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Dutch colonialism, Islam and mosques

4.1. Introduction

The Dutch East Indies were by far the most important Dutch colony. It was also the only colony where a purposeful policy towards Islam was developed and this aspect of Dutch colonial policy in particular attracted attention from other imperial powers. In 1939 the French scholar Georges Henri Bousquet began his *A French View of the Netherlands Indies* by recalling that: “No other colonial nation governs relatively so many Moslem subjects as do the Netherlands”. In reconsidering their colonial policies the French had often looked at the Dutch Indies as a source of inspiration and between 1891 and 1904 twenty five French study missions visited the Dutch colony (Gouda 1995). The French also immediately translated *The Netherlands and Islam* by the Dutch Islam expert Snouck Hurgronje when it was published in 1911.¹⁶⁹ The literature on the institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands in the post-war period, however, has by and large ignored the colonial period. There seemed to exist a consensus that Dutch colonialism and responses to the “new” Islamic presence in the Netherlands had nothing to do with one another.¹⁷⁰ A few years ago the Dutch anthropologist Peter van der Veer observed provocatively that many people seemed to have forgotten that until 60 years ago the majority of people in the Greater Netherlands were Muslim (Van der Veer 2001b). In this chapter I discuss Dutch colonial policy towards Islam in the East Indies as well as the ways Islam was represented and regulated in the Netherlands during the colonial period.¹⁷¹ I explore whether the Dutch were involved in the reception and accommodation of Muslim populations in similar ways to the French and what patterns of Muslim immigration developed. This reconstruction prepares the way for an analysis of policy legacies created within the colonial regime that may have shaped public policy responses with regard to Islam in the Netherlands in later periods.

169. My discussion of Dutch colonial policies towards Islam is limited to their policies in the East Indies and I leave aside the responses to Islam in Surinam and the Antilles. There were also Muslim communities in Surinam and the Antilles, but these were mostly (descendants) of immigrant workers from the Indian subcontinent. See M.Nurmohamed *De geschiedenis van de islam in Suriname* (1985).

170. See for example Landman 1992; Rath et al. 2001. The colonial history is mentioned in Douwes et al. 2005 and in Maussen 2006.

171. For this section I have in particular made use of the following studies: Snouck Hurgronje 1915; Bousquet 1940; Benda 1958a and 1958b; Wertheim 1978; Steenbrink 1993; Van Doorn 1994; Gouda 1995; Federspiel 2001; Bowen 2003; Laffan 2003; and Meuleman 2005. Other studies on Dutch colonial policies towards Islam in the East Indies include Van der Plas 1934; Kernkamp 1946; and Pijper 1955, 1961 and 1977. See also the forthcoming book of Wim van den Doel on the Netherlands and Islam between 1800 and 1950. I would like to thank Martin van Bruinessen for his useful advices in identifying these sources.

4.2. The Dutch Indies and Islam

4.2.1. Expansion of Dutch rule and encounters with Islam

When the Dutch became involved in Indonesian affairs in the 17th century the victory of Islam “was well-nigh complete over the greater part of Indonesia” (Benda 1958a: 9; Steenbrink 1993). Until the arrival and spread of Islam, the most important religions in the Archipelago had been Buddhism and Hinduism, which had developed between the 9th and 13th century. Islam had reached the Indonesian Archipelago by the 13th century via traders and international scholarly networks such as Sufism, and it could spread because Southeast Asian princes converted to Islam (Meuleman 2005: 32; Federspiel 2001).¹⁷² The development of trade and communication had contributed to the spreading of Islam.¹⁷³

Scholars in colonial times were well aware of the fact that Islam had arrived relatively late in Indonesia, and this was important for their perception of Islamic culture. Until the mid 19th century the Dutch attitude towards Islam was based on the idea that Islam was organised in a similar way as Roman Catholicism, with a hierarchical clergy that owed allegiance to the Turkish Caliph who, so the Dutch thought, had great influence over Indonesian Muslims. Religious politics were not of crucial importance for the emerging Dutch system of rule over the East Indies. The Dutch presence in Southeast Asia was aimed at the extraction of wealth and the creation of commerce primarily, and – unlike the strategies of the Portuguese for example – not at Christianisation. The instruction for the governor general of the East Indies of 1803 laid down the principle of state neutrality in the domain of religion, which implied that officially there should be no preferential treatment of Christianity over Islam (Kernkamp 1946: 195). Nonetheless, the Dutch government allowed for Catholic and Protestant missions in Indonesia even though the governors and plantation owners tended to fear that overt support for the Christian missionaries would add to hostility and resistance to Dutch rule.

In the course of the 19th century more became known about Islam in the East Indies. The Dutch, however, continued to view Islam as merely one among several composite layers of indigenous culture. European scholars were inclined to highlight the syncretic, superficial or derived nature of Southeast Asian Islam (Meuleman 2005: 23). That view was not altogether incorrect because, for example on Java, “Islam had been forced to adapt itself to centuries-old traditions, partly indigenous, partly Hindu-Buddhist, and in the process to lose much of its doctrinal rigidity” (Benda 1958a: 12). The Dutch had sought to create alliances with those elements in Indonesian society that seemed only nominally Muslim: the *priyayi*, the Sultans and the *adat*-chiefs (Benda 1958a: 19). In the main, the *priyayi* constituted first and foremost an aristocratic civilisation of their own. A new *santri* civilisation had developed around the religious leaders, the *ulama*, who had become counsellors, judges and religious teachers and began to have

172. Meuleman (2005) argues that the presence of Islam in the archipelago already dates back to the 8th century.

173. The Dutch architect Hendrik Lucasz, for example, designed a mosque in Java in the 17th century, which included a minaret that resembled a European lighthouse and was modelled on contemporary buildings in Holland (O’Neill 2002: 235). According to Van Dijk (2005: 17) it is not altogether certain that Lucasz was the architect of this mosque.

increasing impact on the religious, social and political life of Indonesia (Benda 1958a: 14-15).¹⁷⁴ In contrast to the *priyayi* the *ulama* had more religious prestige and as they were not co-opted by the Dutch they were not part of the system of exploitation of the local populations.¹⁷⁵ Islam became an important rallying point in the opposition to Dutch rule, especially in the second half of the 19th century when the Dutch, who until then were mainly present in Java, also established their authority in other parts of the archipelago.

