengthening of the self esteem of ethnic minorities and as such can contribute to their empowerment and integration (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 1983). This position was repeated in consecutive policy papers of the *Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken* (‘Minister of Internal Affairs’) until 1999, sometimes with specific reference to Islam (e.g., Koolen 2010).

The first decade of the 21st century spiked such interest in Islam, that policymakers thought it wise not to focus on religion too much. Instead, they preferred notions of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘social cohesion’, and in 2006 both were mandatory topics to be taught at high school (e.g., Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2005; Hurenkamp & Tonkens 2011). The advantage of these notions was that they circumvented the exclusive focus on ‘*allochtonen*’, ‘Muslims’ or ‘immigrants’, and emphasized the individual responsibility of each citizen to participate in society. Nevertheless, several religious organizations and political parties argued that religion does not oppose such participation but, on the contrary, contributes to good and active citizenship. One of these voices in the context of Islam was the government-funded foundation ‘Islam and Citizenship’ that was established in 1999.

The two major cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, both with the largest *allochtone* communities, have put a lot of effort and funds into developing policies regarding social cohesion with particular attention to the role of religion therein, although they did so in very different ways. In Amsterdam, the policy paper *Wij Amsterdammers* (‘Us, Amsterdammers’) made no mention of religion or any other quality that distinguishes people, on the one hand, but in its implementation of that policy strongly favoured ethnic and religious diversity as a means to reach municipal cohesion, on the other hand. Mayor Job Cohen was

a driving force behind this policy and he became a forceful, albeit controversial advocate of religion as a source of social cohesion (Cohen 2009). Rotterdam, on the other hand, in its policy paper *Meedoen of Achterblijven* ('Join in or stay behind') specifically identified Islam as one of the issues of controversy and organized in the period 2003-2004 a city-wide discussion entitled 'Islam and Integration', with the intention to get all the information, concerns and needs out in the open. In 2007, the municipality of Rotterdam hired the Swiss-French Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan as the city's 'bridge builder' and paid for his appointment as visiting professor in 'Citizenship and Identity'.

However, the enthusiasm for a religion-oriented policy quickly wore off. In the case of Amsterdam, the city council became entangled in the financing of a mosque building project by a Dutch-Turkish Muslim organization suspected of fundamentalism and embezzlement; and in Rotterdam where Ramadan's role was repeatedly questioned, he was finally fired in 2009 on the grounds of his side-job as a host in a London-based news channel of the Iranian government (see analysis by Zessen 2010). And in 2008, the foundation 'Islam and Citizenship' was dissolved due to discontinuation of government funding. The new governments of 2010, and later in 2012, have also not made religion an issue of government policy anymore.

Radicalism and terrorism

While 9/11 reverberated in the Netherlands as if the attacks had taken place here – for instance, 5 minutes of national mourning were announced – three other events gave the Netherlands prominence on the stage of Islam-related radicalism and terrorism. In 2002, the maverick politician Pim Fortuyn was murdered for his anti-Islam rhetoric, although not by some Muslim immigrant but by a member of a known radical native Dutch veganist movement. In 2004, film producer Theo van Gogh, well-known for his biting satire against all religions and in particular Islam, was murdered by a Muslim radical. In 2006 it became apparent that Van Gogh's assassin belonged to the so-called Hofstad group, a group of young Muslims with allegedly terrorist intentions, who were subsequently arrested. Six members were sentenced for "attempted terrorist crimes", although the Dutch Supreme Court in 2012 overturned two verdicts because the "membership of a terrorist organization" had been insufficiently proven.

These events were followed by intense and sometimes frantic attempts to understand this new phenomenon of Muslim radicalism. The Dutch intelligence agency AIVD, which had already in 1998 produced an extensive analysis of political Islam in the Netherlands (*Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst* 1998), after 9/11 quickly dominated the discourse on

radicalism by publishing several studies of considerable quality, setting the definitions of several terms, such as radicalism, *da'wa*, *jihad* and the like (Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst 2004; 2006; 2007). In addition to these first AIVD reports, academic research produced in-depth studies on radicalism of young Dutch Muslims (Bos 2009; Buijs et al. 2006; Pligt & Koomen 2009; Tillie & Sloodman 2006), whereby some studies paid particular attention to the issue of *Salafism* (Koning 2008, Roex et al. 2010, Sloodman 2009). In addition, investigative journalism also produced several books that gave a good insight into these young Muslim radicals at a time that such information was lacking (Groen & Kranenberg 2006, 2008; Kleijwegt 2005). Within a relatively short time, a comprehensive picture emerged of the young Dutch Muslims – mostly Moroccans and several Dutch converts – who had adopted radical notions of Islam. A combination of social factors was identified as contributing to this development: experiences of discrimination, a sense of alienation, identity crisis, international politics, and criticism of Islam. These factors coincided with a general tendency among the second generation to turn to Islam as their new identity. However, while all these factors explained the resentment and anger among young Muslims and their identification with Islam, researchers could not explain why one Muslim would become a radical while the other turned to politics or merely to orthodoxy. Indeed, most young Muslims who fitted the profile of anger and Islamic orthodoxy did not turn to radicalism, and researchers have pointed out that Islamic orthodoxy is not a necessary prelude to radicalism, so that a clear distinction therefore needed to be made between Islamic orthodoxy, on the one hand, and Islamic radicalism, on the other (e.g., Roex et al. 2010).

The intelligence service AIVD as well as the newly established Netherlands Coordinator for Combatting Terrorism (NCTb) found that the best prevention strategy against radicalization was integration: a Muslim who was successfully integrated, both culturally and socio-economically, was deemed less prone to radical ideas. Indeed, the newly developed government policy of ‘de-radicalization and de-polarization’ was nothing less than a renewed effort at integration (Berger 2010b). However, while the net effect might be the same, there was a distinct difference in the motivation: integration as promoted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and municipalities served a mixed social, cultural and economical cause, while the integration promoted by the AIVD served the cause of national security.

The contributions to this special issue

Many more details could be added to this bird’s eye view of ‘Islam in the Netherlands’ to expound the complexities of Dutch Muslims, their identities and

religiosity. The following articles are therefore a welcome contribution to this panorama since not only do they highlight particular aspects of Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands, but they also reflect the latest insights and research. All articles are set in the present, which means that they mostly deal with the second generation of Muslims who, as we have seen, are mostly well integrated, relatively highly educated, and often quite religious. The contributions cover very different aspects of Islam in the Netherlands – *Salafi* thought, burial, *sharia*, mosque building, Islamophobia – as well as several disciplinary approaches; but two themes recur in all articles: issues of what I propose to call the locality of an Islamic identity, and the confrontation with the particularities of Dutch society.

The search for an Islamic identity is apparent in the recurring question among Dutch Muslims as to where this identity is localized: is it embedded in Dutch society, in the country of origin, or in a global Islamic community (*ummah*). While a typical second and third generation immigrant would strike root in his or her new home country, the critical and even hostile Dutch environment (discussed by Jan Jaap de Ruiter in his contribution) has been the cause for many young Dutch Muslims to re-orient their sense of belonging. The so-called *Salafis*, ultra-orthodox Dutch Muslim youth, discussed by Martijn de Koning in the first article, are an example of well-integrated Muslims who try to maintain a strict adherence to their Islamic ethics, with little allegiance to their Dutch country of residence.

Thijl Sunier, in his discussion of Islamic ‘space-making’ through mosque building, shows how Dutch Muslims first mainly reconstructed a sense of home without any conception of a future in the Netherlands, then made their own ‘enclaves’ in their new Dutch homeland and devised mosques accordingly, and at present, while they are very much integrated in the Netherlands, produce new and unprecedented forms of orientation and belonging due to forms of a globalizing Islam entering from abroad. Eric Roose’s article shows that such globalization had already taken place in the architecture of mosques. Many stand-alone mosques in the Netherlands have raised criticism for being representatives of the ‘home-sick mosque’ (*heimwee-moskee*), that is a mosque that exclusively reflects the imaginary mosque from the country of origin without containing any elements of its Dutch environment. Roose demonstrates that this criticism is based on faulty assumptions, arguing that the individuals who commission the mosque have very particular (although not always coherent) religious and mystical concepts regarding the forms and elements of their mosque, so that these mosques contain elements and forms from mosques as far as Mecca and India.

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany sheds yet another light on the locality of identity by examining the preferences of Dutch Muslims for their place of burial.

The general assumption is that the longer Muslims live in the Netherlands, the more they will opt for burial there. Indeed, Dutch cemeteries are preparing for this coming situation by arranging more Islamic burial grounds. But Kadroush shows that the overall majority of Muslims still prefer to be repatriated to their countries of origin for burial; for the first generation this sentiment is part of the 'the myth of return' and while this myth has little relevance to the next generation, the feeling of being unwanted in the Netherlands has given this myth new meaning.

The second recurring theme in all articles concerns the particularities of Dutch society that are confrontational for Muslims. There are many, of course, but if we were to name the main ones we may mention three: secularism, anti-Islamic sentiments, and the political-legal system. Dutch secularism is peculiar in that it is allowed to manifest one's religion in the political and public domain, but that it is 'not done' to do so. The Christian political parties, for instance, which have a longstanding reputation in Dutch politics, will refrain from publicly referring to Scripture or religious tenets. This particular form of Dutch secularism is quite problematic for those Dutch Muslims who publicly manifest their religion, whether by means of Islamic attire (beards, *jalaba*, headscarf, *niqab*, *chador*) or Islamic behaviour (prayer at work, refusal to shake hands with the opposite sex). Martijn de Koning describes the dogmatic struggles of Dutch *Salafis* who try to maintain a strict adherence to their Islamic ethics, but by doing so are confronted with a Dutch society that either rejects such notions, or provides obstacles in practicing these beliefs. Another aspect of Dutch secularism is the rapidly decreasing popularity of church attendance known in Dutch as *ontkerkelijking* (lit. 'de-churching'), resulting in churches losing their functions and, consequently, being used for other purposes. This stands in stark contrast with the increasing popularity of mosques and the resulting activities in mosque building, as discussed by Thijl Sunier and Eric Roose.

The second particularity of Dutch society, anti-Islamic sentiments, shows in public and political debates that since the late 1990s have been very critical of or even hostile towards Islam. This hostility has been given a political voice by the political party PVV (*Partij Voor de Vrijheid*, 'Party for Freedom') which was established in 2005 and rose to prominence with its resounding election victory in 2010 that made it the third largest party in the Netherlands. The PVV-discourse and its effects are discussed by Jan Jaap de Ruiter. He presents a detailed analysis of the arguments of several prominent PVV-politicians, demonstrating how criticism against Islam is interwoven with and justified by an amalgam of issues ranging from pro-Israel to anti-multiculturalism and anti-socialism. The effect of these sentiments shows in Muslims' behaviour and choices, as becomes apparent in most contributions: some might opt for

mosques that are open and transparent in order to accommodate the fears of non-Muslims, others retreat in their own *Salafi* or architectural versions of Islam, and again others waver between burial in the Netherlands or their parents' country of origin.

The third particularity of Dutch society that Muslims will have to deal with when asserting their space and identity is the political and legal system. This system is not always accommodating to the needs of Muslims, but more often it is. Kadroush shows that an Islamic burial can be conducted without any legal hindrance, and Sunier demonstrates how the political-legal system provides a negotiating space to construct a mosque. The mirror side to a system that allows for religious freedoms is that it also allows for the freedom of opinion that provides the platform for virulent criticism of Islam. The position in-between is taken by the *sharia* which, as described by Maurits Berger, is, in the forms in which it is currently practiced by Dutch Muslims, mostly congruent with the Dutch political and legal system. However, there are also many arguments – several quite justifiable – that oppose such practices taking place in the Netherlands. Berger analyses the main issues in this debate, showing the complex interaction of a position of liberal freedoms versus a need for state intervention to protect the weaker members of society. While some objections to *sharia* are pertinent and justifiable, Berger argues, they are not typical of an exceptional position of Muslims in the Netherlands, but rather illustrative of how Dutch society regards religious orthodoxy as such.

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Between the Prophet and Paradise: The Salafi struggle in the Netherlands

Martijn de Koning

The global Islamic Salafi movement has slowly but surely established itself in the Netherlands over the last 30 years. One of the features of Salafi religiosity is the often very strict interpretation of particular Islamic traditions, one which is sometimes regarded by other Muslims, and non-Muslims, as anti-Western and at odds with European secular freedoms. During the last ten years the Salafi movement also has become the main target of the counter-radicalization policies of the Dutch state. In this article I address the following question: How do Dutch Salafi Muslim youth practice a morally strict version of Islam that is rejected and considered suspect by many other Dutch Muslims as well as wider Christian-secular society? I explain how individual Salafis attempt to realize their desire of becoming pious Muslims and embodying the example of the first generations of Muslims, in a society which they experience as unpredictable, crisis-ridden and frequently hostile. I argue that Dutch Salafis combine two related, but sometimes contradictory, styles of moral reasoning: an ethics of duty and an ethics of pragmatism. I will show that this results in a type of religiosity based upon the idea of struggle. The experience of being part of a struggle, and living through that struggle, provides people with strong incentives to continuously reflect upon and improve themselves as part of their moral ambition. This article provides insight into a modern day Islamic movement and its participants and how people's religiosity is shaped by present-day political and societal contexts and religious teachings.

Key terms: Salafism; The Netherlands; Muslims; Radicalization; Ethics.

Introduction

Originating in the Middle East, the global Islamic Salafi movement has slowly but surely established itself in the Netherlands over the last 30 years. One of the stark features of Salafi religiosity is the often very strict interpretation of particular Islamic traditions, one which is sometimes regarded by other Muslims,

and non-Muslims, as anti-Western and at odds with European secular freedoms. Since 2001, following several controversial sermons given by imams (which, for example, attacked US and Dutch policies on Israel and violence against women) and reports of Muslim youth going abroad on 'jihad', the Salafi movement has become more visible in the Netherlands. After the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 the Salafi movement, which was already fragmented, became the main target of the counter-radicalization policies of the Dutch state.¹

In this article I address the following question: How do Dutch Salafi Muslim youth practice a morally strict version of Islam that is rejected and considered suspect by many other Dutch Muslims as well as wider Christian-secular society? I refer to similar explorations made by Robbins (2004, 2010) of the way in which Christians in Papua New Guinea and the US negotiate between different ethics and Elisha's (2008, 2011) analysis of Evangelical outreach which is often based upon contradictory moral ambitions. I extend these theoretical arguments to the Salafi movement in the Netherlands and, in so doing, I explain how individual Salafis attempt to realize their desire of becoming pious Muslims and embodying the example of the first generations of Muslims, in a society which they experience as unpredictable, crisis-ridden and frequently hostile. I argue that Dutch Salafis combine two related, but sometimes contradictory, styles of moral reasoning: an ethics of duty and an ethics of pragmatism. First I give a brief outline of the utopia and ambitions of the Salafis and the different manifestations of Salafism in the Netherlands. I then explore the fragmentation of Dutch Salafis and the reaction in Dutch media and politics to Islam and Salafism, as both help create the experience of unpredictability that complicates peoples' ambitions to become pious Muslims. After examining the different ethics that Salafis uphold, I illustrate how this unpredictability is absorbed into and becomes entrenched in Salafi convictions and practices. In so doing, I hope to provide insight into a modern day Islamic movement and to describe the different modes of religiosity and secularism which exist in contemporary Dutch society and how they are shaped by their present-day political and societal contexts.

¹ This article is based upon research in the Netherlands which began in 2007. I have spoken to, and observed (online and offline), 48 men and 15 women since 2007; most of them were between 16 and 25 years old and had a Moroccan-Dutch background, but the interviewees also included several native Dutch converts, and Turkish-Dutch and Somali-Dutch Muslims. Most of the interviews were conducted in informal settings; the interviews with the women were done via email and chat programmes.

Salafism: Utopia and moral ambitions

The Salafi movement is a global Sunni Islamic movement which originated in Saudi Arabia. The name Salafism is taken from the term *al-salaf al-salih* ‘pious forefathers’; the term refers to the first three generations of Muslims who are regarded as exemplifying the correct way that all Muslims should live today. The Salafi movement can be viewed as a “utopian movement” (Price, Nonini & Fox-Tree 2008) which aims to revitalize Islam by promoting an idealized vision of the lives of the first Muslims of the seventh century AD, and by persuading Muslims to live according to that vision; an entreaty that its followers find more just and satisfying than the life and circumstances of the present (De Koning 2012a).

In order to disseminate and practice the Salafi utopia, scholars and preachers translate the rather abstract notions of the first generations of Muslims into particular doctrines, strategies and practices that enable individual Muslims to realize their ideals. These ideals can be analysed as “moral ambitions”, a term coined by Elisha (2008) in his research on Evangelical Christians in the US. According to Elisha (2008) Evangelicals work to find virtue in good deeds and to inspire others to internalize the same moral dispositions which they believe are necessary for mobilizing people to do volunteer work (Elisha 2011, 9). Salafis, like these Evangelicals, work not only to fulfil their own moral ambitions, but also to try to convince others (in particular other Muslims) to share, implement and experience these same moral ambitions.

Elisha focuses upon the ideals and complexities of social outreach which are central to the moral ambitions of the Evangelicals. But the moral ambitions of the Salafi movement are different and have a different goal; they aim to establish the “true” Islam of the pious predecessors and to become “true” Muslims – this means that Islam and the current community of Muslims (*ummah*) have to be cleansed of what Salafis regard as non-Islamic accretions such as Sufism, Shi’a Islam, or to local practices and doctrines, which have sullied the “pure” Islam of the first generations of Muslims (cf. Meijer 2009a).

Through fatwas, courses, conferences and websites, this broad perspective is converted into more concrete moral ambitions. In order to realise the Salafi utopia, its adherents try to eradicate all the influences that could dilute their notion of a “true” Islam. For Salafis the only way to lead a pure and authentic life, and consequently inherit paradise, is to return to the period of the prophet Muhammad and his companions as described in the sources of Islam, the Qur’an and the Hadith. According to the Salafis, all human activity should be based upon a strict and literal interpretation of these sources for it to be legitimate or it could be condemned as *bid’a* (‘innovation’) or worse, *kufir* (‘disbelief’). They often reject rulings given by the four different law schools in Sunni

Islam and exhibit profound antagonism towards the teachings of scholars who belong to those schools (except, occasionally, those of the Ibn Hanbal school which is dominant in Saudi Arabia). Salafis propose that an anti-rational approach be adopted which bans all forms of interpretation of Islamic scriptures but, at the same time, they place a strong emphasis on the individual's own duty to gather Islamic knowledge and not to blindly follow Islamic scholars. Several scholars have already noted that this sometimes results in an individual having an eclectic mix of Islamic knowledge taken from different traditions and Western scientific knowledge.²

It should be noted that there are many groups of Muslims, other than the Salafis, who regard the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims as exemplary Muslims, and their teachings as an inspiration for current day reform; these range from other Islamic movements, to socialists and feminists. For many individual Muslims, whether they are affiliated with a particular branch or movement or not, the lives and teachings of the first generations and the Prophet Muhammad are appealing ideals, but they have no clear concept of how these translate into modern day practice. The crucial distinction that sets Salafis apart is that for them the Qur'an, Sunna and the practices and statements of the *salaf* are all-encompassing ideals which the individual and others should conform to as closely, literally and strictly as possible (Meijer 2009a).

At this point it is important to note that using Salafi or Salafist as a label is contested among Muslims; some refuse to use it, others use it to denounce other Muslims and yet others (even those who refuse to use it in religious circles) use it in public debates to describe themselves. Furthermore, in public debates, Salafism is often equated with radicalism, and so-called radical Muslims are often called Salafi or Salafists. This research is concentrated on the networks of mosques, preachers, websites and learning institutions which identify themselves as adherents to the Salafi *manhaj* ('method') and/or as Salafi and, in particular, on those Muslims who visited the Salafi circles (online or offline) at least twice a week between 2007 and 2011 for religious purposes, or other reasons such as leisure and sport.

The category of Salafis is not a homogenous one; there are many differences between and controversies about the interpretation of the first generations of Muslims and the ways of implementing Islam in the present day. The different Salafi networks all share the same doctrine of the unity and uniqueness of God (*tawhid*), but their members and branches differ on the strategies for accomplishing them (Meijer 2009a; Wagemakers 2012). For Salafis

² See, for example, Gauvain (2012), who also refers to Muslim critics of the Salafi trend with similar observations (346-347, n. 139).

tawhid is related to the doctrine of loyalty and disavowal (*al-walawa-l-bara*). According to Salafi interpretations, Muslims are called upon to distance themselves from unbelievers and from Muslims who, in their understanding, have gone astray. Muslims are even called upon to express open enmity towards “infidels” as proof of their loyalty to God (Wagemakers 2012).³ The question, however, is: How does one practice this principle in daily life? Salafis may have to mix with family members who are not considered “pure” Muslims, or with non-Muslims in educational institutions, or at work; this can make achieving these ambitions very difficult.

Many Muslims who try to follow the Salafi teachings experience a tension between their loyalty towards family and friends (who are not always on the Salafi path), their duty to reach out to others for *da’wa* (proselytizing), and the necessity of participating in education and the labour market on the one hand, and the perceived need to remain distant from non-Muslims, and other Muslims, on the other.

Salafi manifestations in the Netherlands

Before turning to an analysis of how Dutch Salafis practice Islam in daily life, we have to explore the different Salafi networks that have established themselves in the Netherlands and the public debates and policies that pertain to Islam and Salafism. Together they shape the, sometimes conflicting, religious, political, social and cultural conditions that influence people’s moral ambitions (Elisha 2011, 2). In this section the different networks of Dutch Salafis and their activities are outlined and, in the next, I explore the political context of Salafism in the Netherlands.

The Salafi movement has been able to establish itself as a global movement that has been remarkably successful in adapting to local circumstances, albeit that it remains a minority almost everywhere (Meijer 2009b). The first Dutch branches of Salafism were established by labour migrants and political refugees from the Middle East in the 1980s and since then Salafi networks have been able to create a strong position in the “market” of Islamic knowledge (De Koning 2012a; Roex, Van Stiphout & Tillie 2010). During the 1980s and 1990s, the Salafis established themselves in the Netherlands through transnational networks, mosques, schools and lecture circles. As most Dutch Muslim youth are not fluent Arab speakers (the dominant language used by the global Salafi networks), when several Salafi mosques changed from using Arabic to Dutch in 2000 this opened up a whole new potential group of participants. The other non-

³ I deliberately use the term ‘Muslim’ here instead of ‘Salafi’ as Salafi is a proselytizing movement and thus has preachers who extend their messages to include all Muslims.

Salafi and Moroccan-Dutch mosques had no Dutch speaking imams or lecturers and were not so easily able to attract young Muslims (Boender 2007).

At the time, however, the Dutch Salafi networks were already fragmented. Global Salafism had split into several distinct, sometimes antagonistic, networks, as a result of local and transnational debates among Salafis focusing, in particular, on the different views held about the presence of US soldiers in Saudi Arabia during and after the first Gulf War and on (violent) opposition against Middle Eastern regimes. Some remained loyal to Muslim regimes, some engaged in political opposition and a few others supported and/or engaged in violent opposition (Wiktorowicz 2006; Hegghammer 2010). In the Netherlands, the first major conflict took place in the *Al Fourqaan* mosque in Eindhoven when imam Ahmad Salam (from Syria) left after being accused by his congregation of being “too political” and “too controlling”. Salam founded a new mosque in Tilburg but, in 2001, a few of his students rejected his political teachings and became followers of the Saudi Islamic scholar Rabi’ al-Madkhali, who preached absolute loyalty to the Saudi regime. These students established their own circle in Tilburg and called themselves *Selefies* (the Dutch pronunciation of Salafis). In 2002 and 2003, these *Selefies* disseminated a black list containing the names of preachers such as Ahmad Salam, Fawaz Jneid (The Hague) and Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven (a prominent Dutch convert) who were accused of being people of innovation (*bid’a*) and excommunication (*takfir*), and of dividing the Muslim community.

Based on these developments, and by using a typology of the relationships which exist between and among networks (antagonistic or cooperative, national or transnational), and their ideological similarities and differences, we can identify five main Salafi networks in the Netherlands, each with its own internal divisions (De Koning 2012a). First there are the *Selefies*, a group which follows the teachings of, among others, Shaykh Rabi’ al-Madkhali. One of the main preachers from this group is Abu Abdillah Bouchta; other preachers include several native Dutch converts who studied in Saudi Arabia. In 2006 this network split when a controversy erupted between a number of preachers about how (and whether) fellow *Selefie* preachers should be denounced. In 2012 a new controversy arose between different local Dutch branches of the *Selefies* in Tilburg, Rotterdam and Amsterdam which led to warnings being given to their respective constituencies advising them not to follow the teachings of the other preachers.

The second network consists of mosques in Amsterdam (*Tawheed* mosque, headed by imam Shershaby), The Hague (*As Soennah* mosque, until 2012 headed by imam Fawaz Jneid), and Tilburg (ISOOK Foundation, headed by imam Ahmad Salam). The preachers in this second network, unlike the *Selefies*,

are much more outspoken in their critique of Dutch politicians and Middle Eastern political leaders. In late 2011 a huge conflict occurred in The Hague at the *As Soennah* mosque between its imam, Fawaz Jneid, and the board of the mosque who regarded him as being too polemical towards other Muslim preachers and Dutch politicians, and as severely damaging the board's aspirations of participation in local societal activities. In 2012, this led to the dismissal of the imam by the board which was comprised mainly of his former students.

The third network, the *Al Fourqaan* mosque in the south of the Netherlands, is closely tied to the second. Dutch convert and Salafi leader Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven, who was a follower of some of the opposition shaykhs in Saudi Arabia, broke away from this mosque and went on to establish his own (loose) network that can be seen as a fourth network. In the past Van de Ven was accused of being part of a fifth network of the Dutch Salafi movement involved in recruiting for, and participating in, armed struggle. This fifth network is the so-called Dutch Jihadi network; most people in this network and its subsidiaries were connected to the core of the old Hofstad network (the assassin of Van Gogh, Mohammed Bouyeri, and his friend Samir Azzouz are its most well-known members). Several arrests made after the murder of Van Gogh in 2004 and in 2005 led to the disintegration of the network and it is no longer active.

All of the major Salafi networks in the Netherlands try to provide Muslim youth with incentives to acquire the right kind of knowledge and behaviour (De Koning 2012a). They strive to teach insiders what it means to belong to a particular kind of community, how to recognize that community and how to recognize themselves as members of it. Through these activities, the different Salafi networks try to establish and present themselves as moral guardians of a Muslim community that, according to Salafi authorities, is characterized by moral crisis. According to Salafi preachers this moral crisis has arisen because Muslims adopt Dutch customs and values and leave the path of Islam. The preachers try to persuade their constituency to reorganize their daily routines and to focus on "returning" to Islam according to Salafi interpretation (De Koning 2012a). In doing so they challenge the discourse of integration propagated by the Dutch state which is increasingly focused on compliance with Dutch (secular) standards and democracy (instead of God's law), and undivided loyalty (instead of the transnational loyalties of the Salafi movement) under the label of active citizenship (instead of "true" Muslims worshipping only God) (cf. Geelhoed 2011; Moors & Jacobs 2009).

The Dutch socio-political context: Secularism, Citizenship and Security

The political context of Salafism in the Netherlands provides a glimpse into how the utopian Islam of Salafism is received within the Dutch context of the management of Islam. I concentrate, in particular, on how a growing debate about Islam in the Netherlands has contributed to making the Salafis more visible (in turn fuelling the Islam debate). This entanglement has exerted a heavy influence on the way in which the Salafi movement has been branded as the main target for the counter-radicalization policies of the Dutch state.

During the 1980s and 90s Salafis shied away from any public visibility, let alone from participating in public debates. This changed after the events of 9/11, when Muslims in general became a huge topic of debate and the *Al Fourqaan* mosque in Eindhoven was accused of having welcomed a number of the 9/11 attackers in the past; something they vehemently denied. From 2002 onwards, Salafi visibility increased in the public's image of Islam and Muslims because of a number of incidents. A few Muslim young men who frequented the main Salafi centers tried to go abroad to participate in the violent struggles in Chechnya, Kashmir and Pakistan. Undercover documentaries of Salafi mosques revealed imams' sermons harshly denouncing Dutch political leaders and Dutch foreign policy towards Iraq and Afghanistan, with its allegiance to the US and Israel (De Koning 2012b). One imam was revealed to have said that, if necessary, women should be corrected with force if they did something wrong (De Koning 2009). The controversy surrounding the Salafis increased even more in 2004 when film-director and writer, Theo van Gogh, known for his polemical views on Islam, was killed by Mohammed Bouyeri, a member of the so-called Hofstad network (De Koning & Meijer 2011). Particular practices often associated with Salafis, such as the refusal to shake hands with people of the opposite sex (Fadil 2009) and the practice of face-veil wearing also became increasingly controversial (Moors 2009).

These controversies show that Salafis go beyond the space traditionally designated for religion in the Dutch public domain. Within the current model of citizenship policies, Muslims are part of society and have the same citizenship rights as others, but, as migrants, they are regarded as a group that needs to be integrated. In the 1990s, in particular, the need for immigrants to accept and internalise "Dutch norms and values" became a benchmark of integration and formed the basis for integration policies; immigrants were required to adopt the same ideas about virtuous citizenship as the ones supposedly held in high regard among native Dutch citizens (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens 2010; Bracke 2012). The policies pertaining to Muslims were designed to steer the development of a Dutch Muslim community in a more "liberal Dutch" direction,

organized in an “acceptable and efficient” manner according to “Dutch standards” and steering away from “orthodoxy” (Rath et al. 1999, 61; cf. Maussen 2009).

The events of 9/11, the murder of the Theo van Gogh in 2004, and the rise of anti-Islam politicians such as Wilders, resulted in the growing securitization of Islam; a process whereby the focus in media, politics and integration was placed almost entirely on Muslims and Islam and their alleged threat to democracy and social cohesion (De Graaf 2011). Salafis, in particular, became entangled in a nexus of secularisation, securitization and Islamophobia as the main target of counter-radicalization policies (Buijs 2009; De Koning 2012b).

Anxiety among policymakers, politicians and opinion leaders about the Salafis is based on their alleged proneness to violence, while their efforts to participate in society are dismissed as attempts to infiltrate Dutch society to undermine it (De Koning 2012b). This fear is not only based on the possibility of political violence being perpetrated by Muslims (which in Dutch society is rare anyway, with the notable exception of the killing of Van Gogh), but also on the idea that Salafi Muslims are a threat to social cohesion, to the integration of Muslims and, in particular, to democratic and secular freedoms (Buijs 2009).

Salafism in daily life: duty, pragmatism and struggle

The internal contradictions and fragmentation of Salafism as well as the negative reactions to Salafism in wider society lead to inconsistencies, tensions and ambiguities arising in the daily lives of Salafis as they complicate Salafis’ ambitions to become “true” Muslims. Elisha (2008) refers to Robbins (2004) who explores how the Urapmin Christians in Papua New Guinea engage with two competing and co-existing ethical frameworks: an “ethic of conviction” (based upon “the Christian moral system and the traditional conception of social action”) and an “ethic of responsibility” (Robbins 2004, 248-249). Robbins’ analysis of the competing and coexisting frameworks allows us to explore how people attempt to realize the moral ambitions that emanate from, but are also sometimes in conflict with, many different cultural repertoires, discourses and motives.

Among Dutch Salafis we can find two ethical frameworks, the ethics of duty and the ethics of social pragmatism. Maintaining a Salafi ethics of duty means that an individual has to acquire the “correct” knowledge and conviction and convert this knowledge into correct practice; there is a strong inclination to view one’s religiosity as based upon fulfilling obligations and duties before God in all spheres of life without compromise (Haykel 2009). The Salafi ethics of duty is strongly related to the claim that Salafis are members of the saved sect (*al-firqa al-najiyah*) or the victorious group (*al-ta’ifa al-mansura*) that will enter

Paradise. According to Salafis, they are the only “true” Muslims: uniting the correct knowledge, intention and practice in fulfilling their duty to demonstrate the correct level of dedication to, and worship of, the unique and one God.

The second frame of moral reasoning that Salafis uphold is an ethics of social pragmatism which they use to try to live up to the responsibilities and loyalties they have towards other Muslims and non-Muslims in different spheres of their lives: family, friends, school, work and leisure. At first sight one might expect the Salafi quest for a “pure” Islam to produce a sharp division between themselves and other Muslims, and the rest of society. In particular because Salafi preachers frame Dutch society as one in which Muslims are in moral crisis: they have strayed from the path of the true Islam and succumbed to the freedoms of “infidels”. Many Salafis in this research, however, realize that an uncompromising position is not always attainable in Dutch society because of every day responsibilities towards family and friends, the duty to proselytize (in practice mostly among Muslims) and because Paradise can only be reached when they are “true” Muslims in the here and now of Dutch secular society. For example, Abdullah states: “If a mother goes out to pick up her child at school and she has to take off her face-veil because some minister does not allow that, that would be very sad.” Others regret the fact that they cannot wear a headscarf at school, that school has no halal food and that boys and girls are not segregated at school.

A Salafi ethics of duty

One of the conditions of living according to the “true” Islam is acquiring the “correct” knowledge. Here Salafis immediately encounter a problem. Given the antagonisms among different Salafi networks all claiming to be disseminating the “true” Islam and the contradictions inherent in Salafi thought, how do they know what “correct” knowledge is? Participating in the Salafi networks only partially fulfils the desire for knowledge; as they grow more aware of the differences in opinion and the denouncements of other (Salafi) Muslims, the necessity to firmly ground their convictions in the “correct” knowledge increases.

Not only should one acquire the correct knowledge, but people's convictions and behaviour have to concur with this knowledge too. We find this most strongly in the concepts of *tazkiyyah* (purification of the soul) and *ikhlaas* (sincerity). Removing all the impurities from one's intentions is necessary if one wishes to come closer to God and to ensure that all the intentions underpinning one's practices of worship of, and obedience to, God are intended solely for the sake of satisfying God. This means that people have to continuously reflect upon their thoughts, attitudes and behaviour to check whether they are in accordance with the Islamic teachings.

The way participants of Salafi courses and conferences absorb these teachings is interesting. Take, for example, Yasin who visited a Salafi conference in Belgium which was attended, not only by Salafi preachers, but by other (more mainstream preachers) too. After the four day conference Yasin published the following summary on his Facebook account:

Golden advice during the 'Hidden Treasure' conference

- 1) Self-reflection: Check yourself regularly, meaning look into the mirror and weigh your statements and actions.
- 2) Know who you are and where you stand: Purify your intentions, look at your character and test it on a regular basis. Do not fool yourself, do not deny but acknowledge that you make mistakes.
- 3) Purify your heart: Keep in touch with Allah (swt) by means of dhikr [remembrance of God]. Always is always, and not only during prayers. Going to school, to the mosque, during sport and during breaks.
- 4) Hope and fear: Are you being tested? Extinguish this with taqwa [fear or awe of God], meaning leave sinful matters for the sake of Him and perform good deeds for the sake of Him, with hope for His enlightenment.
- 5) Islam: Is more than just following a set of rules. Translate your meaning of Islam into concrete actions that can be useful for the society in which you live. Do not stop at words, ideas, making plans, but execute them. In other words: no words, but actions!

