Seeing through the archival prism: A history of the representation of Muslims on Dutch television
Meuzelaar, A.

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CHAPTER 3
Reporting on the Rituals of Islam
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Ritual is an increasingly contested and expanding arena for resistance, negotiation and the affirmation of identity.

(Hughes-Freeland and Crain 1998: 2)

The difference for observant Muslims in Western nations, however, is that their religion requires of them the outward performance of certain visible rituals – praying five times a day, a certain mode of dress, dietary obligations, and so on. Thus, they find themselves in what we might call a double bind of performativity: called upon to demonstrate through performance their national identities, while at the same time performing what is sometimes viewed suspiciously as a conflicting allegiance to the overarching Ummah.

(Morey and Yaqin 2011: 40)

One of the earliest television items that addressed the arrival of Islamic guest workers in the Netherlands was an episode of NCRV’s actuality magazine Attentie, which was broadcast in 1966 and focused on the issue of Islamic ritual slaughter.275 The item opens with a sequence of close-ups of Arabic inscriptions in the Mubarak mosque, and images of men removing their shoes and performing communal prayer accompanied by classical opera music. A voice-over states that these guest workers feel at home in the Netherlands, that they have encountered an atmosphere of understanding for their religious needs, that Dutch churches have opened their doors for their religious celebrations and that sensitivities and discontents were avoided. However, the voice-over points out, these Muslims have objections to the way animals are slaughtered in the Netherlands, which has resulted in problematic clandestine slaughters. In the next scene, imam Hafiz (the imam of the Mubarak mosque) explains that Muslims are only allowed to eat meat of animals that have been slaughtered according to the Islamic rite. He elaborates extensively on the Islamic dietary rules to make clear that for Muslims ritual slaughter is a matter of religious faith. The voice-over then asserts that ritual slaughter is not permitted under Dutch law and that this could be changed by royal decree. While the voice-over further explains that Dutch inspection and animal protection laws still oppose this religious obligation for Muslims, the camera zooms in on an Arabic text on the

275 Attentie (NCRV, 11-02-1966).
wall of the mosque and slowly pans from left to right along the writing. After an interview with a Dutch official who is responsible for meat inspection and an interview with some Moroccan guest workers, the item ends with close-ups of meat in a butchery, accompanied by the same opera music from the beginning of the item and by the voice-over that states that it is hard to imagine that Muslims do not want to touch this meat, even if this refusal is not a matter of unwillingness but of religious conscience.

276 The image on the wall is an inscription of the *shahada*, the Islamic statement of belief: "there is no god but god and Muhammad is his prophet". The *shahada* is one of the five pillars of Islam and expresses Islam’s central dogmas: the oneness of God and the prophecy of Muhammad.
Since this item was made at a time that the Netherlands had only just begun to be confronted with Muslims living within Dutch borders, it is not surprising that the item testifies to unfamiliarity with Islamic religious practices. The reporter, who is somewhat hesitant to take seriously the claim that, it is out of religious faith only that Muslims refuse to eat Dutch meat and the exoticizing gaze of the camera, both constitute the Islamic religion as strange, different and unknown. The camera track along the Arabic writing is a clear visual illustration of the fascination for this mysterious script, and also of the ignorance of the fact that Arabic, the language of the Quran, is written from right to left instead of from left to right. Certainly, to some extent, the item taps into classical Orientalist topoi, as it portrays these Islamic guest workers as having obscure rituals and a tendency towards barbarian practices such as clandestine slaughters. Despite the reporter’s attempt to demonstrate respect for their religious practices, the item also displays a certain discomfort with their need for ritual slaughter. Yet the item is ambiguous in its portrayal of the Islamic guest workers, and also testifies to a willingness to respect the Islamic religion and its rituals; a respect that seems to be rooted in a general appreciation for religious devotion. What is perhaps most striking about this item is that the Dutch nation is imagined as tolerant and hospitable, as a nation that values religious pluralism. Yet, the guest workers’ need for ritual slaughter seems to border the very limits of what Dutch hospitality has to offer. The voice-over not only suggests that this is a consequence of the fact that ritual slaughter is against Dutch law, but it also implies that the refusal of guest workers to eat Dutch meat could perhaps be seen as an ingratitude to Dutch hospitality. The seductive close-ups of the juicy meat that seems to represent Dutch national pride and hospitality emphasize this implication. Despite the fact that the television item might appear archaic and outdated to a present audience, in hindsight the item foreshadows the heated discussions yet to
come. More than forty years later, Islamic ritual slaughter still gives rise to discourses that position Muslims as Other in a similar, albeit less ambiguous, manner as in this television item from 1966.