4.2.2. Liberal Policy and reformist Islam

In the second half of the 19th century the Dutch had begun to develop the rubber and tobacco plantations in Deli, on the east coast of Sumatra.¹⁷⁶ The Treaty of Sumatra, concluded with the British in 1871, enabled the Dutch to try to establish their power in northern Sumatra. The conquest and annexation of this part of Sumatra – notably of the province of Aceh – involved some forty years of military struggle against local sultans, who called upon their subjects to fight a “Holy War” (*Jihad*) against Dutch military forces.¹⁷⁷ Despite indigenous resistance, the Dutch managed to incorporate the other islands of the archipelago into the colonial structure between 1884 and 1912.¹⁷⁸

In the closing decades of the 19th century the system of indirect rule came under increasing pressure. One of the reasons to rethink colonial governing strategies was the changing influence of Islam, which was also fuelling resistance against Dutch rule, as had become clear in the Aceh war.¹⁷⁹ From the latter part of the 19th century onwards Indonesian Islam “started to shed its

174. See Laffan 2003: 7ff. for a discussion of the classification of Indonesian Muslims as developed by Clifford Geertz.

175. As Benda (1958a: 16) observes: “*Priyayi* officialdom, eager to please the alien overlords, was careful to avoid any suspicion of religious ‘fanaticism’, and in so doing not only became a target for the ridicule and hostility of many *Ulama*, it also lost touch with Indonesian Islam altogether”.

176. See notably Breman 1987.

177. The Aceh war consisted of a series of military conflicts between 1873 to 1913. At the beginning of the war Sultan Mahmud Syah (r. 1870-1874) was able to organize a well-armed and determined resistance. The new leader Sultan Ibrahimk Mansur Syah (r. 1875-1907) also helped to unify opposition against the Dutch (See Bakker 1993; Reid 1969, Van ‘t Veer 1969; and Federspiel 2001: 11).

178. Indirect rule remained the predominant form of colonial authority over the expanded territory and a decentralised system of self administration was introduced in the Outer Islands. The Dutch sought to develop the overseas territories without intervening very much in the daily routines and customary practices of indigenous society (Reid 1969: 21ff.).

179. There were other important reasons as well for the system of indirect rule to come under pressure. The idea of the East Indies being administrated indirectly by a rotating class of European rulers, for example, came to exist in tension with the factual emergence of a mestizo civilisation (Gouda 1995: 28ff. and 157ff.). Dutch government was also no longer exclusively motivated by the pursuit of profit. The Dutch came to take more pride in showing their ability to administer their empire “with more wisdom and discretion than other colonizing powers” (Gouda 1995: 23). Finally, the idea developed that beyond the simple exploitation of the East Indies, the Dutch should also care about uplifting the indigenous populations and help the East Indies become a modern society, although at its own pace. The destructive effects of the Culture System and the Liberal Policy on the local economy and on the standards of living of the peasantry, notably on Java, became increasingly visible in the second half of the 19th century and the publication of *Max Havelaar* in 1860 added to the critique of the exploitation of the indigenous population.

syncretic characteristics” (Benda 1958a: 17). The contacts with Mecca intensified and a greater number of people went on pilgrimage or to study in the Middle East and sometimes returned to Indonesia as reformers of Islam (Laffan 2003). Village unrests and anti-Dutch sentiments often found a leadership in Muslim reformers and a rallying cause in Islam. Colonial administrators were ill prepared to face the increasing militancy of Indonesian Islam which they encountered especially during the war in Aceh. An interesting illustration of the ways the Dutch sought to respond to the challenge of Islam-inspired resistance occurred around the destruction and rebuilding of the great mosque of Kota Raja (now Banda Aceh), the capital of the province of Aceh.¹⁸⁰



Picture 4.1 Kota Raja, 1881

During the Second Aceh Expedition (1873-1874) the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (*Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger*) (KNIL) bombarded the sultan’s fortified palace, the *Kraton (dalam)* and managed to capture the Great Mosque. The mosque was largely destroyed during the attack. Some years later, claiming that the war was over, the Dutch wanted to start a policy of goodwill, which would be “symbolized by the rebuilding of the Great Mosque destroyed in the second expedition” (Reid 1969: 184). A new mosque, which followed the design of a European architect, was built between 1879-1881. However, the Acehnese protested against the new mosque building and its architecture, and they argued that the building was alien, inappropriate and unsuited for their purposes. One reason for these protests was that the architect had made a design in the so-called Indo-Saracenic style that the British developed in India. Thus the new mosque had a dome which was uncommon for indigenous mosques.¹⁸¹ Commenting on this colonial encounter around mosque architecture, Hugh O’Neill explains the reactions of the Acehnese:

It was always said that they wouldn’t use the mosque until the beginning of the 20th century because it wasn’t a proper mosque. It didn’t look like a mosque and it was totally unfamiliar and of course it was a reaction to the bombardment of the city – they didn’t really want to be involved (...) with a Dutch architect –the Dutch thought they were doing a marvellous thing, putting up a new mosque for them, a lovely shining proper mosque, and of course the Indonesians didn’t feel like that at all.