Points one, two and five of Yasin's Facebook status are derived from a lecture given by a young preacher at the above-mentioned 'Hidden Treasure' conference. He is not part of the Salafi circles and often teaches Islam as if it were a management course. The third and fourth points are from two young Salafi preachers at that same conference. Yasin's list shows how Salafi Muslims focus on disciplining their inner faith, moral discipline and practices based upon the scripture. The unity between knowledge, conviction and behaviour constitutes the ethics of duty which means that Islamic requirements have to be fully and strictly met in daily life. The logic behind this is that Salafis think life in the here and now is a test for the life hereafter. To be able to enter Paradise, it is not only the worldly consequences of one's behaviour that matters, but also the consequences of one's behaviour for the "last day", when one appears before God to account for one's actions. In this ethics of duty, as explained by Robbins (2010), people focus more on knowing and following the rules and less on the consequences that these actions might bring in the near future (cf. Elisha 2008, 183).

This means, for example, that while working in a health care setting is something that is valued, especially for (preferably unmarried) women, if this means that the strict separation between men and women is violated, it

becomes problematic (especially for women). If a woman decides to refuse such a job, this has negative consequences in the short term, but the long term goal (of entering Paradise) remains intact because she has not violated the obligation to maintain a strict separation between the sexes that is held in high regard by many Salafis.

As Robbins (2010), following Guyer (2007), explains, an ethics of duty is particularly useful when people cannot easily predict the consequences of their own actions. Following an ethics of duty makes sense then because people at least “know” they have behaved correctly. This unpredictability is experienced very strongly among Salafis in my research. The Dutch Islam debate has created a situation in which it is not easy for many to be Muslims in the way they would like to be, and many Salafis and other Muslims have experienced the negative connotations of being held responsible for the actions of other Muslims. The impression of hostility and estrangement, and the problems with Moroccan-Dutch youth in society, are taken as signs that the Muslim community is facing a deep crisis and that their lifestyle, acceptance and presence in the Netherlands is at stake. Many Salafis told me, after the murder on Van Gogh, that they (or their parents) feared for their safety in the Netherlands and wondered whether they would be forced to leave, a feeling that returned after the major victory in the elections of 2009 of the anti-Islam *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV; ‘Freedom Party’) of Geert Wilders. In a situation such as this, when it is difficult to foresee the near future, an ethics of duty makes sense because every action has its own intrinsic value as it forms part of the worship of God. For example Umm Muwahida, who stated on the eve of the elections in 2010: “But people will save their own skin when he (Geert Wilders, leader of the Freedom Party) becomes prime minister. But I wouldn’t stay in the Netherlands for long.”

A Salafi ethics of pragmatism

In their ambition to uphold an ethics of duty, many Salafis compare themselves to “strangers” which is similar to what some Dutch protestant Christians say about “being in the world, but not of the world”. To be able to achieve this state of mind and turn it into practice, preachers emphasize the necessity of keeping a certain distance from worldly matters (nothing more than a “passing shadow” as a Salafi magazine noted; *El Tawheed Magazine* 2010). This does not mean total isolation from the outside world. Having a good education and (for men) having a job are highly valued. Many teachings and articles in journals, therefore, contain “tools and tricks” to help improve one's behaviour as both Salafis and as members of Dutch society; for example, how to succeed at exams (*El Tawheed Magazine* 2010: 24-40), stop smoking (*WijMoslims* 2008: 18-21) and manage anger (*Ontdekislam* 2012). An additional reason for not isolating oneself is that

by participating in society people can work to improve the tainted image of Islam, something that is often seen as part of an individual's *da'wa* efforts. Furthermore, the need to go to school and/or have a job and interact with non-Salafi and non-Muslim family and friends renders a complete withdrawal from society impossible (cf. Dumbe & Tayob 2011), with the exception of those who migrate to an "Islamic" country. To be able to function in society, Salafis engage with an ethics of social pragmatism. When we look at people's day to day practices we find a lot of pragmatic compromises taking place. Many men and women adjust their attire by wearing only a headscarf or not wearing the *djellaba* when they go to school or work. Many women do not wear a face-veil when they are in public with their parents as they often dislike their daughters wearing it. When Salafis go to the mosque for prayer, lectures, conferences and courses, however, they adjust their attire again in such a way they feel is more "Islamic".

The ethics of pragmatism remain firmly rooted in the ethics of duty that emanate from the Salafi understanding of the ambition to become a pious Muslim, but also involve an intimate knowledge of the sensibilities of one's family and friends as well as wider society. A good example pertains to shaking hands with the opposite sex. Underpinning some of the gender segregation among Salafis is the idea that they should refrain from shaking hands to protect themselves from temptations and desires. As, for example, Fadil (2009) also shows, women who would prefer to refuse to shake hands with men tend to avoid confrontation and conflict, as they know and understand many people can be offended by this practice. Such an attitude requires these women to be very aware of the Dutch secular sensitivities about Islam and Salafism as well as being perceptive to the opposition among Muslims against Salafism. In many cases the need to be pragmatic does not immediately lead to the conclusion that one is not Islamic enough or that one's freedom to practice Islam is being limited.

In other cases, for example, when women temporarily wear a headscarf and experiment with it, this is taken by others as "playing with Islam" discrediting the sincerity and authenticity of women's religiosity. In their relationships with family, friends and colleagues, however, the Salafis in my research resorted to all kinds of legitimizations such as: "We are in the Netherlands; that is the way things go here. It is not an Islamic country." "My *iman* [inner faith] is just not that strong yet." "I also have to respect the wishes of my parents who oppose the face-veil." "Work and education are important as well in Islam." "Islam is a religion of the middle way."

Such legitimizations are part of an ethics of pragmatism and, at the same time, refer to the ethics of duty. With the ethics of pragmatism, social responsibilities and daily ambiguities enter into one's concept of what being a

“true” Muslim is; for example, when an individual’s aspirations pertaining to work, education or their relationship with family outweigh the desire to follow particular rules. In other cases Muslims may try to prevent “giving Islam a bad name” by adopting socially pragmatic positions instead of maintaining a strict ethics of duty. In all these cases, however, one relies on (the Salafi interpretation of) Islamic do’s and don’ts to determine what is “correct” behaviour.

Life and faith as a personal struggle

Salafis feel that they are part of something good (the righteous path of Islam), something that transcends their individuality (the world community of Muslims) and something beautiful (the approval, love and benevolence of God). What follows from this exploration of the ethics of pragmatism is that the issue of predictability, so important in regard to the ethics of duty, is somewhat more complicated than explained thus far. The Salafi understanding of Islam is that it is an all-encompassing ritual and moral discipline which removes all the ambiguities, and unpredictability of daily life. But it is certainly the case that many of the Salafi respondents do experience life in the Netherlands as vulnerable and unpredictable. At the same time the ethics of pragmatism requires people to have an intimate knowledge of the do's and don'ts in (a particular section of) society. This suggests that the ethics of pragmatism is created by the need to reduce unpredictability and the search for certainty. There are strong arguments for that, but what complicates such arguments is that the vision of society is heavily influenced by Salafi teaching. Whereas Robbins (2010) and Elisha (2008, 2011) take the experience of tensions, contradictions and ambiguities as a given, or as predominantly the result of external conditions and their complex relationship with a particular mode of Christianity, I would suggest taking this one step further in the case of Salafism. Salafis’ ideas of how difficult it is to be a “true” Muslim in Dutch society and their perception of unpredictability emanate from the predicaments they face and from the Salafi teachings which, with all their internal contradictions and tensions, create a picture of a hostile and distracting environment which is opposed to the blessed and righteous teachings of Islam.

Salafi preachers try to instil the idea of a crisis-ridden world in the mind of their constituency. Challenges, hostility, temptations are, therefore, not separated from Salafism but are a part of it. As one of my interlocutors stated on his Twitter account: “*Iman* is strengthened through difficulties and temptations, *iman* weakens in case of (enduring) success”. Strengthening one’s *iman* is part of the personal transformation which is crucial for realizing one’s moral ambitions and should not be seen as something which hinders one's moral ambition but as a vital part of it. Sometimes people call this struggle *jihad al nafs* [‘the struggle or

effort to control one's worldly desires'], an effort which can be achieved by the purification of the soul.

The experience of being part of a struggle, and living through that struggle, provides people with strong incentives to continuously reflect and improve themselves as part of their moral ambition. Although the pressure caused by this struggle may lead to disaffiliation from the Salafi movement by some, for many others, however, experiences like this are part of a test of faith and steadfastness. Finding “correct” solutions and overcoming setbacks then become temporary victories over Evil, or signs of God putting them to the test, and a confirmation that one is on the correct path and part of a community of “true” believers. The idea of a test or struggle that arises in daily life is, therefore, central in the convictions and practices of Salafi Muslims.

Conclusion: the struggle of Salafism

In popular accounts, Salafism and life in Dutch secular society are often viewed as being incompatible with one other; both within Salafi circles and among secular and other opponents. But acquiring and maintaining an ethics of duty is part of the Salafi moral ambition of becoming a “true” Muslim. This moral ambition is partly a product of living in Dutch society with its concomitant tension, unpredictability and personal dilemmas. These ambiguities, in turn, are incorporated into Salafi thought and practices through an ethics of pragmatism which transforms the ambiguities of daily life into personal struggles. Maintaining an ethics of duty means that people have to continuously reflect upon their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in order to construct a coherent subject who is able to resist the temptations of everyday life and balance different motives, loyalties and practicalities. The ambivalences and ambiguities of daily life in a secular society, therefore, shape and give meaning to people’s moral ambitions and act as challenges on a path of personal development towards achieving a state of piety.

This exploration of the moral ambitions of Dutch Salafis allows us to grasp the dilemmas, ambiguities and nuances that inform people's religiosity and that are used by preachers to mobilize their constituency. The securitization of Islam and fragmentation of the Salafis does complicate people's moral ambitions but as they also reinforce narratives of crisis, the fight against Islam and personal struggle, they constitute a potential that can be used by preachers in their moral activities based upon a utopian vision of Islam. What Salafi Muslims therefore do, and don't do, in the Netherlands is not merely the result of global Salafi doctrines and the end result of a Salafi moral development, but is the product and expression of the ambition of Dutch Salafis to become pious Muslims in what they perceive to be a crisis-ridden secular Dutch society.

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About the author

Martijn de Koning is an anthropologist at the Radboud University Nijmegen. He has published on identity construction of Moroccan-Dutch youth, Salafi Muslims in the Netherlands, radicalization of Muslim youth and the Dutch Islam debate. He teaches about the Middle East and about Islam in Europe at the Faculty of Religious Studies in Nijmegen and at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam.

Entre le Prophète et le Paradis: la lutte salafiste aux Pays-Bas

Le salafisme, mouvement islamique mondial, s'est lentement établi aux Pays-Bas au cours des 30 dernières années. Un des traits de la religiosité salafiste est l'interprétation souvent très stricte de certaines traditions islamiques, position parfois regardée par d'autres musulmans et par les non-musulmans comme anti-Occident et contraire aux libertés séculières européennes. Pendant les dix dernières années, ce mouvement est devenu la cible principale de la politique anti-radicalisation de l'État néerlandais. Dans cet article, j'aborde la question de savoir comment les jeunes salafistes néerlandais pratiquent une version moralement stricte de l'islam que beaucoup d'autres musulmans néerlandais, de même que la

société chrétienne-séculière, rejettent et considèrent comme suspecte. J'explique comment des salafistes individuels tentent de réaliser leur désir de devenir des musulmans pieux et de suivre l'exemple des premières générations de musulmans, dans une société qu'ils éprouvent comme imprévisible, secouée par des crises et souvent hostile. Je prétends que les salafistes néerlandais combinent deux styles apparentés mais parfois contradictoires de raisonnement moral : une éthique du devoir et une éthique du pragmatisme. Je démontre qu'il en résulte un type de religiosité basée sur l'idée de la lutte. L'expérience de prendre part à une lutte et de la vivre leur fournit une forte motivation pour réfléchir et s'améliorer de façon continue comme partie de leur ambition morale. Le présent article offre un aperçu d'un mouvement islamique contemporain et de ses participants, et de la manière dont la religiosité des gens est formée de nos jours par des contextes politiques et sociaux et des enseignements religieux.

Tussen de Profeet en het Paradijs: Salafisme in Nederland

De wereldwijde Islamitische Salafistische beweging heeft zich in de afgelopen dertig jaar langzaam maar zeker een plaats veroverd in Nederland. Een van de kenmerken van de Salafistische geloofsbeleving is de vaak zeer strenge interpretatie van bepaalde Islamitische tradities, die door andere Moslims en niet-Moslims soms gezien wordt als anti-westers en in tegenspraak met Europese seculiere vrijheden. In de afgelopen tien jaar is de Salafistische beweging het voornaamste doelwit geworden van het antiradicalisatiebeleid van de Nederlandse regering. In dit artikel behandel ik de volgende vraag: Hoe beoefenen Nederlandse Salafistische jongeren een moreel strenge versie van de Islam die door veel andere Nederlandse Moslims en de bredere Christelijk-seculiere maatschappij wordt gewantrouwd? Ik behandel de vraag hoe individuele Salafi's proberen hun ideaal uit te voeren om een vrome Moslim te worden en het voorbeeld van de eerste generaties Moslims te volgen in een samenleving die zij ervaren als onvoorspelbaar, in crisis, en vaak vijandig. Ik beargumenteer dat Nederlandse Salafi's twee verwante, maar soms tegenstrijdige, stijlen van moreel redeneren combineren: een ethiek van plicht en een ethiek van pragmatisme. Ik laat zien dat dit resulteert in een soort van geloofsbeleving gebaseerd op het idee van strijd. De ervaring deel uit te maken van een strijd, die strijd mee te maken en te overleven, geeft mensen een krachtige impuls om voortdurend op zichzelf te reflecteren en zichzelf te verbeteren als onderdeel van hun morele ambitie. Dit artikel geeft inzicht in een moderne Islamitische beweging en zijn aanhangers en in hoe hun geloofsbeleving wordt gevormd door de moderne politieke en sociale context en godsdienstig onderwijs.

The distinction between Islam and Muslims in the Dutch anti-Islamization discourse

Jan Jaap de Ruiter

This article discusses the distinction, made by Dutch supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse, between Islam and Muslims, allowing them to say that they have a great deal against Islam, but nothing against Muslims. The main objective of this contribution is to analyze the Islam/Muslims distinction as it appears in this discourse and to describe its possible consequences for the people it concerns: Muslims living in the Netherlands. The article takes the writings of Dutch *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV; 'Party for Freedom') leader Geert Wilders and party ideologue Martin Bosma as cases in point and presents an analysis of their contents focusing on the Islam/Muslim distinction as an essential element in this anti-Islamization discourse. The article discusses the definition of the anti-Islamization discourse and links it to the term Islamization and the related term Islamophobia, and their manifestation in the discourse of Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom. The article shows that this party aims at "luring" Muslims into renouncing Islam and thus creating a Netherlands without Islam, which is in fact a Netherlands without Muslims.

Key terms: Islam; Anti-Islamization discourse; Islamophobia; PVV (Party for Freedom); Geert Wilders; Martin Bosma.

1. Introduction

This article discusses the distinction that Dutch supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse make between Islam and Muslims. This allows them to say that they have a great deal against Islam, but nothing against Muslims. The central issue of this contribution is to analyze the Islam/Muslims distinction as it appears in this discourse and to describe its possible consequences for the people it concerns: the Muslims in the Netherlands. The article starts by presenting a brief description of Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands and Europe (section 2). Section 3 contains a discussion of the meaning(s) of the terms 'Islamization' and 'anti-Islamization discourse', also in relation to the term

'Islamophobia'. Section 4 presents a brief description of the recent history of the anti-Islamization discourse in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the discourse itself is presented in an analysis of representative writings produced by its leading figures in the Netherlands, PVV (Party for Freedom) leader Geert Wilders and party ideologue Martin Bosma (section 5). After this, the article describes possible consequences of the Islam/Muslims distinction when it comes to a realization of what the anti-Islamization discourse considers a solution to the 'Islam problem' (section 6). Section 7 presents the results of polls on discrimination experienced by Muslims in the Netherlands, along with comparative studies. The article ends with conclusions and a discussion (section 8).

2. Muslims in the Netherlands

Assuming, as many people do, that Muslims in the Netherlands, or any other European country for that matter, all adhere to an identical level of religiosity is not merely hypothetical but simply incorrect. The latest report on Muslims in the Netherlands shows that while they do tend to be more religious than their Dutch neighbours, they nevertheless differ substantially among each other in terms of religiosity (Maliepaard & Gijssberts 2012). Thus, some 76% of Moroccan Muslims claim to pray five times a day against 27% of the Turkish Muslims (Maliepaard & Gijssberts 2012, 75). In France, 65% of the male Muslims and 85% of the female Muslims say they never go to the mosque at all (IFOP 2011). Apart from being more heterogeneous in terms of religiosity than is often supposed, Muslims in Europe do not form a homogeneous political community either. Thus, there is hardly any European country in which Muslims have succeeded in organizing and expressing themselves in one single national body, in spite of government efforts to encourage them to do so, to look after their interests and to act as a general representative contact for their community. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. The Belgian government implemented legislation to the effects that Muslims should organize themselves in such a national representative body (Oulad Si M'Hamed 2007; Zemni 2005). The elections for this body were regarded with distrust by parts of 'the Muslim community' and the body as such was and still is hardly recognized by the various national and local Muslim associations and organizations. In France, similar differences occurred in the election of a national representative body of Muslims (Taras 2012). According to German authorities, the perceived unwillingness of the Muslims in their country, consisting mainly of people with a Turkish background, to organize themselves in one body with one voice constitutes a major stumbling block to the integration of 'the Muslim community' (Monsma & Soper 2009).

The Netherlands did not impose legislation on Muslims to organize themselves in a single body but this does not mean that we are dealing with a united community there either. Today the country numbers several 'representative' bodies of Muslims competing with each other for the government's attention. Given these wide differing levels of religiosity and the lack of organization in some kind of central representative body, we cannot really speak of 'the Muslim community' of any given European country. For clarity's sake therefore, the term 'Muslims', as used in this article, is to be interpreted as simply referring to persons with a Muslim background, who may or may not identify with Islam, and who may vary considerably in their levels of religiousness and the extent to which they are organized in representative bodies.

3. The anti-Islamization discourse, Islamization and Islamophobia

Given that this article speaks of the anti-Islamization discourse, it makes sense to relate it to the term Islamization. Furthermore, as the term anti-Islamization obviously implies opposition against Islam, it also makes sense to relate it to the term Islamophobia which shares to a certain extent the same implication. This section therefore describes the meaning of the three concepts and how they relate to each other. At the end of the section a definition of the anti-Islamization discourse is presented.

The idea behind the term Islamization originated in what would later be called the Wahhabi movement in Islam, which emerged in the eighteenth century in what is now Saudi Arabia. Its aim was to do away with innovations (Arabic: *bida'*) in Islam and to return to a pure and undiluted monotheism without the then current widespread adoration of saints, which they considered a reprehensible act of polytheism (Margoliouth 1974). In nineteenth century Egypt, the idea of Islamization was used by such reformers as Mohammad Abdoh (±1849-1905) and Jamal al Din al Afghani (1838/9-1897) in response to British colonial authorities that strove to Westernize Egyptian society. Muslims were urged to go back to their roots and embrace Islam more than they had ever done and to turn away from the West. Among present-day Muslim intellectuals and philosophers, some of them based in the West, Islamization has predominantly taken the form of revisiting methodologies of conducting research in social as well as exact sciences, resulting in widespread literature on concepts like the 'Islamization of knowledge', 'Islamization of social sciences', 'Islamic economics', 'Islamic education', and the like (Al-Atass 2006; Sardar 1985; Rahman 1988; Siddiqi 2001). These days Islamists use the term both inside and outside the Islamic world aiming at the (re-)Islamization of Islamic countries that have deviated, in their views, from the right path of Islam. It should be stressed here

that Islamists are primarily focused on (re-)Islamizing the Islamic world and the Muslims living outside it, practicing *da'wa*, preaching 'true' Islam, and that the Islamization of the Western world is being kept as an item on the agenda for future reference, to be accomplished – if ever – after the primary objective has been realized, as Wagemakers (2012) and De Koning (2012) point out. It will be clear therefore that, for the moment at least and probably for a long time to come, Muslims not eager to "Islamize" have much more to fear from supporters of Islamization than non-Muslims do.

After this brief discussion of the term 'Islamization' it is useful to dwell for a moment on the term 'Islamophobia' and how it relates to Islamization. The fear of Islam in the Western world is as old as Islam itself, as Taras (2012) and López (2012) correctly point out. The continued existence of movements striving for the Islamization of the Islamic world and the Muslims outside of it obviously has not helped to diminish this fear. In fact, it has led to an excessive fear of Islam better known these days as Islamophobia. There is as yet no generally accepted definition of the term, as López (2011) and Ciftci (2012) observe. The Runnymede report (1997), dealing with Islamophobia, distinguishes eight characteristics that, as Ciftci (2012, 295) observes, would appear to be the most comprehensive ones. According to the report, Islamophobia is characterized by the following views: (1) Islam is a monolithic bloc, unresponsive to change; (2) Islam is a separate "other"; (3) Islam is inferior to the West; (4) Islam is violent; (5) Islam is a political ideology used for political and military advantage; (6) Islam rejects criticism from the West; (7) Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims; and (8) Hostility towards Muslims is seen as natural and normal. Esposito & Kalin (2011) follow the Runnymede Report in its description of Islamophobia. López presents the following definition: "Islamophobia denotes a hostile attitude towards Islam and Muslims based on the image of Islam as the enemy and as a vital, irrefutable and absolute threat to "our" wellbeing and even to "our" existence, irrespective of how Muslims are identified, whether on the basis of religious or ethnic criteria" (2012, 572).

In this article, the anti-Islamization discourse as it has developed in the Netherlands is the central issue. Basically, this anti-Islamization discourse is a reaction first of all to Islamization, and secondly to Islamophobia. The term Islamophobia was obviously not coined by people who themselves hold these negative views of Islam and Muslims. Those who hold such views reject the term, claiming that what they say about Islam is true and not fuelled by irrational fear, and that their critics are trying to play down the very real danger presented by Islam or that they are simply blind to the truth. A case in point is Dutch *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* ('Party For Freedom'; PVV) leader Geert Wilders. An illustration

of his thinking can be found in his book *Marked for Death. Islam's War Against the West and Me* (2012), in which he discusses the speech on Islam held by American President Obama in Cairo on June 4, 2009. In this speech, Mr. Obama declared that “he consider[ed] it part of [his] responsibility to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear” (13). Mr. Wilders’ response to this is: “What if these so-called “negative stereotypes of Islam” are the truth – will you denounce people for telling the truth?” (Wilders 2012, 13).

The supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse display all the characteristics of Islamophobia, but they choose to reject the term or at least ignore it. They resent the word being used in connection with their views and justify their words and actions by referring to what I call here the anti-Islamization discourse, which can subsequently be described as follows:

The anti-Islamization discourse claims that Muslims persistently strive to make a person, a group of people or a whole people or nation, irrespective of whether s/he or it originally is Muslim or not, embrace and practice the ideology (note: not religion) of Islam and apply Sharia. It claims that in all cases these endeavours result in the loss of freedom, the loss of possible democratic systems and the consequent repression of minority groups like women, homosexuals and adherents of other religions, like Christianity and Judaism. The discourse therefore strives to combat Islam (read: Muslims; see below) and seeks to make it disappear in the first place from the Western world, and in the end from the whole world.

No definition is exhaustive, but the one given here contains all the basic tenets of the anti-Islamization discourse as will be shown more in detail below. The supporters of the claim that Islam is getting more and more organized in the Western world jump at every opportunity they get to point at the violence ‘Muslims’ are practicing everywhere in the world to substantiate their claims (cf. Geller 2011; Bat Ye’or 2001; Solomon & Al Maqdisi 2012). The anti-Islamization discourse is gaining ground, becoming stronger and stronger, its ideas, be it in different measures, steadily filtering into the media, into politics and into people’s minds (Feffer 2012; Sheehi 2011; Taras 2012; Van der Valk 2012). This development is also taking place in the Netherlands.

It is important to observe that the anti-Islamization discourse claims to consider Islam an ideology and not a religion. Labeling Islam as an ideology prepares the way for equating it to other ideologies, the most common of which is fascism (see below), making it easier to condemn Islam as evil. Another consequence of labeling Islam as an ideology rather than a religion, particularly in the Dutch context, is that the supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse

assert that Islam can no longer claim the protection of freedom of religion (*godsdiens en levensovertuiging*) as offered in Article 6 of the Dutch constitution.¹ It is obviously a semantic game that is being played here, but the bottom line is that, according to the Dutch supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse, ideologies do not fall under article 6 of the Constitution, implying furthermore that, unlike religions, they should therefore not be supported, financially or otherwise, by the Dutch authorities.²

The anti-Islamization discourse emphatically refers to the violence committed in the name of Islam in the last few decades: the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the terrorist acts of Al Qaeda and, in the Dutch context, the assassination of film maker Theo van Gogh by the jihadist Mohammed Bouyeri in 2004, and the permanent protection of former MP Hirsi Ali of the VVD (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*; 'People's Party for Freedom and Democracy'; a Liberal Conservative political party). These and many other events have reinforced the distrust that has been reigning for ages in the Western world against Islam and Muslims. It goes without saying that the blame of the acts perpetrated by individuals or specific groups cannot be laid on the whole community or communities of, in this case, Muslim people. We will see below that the supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse do not make this particular distinction.

4. Voices against Islam in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, VVD leader Frits Bolkestein was one of the first Dutch politicians who successfully mobilized public opinion against Muslims by juxtaposing "European civilization" – standing for liberalism, secularization, freedom of speech, nondiscrimination – with "the world of Islam" (Bolkestein 1991). Bolkestein argued that "the integration of minorities should be handled with toughness" (Prins 2002, 369). Although most Dutch political parties and intellectuals rejected Bolkestein's approach, he did break the Dutch taboo on migrant-hostile discourse in the public sphere (Ghorashi & Van Tilburg 2006, 63). Politician Pim Fortuyn was the first influential person who claimed that the "Islamization of Dutch society" was imminent, and the first to popularize the anti-Islamization discourse in Dutch politics and society. In his book *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur* ('Against the Islamization of Our Culture') (1997) Fortuyn claimed that the daily contact between "Islamic culture" and "traditional

¹ <http://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/9353000/1/j9vvihlf299q0sr/vih9dp4hyqv1>.

² There is extensive literature on the meaning of the term 'ideology' (cf. Hawkes 2003), but in the present article ideology related to Islam is interpreted as the supporters of the Islamization discourse do.

Dutch culture” in Dutch multicultural society threatened to obliterate the latter. In early 2002, Fortuyn was dismissed as leader by his party *Leefbaar Nederland* (‘Livable Netherlands’), which would not stand for some of the statements that he made in a controversial newspaper interview, in which he repeated his earlier claims that the Netherlands was too full to admit any more migrants, that Islam was “a backward culture” and that it would be better to abolish “that weird article of the constitution: thou shalt not discriminate” (quoted in Prins 2002, 376 and in Ghorashi & Van Tilburg 2006, 64). In February 2002, Fortuyn established his own political party *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) and within months gathered a substantial following based on an appealing taboo-breaking program, the main features of which were that it opened up the debate on the alleged “backward” culture of Islam and severely attacked the culture of political correctness and the absence of any ideology in the “purple” governments consisting of PvdA (Labour Party) and VVD (Liberal Conservatives) that had ruled the country since 1994. Fortuyn was shot dead by an animal activist on 6 May 2002. It was the first political murder in the Netherlands literally in centuries and it came as a great shock to the whole population. Fortuyn was assassinated only 9 days before the national elections took place on the 15th of May, when his new party the LPF won a landslide in Dutch politics, winning 26 of the 150 seats, at once becoming the second largest party in the country. The party went on to form a coalition government with the CDA (Christen Democratisch Appèl; the Christian Democrats) and the VVD, an ill-born and as it turned out ill-fated government that did not make it beyond the first 100 days. Soon afterwards Fortuyn’s Party went into decline due to internal conflicts until it ceased to exist in 2008.

In many ways, Wilders picked up where Fortuyn left off. In 1998 Wilders was elected MP for the VVD, but he left the party in 2004, due to an internal conflict on the admission of Turkey to the European Union, which Wilders opposed, to start his own, first under the name *Groep Wilders* and since 2006 under the name *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV; ‘Party for Freedom’). Since 2004, Geert Wilders has been constantly warning against “the Islamization of the Netherlands”. Wilders claims the following: “The Netherlands must be protected against the import of Islamic culture, which will wipe out our tolerance and our democracy” (2005, 66); Islam “is a political ideology, a totalitarian doctrine aimed at dominance, violence, suppression, and the introduction of Sharia law (...) Islam strives for world domination” (2007, 13); “the fight against Islam should be the core of Dutch foreign policy” (2007, 43); Islam is “diametrically opposed to freedom, [there is] not a centimeter of space for Islam in the Netherlands” (2012a, 26). Wilders supported the first minority cabinet of VVD Prime Minister Mark Rutte, consisting of VVD and CDA, after his party had won a

major victory in the June 2010 elections, landing 24 seats in Parliament. In April 2012, however, Wilders decided to no longer support the government, claiming that he could not live with the major cuts it suggested on social welfare and the like. In the subsequent elections of September 2012 his party lost nine seats. It had not only lost seats, it also lost its direct influence on government policies, not just because it was smaller now, but more importantly because it was no longer considered a reliable and loyal partner by the only parties that would consider working with them. Still, the party's voice can still be heard loud and clear and its mission to spread its message regarding the evil nature of Islam is far from over. Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom can be regarded as the Dutch bearers par excellence of the anti-Islamization discourse as described above.

There has been considerable opposition to Wilders' and his party's anti-Islamization rhetoric, not only in parliament but also outside it. He has had to defend himself in court, being charged with incitement to hatred and discrimination against Muslims in his statements in interviews, speeches and in Parliament. On 23 June 2011, the court acquitted him of all charges, considering that from a formal judicial point of view he was criticizing Islam and the behavior of Muslims, but not Muslims themselves (Rozemond 2012). The court did mention in its verdict that certain statements by Wilders, such as "a tsunami of Muslims threatening the country", were "rude and condescending". With regard to these and other statements, the court stated: "These are statements bordering on the impermissible. They are seditious." However, the acquittal encouraged party leader Wilders to continue expressing himself in negative terms on Islam.

5. The contents of the Dutch Islamization discourse

The Party for Freedom is thus characterized by a strong anti-Islam discourse. But like any political party the Party for Freedom had to develop viewpoints on numerous other topics as well. When it comes to social security the party developed a center left program where it stands up for the "man in the street". The party opposes the dismantling of the welfare state. That was also the reason why it decided to no longer support the Rutte government in April 2012 (see above). The party furthermore focuses heavily on the recovery of the Dutch nation state and is categorically against the European Union and the euro currency. The party carries an uncompromising policy for Israel and for the full emancipation of homosexuals. Given these facts it is not easy to characterize the party politically, as stated by Vossen (2013), who wrote an excellent overview of the history and political development of the Party for Freedom. Concerning socio-economic and ethical issues it can be labeled as center left, but it when it

comes to the issue of the Netherlands as a nation state and its position in international politics it can be labeled as right wing. The party's preference for Christian values (see below) does not make it a traditional Christian party. The party structure is that of an association with only one member and that is Geert Wilders himself. There is no party office, there is no think-tank and there is no youth movement. It is unclear how the party is financed, although there are persistent rumours that American right-wing funds and possibly Jewish organizations in the United States would support it.

The anti-Islamization discourse fits in an ideology that focuses on other issues as well and the Party for Freedom's ideology is no exception to that rule. In this section, an overview will be presented of what this ideology stands for. The overview is based on an analysis of a book written by Party for Freedom ideologue Martin Bosma, titled *De schijn-élite van de valsemunters. Drees, extreem rechts, de sixties, nuttige idioten, de groep Wilders en ik* ('The fake elite of the counterfeiters. Drees, the extreme right, the sixties, useful idiots, the Wilders group and I'; 2010), and on party leader Wilders' book *Marked for Death. Islam's War Against the West and Me* (2012), which was mentioned above (De Ruiters 2012a, 2012b).

The ideology of the Party for Freedom is characterized by a strictly applied good-evil structure. Bosma takes the Biblical verse of Isaiah 20:5 as a starting point: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." With this verse in mind, the ideology of the Party for Freedom regards Christianity, Jews and Israel, and monoculturalism as *good*, whereas Islam, leftist political parties and multiculturalism are considered *evil*. There are hardly any exceptions to the rule. Below, all these are discussed in more detail.

Christianity

Bosma puts his vision of Christianity in the following words: "There are not many other things that Dutch people should be happier about than the Christian origins of our country. Nearly all of our crucial assets have a relationship with Christendom: democracy, separation of church and state, tolerance and also values like discipline and efficiency" (Bosma 2010, 94). Basically his point of view is that Christianity has given the Dutch everything that is good in our society. Christianity stands for moral values. It gave the Dutch democracy, the separation of church and state and tolerance.

The following quote is unequivocal about where Wilders stands in regard to what can be considered the best possible culture in the world. When

³ Willem Drees (1886-1988), former Labour Prime-Minister (1948-1958) of the Netherlands, is generally considered to be the founder of the Dutch welfare state.

discussing Western civilization Wilders states: “When you compare the West to any other culture that exists today, it becomes clear that we are the most pluralistic, humane, democratic, and charitable culture on earth” (Wilders 2012, 31). In specifying his claim further he refers to the West as a “Judeo-Christian civilization”. Wilders claims Western culture is superior to all other cultures.

It goes without saying that the claim that Judeo-Christian or Western civilization is superior to all other cultures in the world is at least debatable. Where democracy is concerned, history teaches us that it was brought about in spite of Christianity rather than thanks to it. It was Enlightenment thinking that ultimately brought about the concept of the equality of men, which led to a system of representation that eventually resulted in a democratic system in Western European countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Blom 2004). Christian political parties had to accept the fact that the church was no longer in charge (as it was before the French revolution) and that it had to compete for power with non-confessional forces.

A remarkable aspect of Wilders’ claim that Western culture and civilization are the best in the world today is that he hardly ever mentions it as an independent statement. This creates the impression that the claim cannot be substantiated on its own, and the fact that it is always mentioned in relation to Islam, systematically referred to as “evil”, does not add to its force either. To illustrate the alleged superiority of Western culture Wilders deals with the creation of the state of Israel. He reports on the migration to Israel of Jewish communities living in Arab countries after it was founded in 1948. Wilders labels them refugees and states that “[n]o one talks about the Jewish refugees anymore because they quickly made new lives for themselves in Israel, Europe and America, even though many of them had arrived penniless” (Wilders 2012, 82). Wilders wants to make it clear that there is no point in dwelling on the past. His motto is ‘Look to the future’. He also mentions “the Germans who were expelled from the Sudetenland and the lands east of the Oder and the Neisse rivers, the Greeks who were expelled from the Aegean coasts of Anatolia” (Wilders 2012, 82) and other such cases. All of these people were prepared to let bygones be bygones and got on with their lives. He then makes the comparison with Palestinian refugees: Islamic and Arab countries, he claims, seem to be eternally postponing a solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and 1967. What keeps the Palestinians from permanently settling down and getting integrated in countries like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan? Why do these governments refuse to settle things, like the Jews once did, and the Germans and the Greeks? This, Wilders observes, has to do with “a strong characteristic of Islam: it nurtures resentment, passing it on from generation to generation” (Wilders 2012, 82). “Islam”, he continues, “still complains about the Crusades, as

if France would still moan about the Hundred Years' War..." (Wilders 2012, 82). In short, unlike the Islamic world, the West shakes off the dust of the past and moves forward into the future.