In this chapter I further investigate stories and visual repertoires of Muslims that have been perpetuated by Dutch public television by focussing on the coverage of the rituals of Islam. Since the first arrival of Islamic immigrants, these rituals have often prompted discussions of the place of Muslims in Dutch society, of the freedom of religion and the right of Muslims to practice their religion, of the ability of Muslims to adapt to the culture of their host country, and of the need for Muslims to perform national belonging. The issue of halal slaughter is one of the recurrent and especially contested themes in these societal and political debates surrounding the place of Islam in Dutch society. But also the two important Islamic celebrations of the Festival of Fast-Breaking (id al-fitr) and the Festival of Sacrifice (id al-adha) and the ritual of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan have repeatedly incited debates on the position of Islam in Dutch pluralist society. Since the recurrent nature of these religious rituals goes hand in hand with continual and repeated television coverage – in the previous chapter I showed that television has covered these religious rituals from the very beginning of Islamic immigration and has continued to do so until today – I contend that an investigation of this television coverage can shed new light on the way Dutch public television has framed the encounter between Muslims and Dutch society throughout the years. The aim of this chapter would be then to analyse how television has imagined, visualized and constructed the religious identity of Muslims vis-à-vis the Dutch cultural identity through its coverage of Islamic rituals. Like in the aforementioned item from 1966, the Dutch nation has often been imagined as hospitable and tolerant towards other religions. Yet another exceptionally influential narrative is the story of the modernization of the Dutch nation from a Christian country to a secular one. It is therefore useful to examine the changing frames of reference in the coverage of Islamic rituals – is the Christian religion for example a persistent frame of reference? – and to investigate how the religious identity of Muslims has been mediated by the way television has ideologically constructed the Dutch nation.

Before I move towards an engagement with actual individual television programs that have addressed Islamic rituals, I first begin by briefly elaborating the conceptual paradigm of religion and rituals that I draw upon. This is to stress the fact

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277 The word id means feast in Arabic and is used- since the word originates from the Arabic root that means “to return”- for yearly recurring celebrations.
that I do not depart from an essentialist notion of religion and that I am aware that dichotomies such as religious and secular can never be neutrally invoked. Besides, by conceptualizing rituals as contested spaces for identity politics, I account for television’s fascination for these rituals and for the cyclically recurring coverage of these rituals throughout five decades. From there I proceed to define my two case studies and explain how this chapter is structured around the coverage of id al-fitr and Ramadan on the one hand and id al-adha and halal slaughter on the other. I give some background information about the nature of these rituals and provide methodological details. Where in the previous chapter I analysed the topics and visual repertoires in television’s coverage of Muslims and Islam, without including an analysis of how these topics have been presented, I take a slightly different approach in this chapter and combine archaeological discourse analysis with close textual analysis. Finally, I trace the programs and items that have addressed the various religious rituals of Muslims through the archive and investigate these programs on the level of their themes and frameworks of reference and on their visual level.