180. The citations of Hugh O’Neill and Anthony Reid are from a discussion on Australian radio in April 2005 entitled “The Tale of the Grand Mosque of Banda Aceh” broadcasted in the wake of the tsunami in Southeast Asia in December 2004. See <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s1333683.htm> (accessed 5 October 2005). I express my gratitude to professor Anthony Reid and professor Hugh O’Neill for their further comments following my questions by e-mail. See also Reid 1969 and O’Neill 2002.

181. In 1935 two more domes were added and in 1958 the work on another two was started. During the second extension two minarets were also added (Van Dijk 2005: 22).

Indigenous mosques were characterised by tiered roofs made of timber which were open at the upper levels, allowing for ventilation, making the house of worship suited for the hot climate (O'Neill 2002; Van Dijk 2005). But the protest were not exclusively aimed at the inappropriate architecture of the new building. As Anthony Reid remarks:

It was (...) I believe, the first time the Dutch had built a mosque in their colony. I mean it was quite a remarkable step. A way of trying to woo the Muslims into the project in a way by suggesting that here is modernity as well as Islam. For the Dutch as well as for the Acehnese, the site had become a sacred place, because this is where the initial Dutch commander had been killed, this was where so many Dutch soldiers had fallen in the subsequent attacks as well. Thus, they built it in a quite novel style but in front of it they put a plaque commemorating the heroic Dutch soldiers who died in conquering the site, not a commemoration of the heroic Acehnese who fell defending the site. The Acehnese, of course, saw it as simply a monument built by the invaders with money of the infidels and with this commemoration of the Dutch in front of it, the Acehnese, at least initially, avoided it.

This somewhat clumsy effort at reconciliation is, of course, but an anecdote. Yet it should be situated against the backdrop of the growing unease of the Dutch administration about how to deal with Islam. The Dutch tried to halt the spread of Islamic religious law as well as contacts between Indonesian Muslims and Muslims outside Indonesia (Meuleman 2005: 36; Laffan 2003). They had sought, but had ultimately failed, to place restrictions on the pilgrimage to Mecca, seeing the pilgrims as a major cause of agitation (Benda 1958a: 20). The Dutch authorities wanted to base their policies and administration on more knowledge about Islam. The man for the job was Christian Snouck Hurgronje, a renowned expert on Islam who had been in Mecca and had published a book on the *Hadj* in 1888. He was to become the architect of Dutch policies towards Islam in the East Indies.¹⁸²

In 1898 Snouck Hurgronje became Adviser for Native Affairs (*Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken*), a function he would fulfil until 1907 when he returned to the Netherlands, embittered by the harsh military government of Van Heutsz (Laffan 2003: 95). Only in 1911 after his return to the Netherlands where he became professor at the University of Leiden, Snouck Hurgronje published *The Netherlands and Islam* in which he further elaborated his ideas about Dutch policies towards Islam. Many of these ideas had already been developed and implemented during the previous period.

Snouck Hurgronje's first contribution was to correct many of the misunderstandings which had informed Dutch governing strategies. For example, the idea that there was a clerical establishment in Islam or that all Indonesian Muslims who went on pilgrimage automatically turned into rebellious fanatics (Benda 1958a: 21 ff.). Snouck Hurgronje thought that the colonial administration should adhere to the principles of religious neutrality and toleration towards Islamic practice, and he advised against efforts at large Christianisation. However, he did think

182. I draw here in particular on Benda 1958a and Snouck Hurgronje 1915 [1911]. See also Benda 1958b; Van Koningsveld 1987; Van der Veer 1994.

that there was a real danger of Islam becoming a major enemy of Dutch rule, not as a religion but as “a political doctrine, both in the shape of agitation by local fanatics and in the shape of pan-Islam, whether or not it was in fact inspired by Islamic rulers abroad, such as the Caliph” (Benda 1958a: 23). This led him to argue that the administration should very clearly distinguish between the regular aspects of Islamic religious activity or “Islam as worship” – such as the five pillars of Islam – and those ideas and practices that belonged to fanatic movements and pan-Islamism or “Islam as politics” (Bowen 2003: 48). Islam should be banned from the political sphere.¹⁸³ Snouck Hurgronje suggested that the pilgrimage should be allowed and that there should be room for the social elements in Indonesian society that supported standard religious belief. If the Dutch would be accommodating towards regular aspects of Islamic belief and practice this would help lessen the chances of Indonesians adopting fanatical religious beliefs inimical to Dutch rule (Federspiel 2001: 13). The support for regular Islamic practice, was to be complemented by the containment of “fanatic” Muslim practices and attitudes.

The application of Snouck Hurgronje’s advice, from the last decade of the 19th century onwards, had considerable success. Military action against “fanatical” *ulama*, support for *adat*-chiefs and religious neutrality towards Islam contributed to the lessening of revolt (Benda 1958a: 29-30). Despite the fact that Snouck Hurgronje thus defended religious freedom for Muslim he also thought that in the longer run Indonesia would and could become a more modern society. This ultimate aim could only be achieved gradually, via a process of the association of the Indonesians with Dutch culture. A key to this gradual association was Western education, which should be made available, first to the elites but then also to more Indonesians. They should increasingly be given a share in the administrative affairs of the Dutch East Indies. These ideas about the possibilities of a gradual but progressive association also underlay the Ethical Policy which was inaugurated in 1901.