Now we would agree that at some point one has to come to terms with the past, however difficult that might be. But is this mentality of being prepared to leave things behind you, forgetting about the past, letting bygones be bygones, indeed a specifically Western characteristic, as Wilders would have us believe? A few examples illustrate that old sores cannot be gotten rid of so easily. What about the German people who once lived in what are now Western Poland and the former Sudetenland? How good are they at accepting their new reality, at forgiving and forgetting? How come there are numerous associations whose members long for the days when their ancestors were still living in these regions? An even more telling example is the tragedy of Northern Ireland. How long has it taken before the people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic accepted the partitioning of the island in 1922? Is it not another example that flatly contradicts this presumed Western spirit of forgetting about the past and moving on, as it took thirty years of bloodshed and more than 3,000 dead before finally a fragile peace was established? It will be clear that a lot can be said about the perceived superiority of Western or Christian culture. Academically, the arguments are easy to counter, but as Wilders and his party are political entities, the facts are the least of their concerns. Regardless of proof to the contrary, they hold on to their point of view on the alleged superiority of Western culture.

Jews and Israel

When dealing with the creation of the state of Israel, Wilders explains why he "always feel(s) at home in Israel: it is animated by the same spirit that made Western civilization great – that of the soldier protecting the frontier and the pioneer settling the land" (Wilders 2012, 84). In the lines preceding this sentence Wilders writes: "Their [the Jewish settlers'] spirit is the spirit of the West, the spirit of the pioneers who settled America and spilt "their blood ... in acquiring lands for their settlement," as Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1774" (Wilders 2012, 84). Israel is for Wilders an example of that Western superior spirit. Remarks in the same vein can be found in Bosma's book as well, for instance where he tells his readers that he bought "the biggest Israeli flag on the market of Tel Aviv" that he could find and hung it in his Parliamentary office in The Hague, in the window "so that the people outside will also know that this is a liberated area" (Bosma 2010, 219). Examples of other liberated areas, according to Bosma, are Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, all of which conquered from Arab nations, once again belong to the continent of freedom, or in Bosma's own words, "Israel has grown into the one and only symbol of freedom and the wish to continue

this freedom” (Bosma 2010, 274). “In this vein the flag of Israel is the flag of all free people” and “the country is the barometer of our future... Were the armies of Hamas and Hezbollah to march through the streets of Tel Aviv, Amsterdam and Paris would irreversibly be lost” (Bosma 2010, 275). In short, if Israel perishes, Europe will perish with it. It is Bosma as well who claims that the larger part of the Dutch Jewish community cherishes the Party for Freedom, more or less implying that the majority of the Jews would vote for it in an election.

It does not come as a surprise that the positive view of the Jews and Israel is very much inspired by their perceived common enemy: Islam or Muslims. In spite of their sharing a common enemy, however, polls and analyses of election results show that Bosma’s claims are in no way substantiated by the facts, and that instead the contrary is the case. The Amsterdam-based *Information and Documentation Centre Israel* (CIDI) in a poll of its own showed that in the 2010 elections not more than 2% of the Jewish community voted for the Party for Freedom, which ultimately obtained 15.5% of the total vote (CIDI 2010). Furthermore, the perceived positive attitude of the party towards the Jews got a big blow when in June of 2011 it decided to support a parliamentary bill to abolish Muslim and Jewish ritual slaughtering, much to the chagrin of the Jewish community in the Netherlands (De Ruiter 2012a). While the influence of animal activists within the party cannot be ruled out, and the implied cruelty to animals may thus have been a genuine consideration, one cannot help but suspect that they were so keen on cutting this prerogative of the Muslims in the Netherlands that they sacrificed the perceived allegiance of the Jewish community with it by deciding in favor of the bill. In the end the bill did not make it past the Senate, being rejected by the Liberal Conservatives (VVD) and the Social Democrats (PvdA).

What the political position on this particular issue demonstrates, however, is that the pro-Jewish attitude of the Party for Freedom must be regarded as being at least opportunistic in character and falling under the old adage of the enemies of my friends being my enemies too, except that in this case they forgot to ask their friends if they agreed.

Leftist political parties and multi- and monoculturalism

In discussing the issues of mass immigration and multiculturalism, Bosma (2010) puts the blame for their alleged disastrous consequences squarely on left-wing political parties. He states that it is these parties that opened up the borders to non-Western (read: Islamic) migrants, that facilitated their stay and are still facilitating the institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. His argumentation is an impressive example of fact-free politics, because if we take a look at the actual and factual development of mass

immigration and multiculturalism in the country, a completely different picture emerges. The fact is that what Bosma and Wilders call mass immigration started in the second half of the sixties and continued until the end of the eighties. However, it was center-right governments, consisting of Christian Democrats and Liberal Conservatives that, to accommodate companies in want of cheap unskilled labour, authorized these companies to recruit labourers from countries like Morocco and Turkey. In the period from 1965 to 1989, the Netherlands had only one center-left government, which ruled the country from 1973 to 1977, and of all governments during that period this was the only one that regarded labour migration as a threat to existing labour relations in the country. In short: the borders of the country were opened to migrants by center-right governments and not by center-left ones (Lucassen 2005). Still the claim that it is the Left that is responsible for the alleged disastrous consequences of non-Western labour migration and the ultimate establishment of the multicultural society seems ineradicable, not only within the Party for Freedom. To this day it is bon ton to vent this opinion in most center-right political parties, and also in the media and to the general public.

Concerning the integration and adaptation of immigrants coming from non-Western Islamic countries Wilders states in the last chapter of his book that such immigrants should adapt to Western values, and abide by Western laws. Or in his words: "If you subscribe to our laws and values, you are welcome to stay and enjoy all the rights our society guarantees" (Wilders 2012, 214). But he also presents the consequences if "you" do not adapt and abide by these laws: "If you commit crimes, act against our laws, or wage *jihad*, you will be expelled" (Wilders 2012, 214). Mind that Wilders does not say that such people are to be jailed and/or fined. No, they are to be expelled, whereas normally in a democratic state no one is expelled for breaking the national law. Apparently there are two different judicial systems operating here, one for 'us' and one for 'them'.

A bewildering comparison is often drawn by Wilders and his peers between Islam and leftist political parties, on the one hand, and Nazism, on the other. For example, in the respective cases of Wilders and Bosma, the former gives one of the chapters of his book the title *Islamofascism* and the latter has a chapter bearing the title *Adolf Hitler, socialist*. Endless are the references to Nazism, the Holocaust and fascism in general in both writers' publications. Bosma claims that contemporary leftist parties are the actual heirs of Hitler's political party, the NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party). Consequently, a modern political party like the Dutch *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party), led between April 2010 and February 2012 by Jewish ex-mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen, stands in the same line as Hitler's NSDAP. For those who

can hardly believe that the authors are being serious here, we refer to the Party for Freedom Election Program of 2010, where it says that each year on the fourth of May, the date at which the Germans signed the capitulation agreement in 1945, the Netherlands commemorate “the liberation from the (national) socialist occupation” (1940-1945). The site, which is no longer online, puts the word *national* in parentheses, implying that the Netherlands suffered from five years of *socialist* occupation and terror. Rewriting history this way, the PVV makes it possible to claim that it was the Left that caused the Second World War, and is still to this day responsible for everything that’s wrong with our society in the form of the modern-day Left like the Dutch Labour Party.⁴

In his chapter three, entitled *Islamofascism*, Wilders claims that the Nazis recognized in Islam “a kindred soul” (Wilders 2012, 42). Albert Speer, Nazi Germany’s Minister of Armament and Hitler’s *Reichsarchitect* supposedly wrote in his diaries that Hitler regretted that the prophet Mohammed had not come to the Germans and he quoted Adolf Hitler as saying: “It’s been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why did it have to be Christianity with its meekness and flabbiness?” (Speer 1969, 42; translation by Wilders). It is true that Adolf Hitler in his inner circle condemned Christianity for its meekness. In his politics, however, he did not go so far as to ban Christianity from society. But the full quote puts quite a different angle on the matter, when we read the part that has been left out: “It’s been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why don’t we have that [religion] *of the Japanese*, who consider sacrificing themselves for their country as the ultimate honor? The Mohammadan religion too would have been much more suitable than Christianity of all religions, with its meekness and flabbiness” [my italics]. Hitler supposedly implied that any religion would have been better than Christianity, possibly suitable candidates being the Japanese religion or Islam. The correct interpretation of Hitler’s quote would therefore have to be that he felt Christianity was too soft and weak; not so much that he admires Islam but rather that he would have preferred it or any other ‘heroic’ religion to Christianity.

Finally, both Wilders and Bosma condemn multiculturalism. In Bosma’s words: “We are going to speak out *against* Islam. *Against* the multicultural

⁴ This same line of reasoning led Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik to his atrocious acts in the bombing of Oslo’s government headquarters and the killing of 77 people, the majority of them young members of the ruling Social Democratic party, reasoning that it is the Left that causes the Islamization of Norway and Europe. The ideology of Mr. Breivik, as expressed in his 2083 *A European Declaration of Independence*, shows a disturbing resemblance with the Islamization discourse: anti Leftist parties, pro- Christianity and an opportunistic attitude towards Jews and the state of Israel. When asked for a response to Breivik’s declaration, the PVV denied any link between its own thinking and Breivik’s (De Ruyter 2011).

project and for an immigration stop from Islamic countries” (Bosma 2010, 37; italics Bosma’s). They praise the achievements of monoculturalism, or as Bosma puts it: “Monoculturalism has, together with Christian-Western values like assiduity, discipline, honesty and efficiency, resulted in an unprecedented climax in human history. It has given mankind everything it could have ever wished for” (Bosma 2010, 187). Bosma fails to give a definition of what monoculturalism is exactly, just as he fails to give arguments why it has been so beneficial to mankind. He does refer to the ‘fact’ that monocultural states hardly wage wars, and that if they do, it is certainly not against each other, easily forgetting that if asked for a correct and honest appraisal, the supposedly monocultural (according to Bosma) United States since 1941 would have to be classified as a belligerent rather than a peaceful nation.

6. Islam and Muslims: the solution

Wilders regards Islam as an ideology: “... Islam is not just a religion, as many Americans believe, but primarily a political ideology in the guise of a religion” (Wilders 2012, 25). “[T]he political ideology of Islam is not moderate – it is a totalitarian cult with global ambitions” (Wilders 2012, 26). If Islam is an ideology, its followers cannot be said to be believers. Still, Wilders never refers to Muslims as being adherents of an ideology. He does not give them a new name like ‘Islam ideologists’ for instance. He goes on calling them Muslims but obviously for him the term Muslim has a different meaning than it has for the average reader, who regards Muslims as adherents of a religion. The confusion only grows when we learn that Wilders makes a distinction between Islam on the one hand and its followers, the Muslims, on the other and even among Muslims. He states that “there are many moderate Muslims, but that does not change the fact that the political ideology of Islam is not moderate. ... We are fortunate that the majority of the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims do not act according to the Koran...” (Wilders 2012, 26). Islam is evil; Muslims who do not fully implement Islamic ideology are not necessarily evil, so it seems. But if we read Wilders’ chapters 5 and 6 on the history of Islam, and the last chapter where he presents his view on the (future) path to follow in respect to Islam (see below), one notices that where he speaks of ‘Islam’, he cannot but mean ‘Muslims’. When he claims that Islam with its *jihad* caused the deaths of millions of people in India (Wilders 2012, 89), a justified question to him would be: “Who, in your opinion, was it that killed in India? Was it Islam? Or was it Muslims?”

In a subsequent historical example that Wilders gives of aggressive Islam, we notice a slip of the pen. In his historical overview of Islam, he refers to the fall of Alexandria in 640 AD. “Islam had little consideration for science” and thus “the Arabs ... deliberately burned down its 900-year-old library” (Wilders 2012,

55). Wilders here quotes the Arab leader, Caliph Omar: “They [the books] will either contradict the Koran, in which case they are heresy, or they will agree with it, so they are superfluous” (Wilders, 2012, 55). There are some interesting observations to be made with regard to the example of the book burning in Alexandria. Wilders starts by saying that “Islam had little consideration for science”, but he subsequently uses the word “Arabs”, which can only mean ‘Muslims’, to refer to the persons who executed the actual burning, instead of opting for a passive construction like “and the [...] library was deliberately burned down”. Here we encounter the consequences of the artificial distinction Wilders makes between Islam and Muslims. Islam is evil, Muslims are not necessarily, but in fact according to Wilders it was Muslims that spread the evil ideology of Islam and it was Muslims (apparently) that burned the books in the Library, not Islam – it could not be, as Islam is not a living person. If you are out to find blame, it is impossible to blame Islam and not blame the bearers of Islam, the Muslims. Therefore, the distinction between Islam and Muslims as proposed by Wilders is ultimately untenable. Ideologies do not kill. It is people who kill. He does not reject an ideology. He rejects people, Muslims.

In the context of this Islam/Muslim distinction, Wilders in the last chapter of his book presents a solution for the precarious ‘Islam problem’. The title of this chapter speaks for itself: *How to turn the tide*. Having established in the twelve preceding chapters of his book the evil character of the would-be religion of Islam, its devastating effects on the history of the world and the threat it poses to world peace today, it is now time to come up with a solution. The seventeen pages of this final chapter present Wilders’ view on “how to turn this tide” and of the different parts of the solution the following is the most telling: “Muslims must defeat Islam” (Wilders 2012, 212). Here we find both key words of the Islam/Muslim distinction in one sentence. And here lies the key as well for its deconstruction. For Wilders, Islam is not to be regarded as a religion; it is, under all circumstances, an aggressive ideology that seeks to conquer the world. People who follow this ideology are Muslims. But a real Muslim, in Wilders’ eyes, is one that follows the tenets of Islam and complies with what these require him to do in the full devastating sense of the word. Those who do not strictly and fully follow them are in fact no longer Muslims in the true sense of the word. This then is the answer to the question why Wilders does not assign a new term to Muslims who are not fully ‘observant’. A real Muslim is the one who acts in full compliance with the aggressive ideology of Islam. Those who do not do so are in fact not Muslims or are so no longer. In Wilders’ own words: “People who reject Islam’s violent, intolerant, and misogynistic commandments may be moderates, but they are not practicing “moderate Islam” – they are not practicing Islam at all” (Wilders 2012, 212). Before considering this statement in

some more detail, we might ask ourselves what would be the impact if “Muslims” were to actually “defeat” Islam? Wilders has the answer: “If they [Muslims] could liberate themselves from the yoke of Islam, if they would stop taking Muhammad as a role model, and if they got rid of the hateful Koran, they would be able to achieve amazing things” (Wilders 2012, 212). Earlier in the book he states: “If only they could liberate themselves from Islam, they, too, could become prosperous and free nations” (Wilders 2012, 65). So they are to renounce the Koran and renounce following the example of the prophet Mohammed. The Koran and the Prophet Mohammed are two key elements in Islam. If you take away the Koran, and do away with the Prophet, what would Muslims be left with? To what can they cling in order to live their lives as they believe they should if there is no longer a Holy Book and no (Holy) Prophet? Would they really be inclined to do so just because Wilders says that “in liberating themselves from Islam, they will ensure a happier life for themselves and their children, and a safer, more peaceful world for the rest of us” (Wilders 2012, 212)? Now we can also understand the impossibility of answering the question why moderate Muslims, who according to Wilders are in fact not Muslims at all, should “defeat Islam”. Wilders’ ‘solution’ of renouncing the Koran and the Prophet cannot but apply to *all* Muslims as for all Muslims the Koran and the Prophet are essential. The distinction between Islam and Muslims, and the sub-distinction between moderate (or so-called non-practicing) and extremist (or: real) Muslims is made only to ultimately lure *all* Muslims into accepting the solution to renounce Islam and thus create a Netherlands without Islam, which is in fact a Netherlands without Muslims.

7. Muslims in the Netherlands: experiences of discrimination

This section presents the results of polls on discrimination that Muslims in the Netherlands experience, along with comparative studies. Van der Valk (2012) gives an excellent overview of recent polls and studies that show that Muslims in the Netherlands are more and more regarded as “not integrated” and a “liability” to the safety of the country and its wellbeing. The SCP report on Muslims in the Netherlands (Maliapaard & Gijsberts 2012) devotes a separate chapter to Muslims’ experiences of discrimination related to their religion. It shows that 63% of Turkish Muslims and 80% of Moroccan Muslims find that “people in the Netherlands are much too negative about Islam” (51). When asked if they had personally experienced discrimination, 11% of the Turkish Muslims and 9% of Moroccan Muslims say they had. Around a quarter of both groups had heard of cases of other Muslims being discriminated against. Nearly 30% of the Turkish Muslims and nearly 20% of the Moroccan Muslims claim that this discrimination is inspired by religious motives, i.e., by anti-Islam attitudes.

The SCP report also refers to what is known as the *integration paradox*: those who have best integrated, in this case, in the Netherlands, experience the social climate as least positive (Gijsberts & Vervoort 2009).

Framing Islam as a threat is more and more in evidence in the Dutch media and, to a lesser extent, in Dutch politics. Roggebrand & Vliegenthart report on an analysis they made of documents that were presented and discussed in the Dutch Parliament between 1995 and 2004 and articles that appeared in the same period in five leading Dutch newspapers. With the help of digital analysis software they examined the documents on diverse frames, one of them being “the Islam-as-Threat frame”. In Parliament and more so in the media, the attention paid to issues of immigration and integration grew significantly in the period under investigation. The Islam-as-Threat frame turned out to be particularly strong in the media, but less so in the political realm, or in the words of Roggebrand & Vliegenthart: “Since 2002 a frame that points to Islam as a threat and an obstacle to integration has become dominant” (543). They add to that: “It is mainly right-wing parties that promote the Islam-as-Threat frame, whereas left-wing parties continue to support emancipation and multicultural frames” (543).

Siebers (2010) indicates that there is a large degree of convergence between migrant-hostile voices like Geert Wilders’ and everyday practice in carrying out Dutch government policies with regard to migrants. These are voices and policies that increasingly fit the concept of ethnic cleansing. The authors of the study propose using the concept of low-intensity ethnic cleansing to capture the increasingly militaristic way in which these policies and voices are framed. Furthermore Siebers & Dennissen (2012) prove convincingly that Muslim people in the context of their work are facing the dark consequences of the prevailing anti-Muslim attitudes in the Netherlands. In their study, they show that statements made in Dutch politics and the Dutch media by people like Geert Wilders trigger discussions among colleagues at work, between majority, i.e., Dutch, colleagues reproducing these statements and employees with a Muslim and Moroccan background having to or feeling the need to defend themselves. Wilders’ stigmatizing discourse is often reflected in these discussions, which eventually fuel acts of discrimination and result in exclusion of colleagues with a Moroccan and Islamic background.

It can be argued that the results of the SCP poll and the increasing influence of the Islam-as-Threat frame can be directly related to the anti-Islamization discourse. This argument is confirmed by the large scale survey of Cesari (2012) on Muslims in the liberal democracies, as she calls them, in Western Europe, where she writes about an “existential war” that “manifests

itself in the political distinction (in Western Europe) between good and bad Muslims..." (Cesari 2012, 141).

8. Conclusions and Discussion

The court that acquitted Geert Wilders from charges of inciting hatred against Muslims used the Islam/Muslims distinction as one of the arguments to support its decision. It argued that Wilders was criticizing Islam, but not necessarily Muslims, and took into consideration the fact that in a democracy MPs are entitled to say what they want. Still, there is quite a difference between the judicial application of the distinction by the court and the practice engaged in by the followers of the Party for Freedom and its leader, as was duly recognized by the court when it criticized the insulting nature of the words Wilders uses in speeches and publications, thus signaling to the public that it condemned the manner in which he expresses himself with regard to Muslims. The mechanism of distinguishing between an evil or a religion, on the one hand, and its followers or adherents, who are not necessarily as evil as the ideology or the religion, on the other hand, is not a new phenomenon. In his seminal work *The End of Faith. Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, Harris (2004) meticulously describes the illogical nature of the holy scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in particular and how they left and still leave their bloody imprints on human history. As for the adherents of these three religions, he distinguishes between the orthodox believers who believe every single word of their scriptures and the so-called moderates who accept the achievements of modernity and try to reconcile modernity and faith. With their open attitudes towards modernity and reason, they, willingly or not, maintain the tenets of their religion. Furthermore, labeling Muslims as moderates is, as Harris claims, quite an overstatement because "even "moderate" approaches to Islam generally consider the Koran to be the literal and inerrant word of the one true God" (Harris 2004, 110). Nevertheless Harris is open in his analysis and does not hide behind a 'religion/ideology' versus 'adherents' distinction. He applies an academically consistent way of thinking and judging. His approach is neutral and not aimed at political gain. He expresses his views on all three monotheistic religions and their adherents and, rather than solely condemning Islam and Muslims, he criticizes each of them, each for specific reasons, while the anti-Islamization discourse condemns Islam and in the end all Muslims, while praising the blessings of Judaism and Christianity. The anti-Islamization discourse is completely politically inspired, and not interested at all in such objective considerations. In the Islam/Muslims distinction it is postulated that in principle all Muslims are potentially dangerous for the stability of society. Although the fight is presented as being aimed at an ideology rather than at people, there is little if any

sympathy for flesh-and-blood Muslims in the anti-Islamization discourse. The main reason a distinction is made between ideology or religion and its adherents is to legitimize the fight as being one against an evil force which unfortunately takes possession of people, turning them into victims without them knowing it. It is done to preclude allegations of discrimination, and with time, as the general public gets used to it, allow it to slowly get watered down in order to eventually reach its goal, which in this case is an 'Islam-free' and thus 'Muslim-free' Netherlands, and an 'Islam – and Muslim – free' Western world altogether.

The trial against Wilders proved that the legitimizing distinction has indeed had the desired effect. He was acquitted of hatemongering, of all legal charges against him, a verdict that allowed him to continue expressing his views. In the many statements he has made after his acquittal, in the press and the social media, he continues to employ the Islam / Muslim distinction, as do many of his followers. Polls and studies, a number of which were presented above, show that discrimination of Muslims in the Netherlands is on the rise as is the framing of Islam as a threat, particularly in the media. .

Leaving aside the legal verdict in the Wilders case, one might wonder if making and expressing a distinction between Islam and Muslims is acceptable when looked at from another angle. It might be argued, and this is basically what the court said, that it falls under free speech. But how would we feel about it if the distinction were part of a government program, and the objective, like that of Wilders, to fight the one, Islam, and not the other, Muslims, were actually to be carried out in such a program?

The first important observation regarding the Islam/Muslim distinction is that it gives both the Muslims, who are after all the center of attention of the anti-Islamization discourse, and the general public, the impression that the objective is to combat Islam and not the persons representing Islam, the Muslims. As we have seen, the distinction is artificial and practically untenable. If a government policy were to be applied based on this distinction it could not but result in putting pressure on Muslims to either renounce their religion or leave the country, a measure that would have to be dismissed as ethically unacceptable. A modern democratic government would never want to push people to renounce what is part of their very essence: their religion.

Taking this into consideration, the second important observation that can be made with regard to the Islam/Muslims distinction is that – even if the court decided otherwise – there is really no way round concluding that it is also a violation of the first article of the Dutch Constitution, which reads as follows: “Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted”, and of article 6, referred to above as well: “Everyone has the right to his religion or belief, either

individually or in community with others, to profess it freely, without prejudice to his responsibility under the law.” Even if one chooses to consider Islam as an ideology, its followers would, unlike the supporters of the anti-Islamization discourse maintain as stipulated above (see Section 3), still have the right to believe in it and practice it, as long as it shares some basic foundations with the modern liberal democracy as exemplified in the Dutch constitution.

A third important observation regarding the distinction between Muslims and Islam derives from article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reads as follows: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (United Nations n.d.) Muslims are thus entitled to exercise their religion or, for that matter, their ideology. The Netherlands endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as such suggesting or even forcing people to give up their religion goes against this basic human right. If the anti-Islamization program were to become a political reality this would mean that the Netherlands would have to abolish key articles of their constitution and terminate their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is obvious that all this is highly undesirable and most importantly it shows that the character of the Islam/Muslims distinction is far from innocent. Modern democratic societies like Dutch society are blessed with free speech, allowing the anti-Islamization discourse to be freely expressed. But regrettably history teaches us that words spoken freely can eventually lead to deeds of exclusion and repression. Therefore, modern democratic societies have to remain vigilant and continue to protect all of their citizens.

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About the author

Jan Jaap de Ruiter is Arabist and assistant professor at Tilburg University (Tilburg School of Humanities, Department of Culture Studies). His interests include the status and role of the Arabic language and of the religion of Islam in Western Europe and Morocco. His publications, in various languages, including French, center on these themes. Furthermore he participates in the debate on Arabic and Islam in national and international contexts. He participated in many Dutch and European Research and Development Projects.

La distinction entre l’islam et les musulmans dans le discours néerlandais anti-islamisation

Cet article discute la distinction entre l’islam et les musulmans faite par les partisans néerlandais du discours anti-islamisation, qui leur permet de prétendre qu’ils ont de sérieuses réserves quant à l’islam, mais non quant aux musulmans. Il s’agit d’analyser cette distinction telle qu’elle paraît dans ce discours et de décrire les conséquences possibles pour ceux qu’elle vise : les musulmans habitant les Pays-Bas. L’article prend à témoin les écrits de Geert Wilders, chef du *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, « parti de la liberté ») et de Martin Bosma, l’idéologue de ce parti, et présente une analyse de leur contenu, se concentrant sur la distinction islam- musulman comme élément essentiel de ce discours. Nous discutons la définition de ce discours et la relient au terme « islamisation » et le terme apparenté « islamophobie,» et la manifestation des deux dans le discours de Geert Wilders et de son parti. Nous démontrons que le parti compte « tenter » les musulmans de renoncer à l’islam et ainsi créer un Pays-Bas sans islam – ce qui revient à dire : un Pays-Bas sans musulmans.

Het onderscheid tussen Islam en Moslims in het Nederlandse anti-Islamiserings-debat

Dit artikel heeft als onderwerp het onderscheid dat gemaakt wordt, door Nederlandse supporters van het anti-Islamiseringsdebat, tussen Islam enerzijds en Moslims anderzijds. Dit onderscheid stelt hun in staat te zeggen dat ze weliswaar van alles tegen Islam hebben, maar niets tegen Moslims. Centraal in deze bijdrage staat ten eerste een analyse van het onderscheid Islam/Moslims zoals dit gemaakt wordt in het debat en ten tweede een beschrijving van de mogelijke consequenties voor de mensen om wie het gaat: in Nederland woonachtige Moslims. Het artikel neemt in het bijzonder de geschriften van de leider van de Nederlandse Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV) Geert Wilders en partij-ideoloog Martin Bosma onder de loep en biedt een analyse van hun inhoud met nadruk op het Islam/Moslim onderscheid als een essentieel element van deze anti-Islamiseringsretoriek. Het artikel behandelt de definitie van het anti-Islamiseringsdebat en legt verbanden met de term Islamisering en de gerelateerde term Islamofobie, en hun manifestatie in de argumentatie van Geert Wilders en zijn Partij Voor de Vrijheid. Het artikel laat zien dat deze partij als doel heeft Moslims te “verleiden” tot het afzweren van Islam en daardoor een Nederland zonder Islam te creëren, wat in feite neerkomt op een Nederland zonder Moslims.

Space-making and religious transformation: Mosque building in the Netherlands

Thijl Sunier

The realization of mosques and other religious buildings in the Netherlands has been described and analyzed predominantly as a history of integration and emancipation of Muslims into Dutch society. The first post-war wave of labour migrants used temporal makeshift accommodations to serve as mosques. In subsequent decades they further developed and extended the religious infrastructure. The next step was to realize purpose built mosques with various designs. Most of the literature on mosque building focuses on governance, political process and the politics of identity, i.e. on how negotiations about the establishment of religious accommodation evolve, what actors participate and which positions they take in these negotiations. Although such historical accounts are informative as far as the integration trajectories of Muslims are concerned, they often pay hardly any attention to the conceptions and visions that undergird these negotiations. The development of an Islamic religious infrastructure, including all institutional arrangements, is part of the larger process of the rooting of Islam under changing circumstances. This process, which I call 'Islamic space-making', is partly the result indeed of negotiation processes, but it is also the result of a process of religious transformation in which local, national and transnational dimensions intersect. In this article I focus on this transformation process by analyzing a number of cases of the construction of mosques. I argue that these cases indicate that religious transformation and reflections on how Islam evolves are often much more important than just 'identity politics and space-making'. I also argue that this process of religious transformation has historical dimensions that reveal intriguing perceptions with regard to how Muslims position themselves in a religious-historical context.

Key terms: Islam in Europe; Mosques; Integration of Muslims; The Netherlands.

Introduction

The realization of mosques and other religious accommodation in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe has been analyzed predominantly as a history of integration and emancipation of Muslim migrants into society (see e.g. Landman 1992; Metcalf 1996; Sunier 1996; Naylor & Ryan 2002; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2008). Places of worship, especially when they have been built for this purpose, 'objectify' religious presence (Amiriaux 2001; Cesari 2001; Dunn 2001; Eickelman 1989; Landman & Wessels 2005; Lindo 1999; Rath et al. 1996). The appearance of mosques (and *mandirs*, churches, synagogues, temples and *gurdwaras* for that matter) typically reflects the political and social climate at the time of their construction.

The first post-war wave of labour migrants used temporal makeshift accommodation. In subsequent decades they further developed and extended the religious infrastructure. The next step was to realize purpose built mosques in different designs. Places of worship have become increasingly conspicuous, and as such constitute signs of a community's empowerment and integration. Eade (2000, 6) argues that contestation over the construction of places of worship in London shows that public space is not fixed by 'eternal' traditions, but is open to a constant reshaping and renegotiating of the physical environment. Thus beyond community building and architectural appearance, the construction of places of worship also became a matter of public representation. The general picture that emerged from this settlement process is an increasingly diversified and extensive religious landscape, a religious mosaic consisting of mosques, associations, educational institutions, shops and other commercial activities, and later on representative bodies sustained by an extensive transnational network that linked this religious infrastructure to the countries of origin in a complex and multi-faceted way (Nonneman & Niblock 1996).

The point of departure in much of the academic literature in the early stages of the institutionalization process was the legal principle of religious freedom that exists throughout Europe and that provides the opportunities for Muslim communities to establish religious institutions in accordance with Islamic requirements. Migration networks, organizational structures and authoritative frames on which this infrastructure was built, were taken as an important structuring feature of Muslim religious activity in Europe (Gerholm & Lithman 1988; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1996). The establishment of a religious infrastructure and the integration of migrants were considered two sides of the same process and thus inextricably linked to one another.

In the 1990s two political priorities emerged. The first was the fundamental question whether or not Islam fits Western conceptions of liberal-

secular democracy, or alternatively the 'Judeo-Christian' roots of European civilization (see e.g. Caldwell 2009). The second concern was how to accommodate and govern an increasingly culturally diverse society. This generated a new body of academic literature that perceived the presence of Islam primarily as an identity issue with a focus on the obstacles and confrontations that occurred when new mosques were built (Cesari 2005) or on issues of governance and how to accommodate a new religious presence (Bader 2007; Maussen 2009; Rath et al. 2001). Governance is mostly perceived as a political process in which actors participate in negotiations about the establishment of religious accommodation. In most literature on governance hardly any attention is paid to developments within Islam and among Muslims, thus taking for granted identities, cultural or religious differences and Islamic normativity (Jacobs & Fincher 1998, 6-10), making them seem fixed, given, with an 'appearance of substance' (Butler 1990; see e.g. Bader 2007; Fetzer & Soper 2005; Maussen 2009). Governments are predominantly depicted as neutral referees (McLoughlin 2005). Developments among Muslims themselves, their orientations and religious subjectivities remain remarkably under-researched, except for processes of radicalization.

Mosque building as space-making

In this article I take issue with this omission. The development of an Islamic religious infrastructure is part of the larger and more fundamental process of the rooting of Islam under changing circumstances in which perceptions about the future of society play a crucial constituting role (Sunier 1996). I use the term 'space-making' to denote this process. Space-making is more than the accomplishment of legal and political arrangements about the use of public space and the realization of houses of prayer. It should also be distinguished from 'integration' of Muslims or 'institutionalization' of Islam, because it has highly symbolic underpinnings and is a much broader process. Space-making is symbolic production (see Bourdieu 1991) and refers to ideologies; mental maps of ontological and cultural positioning of people (see Svašek 2002, 498). Ramadan speaks of the related process of entrenchment (1999, 207) which may take place over a longer period, as in the case of the Jews, or more rapidly, as was the case with Catholics in the first half of the nineteenth century and with Muslims after the 1970s. Space-making in the case at hand is the rooting of Islam which takes place in many different domains of religious life. It evolves as a fragmented but active process that is the result of visions, decisions and initiatives by collective actors. Due to the complexity of this process the outcomes are hardly predictable. Collective actors imbue negotiation processes with conceptions and imaginations about envisioned futures. They follow explicit and implicit agendas that pertain to the symbolic place of Islam in society. These

conceptions evolve continuously depending on a wide variety of factors and shifting contexts. Broadly speaking I distinguish two conceptual fields, one predominantly to be found among policy makers and the other among Muslim actors.

For governmental authorities and policy makers, space-making of Islam revolves around the fundamental question how to 'fit' Islam into society and how to bring arrangements in accordance with the principles and characteristics of the nation-state. In the last decade there has been a stronger emphasis in many European countries on national integration as a cultural rather than a political trajectory (Geschiere 2009, 155). Immigrants have to show that they are willing to comply with the dominant national culture. Duyvendak et al. (2008) have referred to this shift as the "culturalization of citizenship". The result is a strengthening of the national state as the dominant frame of governance, with political programs that emanate from the complex relationship between integration, and political priorities of security and national identity with the aim to regulate Islamic practices and to mould outlooks, institutional settings and legal arrangements into the format of the nation-state. This has been referred to as the "domestication of Islam" (Bowen 2004; Humphrey 2009; Sunier 2012a). Domestication as a mode of governance is a broad and complex intervention by national states to develop an organizational form of Islam that fits the national state. The way in which mosques and other organizations of Muslims are organized and managed must be brought in line with the legal requirements of the country of residence. In many instances this is mainly a matter of legal procedures and arrangements, but the involvement of the national or local governments in mosque-building projects is also informed by political goals to develop an Islam that corresponds to imaginaries about the place of religion in society. In many policy documents we often find references to a "liberal Islam", a "moderate Islam", or a "Dutch Islam". The domestication of Islam is about the place of Islam in European societies and the challenges they face, against the backdrop of a particular conception of national identity. Different nation-states have historically grown modes of dealing with religious diversity, sometimes informed by colonial practices, experiences and histories, so the domestication of Islam takes on nationally specific features and outlooks (Sunier 2012a). I consider domestication of Islam a crucial aspect of space-making.

Muslim representatives and leaders enter negotiations also with conceptions about how they envision a future Islamic landscape in the country of settlement. These conceptions are informed by a combination of Islamic normativity and ideas about their position in society. Islam arrived in Europe as a result of large-scale migration. Over the years Muslims built up a religious infrastructure, consisting of organizations and associations, institutional

arrangements, consulting bodies, mosques and educational institutes across the country. This infrastructure was built on networks of migrants who had strong personal ties with the country of origin. Religious affiliation was inextricably linked with personal, familial, and local loyalties. Individual Muslims practiced religious life in familial and communal networks based on ethnic and regional ties. Religious orientations and authoritative relations were transplanted from the countries of origin and reproduced in the countries of residence. Space-making was predominantly a reconstruction of home.