3.1 Religion, Rituals and Acts of Translation

Recent debates on the place of Islam in Dutch society often invoke extremely essentialist notions of both the Dutch national identity and the religious identity of Muslims. The Dutch national identity has repeatedly been imagined as rooted in a Judeo-Christian tradition and the Enlightenment, and as a secular and modernized nation that highly values the separation of church and state. These myths of origin often operate to either deny Muslims a place in Dutch society, because their religious identity would be incompatible with these Dutch values, or to advocate the need for Muslims to adapt to Dutch society. Because I want to examine the way Dutch television has mediated the religious identity of Muslims in relation to the Dutch cultural identity and study the frameworks of reference that television has used in its coverage of Islamic rituals throughout five decades, I consider it important at this stage to explain my conceptual points of departure when I invoke terms such as religious and secular, rituals and rites, and Islam and Christianity. I do not want to delve too deeply into the extensive debates in anthropology and religion studies on the definitions of religion and rituals; however it is helpful to shortly explain the paradigms on which I draw.
First of all, I want to stress that when I speak about religious identity and religious rituals, I do not depart from a notion of religion that defines it as a discrete and universal essence. The idea that the very definition of religion, and thus the idea of calling some things religious and other things not, is the result of historical processes has been advocated most forcefully by Talal Asad, who is an expert on both Islam and Christianity. In his *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), Asad responds to Clifford Geertz’s influential “universalist” definition of religion as a system of symbols, and argues that religious symbols cannot be understood independently of their articulations in social life, and that the study of religion should always be integrated with the study of the social exercise of power. He contends that religion should not be isolated from its formation within the social, political and economic domains of power and that any universalist definition of religion, any a-historical definition that insists that religion has an autonomous essence or core, separates religion conceptually from the domain of power, and thereby risks reiterating the hegemony of the West: “For while religion is integral to modern Western history, there are dangers in employing it as a normalizing concept when translating Islamic traditions” (1). The work of Asad is very much concerned with the cultural hegemony of the West and with the idea that any translation of religious traditions and symbols produces versions of power.

In his later work, *Formations of the Secular* (2003), he further develops his argument by focusing on the question of secularism. The aim of his intervention in the extensive academic debates on secularism is not so much to prove the secularization thesis wrong – Asad opens his book by stating that academic scholarship has abandoned the teleological narrative of progress from the religious to the secular – but again to direct attention to the constellations of power that underlie the political doctrine of secularism. Asad is thus mainly interested in the various assumptions on which secularism is based, and in the operations of power that constitute the categories of the religious and the secular. He maintains that secularism as a political doctrine can be a carrier for harsh exclusion. In his case on Muslim minorities in Europe, he argues that “Europe (and the nation-states of which it is constituted) is ideologically constructed in such a way that Muslim immigrants cannot be satisfactorily represented in it” (159) and that “it is their attachment to Islam that many believe commits Muslims to values that are an affront to the modern secular state” (160). Asad contends that the discourse of European identity that holds the idea of an unchangeable secular essence of a European “civilization” that is rooted in Christianity (or a “Judeo-Christian tradition”) and Enlightenment is a
“symptom of anxieties about non-Europeans” (ibid). And by attributing to Islam an essence, an ingrained hostility towards non-Muslims, Islam is constituted as Europe’s primary Other.

Moving away from Asad’s anti-essentialist approach to religion, I now turn to a short explanation of the concept of ritual that informs this chapter. Since rituals are at the core of the social identity of communities, whether religious, secular or other, they have always been and still remain a topic of lively discussion in the fields of anthropology, sociology and religion studies; consequently they have been afforded a wide range of definitions and applications. In this chapter I draw on the framework of social anthropology that understands ritual as a special kind of performance that creates, maintains and transforms a community’s cultural identity and social relations. In particular, I find Gerd Baumann’s (1992) understanding of rituals as always implicating “Others” useful to understand Dutch society’s and Dutch public television’s obsession with the religious rituals of Muslims. Baumann calls into question the axiom, privileged since Durkheim, that underlies much of the anthropological discourse about rituals, and that claims that rituals can best be understood as “crystallizations of basic values uniformly endorsed by communities that perform them with a view to themselves, ultimately to create and conform their cohesion as communities” (113). He argues that such an essentialist understanding of rituals is too narrow, particularly in pluralist societies. Instead, Baumann argues that rituals are the product of “competing constituencies” (99) rather than of unified communities, that rituals can be also directed towards cultural change rather than only towards the “perpetuation of social values” (ibid), and, finally, that rituals rather than being limited to insiders can be addressed to “Others”, both as “visible participants” or as “invisible categorical referents” (113). Baumann suggests that the domain of rituals is the social arena in which communities communicate among themselves, but also to, or about, “Others”: “In the ritual process, one mode of participation may be blend into another, ambiguities may be played out or manipulated, and constituencies may align or realign in the negotiation of who is “us” and who “them” (…)” (ibid). Baumann thus stresses the dynamic nature of rituals and their capacity to implicate others.