4.2.3. Ethical Policy and association

Ethical Policy was formally inaugurated as a new stance in colonial policy when Abraham Kuyper, the leader of the Dutch Orthodox Protestant Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*, ARP), came to lead a new government in 1901. Ethical Policy aimed to raise the level of prosperity of the people in the East Indies, by improving housing and education of the urban kampong communities in Java, and establishing schools and sanitary facilities (Gouda 1995). Ethical Policy also created opportunities for official support for the refurbishment of existing mosques, particularly in Java and Madura (O’Neill 2002: 239). In 1927 the Dutch Deli Maatschappij financed the building of the modern Azazi mosque in Tanjung Pura (Sumatra) that was commissioned by the Sultan’s family (Van Dijk 2005: 25). European architects and engineers were also involved in the construction of mosques, for example the Dutch officer Theodoor van Erp, who supervised the restoration of Borobudur and built the Al-Mashun Grand Mosque in Medan (Sumatra) between 1906 and 1909 (*idem*).

183. James and Schrauwers (2003: 65) argue that Christian missions in the East Indies, which were seeking to expand the role of religion in civil society and setting up associations with social welfare and cultural ends, opened the way for similar Islamic associations. Thus paradoxically the growing role of Islam in civil society was indirectly stimulated by the Christian missions.

4.2.4. Ethical Policy deformed

Despite its high flown ambitions, the output of Ethical Policy came to be obscured, beginning in the 1920s. The hope that a new Western educated middle class would become allies of the Dutch proved to have been a miscalculation, because “instead of identifying themselves with their overlords and Dutch culture, the leaders of this new class, torn between the harsh reality of colonialism and the egalitarian and libertarian promises of Western education, turned into vociferous opponents of the colonial *status quo*” (Benda 1958a: 39). Related to the above, opposition to Dutch colonial rule grew in the first decades of the 20th century. Political parties were founded, such as the Islamic Union (*Sarekat Dagang Islam*), founded in 1911, and the *Partai Nasional Indonesia* founded in 1927. Beside, the growing influence of “secular” nationalism, Islam also inspired further resistance to Dutch rule, both in the form of the growing importance of reformist Islam and in the form of *ulama*-led village unrest (Benda 1958a; Laffan 2003). Communist insurgencies on Java and the collective fear of the nationalist and Islamic movements would soon lead Dutch governors to further distance themselves from the doctrine of association (Gouda 1995: 26).

From the 1920s onward, the Dutch set out to combat anti-colonial resistance, in particular by exiling the leaders of different oppositional movements. Even though the aim of improving the welfare of the indigenous population remained a part of colonial policy, its guiding principle moved from further association of Indonesians in the administration, to the maintenance of “Tranquillity and Order” (*rust en orde*). Policy practice and implementation in the domains of cultural, legal and religious policies moved away from the ideas and recommendations of Snouck Hurgronje, even though he continued to be celebrated as the “architect of Dutch Muslim Policy”.

A crucial factor in the reorientation of governing strategies in the domain of law, culture and religion was the growing influence on colonial policies of conservative legal scholars, especially those scholars working at the Indological Faculty of the University of Leiden. The dean of the *Adat* Law School was the renowned expert Cornelis van Vollenhoven who worked at the University of Leiden from 1901 to 1933. The idea that each region in the Indies functioned according to its own specific cultural matrix led *adat* scholars since the 19th century to understand their scholarly work as an effort to uncover and describe this cultural matrix for the various regional societies in the East Indies (Gouda 1995: 70ff.). Translated into policy directives this meant that colonial officials could sanction specific identities and particular traditions corresponding to the *adat* law areas.

In the specific context of Indonesian society in the 1920s and 1930s the constant efforts to maintain the particularities of the different regions also seemed an effective instrument to oppose the two major ideological forces of unification: on the one hand Islam and Islamic law, and on the other hand Indonesian nationalism. Another important change in Dutch colonial thinking concerned ideas about the way Indonesian culture could evolve. The Dutch colonizers came to think of themselves as guardians who should “accompany the Indonesians on their evolutionary journey, because they were knowledgeable about the path’s obstacles and pitfalls” (Gouda 1995: 138). This paternalist approach aimed at shielding indigenous culture from deformation by the West stood in glaring contrast to the more interventionist, but also more ambitious, French

civilizing mission in North Africa.¹⁸⁴ Not altogether surprisingly the French scholar Bousquet writing in the late 1930s was stunned by the fact that “the transmission of European social institutions from their mother country to the natives of their colonies does not interest the Dutch” (Bousquet 1940: 11).

The growing influence of the ideas of Van Vollenhoven’s *adat*-school resulted in a shift in religious policies. Out of fear for reformist Islamic movements, the government again sought to restrict the pilgrimage to Mecca and imposed controls and limitations on Indonesian pilgrims. In 1925 the so-called Guru Ordinance tightened administrative control over Islamic education, much to the dislike of Muslim instructors (Benda 1958a: 74). For some years the colonial government sought to support the orthodox *ulama* in the villages in order to oppose the growing influence of reformist-inspired Muslims, but this strategy was abandoned again in the 1930s. Following the advice of the *adat*-scholars, a key governing strategy was to seek to strengthen *adat* and the authority of the aristocracy in order to shield the village communities from further influence of reformist Islam. This had the odd effect of giving the *priyayi* more administrative control over Islamic life, an authority they did not have until then, and that in the eyes of Muslim leaders they certainly did not deserve. The efforts of the Dutch to support customary law in order to obstruct the further spreading of Islamic law also met with opposition. This became more clear in the conflicts about the reform of religious law, undertaken in a series of ordinances between 1929 and 1937. The proposed changes would lead to important restrictions on Islamic law, notably on inheritance matters and marriage, and they were seen as an unjustifiable invasion of Muslim affairs.¹⁸⁵ Fierce protests led the government to withdraw some of its proposals and to adopt a slightly different stance towards Islam since the 1930s (Benda 1958a: 82ff.). Policies against reformist Islam were relaxed again. In 1939 it was even decided that “schools with the Koran” were eligible to public subventions (Kernkamp 1946: 205).¹⁸⁶ Specifically Islamic issues came to play only a minor part in overall colonial policy from the 1930s onward (Benda 1958a: 68). The overall guiding principle was abstention and non-interference. The Japanese occupation of the East Indies (1942-1945) would create new opportunities for Indonesian nationalist movements and the war would speed up the progression toward self-government in Indonesia. Despite new military efforts of the Dutch – still hoping to regain control over the colonial possessions – Indonesia became independent in 1949.