In the 1990s this pattern of orientation gradually changed. These changes were embedded in major demographic, economic and societal transformations taking place among Muslims in Western Europe. Firstly, as in all countries in Europe with a sizable Muslim population, the proportion of Muslims that is born and raised in Europe increased rapidly (Crul & Schneider 2010). Secondly, diversity among Muslims with regard to their societal, educational and legal position in society increased sharply. The proportion of European Muslims with a high level of education has increased sharply in the last decades. In addition to these demographic and societal changes, globalization and the emergence of modern mass media impacted tremendously on the ways in which Muslims perceived their position. They have become full members of society, but at the same time they are connected to events taking place far away. This is not an example of staggering integration but a condition of modern life. It differs fundamentally from the ways in which their parents and grandparents perceived their position. One of the consequences of these developments is that the old migration networks, authoritative relations, and institutional settings which emerged in the early years of migration are still functioning, but their legitimacy is questioned by a growing number of Muslims born and raised in Europe (Peter 2006; Volpi & Turner 2007).

A wide variety of issues of faith that were undisputed were now increasingly questioned. Many (young) Muslims want to build alternative religious communities across and beyond traditional ethnic, regional, doctrinal and national dividing lines. At the same time they engage with society in an unprecedented way. Space-making in this case combines different seemingly opposing sentiments and tendencies and generates new modes of religiosity and religious belonging. These new orientations cannot simply be classified as either local or global, as the dominant domestication paradigm requires. They reflect what has been referred to as 'simultaneity'; migrants become rooted in one place, but at the same time maintain transnational ties (Glick-Schiller & Levitt 2004). This generates new religious orientations and new forms of religious community building in which local, national and transnational dimensions intersect and religious transformation occurs.

In summary, we can observe a general tendency of European governments to domesticate Islam into a shape that fits with the principles of the nation-state. On the other hand we see an ever evolving complex pattern of belonging among Muslims in Europe that is not necessarily bound to the social, cultural and political confines of the nation-state. In actual situations of negotiation these often opposing conceptions of the rooting of Islam shape the process of space-making. I have analyzed this process elsewhere by focussing on how the intimate ritual of the breaking of the fast at the end of the month Ramadan (*iftar*) transformed into a yearly public ritualistic moment of space-making. Already in the 1980s some mosques started to invite non-Muslims who belonged to their local network to attend the *iftar*. By doing so they strengthened their networks in the local community. This initially local low-profile habit in the course of the years developed into an annual public event. But beyond the clearly pragmatic motives behind these initiatives, it also developed into a public statement about the place of Islam in society: we belong here so Ramadan belongs here as well (Sunier 2012b). In other words, space-making transforms conceptions of Islam in mainstream society and among Muslims themselves.

In this article I address space-making by analyzing a number of mosque projects in the Netherlands. Mosque building projects are interesting cases because they not only deal with religious freedom and the right to collective worship, but also with discussions about the historical character and the aesthetics of the built environment, about spatial ownership and visibility, and about the historical attitude of the nation towards the (visible) presence of minority religions. In short the significance of the building of places of worship is threefold: it is a marker of religious institutionalization, it is a test case for the status of that particular religion, and it is the material symbol of the struggle about the character of public space. As such it informs and shapes different modes of religiosity and belonging.

Mosque building and the politics of religious accommodation

There is an intriguing historical aspect to mosque building projects that adds to space-making in a particular way. In some European countries governments have been actively involved in mosque building projects or even financed them despite the publicly proclaimed separation of church and state. In France, the building of places of worship has always been a more public affair related to the secularist republic (in which religious symbolism plays a central role) (see Maussen 2009; Kepel 1991; Cesari 2001; Ternisien 2002). In the UK, the construction of places of worship is tied to debates over racial equality and political empowerment (Eade 2000). In both countries we find large mosques as

a reminder of the countries' colonial past commissioned by the government (Maussen 2009; McLoughlin 2005). In Brussels the government was involved in the realization of a large mosque more or less as the outcome of the recognition of Islam in 1974 (Sunier & Meijer 1997). The Netherlands differs in this respect, for though it once ruled over Indonesia, there has never been any physical reminder of this past in the form of a central mosque (see Landman 1992; Wiegers 1999). The Dutch authorities tend to associate religious infrastructure and associations with decentralized welfare institutions; religious meanings are downplayed, while the building of mosques ideally falls within urban planning.

Although mosques already existed in France, the Netherlands and the UK long before World War II (see Naylor & Ryan 2002; Eade 2000; Kepel 1991; Landman 1992; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1996), their numbers increased in the early 1960s when thousands of Muslim migrants arrived in Western Europe. As most migrants expected to return to their countries of origin, their activities were directed at temporary solutions, including the use of churches, factory halls and other facilities for special occasions. As return was postponed, greater efforts were channelled into finding more permanent accommodation.

Before 1983 the building of mosques in the Netherlands was sometimes financed by state subsidies that were originally designed to rebuild churches after the damage of World War II (Ireland 1994; Monsma & Soper 1997; Nielsen 1992; Nonneman et al. 1996; Sunier & Meijer 1997; Walzer 1997). All of these cases were examples of purely legal 'openings' in an already existing legal arrangement. In 1983 this law was abolished. It was part of more general constitutional change in the Netherlands with the aim to sever historically grown ties between the church and the state and to reconfirm the separation of church and state. From then on the Dutch state officially ceased to finance religious activities. Mosque communities could only receive subsidy for activities in mosques if they contributed to the integration of migrants. Formally speaking the strict separation of religion and state prevented any intervention in religious affairs. However, the state was involved in mosque projects from the early 1990s onwards on for a variety of motives. In the following section I will address some of these cases because they illustrate my argument about space-making, namely that it exemplifies competing conceptions of how Islam should take shape, and ultimately may transform these conceptions.

Space-making and the construction of mosques: three cases

All mosque projects in the Netherlands are initiated by local communities. State involvement occurred only after the negotiating process had started for a variety of long-term and short-term reasons. Not surprisingly most projects in the Netherlands are located in areas with a relatively high proportion of inhabitants

with low income and a large proportion of rental houses. Residential programs for urban renewal, the equal spreading of inhabitants with different cultural and religious backgrounds, the social policies on youth employment, schooling and crime, but also the development of local democracy and the strengthening of the local social texture of society, have informed negotiation processes.¹

Negotiations are informed by a complex set of long-term historical, and mid and short-term political factors. These not only structure the way in which projects evolve, but shape the discourses of identity, nationhood and citizenship and the ongoing debates about the place of Islam in society. The ways in which the Dutch government (nationally but particularly locally) interferes in mosque building projects have strong historical underpinnings, invoking historical parallels with practices and attitudes of state and society towards religious minorities in different eras.

I will elaborate on three mosque building projects in the Netherlands, two of which have resulted or will result in an actual new prayer house, while the third one has a more complex trajectory and is linked up with yet another project. The three projects could be treated as the outcome of negotiations between parties involved, but as I have argued, behind these formal negotiations there are implicit (sometimes explicit) processes of symbolic production. The first case, the *Essalam* mosque in the city of Rotterdam, cannot be understood without taking into consideration space-making in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the urban renewal projects in the 1980s and 1990s, and the political shifts that took place between the late 1980s and the early 2000s. The second case, the *Westermosque* in Amsterdam, illustrates the complex relation between competing political agendas based on different perceptions of space-making. The third case marks the fundamental shift in perspective among young Muslims in Europe.

The Essalam mosque in Rotterdam

Rotterdam was the first city in the Netherlands with a full-fledged, integrated policy on mosque building as early as 1991 (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994; Sunier 1996). The building of the *Essalam* mosque, a large mosque run by a Moroccan organization, situated at the outskirts of the neighbourhood, was a result of this policy. The mosque was opened 2010 and has become the pivot in an intriguing confrontation between different conceptions of space-making among Muslims and in the municipal government.

As in most large urban centres, Muslims and their institutions in Rotterdam are concentrated in the poorer parts of the city, where housing and

¹ The information presented in this section is partly based on my ongoing fieldwork about mosque-building projects in the Netherlands over the last fifteen years.

welfare facilities are scarce. These neighbourhoods are conceived of as 'backward neighbourhoods' (*achterstandswijken*), in which populations of different backgrounds lived together (Bovenkerk et al. 1985; Van Niekerk, Sunier & Vermeulen 1989).

From the late 1970s onwards there was a rapid growth of the number of small mosques in these neighbourhoods, which had to do with a growing demand for religious accommodation, but also with activities of Muslim associations (see Canatan 2001; Maussen 2009; Sunier 1996). The majority of those mosques were of poor physical quality. Houses, backyards, garages and other improvised places were turned into small mosques. However, they emerged more or less organically as part of the settling of migrant families in the neighbourhoods and they perfectly met the needs of the migrant population. They were multi-functional community centres, 'little pieces of home' where migrants met with fellow countrymen and performed their religious duties. Over the years, mosques had developed into focal points of local migrant activity, with shops, tea houses and other facilities in the hearts of the neighbourhoods. The location of these make-shift mosques close to peoples' homes, their multifunctional character, and their low-profile presence made them into typical examples of the early stages of the institutionalization of Islam.

This 'mushrooming' of religious infrastructure, and more in particular the reactions it caused among the rest of the population and the sometimes dangerous situations that existed with respect to safety, induced policy makers to actively monitor this process but also to acknowledge Muslim organizations as partners in negotiations (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994). A fundamental reason for this policy shift was the extensive urban renewal program that the municipal government had put on the political agenda. This was not just a matter of some external improvements to the stock of houses. Whole quarters were designed to be broken down and rebuilt. The plans would imply a major shift of populations. Especially the old neighbourhoods where most of the mosques were located were eligible for renewal.

An important side-effect of the new policy was the possibility for the municipal government to interfere in the mosque building process. A key term in those policies was "separation of functions". The municipal government opted for a limited number of large central mosques with a purely religious function, preferably outside the residential areas. The local government was willing to facilitate the building process, at the expense of the small local mosques in residential areas which are not suitable for extended neighbourhood activities, according to the authorities (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994).

Although local mosque organizations, represented by SPIOR (*Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond*), a representative body for local

mosque organizations, were glad that the municipal government recognized them as partners, they were against the idea of the separation of functions and the building of large mosques outside the residential areas. A local mosque 'around the corner', between the local bakery and the grocery store, was maybe less representative, but to be preferred as part of the local community texture over representative mosques 'with a statement' at socially undesirable places. The argument put forward here was that the mosque-around-the-corner was much more beneficial for integration (Sunier 2005b).

However, a competing conception of space-making existed among Muslim organizations. The existing religious landscape was dominated by ethnically divided Muslim movements with strong links with counterparts in the countries of origin. These movements dominated the mosque building process in those years and they were in favour of large conspicuous mosques as a sign of their presence and prestige, especially when the municipal government would facilitate this. The municipal government had to find a way to reconcile these two conceptions because they needed both. They needed the movements to realize their mosque plans and they needed the local associations and SPIOR to have a firm support for their urban renewal program (Sunier 1996).

Towards the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s there were clear changes in the basic parameters of how the municipal government envisioned the presence of Islam in the city. In early 2002 the political party *Leefbaar Rotterdam* 'Liveable Rotterdam', founded by the populist anti-Islam politician Pim Fortuyn (who was assassinated in the same year by an animal rights activist), won an electoral landslide victory during the municipal elections. The party had a program that explicitly embarked on a very restrictive and confrontational relation with the 85,000 Muslims in the city. The assassination of Pim Fortuyn and the 9/11 attacks and successive events caused an almost 180 degree turn in the municipal political agenda. The inclusive and pragmatic administrative attitude towards Islam of the 1980s and 1990s turned into a policy based on the idea that Islam is a burden for society and a source of potential conflict and disruption of the local community (see Gemeente Rotterdam 2004, 10; Maussen 2009).

The *Essalam* mosque, the largest mosque in the Netherlands, was the result of the policies of the 1990s, but the mosque was not finished until 2010, long after the landslide changes in the municipal policies. From a product of the new mosque policies of the early 1990s, it turned into a symbol of foreign influence and the "ever growing Islamic influence in the city" as a local politician of *Leefbaar Rotterdam* would call it. It has been built very close to the football stadium of Rotterdam in a rather unfriendly place where Muslims tend to visit the mosque only for the Friday prayers. At the same time there are still many

small mosques in the neighbourhoods. By explicitly adopting a policy of “critical non-intervention” (Gemeente Rotterdam 2004), the local government has left the development of Islamic accommodation completely in the hands of private initiatives and possible foreign financiers.

The Westermoskee (‘Westermosque’) in Amsterdam

The ‘Westermosque’ (named after one of the famous churches in the city, the *Westerkerk*), slated to be finished in 2015, is an ambitious plan for a huge complex in the western parts of the city. Initiated by the Turkish *Milli Görüş* movement in the mid-1990s, it would consist of a central mosque, conference halls, and sporting and shopping facilities built in the architectural style of the Amsterdam School (Lindo 1999; Sunier 2010).

Due to the extensive urban renewal program, the local municipal government was a partner in the negotiations, but they were much more involved than their role would require. The municipal government was against the initial plan for the mosque because it would interfere with the urban renewal program, but the main reason for the government’s involvement was the fear of radicalization among young Muslims following the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a radical Dutch-Moroccan Muslim living in the neighbourhood where the mosque project was to be realized.

For the Turkish umbrella organization of *Milli Görüş* in the Netherlands the initial plan was part of their long-term policy to build a series of mosques that would reflect the active involvement of the movement in the Dutch religious landscape (Sunier 2005a).² It also reflected the fierce competition among Turkish Islamic movements in Europe. In that respect the project was not very different from other projects. However, in this particular case two issues shaped the negotiations. One was the anti-radicalization agenda of the Amsterdam municipal government. This explained their decisions to be actively involved in the negotiations. The other had to do with internal developments in the *Milli Görüş* movement. Already in the 1990s a debate emerged in many mosques about their place in society and the strategy to be pursued in negotiations with local authorities. The branch of the movement in the northern part of the country was led by a charismatic figure, Karacaer, who was able to strike a

² *Milli Görüş* is one of the Turkish Islamic political movements that became active among Turkish migrants in Europe in the late 1970s. The movement was founded in the early 1970s by Necmettin Erbakan, an engineer who developed a political program for Turkey in which he combined a national economic development plan with an Islamic ethic. The movement has founded several political parties in Turkey throughout the years. They have been branded as ‘Islamists’ because they always criticized the strict secularist policies of the republic, although they never embarked on a program to turn Turkey into an Islamic state. In Europe they represent the mainstream of Turkish Muslims and they are one of the larger organizations.

balance between the predominantly conservative Turkish Muslim population that belonged to the local branch, and the municipal government. He managed to elevate the discussion to a more general level by linking radicalization to neighbourhood issues and integration of Muslims in the local community. The negotiations resulted in the signing of an 'anti-radicalization-agreement' in 2005 by the municipal government, *Milli Görüş* and other parties involved. The agreement stipulated that all parties, each from their own position and capacity, would actively work to prevent radicalization among Muslims. The municipal government was ready to facilitate the project provided there would be a common agenda to fight radicalization (Sunier 2010).

The construction finally began in 2005, but was called off a year later after the German headquarters of *Milli Görüş* dismissed the board of the northern branch of the Dutch organization in April 2006, in order to install a more subservient board. The German branch of *Milli Görüş* has a bad reputation. Due to personal and political reasons Karacaer withdrew from the negotiations in 2006, at the time when the German branch of *Milli Görüş* decided to interfere in the negotiations. This led to the withdrawal of the project's Dutch partners as well as withdrawal of municipal support. After a number of years some of the initial actors resumed the negotiations once again and this resulted in a final agreement in November 2012. Construction finally began in April 2013.

For the local government the *Westermosque* project became a stake in their agenda to fight radicalization, which explains their involvement. But this was also the weakness. *Milli Görüş*, or more precisely the initial negotiators, was charged with a heavy responsibility in accomplishing the goals. The interference of the German branch was perceived as a serious obstacle to reach that goal. This was the ground for the municipal government to distance itself from the project almost completely.

For the local *Milli Görüş* organization, on the other hand, the *Westermosque* became the symbol of a struggle for local recognition. The architectural style of the mosque, a combination of Turkish architecture and the style of the famous 'Amsterdam School' was but one aspect of the statement that Islam was here to stay. Along with the negotiations the organization invested actively in strengthening local networks with all kinds of organizations in the neighbourhoods such as churches, neighbourhood police, political parties, volunteer organizations, community workers etc. In doing so they opted for a strategy that prioritized the local community over the transnational network of *Milli Görüş* including Germany and Turkey.

One of the most fundamental problems surrounding the *Westermosque* project was the assumption that there was a basic consensus between the parties about the significance and implications of the project. Negotiations were

depicted as ritualized moments of communality. But in fact it was the pursuit of the political agenda of the local government with respect to Islam in the Netherlands. From the point of view of the government the *Westermosque* should have become the embodiment of a domesticated Islam that corresponds to the requirements of the ideology of secular liberalism. The ritual public signing of an agreement by the local Muslim representatives, in which they declared they subscribed to the idea of a liberal 'Dutch' Islam and to detect and fight radicalism, was a condition way beyond the formal and legal ones. It implied a far reaching interference of the government in religious affairs and it corresponded with the political aims and priorities of many countries in Europe after 9/11 to mold Islam into a national format. The *Westermosque* as it was envisioned by the municipal government constituted the symbol of a new 'Dutch Islam', cut off from its foreign roots and sustained by a fully integrated local Muslim community. As a consequence one of the most pressing concerns in this respect was the influence of Islamic activists and ideologies 'from abroad' which were seen to interfere with the national rooting of Islam.

From the perspective of *Milli Görüş*, on the other hand, the *Westermosque* project (apart from being an ambitious plan to build a conspicuous mosque and to contribute to the development of the local religious infrastructure) must be understood against the background of the specific characteristics of the contemporary transnational Turkish religious landscape. In most analyses of the *Westermosque* project *Milli Görüş* continues to be depicted as a political religious movement with a fixed political agenda orchestrated and monitored from Turkey via the headquarters in Cologne (see e.g. Lindo 1999). This not only discards the local dynamics of Turkish Islam, it also ignores the fundamental changes that have taken place since the early 1980s when *Milli Görüş* started to operate among Turkish Muslims in Europe (Schiffauer 2010). In the past two decades Turkish Islamic movements have increasingly followed a twofold path. On the one hand they continue to act as platforms for transnational connections with Muslims in Turkey and elsewhere; on the other hand local organizations and branches develop their own agenda based on local circumstances (Sunier & Landman 2011). This is also true for *Milli Görüş*. The complex picture of space-making that arises from this case clearly shows that negotiation processes were much more than an agreement on practical grounds. The negotiations were to a large extent shaped by shifting orientations and shifting visions on how Islam should take root in society.

The Poldermosque

The previous cases were examples typical of the transitory stage of the religious infrastructure that emanated from the networks and practices of Muslims who

migrated to Europe. The *Poldermosque* initiative³ is based on a radically different conception of space-making based on changes in the ways Islam is lived, practiced and experienced among an increasing number of young Muslims in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. Today young Muslims in Europe, more than ever, feel the need to reflect on the origins of their religion and reconcile these origins with their experiences. These experiences differ in many respects from those of earlier generations. Their relation with the countries from which their parents or grandparents migrated changed fundamentally. Familial networks and concrete connections gradually disappear, or become less and less important. Senses of belonging rooted in personal ties are being replaced by more general and more diversified modes of reference and interaction. Young Muslims are more and more rooted in the society of residence, but at the same time the possibilities to connect to other parts of the world have increased tremendously.

These changes are embedded in major demographic, economic and societal transformations taking place among Muslims in Western Europe. Firstly, as in all countries in Europe with a sizable Muslim population, the proportion of Muslims that is born and raised in the Netherlands is increasing rapidly (SCP 2012). Secondly, there is a growing diversity among Muslims with regard to their societal, educational and legal position in society. The proportion of Muslims with a high level of education has increased sharply in the last decade. Contrary to what many observers predicted this has not resulted in a decrease of religiosity (SCP 2012). The ways Muslims experience their contemporary lives in Dutch society and in a world that is profoundly globalized, and how that affects their relation towards Islam, has diversified tremendously.

Modern media have not only caused a 'globalization of Muslim affairs', but have also created *new* publics that could not be reached by traditional leaders and traditional means. The complexities of modern urban life in which the majority of young Muslims live, require specific competences. These new publics ask new questions and challenge traditional production of knowledge by *ulama*, Islamic theologians. Spokespersons legitimized by conventional means of religious conveyance are complemented and challenged by "rival and alternative articulations of belief and practice" (Eickelman & Anderson 2003, x). Next to the imams and the spokespersons of Muslims organizations, there are new types and new forms and styles of religious leadership that do not fit into the traditional picture of an Islamic leader.

These developments constitute the backdrop of a mosque projects that came into existence in the 2000s. The *Poldermosque* was an initiative of a

³ *Polder* in Dutch means reclaimed land from the sea, but it also denotes the typical Dutch consultation democracy.

number of young highly educated Muslims in Amsterdam, almost all of them born and raised in the Netherlands, who wanted to cut across the traditional ethnic dividing lines that dominated the Islamic landscape. They wanted to establish a mosque that not only should be the first 'real Dutch' mosque, irrespective of ethnic background and with Dutch as the main language, but also one that would engage with the typical public debates about Islam as they emerge in Europe. Thus separate praying was optional, and more in general women had a very central position in the organization. The initiator of the project, Ceppih, a young Dutch imam of Moroccan origin, argued that it was time to face the new realities with respect to experiences of young Muslims. Although they do not live in an ethnically divided society anymore, they have to perform their religious duties in mosques dominated by the old established Muslim organizations in which Friday sermons are carried out in languages of the countries of origin which many young Muslims do not speak fluently.

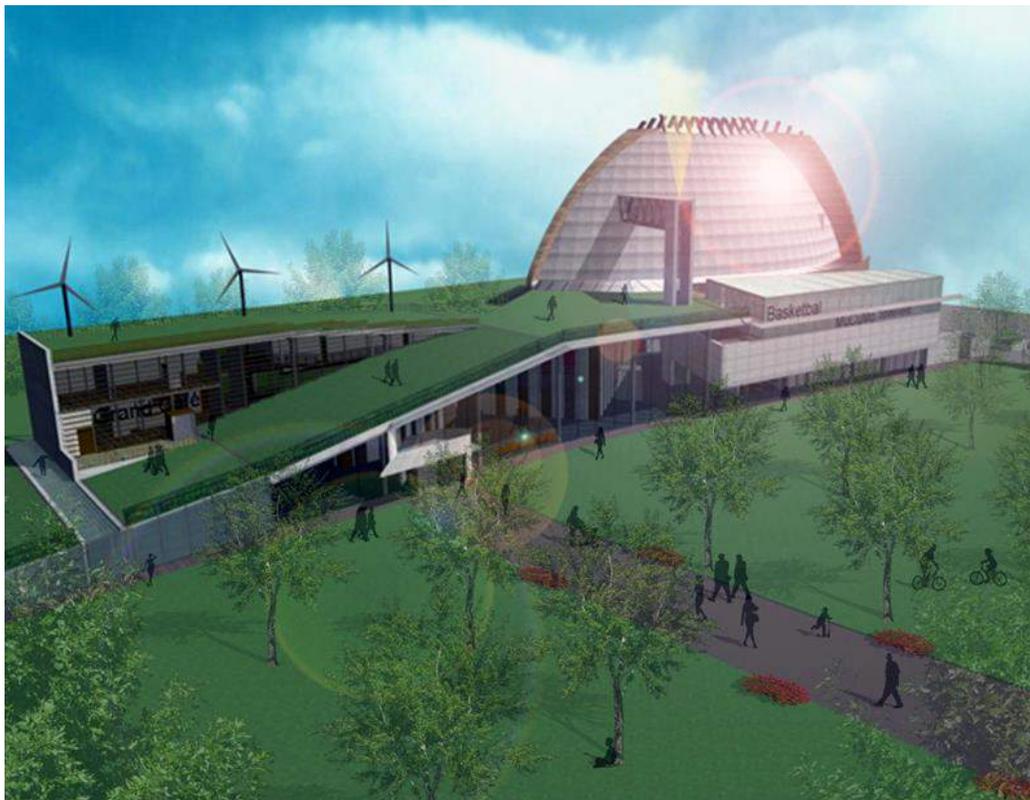


Figure 1. Design of the Poldermosque. Photo MEMAR DUT©H Architects.
<http://www.stroom.nl/gfx/uploads/webPoldermoskee.jpg>.

The project was initiated without much help from the municipal government, but the support among young Muslims in the city was overwhelming. The

government now argued that the separation of church and state implies non-intervention but also no financial backing. The mosque was opened in September 2008 in a temporary building in the western part of Amsterdam. Tariq Ramadan, the popular preacher and Islamic philosopher from Switzerland, delivered the opening sermon. Immediately afterwards imams in Amsterdam opposed the idea of a mosque for young people only. "It is against the basic rules of Islam", one of them argued in a TV interview in April 2008.⁴

The plans of the initiators perfectly captured the changing perspectives of young Muslims: on the one hand it was an example of rooting in the Netherlands. Dutch was the lingua franca and the aim was to provide a genuine Dutch Islamic institution. The design of the mosque was also a breakaway from traditional architecture. It was a plan designed by the architectural company *MemarDutch* in 2003 for a mosque in Rotterdam (see Roose in this issue). Later on this plan was presented for the *Poldermosque* in Amsterdam.



Figure 2. Actual Poldermosque. Photo Website CMO.

<http://www.cmo.nl/islam-nl/index.php/dialog/de-poldermoskee>

However, the new building has never been realized due to financial problems. Between 2004 and 2010 the organization, headed by a Muslim woman, used the old business office to organize all kinds of activities related to the position of Muslims in Dutch society. But the project was also a message to the surrounding society that Islam does not stop at the Dutch border. Modern Muslims are connected to the world. They engage with an increasingly globalized Islam public sphere (see Bowen 2004). The organization invited speakers from all over the

⁴ http://www.eenvandaag.nl/binnenland/33340/imams_fel_tegen_poldermoskee.

world, thereby raising suspicion about an alleged radical agenda. The way the project was framed was also a clear message to those who still consider Islam to be an outside intruder that has to be domesticated.

Despite the relative success of the initiative, the municipal government maintained its position not to support the project in any way beyond the formal requirements. In short, since its opening the foundation has had to cope with two opposing forces in society. On the one hand there was the municipal government questioning a project that is out of their control; on the other hand there was a continuous opposition from mainstream Islamic spokespersons who argued that the project lacked doctrinal authorization. The lack of financial resources brought the foundation into a precarious position and although it still functions, its activities are now overshadowed because media attention has shifted to the recently opened *Blauwe Moskee* ('Blue mosque') in the same part of Amsterdam. Since the mosque is located in an area that is thoroughly renewed, the initiators were able to bring their project to the attention of the local authorities. The mosque has an unusual architecture, conveys a similar message as the *Poldermosque*, and the organization consists of people with the same background. Looking at the initiatives and activities the *Blauwe Moskee* can indeed be considered as a follow up of the *Poldermosque*. In both cases there is a continuous discussion about the content of the sermons, the foreign speakers that are invited and the extent to which the organization is willing to comply with the requirements of Dutch society.

The two cases display an intriguing paradox. Both cases are expressions of the conditions in which contemporary Muslims live: an increasing rootedness in society and at the same time an engagement with the world at large. As we saw in the other cases I have analyzed in this article, governments, generally speaking, envision a domesticated Islam which corresponds with the national model of religious organization. Islam should develop into a 'Dutch church', a corporate body completely integrated in the Dutch institutional landscape.



Figure 3. Blauwe Moskee. Photo website Burgerjournalisten. <http://burgerjournalisten.wordpress.com/uw-provincie/noord-holland/amsterdam-blauwe-moskee/>

Conclusion

We might juxtapose each of these cases that I have elaborated on in this article by simply treating them as local examples of governing Islam; Muslims ask for facilities to practice their religion, and governments have to manage the institutionalization process based on existing legal frames and political decision-making. This results in the actual realization of a mosque, or its failure. This is in itself an adequate assessment of mosque building projects. Many of the mosques as we know them today in the Netherlands have been realized almost as a standard administrative procedure (see also Wessels 2003).

However, I have argued that, rather than treating them as isolated instances of negotiation, mosque-building projects should be approached as part of a more general process of space-making. This allows for a more inclusive and contextualized analysis. I have defined space-making as symbolic production, because it reveals implicit scripts about how Islam should take shape by all parties involved in negotiations. Design and aesthetics are part of this process of symbolic production, but they also have their own dynamics (see Roose in this issue). Negotiations about the design, construction and representation of a mosque are embedded in a discussion about the conceptualization of space and the construction of contextualized identities. This is demonstrated most

explicitly in those cases where the negotiations are contentious, complex, long-lasting, and consequently high profile.

Locality and space are contested issues (Dunn 2000, 291-92). Space is a discursive contentious field that is linked up with a particular problem definition, the construction of identities, embedded in specific power and political relations and by definition something that revolves in the public sphere. The cases I have addressed in this article were transformed into public issues that bring about much more than just administrative proceedings.

When we take a closer look at the three cases at hand as instances of space-making, we can observe a very fundamental transformation in the ways Muslims in the Netherlands make sense of their religion. We could assess the cases in their own right and observe how negotiations are underpinned by implicit or explicit political agendas. I consider this too narrow an analysis. Space-making is a contentious field in which different notions about the future of Islam intersect. We can treat the three cases as examples of different stages of rooting in society. In that respect there are roughly three stages to be distinguished.

In the first stage space-making was predominantly a reconstruction of home, a temporal arrangement without any conception about the future in the country of residence. The 'enclavization' of Muslims into pieces of homeland was in line with the government's policy to discourage Muslims from rooting in society. The situation I have described in the city of Rotterdam in the early 1980s is an example of this first stage.

In the next stage space-making was about developing an infrastructure that corresponds with the ambiguities of people inhabiting a new country while at the same time having strong personal ties with the country of origin. The religious infrastructure was predominantly an extension of networks back home. The double bind character of the religious landscape provided the government a clear but complex perspective: the settling of Islam and the integration of migrants with a Muslim background are part and parcel of the same agenda. The *Westermosque* project could be considered as an example of this second stage. However, the design in the style of the Amsterdam architectural school, an idea that emerged within the leadership of *Milli Görüş*, was already foreshadowing the third stage. It was a statement about the increasing rootedness of Islam in society and in the texture of the local neighbourhood.⁵ In that respect the distinction between inhabiting (temporarily or permanently) and rooting is very significant.

⁵ In that respect I do not agree with Roose's argument in this issue that the reference to Dutch architectural traditions was enforced upon the organization of *Milli Görüş* by the Dutch authorities. In my conversations with the leadership of the organization it turned out that the idea of a mosque not just *in* Amsterdam but one *of* Amsterdam emerged in their ranks.

The third phase is complex because it reveals a paradox. On the one hand Muslims have become an integral part of, and indeed are rooted in, society, but the globalization of Islam due to the growth of modern mass media has produced new and unprecedented modes of orientation and belonging. The *Poldermosque* initiative serves as an example here.

Although there are still makeshift mosques in many parts of the country and new ones are still being added, we can safely argue that the first stage is now over. With regard to mosque building in the coming years, we will observe a growing tension between the established Islamic networks and associations on the one hand and an increasing number of new initiatives on the other. The outcome is not just a matter of political choices and managerial technicalities – it is a development that corresponds to the changing conditions of Muslims in Europe.

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About the author

Thijl Sunier, anthropologist, holds the chair of 'Islam in European Societies' at the VU University Amsterdam. He is head of the anthropological department at the same university. He has conducted research on interethnic relations, Turkish

youth and Turkish Islamic organizations in the Netherlands, comparative research among Turkish youth in France, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands, and international comparative research on nation building and multiculturalism in France and the Netherlands. He currently conducts research in the field of transnational Islamic movements, religious leadership, and nation-building and Islam in Europe. His recent publications include:

- Sunier, Thijl & E. Sengers, eds. 2010. *Religious newcomers and the Nation State. Political culture and organized religion in France and the Netherlands*. Delft/Chicago: Eburon.
- Sunier, Thijl, G. Buijs, & P. Versteeg, eds. 2013. *Risky Liaison? Democracy, Religion and the Media*. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij.

Currently he is preparing a study on Turkish transnational Islam. He is chair of the board of the Inter-academic School for Islam Studies in the Netherlands (NISIS), chair of the board of the Dutch Anthropological Association (ABV), and editor of the *Journal of Muslims in Europe* (JOME).

Création d'espace et transformation religieuse: la construction des mosquées aux Pays-Bas.

La création de mosquées et d'autres édifices religieux aux Pays-Bas a été décrite et analysée surtout comme l'histoire de l'intégration et l'émancipation des musulmans dans la société néerlandaise. Les premiers travailleurs immigrants, après 1945, ont utilisé n'importe quels bâtiments comme mosquées temporaires, mais dans les décennies suivantes ils ont développé et étendu l'infrastructure religieuse, en construisant des édifices fonctionnalisés, selon divers plans. Les études sur la création des mosquées parlent pour la plupart des positions adoptées par les divers acteurs pendant les négociations. De tels récits historiques sont informatifs au sujet des parcours d'intégration des musulmans, mais ils ne prêtent guère attention aux conceptions et visions qui sous-tendent ces négociations. Le développement d'une infrastructure religieuse islamique, y compris tous les arrangements institutionnels, fait pourtant partie d'un processus plus large : l'enracinement de l'islam en des circonstances nouvelles. Ce processus, que j'appelle la création d'un espace islamique, résulte en effet en partie de négociations, mais aussi d'une transformation religieuse où les dimensions locales, nationales et transnationales se croisent. Dans cet article, je me concentre sur ce phénomène en analysant un certain nombre de cas. Je prétends que ces cas indiquent que la transformation religieuse et les réflexions sur l'évolution de l'islam sont souvent beaucoup plus importantes que « la politique identitaire et la création d'un espace. » Je prétends aussi que ce processus a des dimensions historiques qui révèlent des perspectives intrigantes sur la

manière dont les musulmans se placent dans un contexte religieux-historique.

Ruimte-maken en religieuze transformatie: het bouwen van moskeeën in Nederland

De realisatie van moskeeën en andere godsdienstige accommodaties in Nederland wordt vaak beschreven en geanalyseerd binnen het kader van de geschiedenis van integratie en emancipatie van Moslims in de Nederlandse samenleving. De eerste naoorlogse golf van arbeidsmigranten gebruikte tijdelijke geïmproviseerde accommodaties als moskeeën. In de daaropvolgende jaren werd de religieuze infrastructuur verder ontwikkeld en uitgebreid. De volgende stap was het realiseren van voor het doel gebouwde moskeeën met verschillende ontwerpen. Het merendeel van de literatuur over moskeeconstructie richt zich op bestuurlijke aspecten, politieke processen en identiteitspolitiek, dat wil zeggen op hoe de onderhandelingen over de stichting van religieuze accommodatie zich ontwikkelen, welke personen eraan deelnemen en welke standpunten zij innemen in deze onderhandelingen. Hoewel dergelijke historische benaderingen informatief zijn voor zover het de integratietrajecten van Moslims betreft, besteden ze vaak nauwelijks aandacht aan de onderliggende conceptualisaties en visies die aan dit soort onderhandelingen ten grondslag liggen. De ontwikkeling van een Islamitische religieuze infrastructuur, inclusief alle institutionele regelingen die daarbij horen, is deel van het bredere proces van de worteling van de Islam onder veranderende omstandigheden. Dit proces, dat ik 'Islamitisch ruimte-maken' noem, is gedeeltelijk inderdaad het resultaat van onderhandelingsprocessen, maar het is tegelijkertijd ook het resultaat van een intern religieus transformatieproces waarin lokale, nationale en transnationale dimensies een rol spelen. In dit artikel besteed ik aandacht aan dit transformatieproces door het analyseren van een aantal voorbeelden van de constructie van Nederlandse moskeeën. Ik laat zien dat deze voorbeelden aangeven dat religieuze transformatie en reflecties op hoe de Islam zich ontwikkelt in veel gevallen veel belangrijker zijn dan 'identiteitspolitiek en ruimte-maken'. Ik betoog ook dat dit religieuze transformatieproces historische dimensies heeft die intrigerende percepties onthullen met betrekking tot hoe Moslims zichzelf positioneren in een religieus-historische context.