In a similar way, Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary Crain (1998) have theorized ritual as “the contested space for social action and identity politics – an arena for resistance, negotiation and identity politics” (2). They prefer to think of ritualization rather than of ritual, in order to stress what they call the “processual aspect of ritual action” (ibid): the active dimension of ritual as a performance, which
acts upon the world. Like Baumann, Hughes-Freeland and Crain shift their focus from form and meaning in rituals to different aspects of participation, agency and intentionality. This conjunction of ritual and performance, they argue, illuminates the processual aspect of identity making and moves away from the conceptualization of identities as essential, fixed or homogenous. They maintain that in today’s increasingly plural and multicultural societies, diverse publics interpret ritualized action and thereby delineate their social positions in a variety of ways, “often creating new dilemmas for intercultural communication and translation” (3). In many instances, only certain groups of a particular society celebrate a specific ritualized action, while others are excluded from participation or assume the position of (active) spectator. “Ethnic and/or national minorities as well as diasporic societies utilise their own performances as arenas in which they affirm their own identities, while also speaking to ‘outsiders’” (3). Thus, similar to Bauman, Hughes-Freeland and Crain conceptualize rituals in terms of situated and performed social practices and processes, which function as an arena in which identities are negotiated, affirmed and contested.

Finally, this paradigm of ritual is instructive for understanding why the religious rituals of Muslims have caused so many controversies and debates in the Netherlands and why these rituals have provoked continual and repetitive television coverage. Therefore, in conclusion, I explain how the above described non-essentialist paradigms of religion and rituals inform my study of the mediation of Islamic religious rituals. Religion as an aspect of cultural identity has been marginalized by scholars of media due to the Marxist roots and secular sensibilities of cultural studies. Consequently, the juncture of religion and media has mainly been studied by scholars who assume a normative framework and lament the media sphere for being secular and therefore biased and hostile toward religion. I want to stress that I indeed take another approach, not only because the Dutch media sphere is pillarized and thus not by definition secular, but more importantly because I am not interested in exposing misrepresentations. Therefore, I do not aim to evaluate whether Dutch television has represented the rituals of Muslims correctly, but want however to analyze how Dutch television has translated these rituals over the course of fifty years and how this has mediated the identity of Muslims vis-à-vis the Dutch nation. If rituals could be conceived of as arenas for the contestation of

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278 See for an elaboration of this argument: Morgan (2008).
279 See for an overview of the ways religion and media have been addressed: Hoover and Lundby (1997).
identity, how then is the identity of Muslims constructed when television translates the rituals of a "strange" religion? How has Dutch television made sense of these rituals and what meanings have been attributed to these rituals? What are the hegemonic power relations produced by television’s acts of cultural translation? What are the assumptions on which television has constructed the Dutch nation? Have the identities of Muslims and the Dutch nation been essentialized by Dutch television? Has television invoked the Dutch nation as Christian and/or secular and has it compared Islam to Christianity? What unequal power relations have been brought into play in these cases? These are the questions around which this chapter revolves.

3.2 Recurring Islamic Rituals in the Archive of Sound and Vision

This chapter is divided into two parts, both of which evolve around two central Islamic celebrations and two related themes. In the first part, I map the television coverage of the Islamic celebration of id al-fitr and the related theme of Ramadan, and in the second part I map the coverage of the celebration of id al-adha and the related theme of halal slaughter. I have chosen to focus on these specific ritual celebrations because they have been repeatedly covered by television from the very beginning of Islamic immigration until today. Other Islamic rituals such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, male circumcision, funeral rites, to name but a few, have not been so systematically addressed by television or only emerged on television much later.\(^\text{280}\) Id al-fitr and id al-adha are the two most important religious festivals for Sunni Muslims; the majority of Moroccan and Turkish Muslims are Sunni. Not surprisingly, the majority of television items that have covered id al-fitr have also addressed the ritual of fasting during Ramadan. What is striking about the television coverage of id al-adha is that many programs have also addressed the issue of halal slaughter. Over the years, the two topics of id al-adha and halal slaughter have become very much entangled. Finally, this is the reason why I have taken as the object of this chapter the television coverage of id al-fitr and Ramadan on the one hand and of id al-adha and ritual slaughter on the other. Before explaining how I

\(^{280}\) For example: the earliest item that mentioned male circumcision was made in 1977, and was an educational program about the nature of Islam. Only in the nineties male circumcision was addressed more often by television, mostly by informative programs. Besides, items about the pilgrimage to Mecca only sporadically dealt with Islamic immigrants in the Netherlands.
traced these topics through the archive, it is informative to first give some background information about the nature of these celebrations and rituals.