184. See for comparative observations on this aspect of Dutch and French colonialism Gouda 1995: 71 and 220ff.; and Gouda and Clancy-Smith (eds) 1998.

185. In 1937, for example, the government “removed jurisdiction on Java over inheritance from the Islamic courts and gave it to the civil courts” (Bowen 2003: 49).

186. Governmental subsidies for the *Muhammadiyah*’s Western style schools were available. As Benda argues (1958a: 77) these subsidies for Islamic education were an abandonment of Snouck Hurgonje’s ideas about abstention from interference in religious life. The French student of Dutch Muslim policy, Georges-Henri Bousquet, wrote (1940: 17): “According to Dutch custom, a school which meets certain stipulated conditions is subsidized to the same extent as free European schools, but this almost never occurs in the Indies”.

4.3. Dutch colonialism and Islam in Europe: architecture, peoples and exhibitions

I have demonstrated in the preceding chapter how French foreign policy in the Muslim World, its policies towards Islam in the colonies and policy responses to the presence of Islam in France developed in tandem in the first half of the 20th century. In this section I explore whether there were similar linkages between Dutch approaches to Islam overseas and responses to the presence of Islam in the Netherlands. A first issue to explore would be the reception and accommodation of colonial subjects and elites in the Netherlands. At this point, however, there were important differences between France and the Netherlands. Compared to the situation in France the number of Muslim migrants who came to the Netherlands was virtually non-existent. But the differences were not only a matter of number of immigrants, it was also a very different type of migrants. In France there were regiments of Muslim soldiers and large numbers of low-skilled colonial workers. In the Netherlands colonial migrants were either secularised elites who came to the Netherlands with the intention to be immersed in Dutch culture and education, or they came to work as maids or servants in family homes. For these reasons the number of migrants who would want to practice Islam during their stay in the Netherlands was very small and the likelihood that some kind of commonly defined need for facilities for Islamic worship would emerge was very low.

A small community of mostly working-class people from the East Indies (maids, sailors, navy personnel) created a Muslim organisation in the Hague in 1932 and regularly came together for prayer. The association had about 300 members in the 1930s and succeeded in creating a small Muslim section on a cemetery in The Hague in 1932 (Landman 1992: 21). Another form of Islamic organisation and presence in the Netherlands in the early 20th century, was the *Ahmadiyya* movement, a sect which was established in British India in 1889 and which had its European headquarters in London (Landman 1992: 24ff.).¹⁸⁷ The leader of the movement, Mahmud Ahmad, sent missionaries to the Netherlands in 1924 to give lectures on Islam and a stationary missionary post was established in The Hague in 1947 (Roose 2005: 9).

The Dutch colonial empire in Southeast Asia was also present in Europe in the form of scholarly institutions, universities, museums and, of course, the exhibitions. The display of the Dutch colonial possessions at the World Exhibitions and at the Colonial Expositions in Europe was an opportunity to show and explicate the specific nature – and the success – of the Dutch style of colonial rule. One of the main messages the Dutch tried to get across at the colonial exhibitions was that their colonial style and regime were based on profound knowledge and serious study.¹⁸⁸ A key mode of representation used by the Dutch was the staged display of ordinary life in the colonies. The most remarkable elements in the Dutch exhibition sites were the replicas of Javanese villages that were inhabited by Javanese who were brought to Europe for these occasions. Replica villages were established in the Dutch sections at the international colonial exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883, at the exposition of women's labour in The Hague in

187. The movement was founded in 1889 by the followers of Ghulam Ahmad (1830-1908) who claimed to be the promised Messiah who was sent to purify Islam from worldly corruption. The movement was seen as un-Islamic and in 1974 the World Muslim association asked Muslim governments to declare the Ahmadiyya “non-Muslims” (Roose 2005: 6-9).

188. For this section I primarily draw upon Gouda 1995 and Bloembergen 2001.

1898, at the colonial section of the *exposition universelle* in Paris in 1889, and at the World Fair in Brussels in 1910.¹⁸⁹ Some attention was also given to indigenous architecture and arts. The Dutch preferred to display the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups within a single pavilion, showing how well the Dutch colonial system was able to manage cultural diversity. In the case of Islamic culture there were important differences between the Dutch and the French sections at the colonial exhibitions. Both countries displayed at such occasions village mosques, replicas of simple wooden or clay buildings that completed the picture of African village or Javanese villages. The display of these mosques did not so much serve to show the value of Islamic culture, but as an illustration of an aspect of daily life in the indigenous village.