The myth of the orientalist mosque: Towards an iconography of Islamic architecture in the Netherlands

Eric R. Roose

Prominent mosques in the Netherlands figure repeatedly in international discussions of modern Islamic architecture. Increasingly frequently, they are adduced as proof of the extent to which socially disadvantaged Muslims in the diaspora make use of exotic stereotypes in order to emphasize their own identity in an environment which is foreign to them and in which they are considered as foreigners. The few Dutch examples which do not appear to refer back to historical mosques are then usually presented as proof that some communities have been able to move away from this kind of 'self-orientalism'. In this article I first give a chronological overview of the relevant literature on the subject, and demonstrate that any causal connection between orientalism and oriental-looking mosques in the west is based less on empirical investigation than on critical projections. I then present an alternative approach, originally developed in Leiden to study Christian architecture in the Low Countries, which allows scholars to penetrate deeper into the nature of a religious building as a multifaceted collection of meaningful elements. Using previous research into design processes around mosques in the Netherlands, I show that in most cases of mosques which are internationally considered as examples of either orientalist or innovative design, the sponsors of the projects in reality often had completely different objectives. A close consideration of the intentions and actions involved in the design and creation of the buildings rather suggests that the sponsors intended to create a purposeful combination of prototypical examples from Islamic architectural history, whether actually occurring or idealized. Their goal in doing this was not to position themselves as 'oriental' or 'western' vis-à-vis Dutch society, which would in any case be unable to interpret the subtleties involved in such complex configurations. Rather, they sought to position themselves amongst the distinct Muslim communities, as competing leaders with mutually exclusive religious interpretations and power bases, in an internal struggle much like that which has already been recognized in the study of Christian architectural history.

Key terms: Orientalism; Architecture; Mosque design; Iconography.

Introduction

Mosques in the Netherlands, perhaps due to the prominence usually attributed to the innovativeness of Dutch design, have come to find themselves at the forefront of a growing international discourse on modern Islamic architecture by critical architects and architecture critics. Thus, prominent examples of Dutch mosques have not only been formally categorized according to the customary opposition between the 'historicist' and the 'innovative', but they have also come to play an important role as evidence of a causal relationship between western orientalism and a need for exoticist imagery among western Muslims, supposedly looking to identify themselves as 'the other' vis-à-vis their non-Islamic surroundings. Recently, however, in my own studies of mosque design in the Netherlands, I have argued that the forms chosen by Dutch Muslim patrons generally were not an unequivocal mass of eastern bells and whistles, but intricate recombinations of elements from venerated Islamic buildings that were only understandable to small groups of Muslim insiders. If it were true that the recognizability of these complex forms to westerners was never a consideration at the time they were being produced, then what would be left of the idea that they were meant to represent an orientalist mode of Muslim self-identification vis-à-vis the West?

In order to bring clarity to the matter, I will first present the reader with a chronological outline of the literature in which the relationship between western architectural orientalism and Islamic architecture in the West came to be assumed. I will show how it grew from a mere associative connection in the critical minds of the authors themselves, to the scholarly hypothesis that orientalism might have historically caused western mosques to look oriental through the thoughts and actions of the actual design producers. I will then discuss the literature that subsequently, but without further empirical research, changed this hypothesis into the 'fact' that Muslim building patrons in the West, with the Netherlands as a prominent example, either closely followed imperialist stereotypes or liberated themselves from it. As an empirically grounded alternative, I will present the reader with a less critical and more historical methodology, particularly developed for studying churches in the Low Countries but arguably more suited to analyze religious buildings in general as amalgamated iconographies. Drawing on an iconographic study of Dutch mosques that I conducted and published earlier, I will then briefly revisit those particular examples from the Netherlands that were used in the international discourse as evidence either of a self-imposed orientalism or of its long-awaited

demise. In the end, I hope to show that the idea of the orientalist mosque, as well as its complement, the western mosque, may be as much a product of critical fiction now as it was in the beginning.

Mosques from Thousand and One Nights

The first and most prominent author to make a connection between modern mosques and orientalism was the Pakistani-Canadian architect Gulzar Haider. In 1980, he presented a paper during the seminar directly leading up to the first round of awards given by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Haider formulated a list of guiding principles for other architects, stating that “[i]n the choice of architectural motifs it should in no way reinforce the erroneous mythology of Near Eastern “Islamic” exotica of the Thousand and One Nights” (Haider 1980, 123). Subsequently, in the Aga Khan volume reporting on the Awards, the architect Nader Ardalan commented on a comparative survey of 113 historical mosques by region, analyzing their pre-Islamic origins and subsequent transformations (Ardalan 1983). This resulted in a catalogue of a limited number of formal types, varying with circumscribed ecological zones and each representing a circumscribed cultural identity. Ardalan advocated for a complete inventory of major Islamic buildings, in order to come to “a useful road map to more relevant forms appropriate today for each of the ecological/cultural zones of Islam” (Ardalan 1983, 55-56). Rising from this first round of Aga Khan Architecture Awards was the confident belief that Islamic architecture had always developed regional styles in the new Muslim territories; that contemporary objects somehow no longer followed that development; and that modern architects needed to come up with solutions that once more made appropriate use of local cultural characteristics – especially in the West, where oriental-looking mosques would only provoke undesirable associations with fairy tales.

In 1985, these tenets were combined by the architect Ihsan Fethi in a second volume by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. According to Fethi, the arrival of modern technology and a general liberalization in architectural design had resulted in the breakdown of tradition and in a new permissiveness that was the cause of “some sound innovation” but also of “much misguided experimentation”, resulting in what he saw as “stylistic transplants” and “strange hybrids” (Fethi 1985, 54). Diametrically opposed to the few mosques that showed “a remarkable degree of originality and purist simplicity”, stood what Fethi called “Arabian Nights Mosques”, in which “whimsical and often bizarre combinations of Islamic forms and symbols have been used. The eclectic use of symbolic elements from various regional architectural styles, such as multifarious onion domes and frilly minarets, curious arches, and the excessive

use of decoration, evoke Hollywood images of the Arabian nights” (Fethi 1985, 55-7). However, whereas Haider had still merely warned other architects against the undesirability of such forms in light of what they evoked among outsiders, Fethi suggested a reason for their persistence, which he placed in “a resistance on the part of the Islamic clergy to all design innovation” (Fethi 1985, 59).

In 1990, in another publication by the Aga Khan Award, Haider described how, despite all his attempts to change the oriental imagery of western mosques, most of his Muslim clients still generally refused to cooperate. As an example, he mentioned his design for the Bait ul-Islam Mosque in Toronto, commissioned by an Ahmadi community which initially simply wanted to “express its Islamic presence in Canada”, but whose mosque would eventually carry a towering dome and minaret. Haider suggested that he was confronted with an overly ambitious committee, grandly imagining to plant “the seeds of a Muslim town in North America on the model of the Prophet’s Medina” (Haider 1990, 157). Six years later, when the number of oriental-looking mosques in the West appeared to be rising nonetheless, Haider started supporting his argument by way of visual analogy, printing photographs of orientalist theaters and a casino next to actual mosques (Haider 1996, 32-5). As a reason for the phenomenon that “the demand for what is seen as visual authenticity in the mosque ... has intensified over the past decade”, Haider now suggested that “efforts at “melting into the pot” have given way to assertion of a Muslim identity as a better alternative. There are also global movements afoot that have given Muslims in the diaspora a sense of identity and linkage as part of the *umma* [the collective community of Islamic peoples]” (Haider 1996, 41). It needs to be said that Haider did not think very highly of his Muslim clients, suggesting that they often were simple, impoverished and unknowledgeable immigrants who could do no more than rearrange cut-outs from mosque calendars into child-like pastiches (Haider 1990, 158). He even compared himself to “a volunteer nurse in a room full of Alzheimer’s patients at various stages of their condition” (Haider 1996, 38).

This critical dismissal of ‘orientalist mosques’, as well as the belief that a strong conservatism among contemporary Muslims stood at the basis of the popularity of such architecture, subsequently had a great impact on the way in which the subject of modern mosque design was studied at the influential Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, where new generations of western Muslim architects were being trained. The head of its library, Omar Khalidi, signalled that both clients and architects considered with pride the “capturing [of] the essential symbols of Islamic architecture” (Khalidi 2000, 322). However, by refusing to engage in a dialogue with the dominant culture, “[t]he mosque and its community are in danger of reinforcing Western views about the

“otherness” of Islam” (Khalidi 2000, 328). In 2004, as a countermeasure to such tendencies, the Aga Khan program director and architect Nasser Rabbat devised a methodological framework that focused on Islamic architectural history as a continuous cultural dialogue. As modern examples, Rabbat mentioned “some recent modernistically sensible mosques such as the White Mosque of Visoko or the Parliament Mosque in Ankara, to list but a few” (Rabbat 2004, 21). In his opinion, however, since the presence of this process had been negated in Orientalist scholarship, and obstructed by the use, over and over again, of cultural standards such as the arch and the dome, elements such as the latter had come to permeate all religious structures built by Muslims in the last century. Importantly, the author suggested that the producers of such design thereby “resurrected” – although “unfortunately and possibly unwittingly” – “the defamed Orientalist view that identifies Islamic architecture with sedate, static and supra-historical forms” (Rabbat 2004, 23). In effect, Rabbat hypothesized that contemporary oriental-looking mosques not only provoked unwanted associations with orientalist look-alikes, but that they were being produced by Muslims who had actually been influenced by orientalist stereotypes – imposing the latter upon themselves even if they did not realize it.

Expanding on Rabbat’s hypothesis, the architect Nebahat Avcioğlu then ascribed the use of (what she considered to be) non-innovative oriental imageries in western mosques wholly to a generalized postcolonial member of the diaspora (Avcioğlu 2007). In her eyes, the latter looked to identify himself as ‘the other’ by adopting orientalist stereotypes. In support, she further developed the visual analogy that Haider had applied earlier, chronologically strengthening her argument by the pictorial presentation of what she presented as a “genealogy” of mosque building in the West (Avcioğlu 2007, 95). Starting from eighteenth century garden ornamentations such as the ‘Turkish Mosque’ at Kew Gardens in London, and moving through nineteenth century “Islamically clad” industrial buildings such as a steam driven pump station in Potsdam (Avcioğlu 2007, 93-94), the author finally arrived at late nineteenth and early twentieth century mosques, which she illustrated by the 1889 Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking, the 1926 Great Mosque of Paris, and the 1973 Iranian mosque in Hamburg. However, instead of moving beyond the mere mention of the powerful patrons involved and the historical examples they used, and empirically researching the available archives in order to find out what they did and what they wanted, Avcioğlu simply signalled “an astonishing visual proximity” (Avcioğlu 2007, 97) and “an uncanny resemblance” (Avcioğlu 2007, 98) to structures like the fake Kew Gardens mosque. To support this subjective connection, the author described the Orientalist projections that had been applied to these mosques in the western societies where they had been built.

And she subsequently implied that such external and post facto form comparisons and meaning attributions were what the imperialistically subordinated Muslim minorities themselves had in fact aimed for (Avcioglu 2007, 96-98). In her eyes, this “genealogy” of mosque building in the West also “has important implications for our understanding of post-colonial purpose-built mosques because what emerges is not a rejection, but a continuation of such formally authorised, yet equally disenfranchising, modes of diasporic self-representation” (Avcioglu 2007, 98-99). Even the most recently built mosques supposedly presented Islamic space as “either unchangingly distinct from the “West” or identical everywhere in the “East”...” (Avcioglu 2007, 99). Importantly, among the rare examples of mosques that prove the contrary case, the author mentioned the *Nour Mosque* in Gouda. “These mosques have none of the identity politics trappings; they are not conceived as religious signposts. ... These mosques foster a sense of cultural context and artistic concentration, and can be seen as not only contesting the *modes* but also the dominant *forms* of representation” (Avcioglu 2007, 105).

In 2009, Avcioglu repeated her conviction that modern exoticism in western mosques was self-inflicted by displaced Muslim communities, embedded as they were in colonial stereotypes represented by English garden ornaments and German pump stations. Now, however, she also saw several Dutch mosques as examples of “an introverted neo-colonialism where the post-colonial diaspora are unable to negotiate their identity outside the context of a colonial discourse” (Avcioglu 2009, 65). A project such as the *Westermosque* in Amsterdam, for example, which she thought was a copy of the *Hagia Sophia* in Istanbul, “harkens back to European Orientalist visual practices, ... testifies to the dead-end of identity politics as far as architecture is concerned, ... reduces the architectural gesture to a mere ‘not from here’” and “can do nothing but hinder both the process of architectural creativity and distinction” (Avcioglu 2009, 65). Also the *Essalam Mosque* in Rotterdam she found to be “traditional looking” (Avcioglu 2009, 65-66). Nevertheless, the author expressed hope that, since the mosque had always showed “strong regional variations”, the notion of a European mosque was not doomed to fail (Avcioglu 2009, 67).

Another international author to expand on the argument, also highlighting a number of Dutch mosques as case studies, was the architecture critic Christian Welzbacher. After having closely copied Avcioglu’s visual and textual ‘genealogy’, he similarly claimed that “this model is adopted and perpetuated by Muslims themselves. ... In so doing, Muslim immigrants confirm European clichés, taking on the “foreigner” role of their own accord. This mirrors their actual self-image insofar as they actually do feel – for a wide variety of reasons – that they are foreign in Europe” (Welzbacher 2008, 38-43).

Welzbacher, however, lifted the argument to a different – and politically rather more dangerous – level by suggesting that this self-imposed orientalism reflected a wilful refusal to assimilate. “The dome and the minaret, transferred to the suburbs of European cities, thus become visible symbols of the opposite of integration” (Welzbacher 2008, 43). Turning his attention to concrete Dutch examples, Welzbacher claimed that in the *Essalam* Mosque in Rotterdam “we see a radical turning away from the present, a layering of numerous historical models, and above all a reduction to the “image” of a mosque, i.e., dome and minaret” (Welzbacher 2008, 37). In his formulation, “four young architects [calling themselves MemarDut©h] were especially irritated by the *Essalam* Mosque ... For their alternative proposal, they demonstratively chose the exact requirements and location of this building – and did everything differently” (Welzbacher 2008, 86). According to the author, their design, which they called “the Poldermosque”, was “a protest project by self-confident young Muslims who no longer wished to be labelled as exotic” and “evidence of a process of Islamic-European assimilation that is taking place across the continent. [...] They have no need for the kind of illustrative architecture that has been built in the West since the Kew Gardens mosque” (Welzbacher 2008, 91).¹ Another positive Dutch example to the author was the catalogue of mosque projects designed by the architect Erdal Önder and commissioned by the Turkish organization *Holanda Diyanet Vakfi* (‘Dutch Islamic Foundation’). “Almost all of the projects are adaptations of the formal vocabulary of classical Modernism. The subdued basic approach and the use of brightly coloured building material recalls the work of the Delft firm of Mecanoo, not outwardly distinct from the Dutch tradition of sober protestant rationalism” (Welzbacher 2008, 93).

After its publication, Welzbacher officially presented his book to the Dutch Minister for Housing, Communities and Integration (*Minister van Wonen, Wijken en Integratie*) as the ‘solution’ to the issue of mosque design in the Netherlands. The critical author also appeared in a radio interview, during which he was taken by a Dutch journalist to the *Taibah* Mosque in Amsterdam. Confronted with a building he obviously did not know, but nonetheless encouraged to explain it from his particular vantage point, he stated:² “It has an Oriental style. ... It is, of course, really not a European building. ...You never know what really goes on inside a building. But, of course, if a building has a societal meaning, and aspires to be a symbol, then the style does say something about what goes on on the inside, indeed, about the idea of religion and the idea

¹ See Sunier (this issue) for an illustration of the *Poldermosque* design.

² Radio 1, interview on 14 October 2008, min. 6-10, translation from Dutch to English by author. <http://www-test.radio1.nl/items/1908-euro-islam-architectuur>.

of cohabitation, and naturally also of integration. ... This is what I call a cliché mosque.”

Iconographic studies of religious architecture in the Low Countries

Meanwhile in the Low Countries itself, a quite different view of religious architecture has emerged. It could offer a much deeper understanding of amalgamated Islamic iconographies than seeing the overwhelming majority of western mosques as temporary conglomerations of eastern bells and whistles, caused by a need of suppressed orientals to distinguish themselves as ‘the other’. This view was developed by the architectural historian Aart Mekking, who expanded the methodology of architectural iconography as introduced by the architectural historian Richard Krautheimer, and who particularly applied it to the built environment of the Low Countries (for a short historiography, see Bosman 1994).

In 1995, Mekking initiated a large scale long-term project at Leiden University named ‘Art and Region’, with participants from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. They dismissed the ideology behind the formalist perspective that imagined ecclesiastical architecture as having always progressively followed a neat pattern of styles, determined by semi-autonomous architects who creatively reacted to shifting geographical and cultural environments. Instead, they turned their attention to the continuous process by which rivalling Christian patrons, spreading throughout Europe, had been using contemporary religious connotations of venerated historical prototypes. The patrons did so by reshuffling and recombining strategic aspects of these prototypes, as well as of buildings with a more local importance, into wholly new and creative iconographies that nonetheless were claimed to exude historical authenticity, and that effectively served to legitimize their own authority versus that of contested Christian patrons. With an endless variation in politico-religious circumstances and prototypical connotations, historical examples from for instance Jerusalem and Rome had thus come to be transformed to the Low Countries in extremely divergent ways. Any intended connections between the actual origins and the multifarious New Jerusalems and New Romes in this part of Europe would often have been recognizable only to the immediate allies and opponents involved, positioning themselves in their limited but ever-shifting struggles for religious power.

Once the empirical field in the Low Countries was closely studied, the paradigm of the regional consistency of styles, the natural evolution of forms, and the determining role of architects, proved to have been founded on artistic ideals formulated since the nineteenth century within design institutes, not on actual architectural historical research. Thus, the numerous empirical instances

in which existing building schemes were incorporated into new ones should not be passed over as lamentable expressions of nostalgia temporarily disturbing some ideal aesthetic evolution, but as the main target of architectural historical scholarship. And since any apparent chronological and/or geographical coherencies in building elements – ‘styles’, if you will – would have been largely the result of the social agency of networks of patrons positioning themselves in alternate religious hierarchies, any changes in their political contexts and architectural connotations could result in the immediate adoption of completely different building programmes (Bräuer et al. 2004).

Although the Art & Region project ended in 2004, Thomas Coomans, erstwhile participant from the Catholic University of Louvain, has recently shown that Christian patrons did not suddenly stop competing with each other when they spread across the planet, but that they continued to affirm their contemporary, and mutually exclusive, religious identities once outside Europe (Coomans 2012). In China, from Guangxi to Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, Christian missionaries of all sorts built churches in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, but thus far these were left unstudied. Coomans’ aim was to look further than the evident polarization between Chinese and western architectures, and instead to analyze the wide range of internally deviating ‘gothic styles’ (French, English, Flemish, early gothic, late gothic, etc.) and attempt to understand their specific meaning in the Chinese context. He thus found that Scheutists – originating in Belgium – were inspired by a Flemish gothic, while Lazarists – originating in France – referred to a French gothic. To most Chinese, such differences would have been unrecognizable and irrelevant; the Chinese looked at gothic churches in particular as arrogant colonialist representations in contradiction with Chinese building traditions, and as a consequence they were frequently demolished during anti-imperialist revolts (Coomans 2012). To the modern missionaries, however, as to their premodern forebears spreading their messages within Europe, it would have been these differences that determined their design choices in the first place. Explaining the latter through the eyes of local observers, projecting their own ‘occidental’ attributions onto the actual producers, would therefore not lead to an understanding of the objects and their iconographies.

That an iconographic perspective could also have value for the study of contemporary Islamic design in the West, was shown in my own doctoral research study of modern Dutch mosques, conducted at Leiden University between 2005 and 2009. As we have seen in the discussion of the international literature, the plans for the *Essalam* Mosque in Rotterdam and the *Westermosque* and *Taibah* Mosque in Amsterdam have been critically evaluated as self-inflicted representations of a being ‘from the East’; exceptions were the

Nour Mosque, the *Poldermosque* and the Turkish HDV mosques, that were considered artistically creative and socially integrative. My own empirical reconstructions of the design processes of these Dutch mosques, however, showed that their forms, within a variety of municipal restrictions, were largely generated by an internal competition between Islamic interpretations, represented by patrons who positioned themselves in mutually exclusive religious hierarchies by selecting and reshuffling diverging aspects of venerated models, and by recombining the results with strategic aspects of other prototypical buildings (see Roose 2009 and 2012). In order to speed up the design process, from among a wide range of competing architects those were selected whose oeuvre was presupposed to best fit the ideal. What the surrounding western communities would make of the complex end-results only became a concern after construction, when verbal representations to the public would be specifically geared towards reaching the greatest social acceptability possible. In the remainder of this section I will briefly discuss the actual actions and intentions of the patrons behind these three Dutch mosques, as well as those of the patrons behind their supposedly more innovative opposites.³

The Essalam Mosque, Rotterdam

Contrary to the above mentioned critical reflections on the supposedly traditionalist *Essalam* Mosque (built 2010), its Moroccan patron, Ahmed Ajdid, in fact intended it as a highly topical and contemporary representation of his choice for the Islamic Movement of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Egyptian-born sheikh associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and propagating a pan-Islamic vision exceedingly popular among young western Muslims. Al-Qaradawi strove for a reinstitution of an authentic caliphate by returning to a state of unity through religious abstraction, stripping each Islamic view of its excesses in order to extrapolate an original essence. His ideal rejected nationalist Islamic visions as for instance embraced by followers of the Moroccan king, who used a Malikite interpretation of Islam in legitimizing his own claim to being the successor to the prophet. It also rejected the Sufi visions that circulated among other Moroccan religious communities, who resorted to their living Sufi saints as the real heirs to Mohammed and who practiced the worship of graves, with a large role for the tomb of the prophet. And this ideal rejected the growing popularity of Salafism, which also dismissed the theology underpinning the Moroccan throne, since it was not according to the purity of the Sunna (the example and the teachings of the prophet), but which aimed for a complete de-culturalization instead.

³ For the social and political ramifications surrounding the building projects of these mosques, see Sunier (this volume).

Within these politico-religious circumstances and the ensuing prototypical connotations, Ajdid took the modern Saudi extension to the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina (the place where the first Muslim community was established) as a perfect model since in his eyes it had been built by all Islamic nationalities using all Islamic building styles (Figure 1). Ajdid then selected the most recognizable elements of this Saudi structure and planned to reshuffle these around the municipally prescribed space in Rotterdam (Figure 2). While forcefully steering the Dutch architect, Wilfried van Winden, in this direction, he first removed any suggested Moroccan building elements, since these had been predominantly applied by Malikite patrons. He then reworked the green dome of the prophet into a colourless version based on contemporary examples in Dubai, since the original had been so often copied by Sufi patrons in other mosques. And throughout, he dismissed a number of Dutch building elements, as these had been favoured by Salafi patrons in their aim to get rid of fake-Islamic imagery (Roose 2009, 210-236; Roose 2012, 293-303) (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Prototypical image selected by Ahmed Ajdid for the Essalam Mosque, 2001. Archive Wilfried van Winden. Reproduced with permission.

Surprisingly, the *Essalam's* supposedly more artistic counterpart, the critically acclaimed *Nour* Mosque in Gouda (built 1993), had in fact been meant to be based on the same prototype. Its board had engaged a shift away from Malikite Islam and Malikite imams towards a more universal alternative, which they located in Saudi Arabia and which they needed to be represented by a large and freestanding building modeled on the modern Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. It was only due to municipal resistance that the design was altered to

the seemingly integrated prayer house that it is now, replacing an old garage in a row of town houses (Roose 2009, 293).

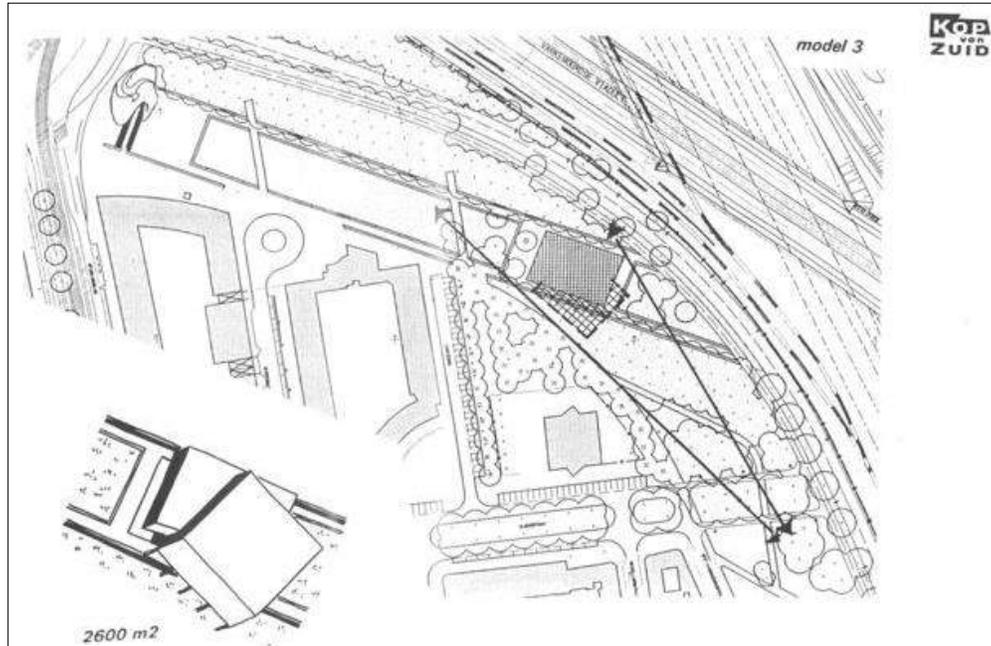


Figure 2. Volume prescribed by Municipality of Rotterdam for the Essalam mosque, 1997. Archive Wilfried van Winden. Reproduced with permission.

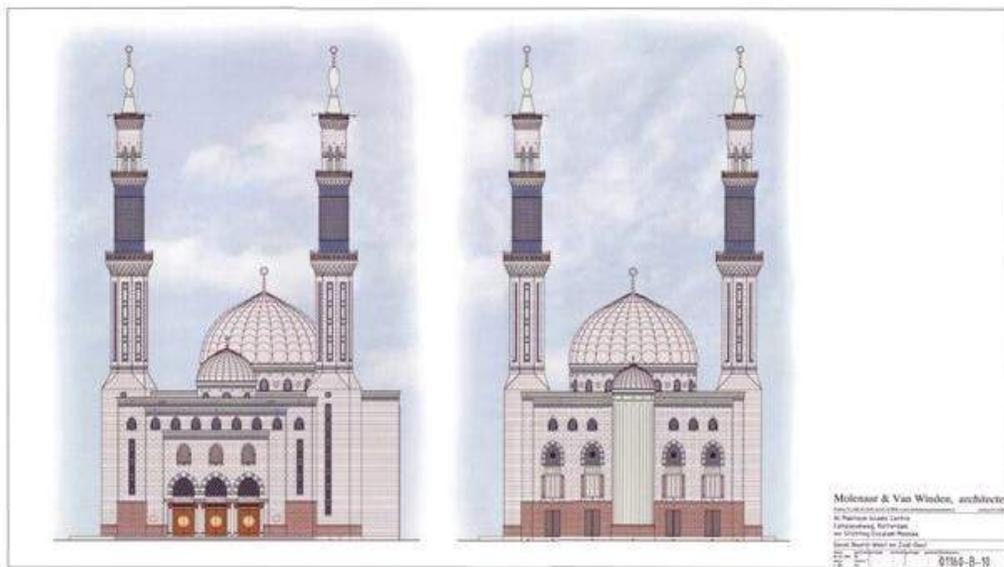


Figure 3. Design for the Essalam mosque by Wilfried van Winden, 2003. Archive Wilfried van Winden. Reproduced with permission.

Similarly, the much heralded alternative for the *Essalam*, the *Poldermosque* design (2003), was adopted by a Moroccan imam who attracted large numbers of Salafi youth and who kept referring to the pre-cultural simplicity of the first mosques during the time of the prophet and his companions (Roose 2009, 250-255). The *Poldermosque* was never built, but recently a Salafi group in the Hague rebuilt their old Soennah Mosque into a similarly 'non-Islamic looking' version (built 2011), lacking a dome and a minaret and even a *mihrab* ('prayer niche'). It was based on scriptural claims that the first mosque was not the house of the prophet (now the mosque in Medina that, in the eyes of the Salafi, has become tainted by the blasphemy of tomb worship), but instead an austere structure on the outskirts of Medina, no longer existent but supposedly created by the prophet himself just before he entered the city (Roose 2009, 294).⁴

The Westermosque, Amsterdam

In a similar vein, the patron of the allegedly orientalist *Westermosque* (design 2005) was a Dutchman of Turkish origin, Üzeyir Kabaktepe, whose aim was to establish a contemporary representation of the Milli Görüş movement of which he was the local leader. This movement strives for a much larger role of Islam in the public sphere in Turkey, idealizing the religious heydays of Ottoman empire and rejecting the secular-republican (or 'Kemalist') downplay of overly Islamic behaviour and the role of religious institutions in public space. Thus, Kabaktepe looked for the grandest representation of Ottoman grandeur and creativity, leading his French architect, Marc Breitman, away from any Byzantine forms suggested by him, towards the main aspects of the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne, Turkey, aiming to create a similar traditional mosque complex (or 'Külliyeh') to be financially maintained by the exploitation of shops (Figure 4). Meanwhile, he dismissed any modernization or stylization of Ottoman architecture, since this had been applied by his opponents in the Netherlands, the mosque leaders associated with the Turkish Dutch Islamic Foundation (HDV) that was sponsored by the Turkish government. In fact, he took his designer to see some prominent examples of HDV mosques, explicitly showing him what not to do. He even ruled that in a genuine Ottoman mosque complex, shops should be kept away from the sacrality of the main prayer building – thereby becoming more Ottoman than the Ottomans ever were themselves (Figure 5). The only thing he allowed for, under heavy pressure of the municipal government, was the use of Dutch bricks, but only since he reasoned that brickwork could also be found in Ottoman mosques (Figure 6). However, when his ties with the European headquarters of Milli Görüş in Germany (which was suspected of being opposed to integration)

⁴ See also 'De Eerste Moskee', Fatwah by the Soennah Mosque, published on its website on 21 March 2010. <http://www.al-yaqeen.com/va/vraag.php?id=799&zoek=moskee>.

were suddenly revealed, however, the mosque was never built (Roose 2009, 163-179).

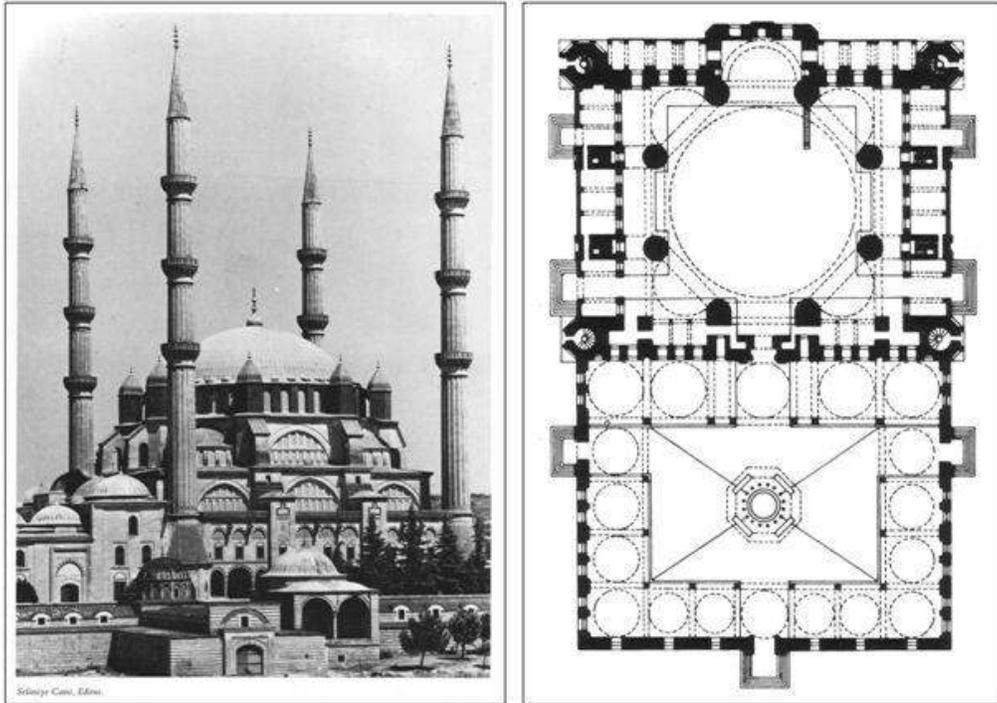


Figure 4. Prototypical image for the Westermosque selected by Üzeyir Kabaktepe, 2002. Archive Westermosque. Reproduced with permission.