*Id al-fitr* (the Festival of Fast-Breaking) is the festivity that ritually closes the holy month of Ramadan – a period of fasting. Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is the period in which the Quran was sent down to earth and revealed to the prophet Muhammad. Fasting during Ramadan (*al-sawm*) is one of the five ritual obligations (the so called pillars) of Islam. The other pillars are *al-shahada* (the statement of belief: there is no god but god, and Muhammad is his prophet), *al-salaat* (prayer, five times a day), *al-zakaat* (the obligation to give alms) and *al-hadj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca). During Ramadan, Muslims must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset. The month of fasting is a period of inner cleansing and self-reflection, and is meant to train one’s willpower and discipline, to stimulate solidarity with the poor and needy, and to show gratitude for the revelation. Each evening, after sunset, Muslims eat *iftar*, often with friends and family. The end of Ramadan is celebrated during *id al-fitr*, and during this three-day festival Muslims visit friends and family and partake of special feasts. In the Netherlands *id al-fitr* has become known as *Suikerfeest*, which literally means sugar festival and refers to the large amount of sweets that people eat during this festival.

*Id al-adha* (the Festival of Sacrifice) is also a three-day celebration that begins on the tenth day of the month of *Hadj*, the day on which the pilgrimage to Mecca is completed. *Id al-adha* is often referred to as *id al-kabir*, which means the great feast and is by many Muslims considered the most important celebration. During this celebration Muslims commemorate the sacrifice of the prophet Ibrahim. Ibrahim was put to a heavy test when God demanded him to sacrifice his son Ismail. Ibrahim could not but obey to God; at the very moment he wanted to fulfil God’s request, God intervened and gave him a ram to sacrifice instead. Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son had proven his dedication to God, and during *id al-adha* Muslims celebrate Ibrahim’s devotion and submission to God by sacrificing an animal, often a sheep, and by gathering and eating a feast with friends and family. Muslims are obliged to give one third of their sacrificial animal to the poor; one third to friends, family and neighbours; and the last third they are allowed to consume themselves. The sacrificial animal, like all the meat Muslims eat, must be slaughtered according to Islamic rites. One of the Islamic dietary rules says that they are not allowed (*haram*) to eat blood, because Islam considers blood impure. Animals therefore must be slaughtered in such a way that all the blood flows out completely – only then is the
meat considered halal – and this must be done by an imam who has been educated in Islamic slaughtering rites. In the Netherlands id al-adha is referred to as Offerfeest and sometimes as Schapenfeest, which literally means sheep festival, and halal slaughter as ritueel slachten.

Yet again, the archive of Sound and Vision is the starting point of my archaeological dig through television history, and in this chapter I continue to read the archive along the grain, in the same manner as I elaborated in the previous chapter. In the first part, I systematically trace the words Ramadan and suikerfeest through the archive, and in the second part offerfeest, halal, and ritueel slachten. I provide some quantitative findings and I analyze the thematic structure of the programs that have addressed these rituals. I engage in a close textual analysis of a number of exemplary programs and items; I investigate how the religious identity of Muslims has been imagined, how the Dutch nation has been constructed, what frameworks of reference have been employed, and what images have been used to visualize and illustrate the stories. I take the ideological vocations of the various broadcasting organizations into account, and I also look at, if relevant, the descriptions of the material. And finally, the periodization I use to structure each part springs from the different discursive regimes that I identified in the previous chapter.

PART 1:
TRACING TELEVISION COVERAGE OF RAMADAN AND ID AL-FITR

3.3 Ramadan: The Respectful Gaze and the Framework of Dutch Hospitality and Solidarity

In the previous chapter, I showed that during the sixties and seventies, in the discursive regime of the single male low-skilled guest worker whose stay in the Netherlands was considered to be of a temporary nature, the religious identity of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers was not very visible on Dutch television and was mainly covered in relation to their yearly religious celebrations. In this period, 