The French had also built huge replicas of mosques at the colonial exhibitions. Especially in the 20th century these reproductions served to illustrate the greatness of Islamic culture and architecture, improved with the help of French engineers and architects, and demonstrate the respect of *La France, amie de l'islam* for Islamic culture.¹⁹⁰ In the Dutch sections at the exhibitions there existed no equivalent of these attempts to display Islam and its cultural, artistic or architectural achievements. Most Dutch scholars and architects agreed that Islam and the “Mohammedans conquest” had caused a period of cultural downfall in the East Indies, especially in comparison to the earlier Hindu and Buddhist civilisations that were grounded in the glory of Borobodur and Prambanan. At the exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883 the Dutch displayed a small model of the mosque which they had established themselves in Aceh. At that same exhibition visitors could also admire a palace built in a quasi Islamic style with imitation minarets (Bloembergen 2001: 83ff). This palace was widely criticized. Critics argued, not incorrectly, that the Moorish style had nothing to do with indigenous culture or Islamic architecture in the Indies. But they also insisted that to visualize the cultural and architectural accomplishment of Indonesian culture the choice should not have fallen on Islam, but on Buddhist or Hindu culture and artefacts. The near absence of Islamic elements in the display and representation of the culture of the East Indies was striking.

At the exhibition in Paris in 1900 the contrast between the attention to Islam in the Dutch and French sections was even more remarkable. The French had displayed numerous artefacts representing Muslim arts and architecture and had built two large replicas of mosques in Algeria and Tunis in their section. In the Dutch section however, no visual reminders of Islam in Indonesia could be found. The Dutch journalist Diederik Baltzerdt wrote in 1910 that the artefacts which were being displayed at the exhibition in Brussels, hid from view the fact that “30 million people in Java practice Islam” (cited in Bloembergen 2001: 209-210).

4.4. Direct legacies of colonialism and Islam in the Netherlands

It should be clear that, unlike what happened in France, there were very few opportunities and mechanism of diffusion allowing ideas and governing strategies with regard to Islam in the East Indies to become of relevance for policy responses the Netherlands. Did the more immediate

189. There was no *tableau vivant* of a Javanese village at the World Exhibition in 1900 (Bloembergen 2001: 216).

190. See chapter 3.

post-colonial period, which also in the Netherlands involved large scale immigration from the former colony, necessitate policy responses to accommodate Islam in the Netherlands then?

The independence of the United States of Indonesia in 1949 and the creation of the Republic of Indonesia in 1950 meant the end of 350 years of direct Dutch involvement in the Indonesian Archipelago. The ties between the two societies and countries were almost completely dismantled within a period of little more than ten years (Van Doorn 1994: 49-50). Between 1949 and 1962, when Western New Guinea became part of Indonesia, virtually all people with Dutch nationality left Indonesia, including not only the white repatriates but also the Eurasians who were now spoken of as the “Indonesian Dutch” (Schuster 1999: 83ff.).¹⁹¹ The Indonesian Dutch usually had received a European education and held, relative to the native population, privileged positions during colonial times. In the new Republic of Indonesia, however, the Dutch Indonesians faced discrimination and unemployment. In total almost 300,000 people from the former East Indies migrated to the Netherlands. Their rapid integration in Dutch society was related to a variety of factors, including their relatively high level of education, familiarity with the Dutch language and culture, policy responses, including the dispersion of immigrant families over the country, and the growing of the Dutch economy in the second half of the 1950s (Van Amersfoort 1982).¹⁹² Most of the newcomers were Christians or agnostics and belonged to the Westernised elite class. Their settlement in the Netherlands did not lead to any firm organisation formation on the basis of Islam (Landman 1992: 22).¹⁹³

The successful and rapid integration of the Indonesians is usually contrasted to the very painful and difficult incorporation of another group of post-colonial migrants who came to the Netherlands in the wake of the independence of Indonesia.¹⁹⁴ These were the Moluccan soldiers who had fought in the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL) and their families. In 1951 about 12,500 Moluccans arrived in the Netherlands. The immediate reason for the immigration of this particular group was the political situation in Indonesia at the time. Moluccan leaders had hoped to create an autonomous political entity within a federal Indonesian state, but when this appeared impossible, some leaders had in 1950 declared the founding of the independent Republic of the South Moluccas or the *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS). The Indonesian government did not recognise the new state and invaded the islands in November 1950. The situation of the Moluccan soldiers was delicate because they had fought in the Dutch army against the Indonesians during the colonial war and because there had been conflicts between KNIL-soldiers and Indonesian soldiers on Java in 1950. The Dutch government continued to think that in due time the Moluccan soldiers could live in Indonesia but, being unable to demobilise them in Indonesia, it nevertheless decided to bring the soldiers and their families temporarily to the Netherlands to demilitarise them in Europe, away from political upheavals in Indonesia.

During the transport the Dutch government decided to discharge all Moluccans from the army. Upon their arrival in the Netherlands the soldiers and their families were housed in

191. Many of the Chinese who had been co-opted by the colonial administration also left Indonesia after independence

192. See also Van Amersfoort and Niekerk 2006; Willems 2001.

193. There was another Javanese Muslim organisation in the Netherlands the *Perkumpulan Ummat Islam*. This was a very small organisation, a continuation of the association founded in 1932 (see above), which now used a prayer room in the Indonesian Embassy in The Hague (Roose 2006: 15).

194. See Smeets and Steijlen 2006.

a demobilisation camp in Amersfoort, and later on they were transferred to special barracks camps. The camps for Moluccans were put under the control of a Dutch staff, preferably consisting of military officers who had served in the East Indies, and who governed the camps jointly with a representative board of Moluccan residents. The Moluccans were housed in camps in the Netherlands arbitrarily and without taking into account differences of clan, villages and religions. These differences would soon lead to tensions. One solution was to concentrate like-minded groups in special enclaves. Already in 1952 the leader of the Moluccan Muslim community in the Netherlands – Ahmed Tan – had asked Dutch authorities to establish a separate residential enclave for Muslims. Tan, who was an ethnic Moluccan who had received a Dutch higher education, insisted that Dutch authorities should also recognise Muslim marriages, and provide for Muslim religious education and a mosque. Brawls between protestants and Muslims led to the will, shared by Moluccans and Dutch authorities, to create a special camp for the Muslim families. In 1954 a special camp – Wyldemerck – was established near Balk a small village in Frysland.¹⁹⁵

The camp in Wyldemerck was set up “along the lines of a traditional Moluccan Muslim kampong, led by a secular leader, the Raja, and a spiritual leader, the Imam” (Roose 2006: 6). Ahmad Tan in fact fulfilled both functions and became the key spokesmen of the camp’s residents, allowing him to further persevere in the demand for a mosque. The Moluccan Muslims received some help from the *Aymadiyya* movement in The Hague to provide for their religious needs.¹⁹⁶ With the help of their fellow Muslims and with a subsidy of 50,000 guilders from the Directorate of Care for Ambonese (*Commissariaat Ambonezenzorg*) (CAZ), a mosque was established in Wyldemerck in 1956.

