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Constructing mosques : the governance of Islam in France and the Netherlands

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The integration of Muslim immigrants is frequently seen as a direct consequence of a country's political tradition. These traditions themselves are often portrayed in clichéd terms. The patterns of incorporation that emerge following the entry of newcomers depend, on closer inspection, on the interplay among a complex set of factors that varies across time periods. This comparative study of policies adopted by the state to accommodate the religious practices of Muslims traces developments in France and the Netherlands in a historical perspective, beginning with the period of French and Dutch colonial rule and ending with the most recent bouts of controversy. The analysis examines discussions about mosque building in Marseilles and Rotterdam, tracing how Islam was represented in colonial exhibitions and in debates at the millennium over what constitutes "appropriate" mosque architecture. The author concludes that colonial governing approaches have shaped post-war policies of accommodation of Islam to a far stronger degree in France than in the Netherlands.