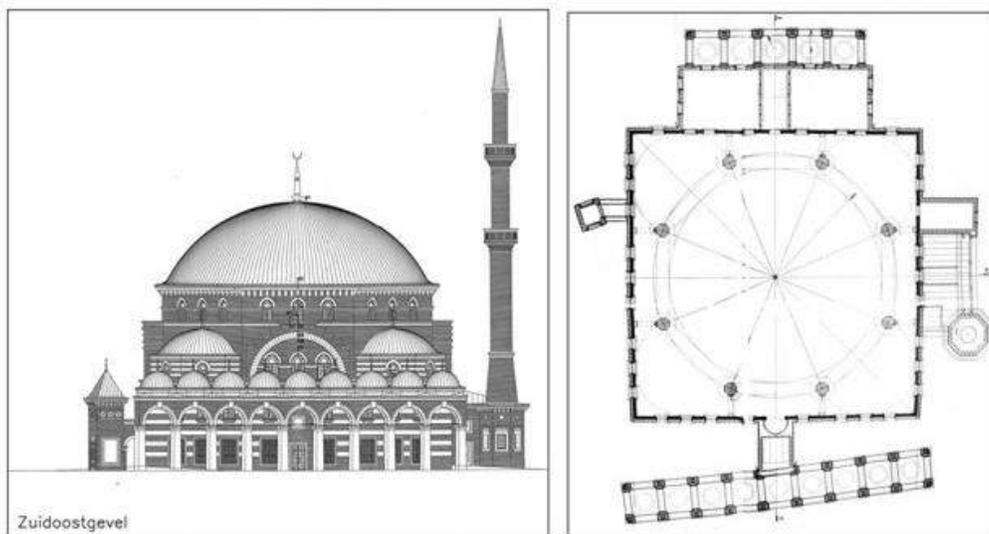


Figure 5. Design for the Westermosque by Marc Breitman, 2004. Archive Municipality of Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

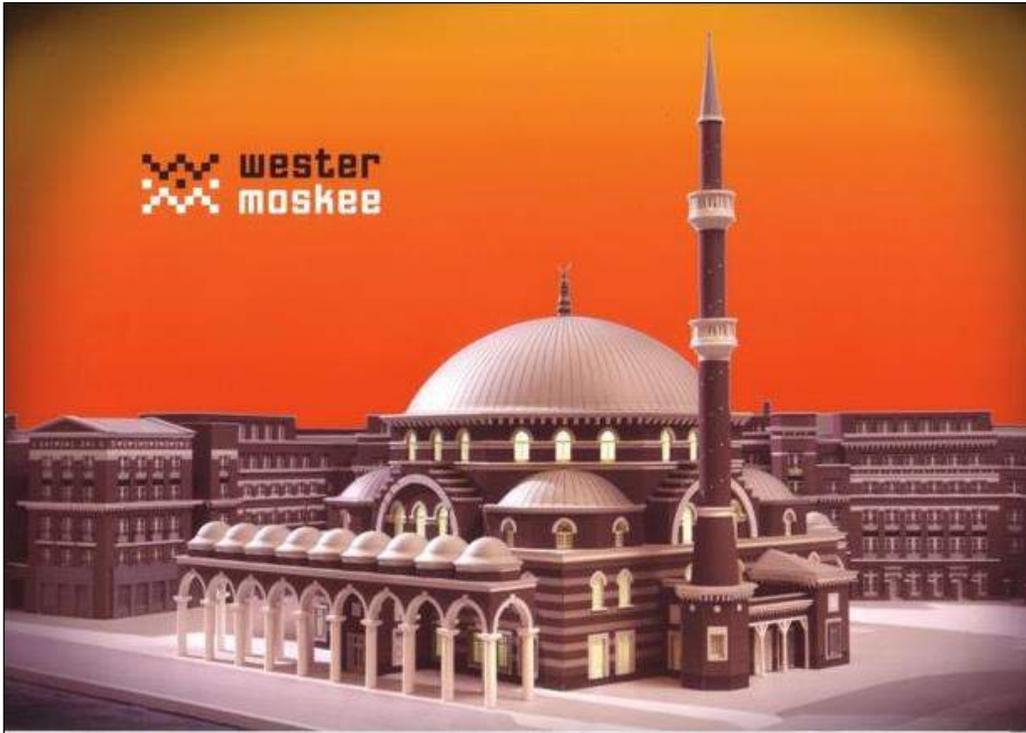


Figure 6. Model for the Westermosque, by Municipality of Amsterdam, 2005. Archive Municipality of Amsterdam. Reproduced with permission.

As mentioned, the HDV or Dutch Islamic Foundation, the organization behind the mosques that were seen to be the modernist opposites to the *Westermosque*, is in reality politically and financially connected to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (or '*Diyamet*') in Turkey. In Turkey itself, this state organization had been steering important mosques, such as the Parliament Mosque in Ankara, away from overly Ottoman imagery and towards modernization through abstraction and application of pre-Ottoman and western building elements. Member mosques in the Netherlands propagated a similarly secular vision of Islam and the state, using official *Diyamet* preachers and architecturally favouring Ottoman elements that were, however, always modernized, the extent to which initially varied with individual patrons. At a certain point Bedri Sevinçsoy, a secular Turkish architect living in the Netherlands, had come to be predominantly used by *Diyamet*, and he eventually devised, loosely based on Ottoman models, a standardized and much-used model for a dome and minaret that could be recognized as Turkish and modern at the same time. After his retirement and an intermittent period of searching for an appropriate successor during which some Dutch designers were hired, eventually the Turkish architect Erdal Önder emerged as the newly favoured architect for *Diyamet* mosques in the

Netherlands, and he also devised a stylized and standardized version of a Turkish dome and minaret for his patrons (Roose 2009, 134-163). Meanwhile in Turkey, the steady rise to power of Islamist groups has resulted in a plan for a mosque in Istanbul that has given rise to much controversy among secularists, since its imagery closely follows that of Ottoman prototypes while its minarets are even claimed to be higher than those of the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina.⁵

The Taibah Mosque, Amsterdam

Lastly, the allegedly cliché-like design for the *Taibah* Mosque (built 2004) had actually been intended by Mohammed Yunus Gaffar, its Hindustani-Islamic patron from Surinam, as a representation of the Barelvi Sufi vision of Islam, led by his venerated Pakistani leader and living Sufi saint Noorani Siddiqui. The latter, a claimed successor to the prophet, had established the World Islamic Mission to counter puritanical Islamic visions that attempted to outstrip Sufi leadership of its divine authority and that were mostly propagated among the Ahmadi and Wahhabi schools. The Barelvi vision was named after a mystic who sought to reinstitute Mohammed and his Sufi successors as the only channels to receive the divine light, as well as to reinforce the veneration and building of domed graves. Thus, Gaffar took what he considered to be the most perfect model of a Sufi tomb, the *Taj Mahal*, and combined its most important aspects, such as its quincunx structure, its arched galleries, its entrance iwans, and its fourfold corner turrets, with the green dome of the prophet and its adjacent Mamluk minaret (Figure 7). Contrary to the aforementioned patron of the *Essalam* mosque in Rotterdam, Gaffar carefully avoided any elements of the modern Saudi-built complex around the latter, since he associated these with the despised Wahhabism. When steering his Dutch architect, Frank Domburg, in this general direction (Figure 8), he added some creative material expressions of basic ideas from Barelvi theology, cosmology and devotion, such as a multitude of starry lights in the inner dome representing the saints distributing the divine light; windows in the shape of the silhouette of the prophet's dome symbolizing the Light of Mohammed falling into the mosque; marble plates based on those of the Garden of Heaven or the area between Mohammed's grave and pulpit in which to directly experience the divine; a sculpture adjacent to the prayer niche in the shape of the doors to the prophet's grave; layers of marble plating in the entrance hall that symbolized the word of god brought from the heavens to the earth by Gibreel to Mohammed; and an enormous poster on the inner balcony that imaged the tombs of the most important claimed Sufi predecessors of

⁵ See <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/29/252449.html>.

Noorani Siddiqui – including the prophet himself (Roose 2009, 83-92; Roose 2012, 285-293) (Figure 9).⁶

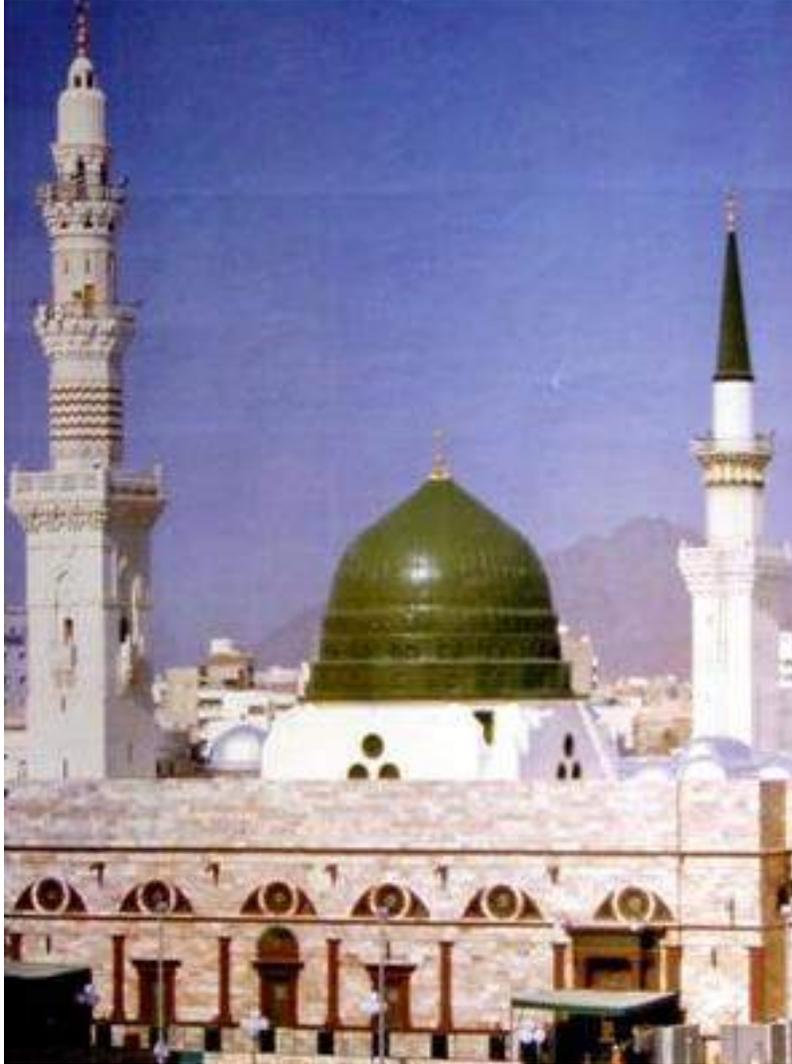


Figure 7. Prototypical image for the Taibah mosque in Amsterdam, selected by Mohammed Yunus Gaffar, 1997. Archive Frank Domburg. Reproduced with permission.

⁶ Compare the new design for the *Barelvi Noor ul-Haram* Mosque in Oakville, Canada – indicated by Noorani Siddiqui to be “a land thirsty for the *adhan*”. Also this building appears to combine an ideal Sufi tomb with the prophet’s grave, and in many ways it is akin to the *Taibah* Mosque. See <http://www.wimcanada.com/>.



Figure 8. Design for the Taibah mosque in Amsterdam, design by Frank Domburg, 2000. Archive Frank Domburg. Reproduced with permission.

As previously mentioned, the patron of the *Taibah* mosque detested both Salafi and Ahmadi Islam and, consequently, opposed the mosque designs of these two strands of Islam. Several Dutch Salafi mosques have been discussed above, but the oldest stand-alone brick mosque in the Netherlands is actually Ahmadi: the Mubarak Mosque in the Hague (built 1955). Although its age prevented its treatment as an example of modern mosque design in the international literature, in the Netherlands it was described as perfectly adapted to the Dutch context, much along the lines of the international acclamations of the *Nour* Mosque, *Poldermosque* and HDV mosques. But also here, looks may deceive: it had actually been modeled on the holy mosques of the claimed prophet Ahmad and his caliphate successors in Qadian, India – it just had been heavily restricted in its details by the municipal government. In fact, the mosques in Qadian had been taken as ideal models by a multitude of Ahmadi missionaries after they had moved headquarters to Rabwah, Pakistan, following the partition of British India (Roose 2009, 43-47, 50-65). Over time, a growing number of Ahmadi patrons shifted from merely referring to Qadian, where Ahmad’s early construction had already referred to what was then known of the prophet’s mosque, to incorporating features of Medina itself as an even more authentic prototype, following the motto “Mosques will be constructed on the model of the Prophet’s Mosque and

make every land the land of Hejaz” (Rehmatullah 2001). The model was taken to be the building as it stood before the anti-Ahmadi patrons in Saudi Arabia extended it, with elements from its substructure, its multiple domes, and its variegated turrets visualized both in photographs and, at times combined with the North Indian prototypes, in actual mosque design (Khan 1994).



Figure 9. Additions for the Taibah mosque in Amsterdam, by Mohammed Yunus Gaffar, 2004-2013. Photo Eric Roose.

Recently, the prototype has come to be represented, in Ahmadi photography as well as in mosque architecture, as particularly consisting of the prophet’s dome combined with its Ottoman corner minaret (Khan 2008).⁷ The latter was perhaps less adjacent to the dome than its Mamluk counterpart, but also less tainted by the inappropriate religious connotations vested in the latter by anti-Ahmadi patrons such as the Bareilvi.⁸

⁷ Also see the image on the main Qadiani website. <http://www.alislam.org/gallery2/v/mosques/>.

⁸ Compare the design for the *Ahmadi Bait ul-Islam* Mosque in Toronto. As mentioned earlier, its patrons wished to plant “the seeds of a Muslim town in North America on the model of the Prophet’s Medina”. See <http://www.alislam.org/gallery2/v/mosques/>. In a similar manner, compare the Shia Ismaili centre in Vancouver, commissioned by the Aga Khan himself, with the Great Mosque of Mahdiyya in North Africa, built by the first claimed Fatimid caliph and grandest among the Aga Khan’s predecessors, imam al-Mahdi. The latter also modeled his mosque on the

Conclusion

Where the architect Gulzar Haider initially only advised other architects against oriental-looking mosque design since it would evoke images from the *Thousand and One Nights* among westerners, the architect Ihsan Fethi went one step further and placed the ongoing popularity of what he thought of as Arabian Nights mosques in an assumed conservatism among the Islamic clergy. Haider then followed by suggesting that the supposed use of orientalist imagery in western mosques had something to do with the need to assert a global Muslim identity through resorting to a false idea of visual authenticity. At the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, the head of library Omar Khalidi subsequently rejected oriental-looking mosque design as caused by a misplaced Muslim pride in capturing an essential symbolism, dangerously reinforcing the western view of Muslims as ‘the other’. Program director and architect Nasser Rabbat then set the argument in a methodological framework and devised a perspective that pre-supposed the imposition of orientalist stereotypes by the producers of oriental-looking mosques themselves, whether they experienced it as such or not. This led the architect Nebahat Avcioglu to represent orientalist buildings and oriental-looking mosques as a historical continuum, using subjectively projected similarities between the two categories in support of the idea that the great majority of diaspora Muslims had evidently not been able to escape the bindings of architectural self-orientalism. Finally, the architecture critic Christian Welzbacher put all of these ideas together and implied that even if you did not have any knowledge about a particular oriental-looking mosque, you could safely say that its community had embraced western clichés of the foreigner from the East in order to wilfully resist the idea of integration.

Whereas all of these authors offered international examples of oriental-looking and (much rarer) non-Oriental-looking mosque design, it is especially in a closer study of Avcioglu’s and Welzbacher’s examples from the Netherlands that the flaws in their argument come fully to the fore. It shows that as soon as critical and social ideals are left behind and actual design processes are studied, a number of methodological assumptions on mosques in the West turn out to be artistic projections rather than historical facts. The objects appear not to have been built by circumscribed Muslim communities, generalized diaspora members, or semi-autonomous architects, but by ambitious patrons. The latter do not aim for the enhancement of a singular Muslim identity, but for that of

house of the prophet, but explicitly substituted a monumental portal, in Shia scriptures associated with Ali, for the massive minaret that had been preferred among his Sunni rivals (Bloom 1989, 99-103).

their own religious legitimacy among their newly expanding Islamic constituencies. Since their target group is not ‘the West’, the public recognizability of their complex iconographies is not an issue at the time they create them. As public acceptance does become an issue after construction, their verbal representations do not necessarily reflect their actions during the design process. And thinking of the resultant forms in terms of Western Mosques versus Orientalist Mosques may do justice to our own hopes and fears, but not to those of the people who produced them.

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About the author

Eric R. Roose is a cultural anthropologist and an art historian with an ongoing interest in the comparative iconography of modern religious architecture. Between 2005 and 2009 he was an affiliated PhD fellow at Leiden University, where he conducted a research project on Dutch mosque design. Between 2009 and 2012 he completed a study of Sufi sanctuaries in Europe as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Amsterdam, where he was funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). From 2012 to 2013 he was an affiliated fellow at the Institute for Religious Studies at Leiden University, preparing a research project on the iconography of modern Jewish and Christian architecture in the West.

Le mythe de la mosquée orientaliste: vers une iconographie de l'architecture islamique aux Pays-Bas

Les grandes mosquées des Pays-Bas figurent souvent dans les discussions internationales de l'architecture islamique moderne. De plus en plus souvent, elles sont citées comme preuve d'une tendance parmi les musulmans défavorisés à utiliser des stéréotypes exotiques pour affirmer leur propre identité, dans un milieu qui leur est étranger et qui les considère comme des étrangers. Les rares exemples néerlandais qui ne semblent pas évoquer des mosquées historiques sont alors présentés comme preuve que certaines communautés ont su dépasser cette sorte d'« auto-orientalisme. » Dans cet article, je commence par donner un survol chronologique de la littérature pertinente, puis je démontre que tout rapport causal entre l'orientalisme et les mosquées occidentales à l'air oriental est basé plutôt sur des projections critiques et non sur un examen empirique. J'offre ensuite une approche alternative, élaborée

d'abord à Leyde pour étudier l'architecture chrétienne des Plats Pays, qui permet aux chercheurs de voir un édifice religieux comme un ensemble complexe d'aspects révélateurs. À l'aide de recherches déjà faites sur les processus de conception de mosquées aux Pays-Bas, je démontre que pour la plupart des mosquées considérées internationalement comme exemples de conception soit orientale soit innovatrice, les donneurs d'ouvrage avaient en fait des buts tout à fait autres. Un examen plus à fond des buts et actions présidant à la conception et construction de ces édifices suggère plutôt qu'on voulait combiner des exemples prototypiques, réels ou idéalisés, de l'histoire architecturale de l'islam. Leur but n'était pas de se placer comme « oriental » ou « occidental » aux yeux de la société néerlandaise, qui serait en tout cas incapable d'interpréter les subtilités de ces formes. Ils cherchaient plutôt à se placer parmi les diverses communautés musulmanes, comme des chefs qui se faisaient concurrence, ayant des interprétations et des bases de pouvoir qui s'excluaient réciproquement, dans une lutte interne toute pareille à celle que l'étude de l'histoire architecturale chrétienne a déjà révélée.

De mythe van de oriëntaalse moskee: Naar een iconografie van Islamitische architectuur in Nederland

Prominente moskeeën in Nederland blijken herhaaldelijk te worden gebruikt in internationale verhandelingen over moderne islamitische architectuur in het westen. Zij dienen daarbij steeds vaker als bewijs van de mate waarin sociaal achtergestelde moslims in de diaspora gebruik maken van exotische stereotypen, om zo hun eigen identiteit te benadrukken in een voor hen vreemde (en bevreemdende) omgeving. De enkele Nederlandse voorbeelden die niet lijken terug te grijpen op historische moskeeën, worden vervolgens gepresenteerd als bewijs dat sommige gemeenschappen zich blijkbaar wel hebben kunnen ontworstelen aan dit soort 'zelf-oriëntalisme'. In dit artikel geef ik een chronologisch overzicht van de betreffende literatuur, waaruit blijkt dat het causale verband tussen oriëntalisme en oriëntaals aandoende moskeeën in het westen minder is gebaseerd op empirisch onderzoek dan op kritische projecties. Vervolgens presenteer ik een alternatief perspectief dat ontwikkeld werd in Leiden om christelijke architectuur in de Lage Landen te bestuderen, en waarmee onderzoekers dieper door kunnen dringen in een religieus gebouw als een samenstelling van betekenisvolle elementen. Aan de hand van verwijzingen naar eerder onderzoek dat ik verrichtte naar ontwerpprocessen van moskeeën in Nederland laat ik zien dat in de gevallen die internationaal aangehaald werden als voorbeelden van hetzij oriëntalistisch, hetzij innovatief ontwerp, de opdrachtgevers in werkelijkheid een heel andere bedoeling

hadden. Door te kijken naar de opeenvolging van intenties en acties tijdens het creëren van de gebouwen, wordt duidelijk dat de betreffende opdrachtgevers een samenstelling nastreefden van prototypische voorbeelden uit de islamitische architectuurgeschiedenis, hetzij bestaand of geïdealiseerd. Hiermee positioneerden zij zich niet als ‘oosterlingen’ of ‘westerlingen’ tegenover de Nederlandse samenleving, die dit soort complexe samenstellingen toch niet zou begrijpen, maar tegenover elkaar, als de elkaar betwistende leiders met hun wederzijds met elkaar onverenigbare geloofsinterpretaties en machtsposities die we eerder al herkend hadden in de christelijke architectuurgeschiedenis.

Burial practices and desires among Muslims in the Netherlands: A matter of belonging

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany

For Muslims in the Netherlands the choice of burial location is not only a matter of being well-informed on the practical, legal and religious possibilities and impossibilities. It is also a matter of how Muslims view themselves and the Dutch society of which they are part. This article discusses the Islamic burial practices among Muslims in the Netherlands in relation to both Dutch and Islamic legal norms. The focus of this article is on the motives and considerations that underlie the choice of burial location. The results are based on personal interviews held with Muslims of various Islamic denominations. The motives and considerations that were expressed seem to reveal a strong sense of belonging to countries of origin. Even younger generations of Muslims express their emotional attachment to their roots and their wish to return to the home countries for burial. The interview data also provides the insight that growing anti-Muslim sentiments in Europe appear to have negatively affected many Muslims' sense of belonging to the Netherlands and hence their desire not to be buried there. This article furthermore includes the results of a survey among all Dutch municipalities with regard to Islamic burial facilities. This survey reveals some quite interesting solutions developed by Dutch cemeteries in dealing with the diversity among Islamic communities in the Netherlands.

Key terms: Islam; Islamic burial plots; Sense of belonging; Islamic law; The Netherlands.

Introduction

Death, dying and burial are not only matters of individual experiences and emotions, but also social events.¹ They lay bare social relations and the shaping

¹ I would like to thank Professor W.A.R. Shadid, Professor P.S. van Koningsveld, Professor M.S. Berger and the anonymous referees for their remarks on an earlier version of this paper. This

of identity within a community. As Gardner states: “The meanings and practices which surround death are [...] the products of particular social, cultural and historical circumstances. Since these rituals are central to the identities and meanings which groups construct for themselves, they can be viewed as windows, which open out to the ways societies view themselves and the world around them [...]” (1998, 507).

For the purpose of this article I take up the case of Muslims in the Netherlands and the practice of legal and religious regulations with regard to death and burial.² Using the practice of death rituals and regulations as a ‘window’, we can elaborate on the fact that the choice as to where to be buried is not only a matter of being well-informed with regard to practical, legal and religious possibilities and impossibilities. It is also a matter of how Muslims view themselves and the Dutch society of which they are part. Regarding the latter, a sense of belonging and the myth of returning to the home countries were often mentioned. During the fieldwork done for this study, cemetery managers would often express to me their expectation that future generations of Muslims in the Netherlands would chiefly opt for burial in the Netherlands because of a decline in their sense of belonging to the countries of origin. However, it was exactly this sense of belonging to the countries of origin which formed a prominent motive for respondents in their choice of burial location. This seems to be the direct opposite of the general expectation among cemetery managers. In this article I will use Muslims’ experiences with legal and religious regulations around death, dying and burial as a window through which to look at how Muslims view themselves and the society around them. A connection will be made to theories on the sense of belonging and the myth of return (Gardner 1998; Gardner 2002; Anwar 1979; Bolognani 2007).

In what follows I will first consider how Islamic burials are facilitated within Dutch public policy. In this discussion I will deal with how the Dutch burial landscape is shaped through a brief overview of the legal history regarding the creation of cemeteries. Muslims’ responses to the facilities for Islamic burials in the Netherlands, which may concern both Islamic plots in public cemeteries and the creation of private Islamic cemeteries, will also be considered. Then a general description will follow on the practice of Islamic burial prescriptions among Muslims in the Netherlands, according to three different categories:

article is part of my PhD thesis on the religious, legal and social aspects of Islamic burials in the Netherlands and Belgium (Kadrouch-Outmany fc.).

² Although I focus on the Netherlands in this article, the matter is certainly not limited to this country. Over the last years several studies have been conducted on Muslim burial practices in European context. For example in Germany (Tan 1996; Jonker 1996), in France (Chaib 2000), and in the United Kingdom (Gardner 1998, 2002).

dying a good death, preparatory burial regulations and the choice of burial location. These categories were derived from the interviews and will be connected to the *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and to studies of Islamic burials. In the final section I elaborate on the results of my interviews and discuss the ‘emotional aspect’ with regard to the choice of burial location. From the experiences Muslims in the Netherlands have had with death and burial among relatives, I will discuss their choices regarding where to be buried, how these choices are put into effect, and the role of rules and regulations in these choices.

In this multidisciplinary research, which is qualitative in nature, my aim is not to generalize the results. Primarily I aim to ensure as much variation as possible. This allows me to describe and explain specific opinions and practices concerning burial practices among the various Islamic denominations. These aims are in line with the definition of qualitative research as given in the literature on the methodology of social research (Shank 2002, 5). As a qualitative researcher I am interested in understanding how people make sense of their world and what kinds of experiences they have (see Meriem 2009, 13). Besides explaining and describing respondents’ views, I will also focus on whether the practices and opinions relate to some variables such as ethnic background, age, gender and religious denomination. One has to keep in mind that such relationships will be looked at by searching for trends, rather than by presenting statistical evidence. The sample size is too limited to allow such statistical correlations.

Countries of origin		Morocco	Turkey	Surinam	Other countries ³	Total
Total respondents		6	5	3	5	19
Gender	Male	4	2	1	2	19
	Female	2	3	2	3	
Denomination	Sunni	6	3	1	2	19
	Shia	0	0	0	3	
	Alevi	0	2	0	0	
	Ahmadiyya	0	0	2	0	
Year of birth	1981>	2	1	1	3	19
	1971-1980	3	3	0	1	
	<1971	1	1	2	1	

Table 1: Interviewed respondents in the Netherlands

³ The category ‘Other countries’ includes one respondent from each of the countries Sudan, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews among 19 Muslims (9 men and 10 women) of various backgrounds, aged between 20 and 77, who adhere to Sunni, Shiite, Alevi and Ahmadiyya branches of Islam (Table 1). Approximately 85% of Muslims worldwide adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2009, 38).⁴ Their number in the Netherlands can be estimated at 765,000. For the Shiites and Alevites both their numbers are estimated at approximately between 45,000 and 90,000 (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2009, 47; Neijenhuis 2008).⁵ The Ahmadiyya have roughly 10,000 adherents in the Netherlands (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2009, 39).⁶

Beside the interviews, the results of this article are also derived from a survey among Dutch municipalities. This survey included questions on Islamic burial practices in public cemeteries. Of all 439 Dutch municipalities that were invited to take part in this study, 327 actually responded, of which 297 have one (or more) public cemeteries.⁷

In the next section some of the results of the survey will be presented, which mainly concern the creation of Islamic burial plots. Some quite interesting solutions have been developed by municipalities in dealing with the diversity among Islamic communities in the Netherlands. The Sunni and Shiite branches represent the two main denominations of Islam and from their perspective the Alevi and Ahmadiyya branches are controversial. Where burial is concerned the fact of the matter is that all these groups want to be buried in either the Islamic plots or the Islamic cemetery. This introduces challenges for municipalities in coping with the various demands coming from Muslims to include or exclude

⁴ Sunni Muslims accept the legitimacy of the first four successors of Muhammad, Abu Bakr Al Siddiq, Umar ibn al Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib (Esposito 2003, 306), whereas Shiite Muslims believe that Muhammad's religious and political authority was passed on to his descendants beginning with his son-in-law and cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib and his sons Hasan and Husayn. The defining event of Shiism was the martyrdom of Husayn in Kerbela (Iraq) in 681 (Esposito 2003, 292).

⁵ Alevi is a term which is used to cover a number of heterogeneous socio-religious communities in Turkey and the Balkans, who in the twentieth century began to share a common transregional identity called Alevism. Alevi are considered by some to derive from Shiite Islam (Esposito 2003, 14).

⁶ The Ahmadiyya is a controversial messianic movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in Qadian (India) in 1889. This denomination consists of two branches: the Qadiani, who claim that Ghulam Ahmad is a non-legislating prophet with a divine mandate for the revival and renewal of Islam, and the Lahore branch, which considers the founder to be a renewer of the faith rather than a prophet. The Ahmadiyya were declared non-Muslims by a Pakistani law of 1974 because of their opposition to the mainstream belief in the finality of Muhammad's legislative prophesy (Esposito 2003, 11-12)

⁷ This research took place between December 2010 and March 2011.

certain Islamic denominations. To start this discussion we will first look at the legal possibilities for Islamic burials in the Netherlands.

Legal possibilities for Islamic burials in the Netherlands

Dutch Muslims who consider burying their deceased in the Netherlands are faced with a host of regulations at the national and local level, not all of them compliant with Islamic burial regulations. As a matter of Dutch public policy, burial is subject to certain regulations. National law sets standards for proper burial, hygiene and public order, while municipal regulations deal with urban planning, aesthetics and soil requirements. In this section we will briefly outline the historical developments that shaped the current Dutch burial landscape. Furthermore, we will discuss the creation of the first Islamic cemetery in the Netherlands and the development of Islamic plots in public cemeteries. Let us first turn to a general overview concerning the legal organization of cemeteries and religious plots.

In the Netherlands cemeteries can be either public or private. Since 1827 municipalities have been obliged to provide for a public cemetery. According to Van Breemer & Maussen (2012, 283) only one third of all cemeteries are owned, administered and paid for by municipalities. The remaining two thirds are so-called *bijzondere begraafplaatsen* ('special cemeteries'), owned by different religious groups or by private legal entities. The right to maintain religious cemeteries was established with the introduction of the first Burial Act of 1869. Besides the creation of religious cemeteries, article 19 of this Act stipulates the right to a plot for religious denominations who could not afford their own cemetery:

The general cemeteries are constructed in such a way that on the wish of the management of a religious congregation which does not possess its own cemetery, the bodies of the members of this religious congregation can be buried in a separate part intended exclusively for them. Every such part has a separate entrance, except for the single main entrance which can serve the whole cemetery. The layout of each of these parts is arranged by the municipal council, after having listened to the management of the religious congregations involved.⁸

⁸"De algemeene begraafplaatsen worden zóó aangelegd, dat, op verlangen van het bestuur eener kerkelijke gemeente die geen eigen begraafplaats bezit, de lijken van de leden dier kerkelijke gemeente in een afzonderlijk, uitsluitend voor hen bestemd gedeelte kunnen worden begraven. Ieder zoodanig gedeelte heeft een afzonderlijken ingang, behoudens dat één hoofdingang voor de geheele begraafplaats kan dienen. De inrigting van elk dezer gedeelten wordt door het gemeentebestuur geregeld, na daarop het bestuur van de betrokken kerkelijke gemeenten te hebben gehoord" (article 19, Begraafwet 1869, Stb 65).

These rights applied to Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Nowadays the same is also true for Muslims as well as adherents of other religions. The burial landscape in the Netherlands presents a wide range of options, including different religious cemeteries, religious plots in municipal public cemeteries and also municipal public parts in religious cemeteries (Van den Breemer & Maussen 2012, 283).

Currently cemeteries are primarily regulated by the national law *Wet op de Lijkbezorging 1991* ('Burial and Cremation Act 1991'). During the preparations for the revision of this act in the 1980s there were discussions on adapting the existing burial law, in order to remove all unnecessary obstacles for Muslims as well as adherents of other religions (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2008, 170). This resulted for example in the legal possibility of burial without a coffin and within 36 hours, both of which are Islamic burial prescriptions. Consequently, the number of Islamic burial plots started to increase. At the time of writing, there are approximately 70 to 80 Islamic plots in several public cemeteries and one Islamic private cemetery.

The first Islamic cemetery was established in 2007 in the municipality of Almere by Muslims mainly with a Surinamese background.⁹ They were able to buy a piece of land next to the existing public cemetery and to develop a private Islamic cemetery with a private entrance and its own rules and regulations.¹⁰ At the Islamic cemetery graves are only granted for an unlimited period of time, which is rare due to the shortage of space in the Netherlands.¹¹ Furthermore, only those deceased who "are Muslims according to the Islamic religious law" can be buried at this cemetery. Who is meant by this, is to be determined by the board of the organization. In case of doubt the board can ask their *mufti* (Islamic scholar) for advice. So far, it has been clear that members of the Ahmadiyya are strictly forbidden to be buried at this cemetery: "Ahmadiyya are considered non-Muslims and should therefore not be buried in an Islamic cemetery," as was explained to me during an interview.¹²

The creation and the organization of an Islamic cemetery differs from that of an Islamic plot. Islamic plots in public cemeteries have existed for decades in the Netherlands. The very first of these plots was established in 1932 and is located at the Kerkhoflaan cemetery in the city of The Hague (Ryad 2012,

⁹ The Islamic cemetery in Almere was inaugurated in 2007 and is owned by the Sunni organization SAMAR: *Stichting Almeerse Moslims Al Raza* ('Al Raza Foundation of Almere Muslims').

¹⁰ Private cemeteries do have to observe national regulations laid down in the *Wet op de Lijkbezorging* ('Burial and Cremation Act').

¹¹ Due to shortage of space, graves with an unlimited granting period are very rare in the Netherlands. From the survey I conducted among Dutch municipalities it turned out that less than 10% of the municipalities still offer the option for a grave with an unlimited period.

¹² Interview with Hadji Dilorosun, responsible for the Islamic cemetery, Almere, 22 March 2012.

293). My survey of Dutch municipalities shows that approximately 25 % of them provide an Islamic plot in one of their cemeteries. The Islamic plot is mainly separated from the rest of the cemetery by a hedgerow, and the graves face the direction of Mecca (Harmsen 2009). The rules that apply to the Islamic plot are the same as those for the public part of the cemetery, i.e. the *gemeentelijke verordening* ('municipal act') and the *begraafplaatsreglement* ('cemetery regulation'). As opposed to the Islamic cemetery, a public cemetery cannot deny anyone access to be buried there. However, discussions have occurred among Muslims about whether adherents of certain Islamic denominations should be granted access to the Islamic plots, which has led to quite interesting solutions.



Figure 1. Cemetery Westduin in the Hague. Photo Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany. The Islamic plots are separated from each other by hedgerows and a pathway in the front of the photo. In the back we see the public part of of the cemetery which is is also separated from the Islamic plots by hedgerows and pathways.

Illustrative in this regard is the Islamic plot in the municipal graveyard of *Westduin* in The Hague, which was established in 1994, and has been divided among seven different Islamic organizations belonging to three different Islamic denominations. The municipality argued that these Islamic organizations have

the right to their own plots, since they cannot be conceived of as one church community. The single Islamic plot consists of seven separate subplots which are internally divided from one another by paving stones or by a hedgerow, as shown in the photographs on the following pages. The different sub-plots are separate sections for Sunni, Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims, as a result of their refusal to be buried next to each other in the same plot. Only members of the specific organizations can be buried at ‘their’ plot. Muslims who do not belong to one of these seven organizations, but nonetheless want to be buried in the Islamic part of this cemetery, can be buried in the ‘public Islamic part’ of the Islamic plot, which does not belong to any Islamic organization in particular. During the interviews Ahmadiyya Muslims especially expressed their wish to be buried at a plot which was especially reserved for their denomination. This fragmentation in Islamic plots has occurred in several other municipalities and seems to be characteristic for the Netherlands, because of a historical tradition of separate plots for different church denominations (Kadrouch-Outmany *fc.*).



Figure 2. Cemetery Westduin in the Hague. Photo Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany. The Islamic plots are separated from each other by hedgerows. In the back of the photo we see two other Islamic plots belonging to different denominations.

Although the establishment of Islamic plots seems to be on the increase, this is not the case for private Islamic cemeteries. Earlier studies suggest that the reason there are not more Islamic cemeteries is that “Muslims prefer burial in a public cemetery instead of investing resources in a private (and costly) cemetery” (Van den Breemer & Maussen 2012, 287). I would argue that a sense of belonging and the wish of returning to the country of origin also play an important role. I will discuss this in more detail in the next sections.