The mosque was made of white painted asbestos plates, it served as a place for ritual ablution and had a small minaret built next to it. After a reconstruction of the design process of the mosque the researcher Eric Roose (2006: 15) concludes that Ahmad Tan deliberately had tried to use the mosque architecture to contribute to the creation of a recognisable Moluccan Muslim kampong. The mosque would be in use until the camp was closed down and the barracks demolished in 1968. It had a capacity of some 150 persons.¹⁹⁷ A small Muslim cemetery was also established on the local cemetery, where Ahmed Tan was buried after his premature death due to illness in 1957. Besides subsidizing the building of the mosque the Dutch authorities also remunerated the imams of the Moluccan community and provided for other religious needs (Van der Hoek 1994: 184-185).

The fact that Dutch authorities ended up helping to create facilities for Islamic worship was in large part a result of the fact that they were caring for the religious and cultural needs of *all* Moluccans irrespective of their religion. The great majority of the Moluccans were Christians, 93% were protestant and 4.5% were Catholics. In fact only 2.5% were Muslims, at a total of 300 people (about 80 families) (Smeets and Steijlen 2006: 99ff.). The willingness of Dutch

195. Van der Hoek 1994: 173ff.; and Bergh 1994. See <http://www.wyldemerck.nl/> for pictures of Wyldemerck, accessed October 5 2005.

196. The leaders of the movement managed to establish close contacts with members of the Dutch establishment, including Queen Wilhelmina and the Mayors of The Hague and Rotterdam. The *Ahmadiyya* established the Mobarak mosque in The Hague in 1955, a small building which is colloquially known as the first mosque in the Netherlands. For a detailed discussion on the architecture of this mosque see Roose 2005.

197. Eric Roose has recently discovered that the mosque has been reassembled to be used for storage and now has taken an initiative to see the mosque reconstructed in its original guise.



Picture 4.2 Mosque Wyldemerck 1956

authorities to create religious facilities for Moluccan immigrants should also be understood in light of four situational factors. First, the sense of responsibility of the Dutch government for this particular group of immigrants was extremely strong. Not only had they been allies of the Dutch, they had also been demobilized and repatriated largely against their will and they had been disappointed in the hope they had invested in the Dutch government to support the struggle for an independent Moluccan state. For various reasons, then, the Dutch government accepted it had a “debt of honour” towards the Moluccan communities in the Netherlands. Second, the housing of Moluccan families in barracks camps resulted in the Moluccan communities becoming totally dependent on the care of Dutch authorities. Moreover, oftentimes the leaders of the communities were also opposed to further integration and contacts with Dutch society, fearing that this would jeopardize internal cohesion and undermine the common rallying cause of a return to a free Moluccan state. Given these circumstances it was inevitable that the responsibility for the creation of the necessary facilities would fall upon the Dutch state, including the creation of religious facilities.¹⁹⁸ Third, government support for religion was still a common phenomenon in the Netherlands in the 1950s. Fourth, policy advisory reports on the situation of the Moluccan communities in the Netherlands had emphasised the importance of religion for the psychological well being of the uprooted Moluccan families (Van der Hoek 1994).

198. In the case of the protestant Moluccans, army chaplains (*legerdominees*) had accompanied them on their voyage from Indonesia to the Netherlands. Dutch authorities had asked the Council of Churches to provide spiritual care for these Moluccans. In the case of the Catholics they were usually provided for by the diocese in which their camp was located (Smeets and Steijlen 2006: 100ff.).

In 1959 the Dutch government decided to relocate the Moluccans to regular quarters in various cities spread over the Netherlands, thinking that it was likely that their stay in the Netherlands would be longer than foreseen.¹⁹⁹ The idea was that the communal structures would be maintained by relocating specific groups to special neighbourhoods, a wish which was also articulated by most of the families themselves. The Muslim Moluccan families mainly moved to Waalwijk in 1964 and to Ridderkerk in 1966. One aspect of the negotiations with the Moluccans was that they would only move to the new quarters if church buildings and community spaces would be made available. The regulations for the construction of these Moluccan neighbourhoods stipulated that communities of more than 30 families were entitled to a house of worship that would be built at the costs of the Dutch state. The Muslim communities in Ridderkerk and Waalwijk only passed the “30 families threshold” in the 1970s. The imam of the Muslim community in Ridderkerk wrote a letter to the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM) in 1976 with the request for a newly built mosque, and in 1978 the community in Waalwijk also began negotiations with the Ministry to be given a new mosque (Roose 2006: 18ff.). The request for a new, state-funded mosque was only made after the Church Building Subsidy Act had been rescinded in 1975, and it came in a period when negotiations were going on concerning the ending of financial relations between churches and the state in view of the revision of the constitution in 1983 (see chapter 2).