281 In this chapter, I have not searched with keywords, but I have searched in “open field” in order to find as much items as possible that have addressed these topics. Again, I want to stress that I do not claim that the following overview of television’s coverage of these rituals is complete. If certain programs have addressed one of these rituals, but the archival descriptions have not mentioned this, then I have not included them in this overview. I have not searched with the official Arabic names of the festivals, because that results in programs broadcast by the Islamic broadcasters only (IOS and NMO).
nine items addressed the celebration of *id al-fitr* and/or the ritual of Islamic fasting. Of these, the news items- the *Journaals* of the NTS/NOS - covered celebrations of the end of Ramadan, while the actuality magazine more extensively covered the nature of the Ramadan ritual. The earliest item, a NTS *Journaal* broadcast in 1964, covered a Ramadan celebration in the Mubarak mosque in The Hague. The NTS dedicated three additional news items to the celebration of Ramadan: respectively, about a celebration in a town hall in Enschede in 1966, a celebration in the Mubarak mosque in 1968 and a celebration in the newly opened mosque in Almelo in 1974. The actuality magazine *Kenmerk* of the IKOR (the inter-religious broadcasting organization) broadcast an item about a Ramadan service in the Mubarak mosque in 1967 and one about a Turkish family in 1975. Finally, the pastoral broadcasting RKK dedicated two items to the portrayal of a Turkish guest worker and his practice of Ramadan. In order to show how the ritual of Ramadan has been visualized and framed during these initial years of Islamic immigration, I now take a closer look at a selection of these programs.

**Serene scenes of prayer**

One of the earliest items that addressed Ramadan was an item from the NTS *Journaal* that was broadcast in 1966. The description of the material tells us that this two-minute item is about a Ramadan service in a town hall in Enschede that has been arranged into a mosque for Turkish workers. Despite the fact that only the visuals and sound recorded on location has been preserved (the introduction by the presenter and the explanatory voice-over have been lost) and that it is hence impossible to capture the exact tone of the item, the images are still quite revealing. The item opens with images of the town hall followed by images of men who enter

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282 The word “Ramadan” results in 9 programs/ items that address the Dutch domestic context. The word “*Suikerfeest*” does not give any results, and had apparently not yet penetrated the archival descriptions of Sound and Vision in the sixties and the seventies. One of the nine items is an episode of *Paspoort* (NOS, 26-08-1976), that provided a Ramadan broadcasting for the Turkish community.

283 *Journaal* (NTS, 15-02-1964).


286 *Het Omroeppastoraat* (KRO/RKK, 01-01-1997) and *T Zand 33* (RKK, 14-06-1979). This pastoral broadcasting of the Catholic Church had been founded in 1974, and was a cooperation between the KRO- the Catholic broadcasting organization- and the archdiocese Utrecht. The aim was to involve the media of radio and television in the Catholic liturgy.


288 The archival description displays a certain ignorance of the Islamic religion, as the service has been described as Islamist instead of Islamic.
the building and remove their shoes. On the soundtrack we hear a man calling for prayer and repeating the words *Allahu Akbar* – God is great. Then a lengthy scene of a communal prayer is shown. What is striking is that the camera seems to have done its utmost to accentuate the serenity and the beauty of this ritual prayer. The men are filmed from above and behind, while they repeatedly bend, kneel down on the ground and rise again. On the soundtrack we hear the men performing a prayer. The scene is filmed in long shots, which leaves the impression that the camera has consciously kept a proper distance from the men during their intimate moment with God. The framing of the images stresses the visual harmony and symmetry of the ritual prayer performance. This sequence is followed by a final scene of the party afterwards, and images of men congratulating each other and of men enthusiastically dancing and celebrating. Although it is impossible to analyse the exact tone of this news item, the item shows Islamic guest workers as exotic and strange, and the gaze of the camera displays fascination and respect for the strange rituals.

The style of this news item is exemplary of the way the ritual of Ramadan has been visualized by television during this period. Both the news and actuality items have employed an observational style and include comparable long-lasting scenes of people praying and singing from the Quran. Images of the exterior and interior of the Mubarak mosque, of Arabic writing on the wall, of preaching imams, and of men performing communal prayer dominated the visual repertoire of these programs; the gaze of the camera displayed an unfamiliarity with and curiosity for the Islamic religion. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, these were also the very images that were highlighted in the archival descriptions. In the many scenes of prayer that recur in these programs, the camera has underlined both the otherness and the visual beauty of Islamic ritual prayer. The observational style of these items and the exotic gazes of the camera clearly display a respectful attitude towards the religious identity of the Turkish and Moroccan guest workers. Regarding the thematic content of the coverage of Ramadan, the news and actuality items were aimed at informing the Dutch viewer about the nature of this ritual and unfamiliar religion. The themes that these programs raised were the integration of guest workers in the sphere of religion and the lack of facilities to practice the Islamic faith. What is striking is that many of these items spoke from a position of solidarity with the guest workers and often imagined the Dutch nation as hospitable, but also as not yet hospitable enough.
Ramadan and the lack of facilities to practice the Islamic faith