Figure 3. Cemetery Westduin in the Hague. Photo Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany. Separate Islamic plots divided by hedgerows and a pathway.

The fact that the first (and so far only) Islamic cemetery was created by an Islamic organization which consists of Muslims mainly with a Surinamese background suggests that these Muslims have a stronger sense of belonging to the Netherlands and do not wish to return to their ‘home country’ after death. This corresponds with the results of my interviews which show that Surinamese and Indonesian respondents all bury their deceased in the Netherlands. Other respondents from various backgrounds, on the other hand, stated that the connection with their country of origin plays a much more important role in their choice of burial location than the legal possibility for Islamic burial in the

Netherlands. Before elaborating in detail on the motives in the choice of burial location, we will first look at what Muslims actually do when someone dies: the practice of Islamic burial regulations.

Death, dying and Islamic burial regulations in practice

In this section I will argue that Muslims in the Netherlands closely follow Islamic prescriptions relating to death and burial. I will also consider the question of why respondents stress the 'correct' carrying-out of these Islamic prescriptions and to what extent respondents knew about the prescriptions. This section is of importance regarding the question if, how, and why the practice of Islamic burial regulations are part of the motives and considerations that underlie the choices Muslims make regarding where to be buried.

Islamic burial regulations give detailed instructions to the bereaved on what to do during the time span from the deathbed until after burial. From the results of my interviews we can derive three categories of answers with regard to the process of dying and the practice of Islamic burial regulations in the Netherlands. The first category contains rules that are connected to the process of dying a 'good death'. The second category relates to the performance of rituals preparatory to the actual burial, whereas the last category concerns the choice of burial location. We will discuss these categories of answers chronologically relating both to the Islamic *fiqh* and to the results of the interviews.

As examples given in the first category we will highlight the positioning of the body towards the *qibla* (towards Mecca: *ihtidâr*), the pronouncing of the *shahâda* (Islamic creed: *talqîn*) and reading from the Quran. When it becomes clear that a person is dying, the body is often positioned in the direction of the *qibla* (Al Jaziri 2009, 668; Al Sistani 1999, 135). If this is not possible due to the layout of the room, the person is not turned in any specific direction. This was the case in the story of one of my respondents, who related the course of her father's death. Her father died in the hospital and they had not turned him in any specific direction, because hospital beds are arranged in a particular way:

My father died in the hospital and we didn't turn him in the direction of the *qibla* because it was too difficult. People were in the room reading from the Quran and my father read along. He even performed his daily prayers while lying in his bed and he pronounced the *shahâda* out loud several times. I think that is more important than turning the bed [in the direction of the *qibla*].

(Ilhame, personal interview, September 3, 2012)

According to this respondent the prayers, the *shahâda* and the people present were more important in the process of dying a 'good death', than being turned in the direction of the *qibla*. Islamic burial regulations stress the relevance of pronouncing the *shahâda* as a sign of a 'good death' (Ibn Rushd 1994, 259; Al Jaziri 2009, 668; Sayyid Sabiq 1991, 16; Al Sistani 1999, 135). It was generally emphasized also by respondents that pronouncing the *shahâda* was an important part of the dying process. One of the male respondents explained this by stating: "Those are the words you first hear when you are born and they have to be the last words you say or hear before you die" (Jaouad, personal interview, September 14, 2012). Besides pronouncing the *shahâda*, reciting from the Quran (especially the 36th verse Yasin) and doing *dua* (supplication accompanied by gesture of outraised hands with palms facing up) in order to ease the suffering of a dying person, were also stressed by respondents. These recommendations are also found in the *fiqh*, relating them to a good death (Al Jaziri 2009, 669). After death takes place, preparatory burial rituals are performed.

With regard to the second category of answers that were derived from the interviews, the preparatory burial regulations, I will discuss the washing of the corpse (*ghusul al mayyit*), the shrouding (*takfîn*), and the funeral prayer (*salât al janâzah*). Just as in the last section, the results of the interviews will be connected to *fiqh* regulations. Respondents attached much importance to the preparatory burial rituals and they were considered only to be valid if they were 'correctly' carried out.

Four of the respondents were actually present when the corpse of their deceased was washed. Those who did not attend the washing stated that it was either not possible because the deceased was of the opposite sex or that professional washers had been called upon instead.¹³ Respondents indicated that a professional washer or someone who had previously performed the washing had to be present during the occasion to make sure the washing is correctly performed. The remaining washers can be either relatives or others who are called upon, for the most part, from within a mosque. From the reports of the respondents it turned out that the washing takes place in a funeral parlour, in the hospital or in a special washing room in the mosque. In various *fiqh* works the washing of the corpse is described in detail, with some variation among the different Islamic denominations (Al Jaziri 2009, 680-684; Ibn Rushd 1994, 265; Al Sistani 1999, 136). The washing of the corpse was generally described by respondents as an overall wash of the body with water and soap, while the corpse is covered with a cloth. One of my respondents reported that

¹³ It is a general rule that a deceased male is washed by men, and a deceased female is washed by women. There are some exceptions to this rule with regard to spouses and children. Professional washers are either called upon by the family or are contacted through the insurance company.

he does not recall how many times the washing had taken place, only that the body had to be clean and that the washing had to take place while the *awra* of the corpse was covered (*awra* being the area from the navel to the knees in the case of a man, and the whole body of a woman with exception of the hands and face; Al Jaziri 2009, 672; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1994, 128; Mamduh, personal interview, September 13, 2012). After the washing is completed, the body is dried with towels and covered with white shrouds, the *kafan*.

As far as the ritual of the *kafan* is concerned, respondents who had attended the washing were also present at the shrouding and indicated that it happened in the same place where the corpse was washed. They informed me that the *kafan* itself was either provided by the bereaved family, by the mosque or by an Islamic undertaker. The *kafan* consists of three cloths for men and five for women (Al Jaziri 2009, 684-688; Al Sistani 1999, 137-138). One of the male respondents reported that when he shrouded his son, the three parts of the *kafan* were laid down on top of the opened coffin:

We laid down the *kafan* over the coffin, one on top of the other. There was me and three other men from the mosque who performed the washing. When we were done we raised my son onto the *kafan* and into the coffin. While he lay in the coffin, we wrapped the shrouds around him. You always have to begin from the right side and then move on to the left side. His whole body was covered from head to feet.

(Rashid, personal interview, November 27, 2012)

This respondent furthermore emphasized that ‘not just anyone’ could wrap the cloth around the deceased, it should be performed in a professional manner.¹⁴ All the respondents who did not attend a shrouding related that they knew the *kafan* should consist of white cloths, but did not know about the number of cloths or the manner in which the shrouding took place. After the corpse is washed and shrouded the last ritual to be performed, before the actual burial takes place, is the funeral prayer.

The funeral prayer, unlike the five daily prayers of Muslims, is performed while standing and does not include prostrations. It consists of four or five *takbîrs* (the utterance of *Allâhu akbar*) and several *dua* in silence (Al Jaziri 2009, 689-691; Ibn Rushd 1994, 270-271; Al Sistani 1999, 138). The attendance of women at the funeral prayer is an ongoing discussion among Muslims, also in the Netherlands (see Dessing 2001, 156-157). As one of the female respondents

¹⁴ The use of a coffin in Islamic burial has been a matter of discussion and of growing importance in the Dutch situation, since burial without a coffin has only been possible in the Netherlands since the introduction of the Corpse Disposal Act in 1991. This topic will be dealt with exhaustively in my thesis (Kadrouch-Outmany fc.)

reported, she was not allowed to participate in the funeral prayer for her grandfather, although she was present at the mosque where the prayer was held:

The funeral prayer for my grandfather was held in the mosque where we had just said our farewells. When the men gathered to perform the prayers we women were asked to leave. I think it is not common for women to attend the funeral prayer and I never really asked about it.

(Norah, personal interview, April 27, 2012)

However, in all the interviews conducted in the course of this research, this appeared to be a minority. The majority of the women I interviewed did participate in the funeral prayer, although they did not attend the washing and shrouding. In most cases the funeral prayer was held in the mosque or outside at a square nearby the mosque. Some respondents indicated that the prayers were held at a funeral parlour or at the cemetery. Only a few of my respondents knew about the exact formulation of the prayer; the majority followed the imam. Since the prayer is held in silence, most of the respondents were not able to tell me what was being murmured. Although they were not informed as to the exact formulation, respondents did consider the prayer to be of utmost importance since it was considered to be the last time prayers and supplications could be held for the deceased in his or her presence.¹⁵

After the funeral prayer the burial takes place. At the cemetery the corpse, covered with white shrouds, is laid down on its right side in the grave without a coffin, facing the direction of Mecca. The body is then covered with wooden planks or large bricks and the grave is filled with soil (Al Jaziri 2009, 715; Al Sistani 1999, 138). With regard to the use of a coffin there appeared to be ethnic differences among the respondents, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Indonesian and Surinamese respondents indicated that their relatives were buried in a coffin. With regard to the deceased buried abroad the answers differed. The Turkish respondents all indicated that although the corpse had been repatriated to Turkey in a coffin, the body was always taken out of the coffin to be buried. The same was true for those buried in Iran and Iraq. In the case of repatriation to Morocco, however, the corpse was buried in the coffin. The use of a coffin is not forbidden by *fiqh* regulations. Some scholars however find the use of a coffin undesirable, unless there is a (legal) necessity to do so (Al Sistani 1999, 139; Al Jaziri 2009, 715-716).

¹⁵ There are nuances and differences among different schools of law and among different denominations within Islam with regard to the precise formulations during the funeral prayer. See Al Jaziri (2009, 689-709).

So far we have described the practice of the preparatory burial regulations from the results of the interviews and in connection to scholarly opinions. Respondents attached much importance to a 'correct' performance of these regulations and considered them to be a communal obligation toward the deceased.¹⁶ We will now turn to discussing the last category which concerns the choice of burial location.

As far as the choice of burial location is concerned, four different categories of motives were derived from the results of the interviews; social, financial, religious and emotional. Several examples of these motives that underlie the choice regarding where to be buried can be given. We will highlight a few of these examples, but in the scope of this article we will focus mainly on the emotional motive in the next section.

With regard to the social aspect, answers such as being buried among deceased relatives or being buried near to living relatives were given by respondents. For example in the case of a Surinamese respondent who buried her son in the Netherlands because she wants to keep him nearby:

I buried him here! He lived here, we live here and his children live here. It was never an option to have him buried in Surinam. He should be buried among his relatives.

(Djamila, personal interview, October 18, 2012)

Burial in the Netherlands was reported by all respondents that I interviewed with a Surinamese or an Indonesian background. This appears to have been the case for at least the past ten years since these findings correspond with the work of Dassing (2001, 160-161) and with the work of Shadid and Van Koningsveld (1995, 99). The latter suggest several other reasons why Muslims who are settled in Europe as a result of decolonization more frequently bury their deceased in Europe; these include naturalization, the distance to the countries of origin, and the availability of Muslim cemeteries or Islamic plots in public cemeteries. When visiting Islamic plots in the Netherlands, one indeed finds a large number of Indonesian and Surinamese Muslims buried there. We might argue that for Indonesian and Surinamese Muslims, burial in the Netherlands has become the standard:

My father always said that the whole world belonged to Allah. It doesn't matter where you are buried. He had lived in the Netherlands for such a long time, he doesn't even know his relatives in Indonesia anymore. We [his children] are here therefore he never wished to be buried outside the Netherlands.

(Ena, personal interview, November 20, 2012)

¹⁶ In Islamic *fiqh* the term used to indicate communal obligations is *fard kifaya*.

Colonial history and the presence of large numbers of relatives and acquaintances in the Netherlands, but also the distance to home countries were emphasized by Indonesian and Surinamese respondents as motives in their choice of burial location.

The existence of a funeral fund, the financial motive, was most frequently mentioned by respondents with a Turkish and Moroccan background as a reason for repatriation of the deceased. For a small annual fee that had been paid for decades, respondents indicated they were assured all burial costs would be covered by the funeral funds and therefore chose to have their deceased relatives buried abroad. In the next section however, we will see that this financial motive was not the main motive for burial abroad.

As for the religious motive, burial in an Islamic cemetery where graves were not to be emptied was one of the answers given in this regard. This motive was given by Muslims with a Moroccan, Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian and Sudanese background. Although during my own fieldwork in Morocco I was informed that graves are indeed cleared out after an unspecified time, most of my respondents are still under the impression that graves are granted for an unlimited period of time in Morocco. The same was true for the Turkish respondents with regard to eternal graves in Turkey, which are also cleared out especially in the larger cities. Only a few of the respondents actually confirmed that eternal graves are not certain but that the idea, so they explained, of an eternal grave is much more supported abroad than in the Netherlands:

As long as no one says the grave is granted for a determined period, you assume that it is there to stay for eternity. This is how it works in Morocco. No one in Morocco will ever tell you straightforward 'this grave will be emptied after 50 years.' This is why people are assured and want to be buried there.

(Louay, personal interview, July 15, 2012)

Estimates show that approximately 90 per cent of Muslims in Western Europe are still being repatriated to their countries of origin for burial (Jonker 2004, 6). On the question of why this is the case, the most frequent consideration mentioned by respondents was an emotional one: the sense of belonging to a specific country or village. In the following section we will connect this emotional motive to a sense of belonging and to the myth of returning to countries of origin.

The myth of return and a sense of belonging

In the previous sections we discussed experiences of Muslims in the practice of legal and religious rules and regulations on death and burial in the Netherlands. In the following discussion we will use this ‘window’ of experiences to elaborate on the ‘emotional’ motive in the choice of burial location in relation to the sense of belonging and the myth of return. We will begin with a brief description of the migration of Muslims to the Netherlands.

Until the end of the Second World War, there were only a small number of Muslims in the Netherlands who had migrated from the former Dutch colonies Surinam and Indonesia (Sunier 2010, 115; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2008, 22). Similar to other Western European countries, the large-scale settlement of Muslims as guest workers (*gastarbeiders*) in the Netherlands emerged as a result of immigration from the 1960s onwards and family reunifications during the 1970s and 1980s. The guest workers who arrived in the Netherlands after the Second World War were mainly male laborers from Mediterranean countries such as Turkey and Morocco, who planned to work, save money and return to their countries of origin. With their continued stay in the Netherlands, this intention to return gradually turned into what now appears to be a myth of return (Gardner 1996; Gardner 2002; Bolognani 2007; Chaib 2000). This ‘myth of return’ was also a central feature in Dutch policies on the settlement of guest workers, who were considered to be members of a temporary labour force and would eventually return to their countries of origin. Dutch policy related to these labourers was based on this idea of temporariness (Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2008, 10-11; Sunier 2010, 121). However, large-scale family reunifications in the 1970s and 1980s denied this presumption. As a result, the number of Muslims increased considerably.

Nowadays the number of Muslims in the Netherlands is estimated at 900,000 (Sunier 2010, 115). For the majority of these Muslims the myth of return may still be their intention, but has remained just that: a myth.¹⁷ For the first generation of Muslims in the Netherlands the idea of returning to their home countries provided an ideological justification for their residence. The return was only attainable once the capital needed to return was gathered (Bolognani 2007, 73). But this return rarely took place permanently when the person was still alive, as opposed to the return to countries of origin after death. The myth of return also seems to be very vivid among later generations of Muslims in the Netherlands.

¹⁷ As explained by Bolognani, ‘myth’ is referred to in the “Malinowskian sense of an allegorical representation that legitimizes contemporary patterns of social action” (Bolognani 2007, 73).

This explanation of an actual return to countries of origin to be buried there was often referred to by my respondents when talking about their loved ones being buried abroad. However, returning to the soil of one's roots was also mentioned by respondents as an important consideration in their own choice as to where they wanted to be buried. One of the respondents explained her reason for wanting to be buried in Morocco, by emphasizing:

It is not a matter of an Islamic country or an Islamic environment. For me the main consideration is to return to where I came from and to go back to the soil of my roots. I want to make it very clear to my children that Morocco is where we are from and not the Netherlands.

(Ilhame, personal interview, September 3, 2012)

Ultimately, even though she was born in the Netherlands, this respondent explained that she felt a sense of belonging to Morocco.

The sense of belonging to a country or even to a specific village was frequently mentioned as a reason for burial abroad. One of the respondents even specified the city in Turkey in which she wanted to be buried, because it is where she felt she belonged (Hulya, personal interview, June 12, 2012). Although the greater majority of my respondents came to the Netherlands at a young age (before they were 12) or were born in the Netherlands, their position with regard to burial implied a feeling of not belonging 'here'; that is, in the Netherlands. Five of the respondents, three of Surinamese, one of Afghani, and one of Indonesian background, expressed their wish to be buried in the Netherlands. The majority opted for burial abroad.¹⁸

The sense of belonging is a sentiment that is caused not only by internal, but also by external factors. In his discussion on the development of 'the domestication of Islam' in the Netherlands, Sunier points to the fact that "[a]n increasing number of people have serious doubts about the possibility of Muslims becoming fully-fledged citizens while at the same time retain[ing] to [sic] their religious convictions. Islam has increasingly become associated with undesirable influences from abroad" (Sunier 2010, 127). This corresponds with the point made by a respondent who clearly indicated the feeling of not belonging to the Netherlands as a result of what he explained to be "current discussions on religiosity, loyalty and nationality" (Mamduh, personal interview, September 13, 2002). This respondent emphasized the need or certainty of belonging somewhere (else). He stated that as long as Dutch public discussions on double nationality and the alleged lack of loyalty of Muslims continued, and as long as he had to keep explaining what brought him to the Netherlands, he

¹⁸ Two respondents reported that they did not have a specific wish regarding where to be buried.

would have no doubts about Morocco being the country where he wished to be buried. Because, as he explained: “No one in Morocco will ever wonder why I am buried in Morocco as opposed to if I were buried in the Netherlands” (Mamduh, personal interview, September 13, 2002).

The above-mentioned considerations and explanations given to me by my respondents show a clear sense of belonging to the ‘home country’ among many of the younger generations of Muslims in the Netherlands. It is surprising to see how different situations may affect the sense of belonging. One of the Turkish respondents explained how she felt very much Dutch and loved the Netherlands, but her bond with Turkey was stronger, “especially in the aftermath of 9/11” (Ceyda, personal interview, November 27, 2012). Similar answers were given to me by other respondents, where they emphasized that ‘feeling and being Dutch’ for them was something other than being buried in the Netherlands. Being buried in the Netherlands would assume being from Dutch descent and returning to Dutch soil, to which many of my respondents could not relate. I agree with Bolognani that if the elders’ myth of return was fed with a hope to improve their material conditions in their countries of origin, the youngsters’ orientations seem to be more idealistic and based on their own individual needs, perceptions and anxieties on the one hand (Bolognani 2007, 65), and a feeling of descent, belonging and family reunification on the other hand. For many respondents, decisions surrounding death and burial were considered to be markers by which your belonging to a country is measured and by which the attachment to a ‘home country’ is transmitted from older to younger generations. It might be a step too far to break with this line of transmission. Many Muslims, as we have seen, have a stronger sense of belonging to countries of origin in matters of burial, as opposed to a sense of belonging to the Netherlands in ‘everyday’ matters.

Conclusion

Burial in Islamic plots and creating these plots in Dutch cemeteries have gained more attention during the last years. As Ahmad Aboutaleb, the current mayor of Rotterdam (of Moroccan origin) stated in an article in the daily newspaper *Het Parool* on March 22, 2001: “If you want to be buried in the Netherlands, you are Dutch. And that’s what I want: to become one with the soil of the land on which I walk.” When visiting Islamic plots in the Netherlands, however, one especially finds Muslims with Surinamese and Indonesian backgrounds buried there, as well as many children. This corresponds with the results of my own interviews. For the majority of the Muslims I interviewed, the connection with their countries of origin is stronger in the considerations and motives that underlie their choice of burial location, than their sense of belonging to the Netherlands.

Although according to the above-mentioned statement by Aboutaleb one is Dutch when one chooses to be buried in the Netherlands, many of the respondents I interviewed felt very much Dutch but did not want to be buried here. It was not a matter of a lack of feeling Dutch. It was also not a matter of a lack of legal, religious or practical possibilities, as we saw in the discussion on the practice of legal and religious regulations concerning death and burial. The decisive consideration in the choice of burial location was an emotional aspect; the sense of belonging and the wish to return to home countries, which respondents even connected to a feeling of having descended from there.

The sense of belonging to a country or village outside the Netherlands and the wish to return there, were the most frequently mentioned considerations in the choice of burial location. In the introduction to this article I began with the cemetery managers who would often express to me their expectation that future generations of Muslims in the Netherlands would chiefly opt for burial in the Netherlands because of a decline in the connection with their countries of origin. This does not seem to apply to the results of my interviews, at least not for the second generation to which the greater majority of my respondents belong. The connection with countries of origin still seems very prominent in the decisions that are made with regard to burial location. I believe that the results of the research presented in this article can give us insight into how one's sense of belonging not only seems to be a decisive consideration in the question of where one wants to be buried, but also how it is flexible depending on whether the sense of belonging concerns 'everyday life' or burial location.

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Newspaper article

Met het gezicht naar Mekka, maar wel hier. *Het Parool*, March 22, 2011. Accessed January 24, 2012. <http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/?verb=sr&csi=259062>

About the author

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany obtained both a Master's degree in Law in 2008 and a Bachelor's degree in World Religions in 2009 at the University of Leiden. Her MA thesis dealt with the legal and philosophical dimensions of repudiation in the Netherlands and Belgium. She is currently working on a PhD research in which she aims at providing insight in the current legal possibilities for Muslims to be buried in the Netherlands and Belgium according to the Islamic burial rules. Furthermore this research includes the perceptions of Muslim scholars and the desires of Muslims in the Netherlands and Belgium with regard to Islamic burying. This research consists of three integrated phases; the legal, religious and social-anthropological.

Le choix de lieu de sépulture parmi les musulmans aux Pays-Bas: une question d'appartenance

Pour les musulmans des Pays-Bas, le choix d'un lieu de sépulture ne dépend pas seulement de ce qu'ils savent sur les possibilités et impossibilités pratiques, juridiques et religieuses. Il s'agit aussi de la manière dont les musulmans se perçoivent dans la société néerlandaise dont ils font partie. Cet article discute les pratiques funèbres islamiques parmi les musulmans des Pays-Bas par rapport aux normes juridiques néerlandaises et islamiques, et notamment les mobiles et considérations qui déterminent le choix du lieu de sépulture. Les résultats sont basés sur des entrevues individuelles avec des musulmans de diverses sectes islamiques. Les mobiles et considérations qu'ils ont exprimés semblent révéler un sentiment fort d'appartenir à leurs pays d'origine. Même les plus jeunes laissent voir un attachement émotif à leurs racines et le désir d'être enterrés là-bas. Les données des entrevues montrent aussi que les sentiments anti-musulmans en Europe semblent avoir diminué le sens qu'avaient beaucoup de musulmans qu'ils appartenaient aux Pays-Bas, de sorte qu'ils ne veulent plus y être enterrés. L'article inclut aussi les résultats d'un sondage parmi toutes les municipalités des Pays-Bas concernant la provision de sections islamiques dans les cimetières. Il s'avère que ceux-ci ont élaboré des solutions assez intéressantes pour faire face à la diversité des sectes.

Wensen en gebruiken omtrent begraven onder Moslims in Nederland: Een kwestie van thuishoren

Voor Moslims in Nederland is de keuze voor een begraaflocatie niet alleen een kwestie van goed geïnformeerd zijn omtrent praktische, juridische en religieuze mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden; het is ook een kwestie van hoe Moslims zichzelf en de Nederlandse samenleving waarvan zij deel uitmaken beschouwen. Dit artikel bespreekt wensen en gebruiken rondom Islamitische teraardebestelling onder Moslims in Nederland in relatie tot zowel de Nederlandse als de Islamitische wettelijke normen. De focus ligt op de motieven en overwegingen die in de interviews aan de keuze voor een begraaflocatie ten grondslag liggen. De resultaten zijn gebaseerd op persoonlijke interviews met Moslims van diverse Islamitische denominaties. Uit de motieven en overwegingen die in de vraaggesprekken tot uitdrukking werden gebracht komt een sterk gevoel naar voren van behoren tot de landen van herkomst. Zelfs jongere generaties Moslims geven uitdrukking aan hun emotionele verbondenheid met hun wortels en hun wens om terug te keren naar de landen van herkomst om aldaar begraven te worden. De interviewdata geven ook inzicht in het feit dat toenemende anti-Moslim sentimenten in Europa een negatief effect lijken te hebben op het gevoel van Moslims dat zij in Nederland thuishoren, met als gevolg hun wens om daar niet begraven te worden. Dit artikel rapporteert ook resultaten van een survey gehouden onder alle Nederlandse gemeenten met betrekking tot beschikbare Islamitische begraafplaatsen en faciliteiten. Deze survey bevat interessante oplossingen ontwikkeld door Nederlandse begraafplaatsen in reactie op de diversiteit onder Islamitische gemeenschappen in Nederland.

Responding to sharia in the Netherlands

Maurits S. Berger

Confusion and anxiety reign in the Netherlands when it comes to issues of sharia, in particular so-called sharia courts and Islamic marriages. It has repeatedly initiated parliamentary debates and national inquiries. This article analyzes what forms of sharia one may or may not discern in the Netherlands. It addresses the question what we mean by sharia and, more importantly, what Dutch Muslims think of it, and puts the discussion of sharia in the wider context of the Dutch legal system. This article argues that while public and political opinion might disapprove of sharia, most of its rules as practiced by Dutch Muslims are allowed by the Dutch legal system. The article then continues by analyzing the nature of the concerns of Dutch public and political opinion regarding sharia, finding that these concerns may be grouped into three categories: sharia's alleged infringement of legal order, in particular the concepts of equality and rule of law; its infringement of social order, in particular the integration and position of women; and the infringement of national order, which combines the legal and social arguments as they relate to national security. The overall concern is the extent to which Dutch Muslims are, and want to be, part of Dutch society, and sharia appears to function as the ultimate litmus test in that respect. The main conclusion of this article is that the way in which Dutch Muslims practice Islam and its rules of sharia is not that different from that of other orthodox religious communities in the Netherlands; the main difference between the two is that Dutch Muslims' behaviour is more conspicuous since they live predominantly in the secularized urban areas, while their Christian orthodox counterparts are mostly concentrated in rural areas in the so-called 'Bible belt'.

Key terms: Sharia; Sharia in the West; Sharia courts; Islamic marriage.

Introduction

News about 'applying sharia' and the introduction of 'sharia courts' in Canada in 2004 and the United Kingdom in 2008, and again in 2012, made headlines in the

Dutch press and prompted concerned MPs in Dutch parliament to ask the government whether a similar situation existed, or might occur, in the Netherlands. The leader of the ruling Christian Democrat Party (*Christen Democratisch Appèl*; CDA) in 2005 expressed his apprehension of similar developments in the Netherlands in an interview in the weekly *Elsevier* on 22 February 2005: “Thousands of Muslims acknowledge that they seek explicitly to endorse the Sharia. A large majority feels at home here, but we must prevent that by means of peer pressure within a closed community they feel obliged to submit themselves to such a [Sharia] tribunal.” A report in 2010 commissioned by the Minister of Justice concluded that sharia courts do not exist in the Netherlands and that Dutch Muslims had little interest in establishing them (Bakker 2010), but failed to put the worries to rest.

Similar concerns were raised in the press and in parliament in 2005 and 2008 with regard to so-called ‘Islamic marriages’, that is marriages that are concluded religiously but are not registered with the civil registrar. To some, these practices were a sign of deliberate unwillingness on the part of young Muslims to integrate in Dutch society. To others, it was a sign of radicalization among Dutch Muslims, and the Dutch anti-terrorism agency NCTb called it a threat to national security (NCTb 2006). Later research, however, showed that these reactions were not justified. One report saw little evidence of radical motives among Muslim youth for entering into Islamic marriages without registering them, but pointed to a variety of causes for doing so, ranging from piety combined with ignorance of the law, to the fact that some Muslims registered their Islamic marriages with the consulates of their countries of origin, so that the marriage was recognized under that country’s law (Van der Leun & Leupen 2009). Another study demonstrated that Islamic marriages were also used strategically by Muslim youth to ensure their personal choice of a partner vis-à-vis their parents’ choice (Moors 2013).

While sharia courts and Islamic marriages refer to legal instruments of Islamic law, the notion of a ‘creeping sharia’ was also cause of concern, predominantly voiced by the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (‘Freedom Party’; PVV) (see De Ruiters in this issue). They repeatedly initiated parliamentary debates and frequently asked ministers questions about sharia. In 2007, for instance, they asked the Minister of Finance whether he shared the PVV’s opinion that the popularity of Islamic banking was “unwanted and improper” (the Minister answered that he did not share this view).¹ And in 2011, the PVV called for an all-

¹ ‘Vragen van de leden Wilders en Van Dijck (beiden PVV) aan de minister van Financiën over het bericht dat Islamitisch bankieren sterk in opkomst is’, ingezonden 22 juni 2007 (Kamervragen 2006-2007, 2140). <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kv-2060719000.html>.

out ban on any use of sharia within the Netherlands, including the Dutch courts (their concern was not shared by the other parliamentarians).²

In short, confusion and anxiety reign when it comes to issues of sharia in the Netherlands. In this article I will analyze what forms of sharia we may, or may not discern in the Netherlands, and I will put the discussion of sharia in the wider context of the Dutch legal system. But before we do so, we must first address the question what we mean by sharia and, more importantly, what Dutch Muslims think of it.

Defining sharia

For the clarity of the discussion I propose to define sharia on the basis of the question ‘What do Muslims do and want in terms of sharia?’ rather than ‘What is sharia?’. The latter question will lead us to the classical legal scholarship of Islam (see Hallaq 2009; Kamali 2008), or to the practices and laws applied in Muslim countries (see Otto 2011). But if we take the needs and practices of Dutch Muslims as our starting point, we do more justice to everyday reality in the Dutch context.³ It means that we move away from the theological-legal study of sharia, and that we must instead determine what rules are adhered to by, or otherwise relevant for, Muslims in the Netherlands.

From this perspective it is striking that so little is known about what Muslims in the Netherlands mean by sharia. Only one survey has been conducted in 2004 among Dutch Muslims, and it found that 51 per cent of the Dutch Muslims interviewed favoured a Muslim political party, and 29.5 per cent thought that the political programme of such a party should be based on sharia.⁴ (The subsequent newspaper headlines reporting that “one third of Dutch Muslims favour Sharia” were therefore entirely wrong). The only other two similar studies that I am aware of were conducted in the United Kingdom in 2006 and 2007: the first found that 40 per cent of the Muslims interviewed support the introduction of sharia in Muslim-dominant areas (ICM 2006, 14), while the latter found that 28 per cent of British Muslims would prefer to live under sharia law (Mirza 2007). What is of interest to us here is that none of these surveys defined sharia, nor asked their respondents to do so, therefore leaving us ignorant of what Dutch and English Muslims mean by sharia.

² Parliamentary debate, 29 September 2011. Transcription available at http://publitiiek.nl/debat/toepassing_islamitisch_recht_29-09-2011/5, last accessed July 15, 2013.

³ This legal-anthropological approach has been advocated by a few scholars, mostly when discussing sharia in Muslim-majority countries; see e.g. Dupret (1996).

⁴ To be more precise: to the question “Should the programme of this [Muslim] party be based on Sharia?”, 10.2% answered “Yes, entirely” and 19.3% “Yes, to some extent” (Foquz Etnomarketing 2004, 10-12).

Some answers might be found on the many Internet sites – both international and Dutch – where these issues are being discussed, and counsel is sought and given (the so-called *fatwas*). Similar insights might be provided by the ‘*fiqh* for minorities’ (*fiqh al-‘aqalliyat*) that has been developed by Muslim scholars outside of the Netherlands in order to provide Islamic solutions that are tailor-made for Muslims in the West (Altikriti & Al-Ubaydi 1999; Caeiro 2011; Hussain 2004). However, while the counsels and opinions voiced on these forums yield interesting information about issues and solutions of sharia debated among Muslims, they do not tell us whether Muslims in the Netherlands actually put these rules into practice. In other words, they may talk about sharia rules, but to what extent do they want or practice them?

We are, therefore, left without quantitative and qualitative evidence of sharia as it is practiced by Muslims in the Netherlands. However, with regard to the quantitative aspect (how much sharia) we may assume that there is more adherence to sharia now than ten to fifteen years ago, given the fact that the second and third generation Muslims in the Netherlands are distinctly more religious than the first generation, and more intent on practicing their religion (De Koning 2008; Maliepaard & Gijssberts 2012; Roex et al. 2010).

With regard to the qualitative aspect (what kind of sharia), we may draw tentative conclusions based on what we know from observations and from existing studies. It appears that what Dutch Muslims do and want in terms of sharia is the following: a) religious rituals; b) rules relating to family law, in particular those pertaining to marriage and divorce; c) rules relating to financial transactions, in particular the ban on interest or usury; and d) social relations, in particular gender relations and relations with the non-Islamic environment. And, if we want to be truly comprehensive, we should include the few radical Muslims who e) justify violent acts with sharia.

Several observations can be made with regard to the first four of these domains of sharia rules. First, they pertain to Muslims’ daily lives, and have little to do with harsh Islamic punishments nor with political views on the need for an Islamic restructuring of Dutch society. Of course, such views might exist among some radical Muslims, just as there are Muslim extremists who interpret sharia as a call for militant action against alleged Western injustices. We will discuss that separately below.

Second, this collection of rules appears quite haphazard, both in scope and in content. From an Islamic legal-theological perspective, however, this set of rules has an internal logic, because all of these rules share a high ranking in the hierarchy of Islamic rules prescribed by classical orthodoxy: they are explicitly mentioned in the Koran, by the Prophet, or by scholarly consensus, and are therefore the first to be followed by any devout Muslim. From the

perspective of the Muslim, therefore, these domains pertain to essential doctrines of their religion.

The final observation is that of the abovementioned rules, only those related to family law and the prohibition of usury or interest can be considered 'law' or 'legal rules'. The other rules pertain to religious rituals or social conduct and, as such, are mostly outside the scope of Dutch legislation (we will discuss the few exceptions below). This is very important, because it is the contention of this article that while public and political opinion might disapprove of sharia, most of its rules, as practiced by Dutch Muslims, are allowed by the Dutch legal system.

Let us now briefly look into each of these forms of Sharia, and see how they relate to the Dutch social-political and legal environment.

Practices of sharia in the Netherlands

Religious rituals and behaviour

The main priority of any devout Muslim is to fulfill his or her religious duties like prayer and fasting, and to observe religious rituals of burial and dietary laws (Dessing 2001; Landman 1992; Sunier 2009). In the Dutch legal system, these are typically matters pertaining to the freedom of religion. Indeed, the Dutch government makes a deliberate effort to guarantee that persons who are limited in this freedom due to restrictions under state control, such as soldiers in army barracks, patients in hospitals and prisoners in jail, can still practice their religion (Berger 2010a, 29-30). During the 1980s the state briefly subsidized the building of mosques with the argument that such financial assistance was needed to guarantee the Muslim community that was too poor to provide such funding, the freedom to actually practice their religion (Rath et al. 1996, 38-40; Shadid & Koningsveld 2008, 57-58).