These developments did not get in the way of the earlier agreement made with the Moluccan communities promising them that houses of worship would be built in the new neighbourhoods. Maintaining this agreement was not only a result of the idea of a “debt of honour”, but also of the fact that hostage takings by young Moluccans in the 1970s had created a political climate in which most political parties supported the establishment of facilities that could appease the Moluccan communities in the Netherlands (Hampsink 1991: 18-20). Thus it was decided that the Ministry of CRM (that became the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture (*Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur*) (WVC) in 1982) would make a reservation of 12.6 million guilders that would be used for a Maintenance Fund for Moluccan Churches, and that also served to finance the building of the two mosques.

Two mosques were built for the Moluccan Muslims communities at the costs of the Dutch state, one in Ridderkerk that opened in 1984 and one in Waalwijk that opened in 1990.²⁰⁰ The mosque in Ridderkerk was built by the *Rijksgedebouwendienst* Zuid-Holland and Zeeland and financed with a public subvention of 1,800,000 guilders for the building costs and with 330,000 guilders for the maintenance costs. The new mosque in Waalwijk, that was also built and financed by the Dutch state, was opened by Minister d’Ancona in 1990. At this occasion she said:

... the relations between the state and the Moluccan Muslim community in the Netherlands, in the religious domain, have now been normalized (...) You now have the space to practice your religion on this spot. But also in a metaphorical way, you now have the space, independent from anyone and under your own responsibility, to give this mosque the particular

199. This decision followed the report *Ambonese in the Netherlands* (1959) written by the commission Verwey-Jonker (Smeets and Steijlen 2006: 156).

200. See Roose 2006 for a detailed discussion on the architecture and negotiations around these two mosques.

place in your community and Dutch society that you wish it to have (cited and translated in Roose 2006: 43-44).

The opening of the second newly built Moluccan mosque was also the execution of a “debt of honour”. In that sense it was also a colonial legacy that continued to be at work 40 years after the independence of Indonesia. It was paradoxical that this colonial institutional logic could help produce a policy response – the Dutch financing the building of a mosque – that was in contradiction with the new regulations that no longer allowed the direct financing of religious buildings.²⁰¹ It was even more paradoxical because at the time, in the late 1980s, the government was turning down requests of other Muslim minority groups for financial support for the building and refurbishment of mosques.

4.5. Conclusion

It is possible to characterise the Dutch approach to Islam in the East Indies in light of two broader strategies of government. On the one hand, there was a strategy of abstinence from an all too direct regulation of Islamic practice, education or issues of religious authority. When they developed a more articulate view on Islam in the closing decade of the 19th century, the Dutch tried to follow the advices of Snouck Hurgronje, in reality more a “philosophy” than a set of policy guidelines, and sought to steer the development of Islam without taking its regulation in their own hands. The influence of “fanatical” Islam could be opposed by obstructing attempts of Islam to enter the political sphere, by preventing reformist movements to reach some parts of the archipelago, by fighting rebellious Muslim leaders and by preventing individual Muslims from coming into contact with “fanatical” ideas via the pilgrimage and contacts with other Muslims outside the East Indies. In addition, the system of indirect rule was based upon the co-optation of members of the indigenous aristocracy, not religious authorities and Muslim leaders. On the other hand, there was a strategy of shielding and protecting indigenous cultures and *adat* communities from outside influences. Islam in the East Indies, and especially on Java, was perceived as a moderate brand of Islam precisely because of its syncretic nature. Protecting this syncretic nature of local Islam seemed a good way of stopping the spread of “fanaticism”, but it could also be seen as a way of protecting indigenous culture from foreign influences, notably from the Arab subcontinent, that risked destruction of its internal complexity and unique composition. This strategy gained more legitimacy in the early parts of the 20th century with the growing prestige of *adat*-scholars.

Another question is whether the colonial government of Islam was shaped by the Dutch church-state regime and notably by foundational doctrines underlying pillarisation such as “parallelism” and “sovereignty in one’s own set”. The idea of government neutrality, the need for the state to refrain from direct interference in religious matter did play a role in colonial

201. In a report addressed to the Queen the Minister of WVC argued that the regulation would create no precedent given the unique position of the Moluccan communities (Hampsink 1992: 19).

religious policies and lip-service was also paid to the principle of even-handedness. However, in the East Indies the Dutch church-state traditions were being mixed with colonial ideology and they were being greatly deformed in the process. In the Netherlands denominational political parties functioned as the “roof” over a pillarized society, but in the East Indies the political organisation of Islam was seen as a sign of religious fanaticism. Christian schools and missionaries received far more financial support than Muslim schools, and more money was spent on building churches than on renovating or constructing mosques. Colonial government was not based on genuine equal respect for various denominations but on the idea that Dutch and Christian culture were superior.

When the East Indies “came” to the Netherlands – in the form of peoples, stories or objects – Islam was virtually absent. The need to accommodate Islamic practice *in the Netherlands* did not present itself in the colonial era. Also at the colonial exhibitions it seemed as if the Dutch aimed to downplay the significance of Islam in Indonesian society and culture. The Dutch contributions to the exhibitions were first and foremost to illustrate the success of their ability in protecting, maintaining and orchestrating cultural differences.

In many respects the East Indies and Islam were much more distant from the Netherlands than the African colonies were from France. Geographically, of course, but also with respect to the system of rule and administration and because of the comparatively small numbers of colonial subjects who travelled to Europe. Because of this there were hardly any reasons or mechanisms to diffuse accommodation policies with regard to Islam from the East Indies to Europe. The fact that, paradoxically, the Dutch state became involved in the creation of mosques for post-colonial Muslim immigrants from the Moluccas was in large part due to the particular history of this group of post-colonial immigrants. Whether the colonial regime and its accommodation policies left significant institutional and policy legacies for subsequent strategies of government of Islam will be explored later on.