While many religious duties are a personal affair of the individual believer, several duties also have an impact on society or on the legal system. For instance, taking the oath on the Quran and in the name of Allah rather than on the Bible and in the name of God required the revision of numerous national and municipal laws, often accompanied by critical opposition by Christian parties (Koolen 2010). Similar legal adjustments have been made in the national laws on burial and slaughter, in order to accommodate the particular religious needs of Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others. Another example of the freedom of religion is that Muslims are entitled to religious instruction, i.e. instruction in sharia. While this is usually a private affair of the community or mosque, it is a state affair in the case of the more than forty religious ("Islamic") schools that are part of the national educational system, and in the case of religious programmes on state media, which are both state funded (Shadid 2006; Berger 2010a, 53).

The judicial system has also been confronted with numerous issues relating to religious duties and rituals. Should an employer provide space and time for the daily prayers of its Muslim employees (Berger 2010a, 51-52)? Should a judge authorize the guardian of a handicapped Muslim to annually send 2.5 per cent of his estate to charity in Morocco as a matter of the religious duty of almsgiving (*zakat*) (Rutten 2011)? The most conspicuous example is the headscarf, which is socially often contested but is recognized as such by the Dutch legal system as pertaining to the freedom of religion. It is interesting, therefore, that the many headscarf issues that have been brought before the courts as well as before the Equal Treatment Commission (*Commissie Gelijke Behandeling*) have all been dealt with on the basis of non-discrimination rather than religious freedom: the question was never whether the woman in question was allowed to wear a headscarf (she was), but whether in the given circumstances the prohibition to do so was reasonable and non-discriminatory (*Commissie Gelijke Behandeling* 2003-11).

Social relations

Social relations are typically part of the individual's freedom, and a state like the Netherlands traditionally will have little interference in such relations. In the case of the Muslim social relations that are based on or justified with Islam, two issues have received considerable public attention: gender relations and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The most conspicuous example of gender relations is the refusal to shake hands with someone of the opposite gender (Fadil 2009). A famous Dutch case took place on 19 November 2004, when an imam declined the extended hand of the female Minister of Justice and Integration. The refusal of a teacher to shake hands with parents of the opposite gender has on several occasions led to the dismissal of such a teacher, and such dismissals have been contested successfully as well as unsuccessfully in court. This very issue was even a topic of discussion in the Amsterdam municipal council in 2011 and was branded by the mayor as "an undesirable situation".⁵ And in 2012 the Court of Appeal ruled that a municipality was in its right to deny a man a job which demanded interaction with city residents if he was unwilling to shake hands with women.⁶

The problem, of course, is the tension between law and custom. There is no law that prescribes the ways of greeting, but not shaking hands may be considered insulting within a Dutch cultural context. In its *Factsheet 'Handen Schudden'* ('Shaking hands') the Discrimination Office of the The Hague region

⁵ 'Van der Laan: docent moet handen schudden', in daily *De Volkskrant*, 3 February 2011.

⁶ Gerechtshof Den Haag, 10 april 2012, LJN: BW1270. Available at <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:GHSGR:2012:BW1270>.

concluded in 2008 that shaking hands is a societal convention without any legal basis, so that the law provided no solution and each case had to be judged on its own merits.⁷

The second issue of sharia rules regarding social relations relates to the position of Muslims vis-à-vis Dutch (non-Muslim) society. One part of this issue relates to the question whether a Muslim is allowed to reside in a country under non-Islamic rule (and, by consequence, should abide by the non-Islamic rules and participate in elections of non-Islamic political parties). Islamic scholars provide both answers: some argue that a Muslim should leave a country under non-Islamic rule, while others argue that a Muslims can stay as long as he or she is free to practice the Islamic faith.⁸ The issue is hotly debated among Dutch Muslims, in particular on website forums. However, the discussion appears mostly academic because surveys show that Dutch Muslims are politically as active as native Dutch, although their electoral participation is slightly less than that of native Dutch (CBS 2010), with a preference for the social democrat parties (CBS 2010; Brasse & Huinder 2010).

Interestingly, while there is an active participation of Islamic organizations in Dutch civil society, there is little interest among Muslims to organize politically. On a national level, where a low threshold and proportional representation makes it relatively easy for small parties to gain access to parliament, no initiatives have been taken so far by a political party with an Islamic program. Several Islamic political parties have participated in municipal elections in several of the larger cities, but did so with very little success.⁹ On the other hand, all large political parties – socialists, social democrats, liberals, Greens, Christian-Democrats – have several Muslim candidates in parliament as well as in numerous municipal councils.

Finally, issues related to social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims tend not to focus on the specific interaction with non-Muslims, but on the general issue of living in a social and working environment that is distinctly un-Islamic. For instance, can a Muslim join his colleagues for drinks in a café after work? Can a Muslim work in a restaurant where pork or alcohol is being served, or in a supermarket where such items are being sold? The issue here is not the interaction with non-Muslims, but that working in a non-Muslim

⁷ Bureau Discriminatiezaken, Hollands Midden en Haaglanden: *Factsheet 'Handen Schudden'* (Factsheet 2008/2, update 18-6-2009), available at <http://www.discriminatiezaken.nl/doc/Factsheet%20handen%20schudden.pdf>.

⁸ See several *fatwas* on this subject at IslamOnline: 26 July 2005, 7 and 29 August 2002 (these *fatwas* are no longer available online after IslamOnline.net was taken offline in March 2010).

⁹ The *Islam Democraten* ('Islam Democrats'), established in 2006, won one seat in the The Hague municipal council in 2010.

environment may confront Muslims with certain acts or items that are forbidden by his or her religion. These are questions that are solved by each Muslim on an individual basis: some will argue that there is no problem with them handling the prohibited foods or beverages as long as they do not have to eat or drink them, while others want to clearly stay away from them.

Family law

With regard to Dutch citizens, civil marriage is the only marriage recognized by the Dutch courts. Couples are free to celebrate a religious marriage, but without registration at the civil registrar or notary deed conforming their common law marriage (the so-called *samenlevingscontract*) their marriage is not legally recognized and no marital rights can be enforced. The registration of a civil marriage is supposed to take place prior to a religious marriage;¹⁰ however, the reverse will not invalidate the marriage, but the cleric who conducted that ceremony is considered to have committed a misdemeanor.¹¹ This particular rule, which dates from Napoleonic times when the French Republic wanted to assert its power vis-à-vis the Church, has been re-invoked against Muslim imams who concluded Islamic marriages that had not been registered with the civil registrar. In itself an odd situation if we consider the fact that nowadays in the Netherlands anyone may conclude any kind of relationship with any kind of ceremony. Moreover, in the case of Islam, the imams have no sacerdotal authority, unlike their Catholic or Protestant colleagues, because according to sharia marriage is not a sacrament or holy union, but a civil contract.

To accommodate their religious family rules, the Dutch communities of Catholics, Protestants and Jews have a long tradition of 'religious courts' where religious family law is being administered to the faithful who seek their adjudication (Vestdijk-Van der Hoeven 1991; Oldenhuis et al. 2007). The Roman Catholic Church has its own diocesan courts that apply Canonical Law; the united Protestant Church Netherlands (PKN)¹² has 'church councils' (*kerkenraden*) that adjudicate on the basis of the 'Church Order and Ordinances'; several Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) churches¹³ have the 'Lesser Councils' that use the Dordtian Church Order; and the Dutch Israelite Church (*Nederlands Israëlitische Kerk*) allows arbitration by its rabbinical courts (the so-called *Beth Din*). There are therefore two parallel legal systems, religious and civil, that more often than not

¹⁰ Article 68 Book 1 Dutch Civil Code.

¹¹ Article 449 Dutch Penal Code.

¹² Established in 2004, the PKN consists of the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* (NHK), the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN) and the *Evangelisch-Lutherse kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (ELK).

¹³ These are the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten*, the *Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt* and the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*.

do not recognize each other's jurisdiction or decisions. For instance, a Catholic couple may obtain its divorce easily from the court, and both divorcees can remarry at the civil registrar, but the Catholic tribunal will not recognize the civil divorce, and in absence thereof will consider the couple to be married and, if one of them remarries, to be living in a state of bigamy (Berger 2010b, 2011a; Rutten 2008a). The Dutch Muslim community, on the other hand, lacks a similar institutionalized form of adjudication on the basis of religious law and, so it appears, also lacks the will to establish such a body (Bakker 2010). Advice and dispute resolution in family matters does take place, but on an ad hoc basis by individual imams or scholars who are approached for that purpose.

Within the legal framework of Dutch law, the only place where Islamic family law is applied is by the Dutch civil court as a matter of private international law. This is the case when a Muslim who appears before the Dutch court in a family law case has the nationality of a country that upholds an Islamic family law. The conflict rules of international private law may then allocate that national law as the law to be applied by the Dutch court. This has happened in the past to Moroccans living in the Netherlands; their cases of marriage, divorce and inheritance were decided on the basis of Moroccan Islamic family law (Jordens-Cortran 2007; Kruiniger 2008; Rutten 1997). It was against this legal practice that the aforementioned PVV fulminated in 2011, ignoring the fact that this was not by choice of the individual judge, as was insinuated, but by applying Dutch international private law.

Since the 1990s, the application of foreign Islamic family law by Dutch courts has diminished; however, this is mainly because most Muslims in the Netherlands by now have the Dutch nationality, or are considered to have closer ties to Dutch society than to their country of origin. While national Western courts are less and less inclined to apply foreign national laws to residents with a foreign nationality, these residents continue to navigate their way through a legal labyrinth for the practical reason that they often retain strong ties with their countries of origin.

In addition to marriage and divorce, the issue of Islamic inheritance law has been raised. Here, again, two possibilities present themselves: one is the application by Dutch courts through private international law, the other as a form of domestic law. The application by Dutch courts has been limited, mainly because the first generation of Muslims is still alive or the inheritance has been settled abroad, or because specific forms of Islamic inheritance are considered contrary to Dutch public order, such as the unequal shares between brother and sister (Rutten 1997).¹⁴ The possibility of domestic forms of applying Islamic

¹⁴ 'Dochters moslims gedupeerd door sjaria-testament,' in daily *Trouw*, 7 October 2006.

inheritance law has been suggested in the particular case of the will: according to Dutch law, one may dispose freely in one's will, and it has been suggested that for the part of the estate that pertains to the will one could allocate the portions in accordance with the division of Islamic inheritance shares (Rutten 2008b). This raised questions in Parliament and the Minister of Justice emphasized the freedom to testate by means of the will, but added that "it is undesirable when daughters systematically inherit only half of what sons would inherit".¹⁵ The answer was clearly politically motivated because from a legal point of view, Dutch inheritance law has a long history of farmers legating their farms to their sons and leaving a (lesser) sum of money to their daughters.

Financial transactions

Islamic law of commerce is based on the prohibition of interest (*riba*) and usury (*gharar*). These two injunctions are sacrosanct in Islamic law and have resulted in a number of intricate commercial contracts. In the case of devout Muslims in the Netherlands – and in most Western countries, for that matter – these prohibitions have led to a number of problematic situations. One is the impossibility to buy a house, since this is commonly financed by means of a mortgage that, due to its use of interest, is off-limits for a Muslim. Another problem is that savings accounts pay interest.

Since these issues pertain to the freedom of contract, which is quite extensive in Dutch law, people have ample possibilities to come up with solutions or alternatives. In the case of the savings account, for instance, a Muslim may request that interest is not paid, or may have the interest amount being deferred to charity. In the case of the mortgage, a Dutch organization named *Bilaa Riba* ('Without Interest') tried to come up with an Islamic alternative, the so-called 'halal mortgage'.¹⁶ Here, however, the situation proved complicated. There are Islamic contracts that reflect the instrument of mortgage, but such a contract is based on two contracts of sale that take place simultaneously; in most Western legal systems this will result in a transfer tax that needs to be paid twice. In the United Kingdom, the tax law was amended to accommodate this specific need. In the Netherlands, however, the tax authority was not willing to provide such solution, and the 'halal mortgage' has never seen the light.

Nevertheless, Islamic finance has received positive responses from both Muslims and non-Muslims. Considering the fact that finance is an important

¹⁵ See questions in parliament by Groep Wilders dated 11 October 2006, and written answer by Minister of Justice of 22 December 2006 (Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 2006-2007, Aanghangsel Handelingen, Nr. 530). <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20062007-530.html>.

¹⁶ Their website www.bilaa-riba.nl is no longer active.

domain of sharia, it is interesting that it has always received enthusiastic support in the public debate and in the media.¹⁷ Moreover, initiatives relating to Islamic finance have been undertaken by non-Muslims as well, including renowned Dutch banks such as Rabo and ABN-AMRO, and Dutch (non-Muslim) lawyers and bankers who specialize in Islamic finance (Berger 2011b; Tjittes 2008).

Violence in the name of Islam

The murderer of Theo van Gogh in 2004 justified his horrific act with the argument that he had to defend Islam. Van Gogh was considered the epitome of the Islam-bashing that dominated the public debate since the late 1990s, and which was a source of powerless resentment and anger among Dutch Muslims. The young Dutch Muslim Mohammed Bouyeri, who was born and raised in the Netherlands, and who was a devout Muslim, took the extremist step of stopping Van Gogh by force. His justification was based on a radical reading of sharia: insulting Islam is punishable by death, and the execution thereof is in the hands of any individual believer.

The pressing question was whether many Dutch Muslims shared these kinds of radical interpretations of sharia. In a relatively short time, numerous research reports on radicalism among young Dutch Muslims have been produced (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2004, 2006, 2007; Bos 2009; Buijs 2006; Demant & De Graaf 2010; Hrachoui 2006), accompanied by several insightful books by investigative journalists (Groen & Kranenberg 2006; Kleijwegt 2005). A comprehensive picture emerged of the Muslim Dutch youth – mostly Moroccans but also Dutch converts – who had adopted radical notions of Islam. A combination of social factors was identified as contributing to this development: experiences of discrimination, a sense of alienation, identity crisis, international politics, criticism of Islam. These factors coincided with a general tendency among the second generation to turn to Islam as their new identity.

However, while all these factors explained the resentment and anger among young Muslims and their identification with Islam, researchers could not explain why one Muslim would develop political or even violent radical ideas, while the other turned to politics or merely to orthodox forms of Islam (Buijs 2006). An important observation made in another study was that orthodoxy among young Dutch Muslims by itself was not a *sine qua non* for their radicalization (Roex et al. 2010).

¹⁷ See e.g. 'Hoe islamitisch recht en hypotheekrenteaftrek verrassend goed kunnen samengaan' in daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 October 2006.

Sharia in the Netherlands – what, exactly, is the problem?

Given the fact that most forms of sharia as being practiced by Dutch Muslims are not contrary to any constitutional or legislative rights that they have as Dutch citizens, what, then, is cause of the recurring and vitriolic objection towards anything that is somehow related to sharia? The arguments put forward in the political and public discourse on this issue may be grouped into three categories: the legal order, in particular the concepts of equality and rule of law; the social order, in particular integration and the position of women; and the national order, which combines all arguments when they are related to national security.

Legal order

The bottom line of this argument is that rules of sharia are contrary to fundamental principles of the Dutch legal order and that, as a consequence, their application in any form should be prohibited. This argument definitely holds in the aforementioned situation of international private law: when foreign rules are deemed applicable by the Dutch court, their application may nonetheless be denied on the grounds of a violation of fundamental principles of Dutch law (known as ‘public order’). It has thus been declared that polygamy¹⁸ and repudiation are violations of the Dutch legal order: polygamy is said to contravene the fundamental principle of monogamy,¹⁹ and repudiation is deemed contrary to gender equality (the Muslim man has the right of repudiation, but not the woman).²⁰

However, the domestic setting out of court provides a different picture. If one were to apply the fundamental principle of gender equality to any kind of relation and situation within the Netherlands, then surely many religious rules in this respect would have to be abandoned: the Catholic church should allow female priests, Protestant schools should be denied their right to refuse non-Protestant pupils and staff, and a Jewish divorce should not be the exclusive prerogative of the husband but also the right of the wife. Clearly, this is not the intention of such fundamental right, not in the last place because there are also other fundamental rights: one is the freedom of religion, and the other the freedom of assembly where, in the closed circle of members and adherents, one is allowed to live in accordance to rules that are contrary to those of the

¹⁸ While ‘polygyny’ would strictly speaking be the correct term to describe the intended practice, as it denotes the practice by which males are allowed to marry multiple wives, the term ‘polygamy’ (which literally means allowing both genders to have multiple spouses) is so common in western discourse on this issue that it will continue to be used here.

¹⁹ Article 33 Book 1 Dutch Civil Code, confirmed as a principle of public order by the Supreme Court (Hoge Raad, 1 July 1993, NJ 1994, 105).

²⁰ Hoge Raad, 9 November 2001, NJ 2002, 279 (see also Van der Velden 2003).

constitution (Akkermans 2005, 32, 34). Nevertheless, a clear tension between these fundamental rights remains – and has already existed for some considerable time, but as of recently seems merely to have been highlighted by the presence of Muslims and their wish to apply certain rules of Islamic law (see for these tensions Rutten 2010, 2013).

From a legal perspective, therefore, Dutch Muslims are allowed to live in accordance with most sharia rules as described above, even if these rules are not in conformity with certain Dutch conventions or constitutional rights. Muslims share this freedom with other religious communities in the Netherlands. The frequently heard argument that the Dutch civil law system does not accept ‘parallel legal systems’ (see further below) is therefore incorrect: all kinds of professional, religious and social communities maintain sets of rules to settle internal conflicts. Perhaps part of the confusion in this respect is that one speaks of ‘religious courts’ and ‘religious law’ as if these Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and (hitherto non-existent) ‘sharia’ courts have equal status to civil law and civil courts. They don’t. In the eye of the state, a religious marriage is the equivalent of a common law marriage, since it is not a registered civil marriage. Similarly, a ‘religious court’ may have great authority among the believers, but from the civil law perspective it is a means by which people have decided to solve their problems, without relinquishing their right of recourse to the civil court.

The singular system of the rule of law demands that everyone is treated equally before the civil court and in accordance with the same civil law, but it also allows people to begin, arrange and end their relationships in ways they see fit. The presupposition of this system is that people voluntarily submit to the rules, codes or norms of their society, group or communities. Consequently, members of communities that have decided to apply certain rules will always have the option to claim their rights under civil law. But this brings us to the next argument against sharia: to what extent are people actually *free* to choose the ways they want to handle their relations?

Social order

It is argued that, if a sharia ‘court’ were to exist, Dutch Muslims, and in particular Dutch Muslim women, even though they are formally not obliged to submit their family cases to such court, would be coerced to do so through peer pressure. Such coercion from the family, friends or community puts into question the voluntarism that presupposes the use of that court. In the case of the Netherlands there is no evidence of such peer pressure, firstly because no such courts exist and, secondly, because the degree of peer pressure among Muslims

is little researched.²¹ However, the practice of group coercion among Muslims in matters of family law has been indicated in English studies (Bano 2011; Sachar 2001, 15) and also became apparent in the case of the sharia tribunal in Ontario.²² Ali Mumtaz, the Muslim scholar who intended to found that tribunal, stated that Muslims are under a religious obligation to subject themselves to the sharia-arbitration offered by that tribunal: “[...] a Muslim who would choose to opt out of this stage, for reasons of convenience would be guilty of a far greater crime than a mere breach of contract – this could be tantamount to blasphemy-apostasy.”²³ The coercive impact of such religious arguments was confirmed by the president of Toronto’s Jewish religious tribunal (*Beis Din*) who was quoted as saying: “In this city, we actually push people a little to come [to arbitration by Jewish law] because using the *Beis Din* is a *mitzvah*, a commandment from God, an obligation” (Cohen 2000, 27).

If such peer pressure exists, the next question is whether it is up to the state to prevent such pressure from happening. Two possible answers present themselves. On the one hand, one might take as a starting point the responsibility and autonomy of the individual adult. According to this view, it is up to each and every adult to arrange his or her life in accordance to his or her wishes, even if that means the submission to rules that the general public or constitutional prescriptions might disagree with. The only legal limit is that of criminal law, because the individual freedom does not extend to minors or to abuse. The premise of personal autonomy presumes that all actions are taken voluntarily, and that one always has recourse to the civil law system. Obviously, it is not as simple as that, especially when the pressure is from one’s immediate family or peers. But if the principle is the individual’s autonomy, then by implication peer pressure is one’s personal responsibility unless there is obvious physical or violent coercion involved. In a Canadian case of a woman who was reluctant to sign the arbitration contract for her divorce, but nevertheless did so under what she perceived as social pressure by her family, the Canadian courts – all the way up to the Supreme Court – held that “notwithstanding the

²¹ Such coercion has been researched with regard to marriage, where it appears to exist (Cornelissens 2009; Kuppens 2008), and with regard to the wearing of the headscarf, where coercion seems to occur much less (Motivaction 2011).

²² Canadian Council of Muslim Women, ‘Position Statement on the Proposed Implementation of Sections of Muslim Law [Sharia] in Canada’, May 25 2004, p.2 (formerly available at http://www.ccmw.org/Position%20Papers/-Position_Sharia_Law.htm, now referred to at <http://www.wluml.org/node/1475> but without a link to the text itself.)

²³ This statement was originally posted at the website of the Islamic Institute (<http://muslim-canada.org/-DARLQADAform2andhalf.html>), but has been removed since. It has been repeated in many publications, among which the aforementioned Canadian Council of Muslim Women (2004).

defendant's emotional upset at the time" there was no evidence of "duress, coercion or undue influence" (Bakht 2004, 9).

The opposite position in this question is that the state has a duty to protect the weak and vulnerable. In the Netherlands, this argument is used in particular with regard to Muslim women who are considered to be in position of double vulnerability: they belong to a relatively young and socio-economically weak migrant community and, within that community, to a religious system that grants them a lesser status (Arib 2009; Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2007; Amsterdam 2006; Salem 2009; VROM 2007). The latter argument is often illustrated with the situation of the religious marriages without civil registration: the Muslim women are 'trapped' in such marriages since they cannot divorce according to Islamic law, while their 'husbands' may engage into another relationship as a matter of polygamy, which is permitted by Islam (Arib 2009; Rutten 2010; Salem 2009). Also, Muslim women are said to be in particular need of protection against the growing influence of radical conservative forms of Islam in the Netherlands (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2007; Amsterdam 2007).

It could also be argued – as this author has done – that a body of authoritative and representative Muslims that adjudicates among Muslims is not only a constitutional right, but might also provide solace in a Dutch Muslim community that is increasingly pious and in need of a central authority with decisive or advisory powers regarding conflicts of religious law (Berger 2009a-b, 2011). It might even be argued that such an authoritative body is especially in the interest of Muslim women: in the aforementioned cases of Islamic marriage where the 'husband' leaves the woman without religiously divorcing her (and therefore leaving her incapable of remarrying religiously), such a body may pronounce the divorce or force the husband to do so (for counter arguments see Arib 2009 and Salem 2009). Of course it all depends on the degree of conservative or liberal views of the members of such a body.

Still, opposition against such bodies, regardless of how they are named or of what their exact function might be, is fierce. The overall argument in this respect is that allowing any kind of sharia or sharia 'court' would obstruct integration: institutionalizing a form of adjudication on the basis of Islamic law, however constitutional that may be, might create a 'parallel society' which would further alienate Muslims from Dutch society rather than integrate them into it. This argument has also been embraced by the national security agency AIVD (*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*) and has been incorporated into their notion of national security, as we will see in the next paragraph.

National order

According to the AIVD, radicalism is not confined to the process leading to violent action. The Dutch security agency employs a much wider definition of (Muslim) radicalism as “striving towards the creation of parallel community structures with forms of self-defined justice and the propagation of anti-democratic behaviour which could result in polarisation, inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions and serious social unrest” (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2007, 10). This is a broader definition than those used by other Western European security services that mostly confine the definition of radicalism to the use of violence (Berger 2010c, 238).

The concern about ‘parallel societies’, that is communities that isolate themselves from society at large, is shared at the top political level. The Dutch prime minister had already indicated several years earlier, in 2003, that Islamic organisations and schools could impede integration as they might become “prisons for those staying behind”.²⁴ Anxiety about Muslim ‘parallel societies’ as a breeding ground for radicalism was one of the main reasons for parliament to have the Ministry of Justice commission the aforementioned studies on Islamic marriage (Van der Leun & Avalon 2009) and sharia courts (Bakker et al. 2010). However, apart from these studies, the existence and particularities of Muslim parallel societies has to date not been researched.

These concerns deserve closer attention because they illustrate the changes that have taken place in Dutch thinking on religious minority communities. Only thirty years earlier, in the 1970s and early 1980s, the government had introduced the programme of ‘Education in one’s own Language and Culture’ whereby Turkish and Moroccan children received special instruction in their native language and culture. And before that, until the 1970s, Dutch society was structured by means of so-called ‘pillars’ (*zuilen*) that in fact constituted ‘parallel societies’. In this system, each confessional and ideological community – Catholics, Protestants, socialists, liberals – had organized itself as a separate community from grass root level up to the political arena (hence the pillar image) with its own schools, shops, sport clubs, unions, media outlets and political parties. Catholics listened to Catholic radio stations, read Catholic newspapers, sent their children to Catholic schools, bought bread from Catholic bakers, voted for Catholic parties, were members of Catholic unions, etcetera. And the same applied to Protestants, socialists, liberals. Only the leaders of the various pillars would meet to communicate on matters of common or national concern. The Dutch Christian Reformed community, under leadership of Abraham Kuyper, had introduced this concept in the early twentieth century as a

²⁴ ‘Premier: zuil moslims blokkeert integratie’, interview with daily *Trouw*, 3 November 2003.

means of empowerment. They had established their own newspaper, political party and even university (the *Vrije Universiteit* or 'Free University', known by its acronym VU) – all as part of the newly coined concept of 'sovereignty in one's own circle' meaning that state power should not extend to all facets of life. These concepts and ideas gradually disappeared in the seventies, only to be resuscitated by some sociologists and politicians who suggested it as a model for the empowerment and integration of the Muslim community (see analyses by Hoogenboom & Scholten 2008; Penninx et al. 1998; Rath et al. 1996). But as we have seen, by the turn of the millennium the dominant public and political opinion deemed any form of structural internal organization and community formation by Muslims to be not only contrary to integration but also susceptible to radicalization.

The notion of an isolated Muslim community similar to that of the early Dutch pillar society is not only considered an impediment to their integration, as the former prime minister mentioned. Some also are anxious about such communities establishing an Islamic polity, either within their community, or imposed on Dutch society at large. A member of the city council of Rotterdam, a city with a large Muslim population, said in 2005: "In some areas of our city more than half of the population is Muslim. If a Muslim party obtains a near majority vote in that area²⁵ and when the idiots of the Green Left [Party] with their politically correct tendencies join forces with them, we are in for some strange things [...] like polygamy, honour killings, forced marriages, suppression of women. And we don't want that, do we?"²⁶

Provided that these Muslims would do so – we already saw that their enthusiasm in this respect is very limited – it is striking that this politician had such little faith in the Dutch national and municipal rule of law that does not allow such local legal initiatives. But the fear for the Muslims' alleged intention to "implement sharia" is apparently widely shared by the Dutch public. This showed again in the national outrage caused in 2006 by the then Minister of Justice when he said: "If two-thirds of all Dutchmen tomorrow want to implement the sharia, then surely this should be possible?"²⁷ The democratic point that the Minister wanted to make was entirely missed, and so were the statistics: even if all Dutch Muslim adults were to vote for a party that strived for the implementation of sharia, then they would win no more than 14 of the 150

²⁵ In large cities like Rotterdam the municipality is divided into several district councils, each to be elected by the constituency of that district.

²⁶ Interview with Mr. Marco Pastors, leader of the *Leefbaar Rotterdam* ('Liveable Rotterdam') party and alderman in the city of Rotterdam, in *Metro*, 12 March 2005.

²⁷ Interview in weekly *Vrij Nederland*, 16 September 2006.

seats in Parliament. And we would still be struggling with the same question that we started this article with: what is meant by sharia in the first place?

A future for sharia in the Netherlands?

Will sharia ever get a footing in the Netherlands? Let one thing be clear: sharia is already present in the Netherlands, in many forms. Each faithful Muslim lives his or her life in accordance to sharia. Some do so by fulfilling the basic requirements of prayer, fasting, religious burial and following dietary laws. To other Muslims living a 'virtuous' life will suffice to be considered a Muslim observing sharia. And again others will go further by dressing, talking and behaving in ways that they deem in accordance with the rules of sharia.

Articles and arguments by Dutch scholars pointing out that the role of sharia in the Netherlands is limited, or at least not worrisome, are met with scorn.²⁸ Concerns and anxieties apparently prevail, even among judges (Buskens 2011). In some instances, these concerns are justified, as is the case with examples of 'Sharia Councils' in the United Kingdom where presiding clerics tell the woman not to complain too quickly about a beating by her husband.²⁹ Some concerns are also justified, but have little to do with sharia or Islam, as is for example the case with the high crime rate among Dutch Moroccan youth (Werdmölder 2005); indeed, Muslim clerics point to their lack of religiousness as the cause of their criminal behaviour.

In many instances, however, it is the perspective taken on the issue at hand that makes all the difference. From a legal perspective, manifestations of sharia-compliant behaviour often fall within the parameters of what is permitted by Dutch law. From a cultural perspective, on the other hand, such behaviour is often experienced as insulting or threatening to Dutch society. "This is not how we do things here", is the underlying reasoning in such matters. People get nervous about mosques, especially if they have minarets, and about Islamic attire and Muslims on the work floor who do not want to go out for a beer, or refuse to shake the hand of someone of the opposite sex, or who demand a brief work break for prayer.

It is interesting to note that much of what Muslims practice is not that different from what orthodox Protestants or Jews do. The issue at hand is therefore perhaps not Islam as such, but the position of (orthodox) religiosity in a Dutch society that is dominated by secularism. Public manifestations of religion

²⁸ As was lately the case with the sharia-special of the legal journal *Rechtstreeks* (2011.4: *Sharia(&)rechtspraak: rechtsontwikkelingen in de moslimwereld en Nederland*).

²⁹ See e.g. the youtube video *Inside a sharia divorce Court*, especially at 4:02 minutes, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ctyr5FaZJtI> (last visited on 12 July 2013).

in the Netherlands have in the past century gradually receded to places outside the urban areas of the Randstad in the so-called 'Bible-belt', where they live in accordance to their own strict rules. Even the staunchest Christian political party will not refer to God or the Bible during parliamentary debates – not because it is not allowed, but because it is culturally considered *not done* to do so. If this is the case, then the question arises why there is much more commotion about orthodox manifestations of Islam than about similar manifestations in other religions. The answer, to my mind, must be sought in demographics and the 'otherness' of Muslims. The notion of Muslims being alien to Dutch (Christian) society and culture has been discussed extensively elsewhere (Van Donselaar & Rodrigues 2008; Poorthuis & Salemink 2011; De Ruiter in this issue). Demographically, orthodox Muslims have not (yet) receded into isolated communities like their non-Muslim peers but live mainly in the urban areas of the Randstad. They are therefore positioned in a daily confrontation with the public domain that is dominated by a secular or even anti-religious attitude. The Dutch have developed over the years a confrontational attitude between secularism and religion, and this confrontation is made manifest by Islam, not because of Islam per se, but because Muslims happen to live in the crossfire. And as we are currently witnessing, young Muslims deliberately walk into that crossfire to claim their religious identity and to challenge Dutch society that they feel is denying them that identity.

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About the author

Maurits S. Berger is professor of Islam in the contemporary West at Leiden University. As a lawyer and arabist he has specialized in Islamic law ('sharia') in the Muslim world and in the West. He has published numerous articles on this subject as well as two books: *Sharia. Islam tussen recht en politiek* (Den Haag: Boom Juridische Uitgeverij, 2006) and *Sharia in the West* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2013).

Réactions à la charia aux Pays-Bas

La confusion et l'anxiété règnent aux Pays-Bas au sujet de la charia, notamment en ce qui concerne les soi-disant tribunaux charia et les mariages islamiques, et ont déclenché de nombreux débats au Parlement et des enquêtes nationales. Le présent article analyse les formes de la charia qu'on trouve aux Pays-Bas. Il aborde la question de ce que nous entendons par la charia – et, chose plus importante, ce que les musulmans néerlandais en pensent – et replace cette discussion dans le contexte plus large du système juridique néerlandais. Je prétends que, même si l'opinion publique et politique désapprouve la charia, la plupart de ses règles, telles que les musulmans néerlandais les pratiquent, sont permises par la loi néerlandaise. En analysant la nature des préoccupations du public néerlandais à ce sujet, on trouve qu'elles peuvent être regroupées en trois catégories : l'infraction prétendue par la charia de l'ordre juridique, notamment les concepts de l'égalité et de l'autorité de la loi; son infraction de l'ordre social, notamment l'intégration et les droits des femmes; et son infraction de l'ordre national, qui combine les arguments juridiques et sociaux en tant qu'ils concernent la sécurité nationale. Plus généralement, les gens sont incertains combien les musulmans font partie de la société néerlandaise et veulent en être, et la charia semble fonctionner comme épreuve décisive. Ma conclusion principale est que la manière dont les musulmans néerlandais pratiquent l'islam et les règles de la charia ne diffère pas tellement des pratiques d'autres communautés orthodoxes aux Pays-Bas. La différence principale est que la conduite des musulmans néerlandais est plus remarquée parce qu'ils habitent pour la plupart des régions urbaines, qui sont sécularisées, tandis que leurs homologues orthodoxes chrétiens sont concentrés plutôt dans des régions rurales, les « coins évangélistes. »

Reacties op sharia in Nederland

Verwarring en paniek regeren in Nederland waar het gaat over sharia en in het bijzonder de zogenaamde sharia-rechtbanken en Islamitische huwelijken. Het onderwerp heeft herhaaldelijk geleid tot debatten in de Tweede Kamer en nationale enquêtes. Dit artikel analyseert welke vormen van sharia men al dan niet kan onderscheiden in Nederland. Het gaat in op de vraag wat we bedoelen met sharia en, belangrijker nog, wat Moslims ervan denken, en plaatst de discussie omtrent sharia in de bredere context van het Nederlandse rechtssysteem. Dit artikel betoogt dat publieke en politieke opinies sharia weliswaar mogen afkeuren, maar dat de meeste regels waaraan Nederlandse Moslims zich houden in feite zijn toegestaan onder het Nederlandse rechtssysteem. Het artikel analyseert vervolgens de aard van de bedenkingen die naar voren gebracht worden in de Nederlandse publieke en politieke opinie met betrekking tot sharia, en verdeelt deze bedenkingen in drie categorieën: de alleged ondermijning van de wettelijke orde, in het bijzonder met betrekking tot gelijkheid en de rechtsstaat; de ondermijning van de sociale orde, in het bijzonder de integratie en positie van vrouwen; en de ondermijning van de nationale orde, waarbij de wettelijke en sociale argumenten gecombineerd worden in hun relatie tot nationale veiligheid. De overkoepelende zorg is de mate waarin Nederlandse Moslims deel uitmaken en willen uitmaken van de Nederlandse samenleving, waarbij sharia lijkt te functioneren als een soort litmustest. De voornaamste conclusie van het artikel is dat de manier waarom Nederlandse Moslims Islam en de sharia-voorschriften beoefenen niet wezenlijk afwijkt van die van andere orthodoxe geloofsgemeenschappen in Nederland, maar dat het voornaamste verschil tussen de twee groepen te maken heeft met het feit dat het gedrag van Nederlandse Moslims meer opvalt omdat zij voornamelijk in de geseclariseerde stedelijke gebieden wonen, terwijl hun Christelijke tegehangers zich voornamelijk bevinden in plattelandsgebieden in de zogenaamde 'Bible belt'.