The first actuality magazine that addressed the issue of Ramadan is *Kenmerk.* In 1967, it dedicated a six-minute item to the issue of Islamic fasting, a week after the end of Ramadan. The item opens with scenes of prayer in the Mubarak mosque, accompanied by a voice-over that states that the *azan* (the call for prayer) can nowadays be heard in the Netherlands, because thousands of guest workers are Muslim. Close-ups of a praying Muslim and of the entrance of the Mubarak mosque are shown, while the voice-over continues and states that the *azan* could even be heard in some Christian churches that were lent to Muslims for the celebration of the end of Ramadan because there is only one official mosque in the Netherlands. Besides more prayer scenes, the item shows an interview with imam Hafiz who explains the nature of the ritual of Ramadan and also extensively elaborates on the other four pillars of Islam. In the last scene, the reporter compares Ramadan to Catholic fasting and asks imam Hafiz whether the Dutch tolerate Ramadan. The imam thereupon goes into details about Dutch tolerance and states that many employers have arranged for improvised places for worship in their factories. Clearly, the tone of the item echoes the religious foundation of the broadcasting organization IKOR and its mission to advocate inter-religious dialogue. The item wants to inform the Dutch audience about the Islamic religion and seems to speak from a position that highly values religion. The comparative framing of the ritual of Ramadan seems to promote sympathy for the Muslims and advocate tolerance. The item only faintly raises the issue of the lack of places for worship, and eventually, by stressing the generosity of Dutch churches and employers, the Dutch nation is imagined as tolerant and hospitable; as a country that cherishes religious pluralism.

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289 *Kenmerk* (IKOR, 16-01-1967).
In 1975, another episode of Kenmerk dedicated a twenty-four minute item to the issue of Ramadan, in which the issue of Dutch tolerance and hospitality was also addressed, but this time in a more critical manner. The item opens with observational scenes of prayer and Quran recitation in the living room of a Turkish family and of the family eating iftar, accompanied by a voice-over that explains the practice of Ramadan. Then a young Turkish man talks in front of the camera about the religious significance of Ramadan, followed by images of a communal prayer service. The voice-over explains that the Muslims living in Amersfoort are forced to hold their religious service in a room of the Remonstrant and Baptist Church, and that this church community counts 500 souls, while the amount of Turks and Moroccans who live in and around Amersfoort has reached nearly 2000 people. A lengthy scene of the religious service follows: close-ups of the imam preaching, men sitting on the floor while listening and images of the communal prayer. Then the item cuts back to the interview with the young Turkish man, who explains that it is exceptional to be able to hold a service like this and that the Turkish community is seeking a place where they can perform their daily services. The voice-over continues and says that the Moroccans hold their Ramadan service in another room of the church, because – due to different languages – they are unable combine their services. This statement is illustrated by a sequence of images of the Moroccan Ramadan service: a preaching imam, men reciting the Quran and close-ups of

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290 Kenmerk (IKOR, 01-10-1975).
Arabic writings in the Quran. The voice-over states that it is not only the lack of places for worship, but also the attitude of Dutch employers towards “Muhammadan” employees that causes them problems. In the last scene, a guest worker further explicates and gives examples of blunt comments from Dutch people about his fasting during Ramadan.

This episode of Kenmerk thus quite explicitly raises the issue of the lack of facilities for Muslims to practice their religious obligations, and again obviously speaks from a position of solidarity with Islamic guest workers who are also referred to as “Muhammadan” – a word that apparently was still in common usage, to describe the followers of Islam. Once again the rituals of Islam are met with both respect and curiosity. The item dedicates much time to show the Ramadan service of both the Turkish and Moroccan workers, the scenes of prayer are filmed in the typical observational style, the voice-over falls silent as to leave the intimacy of these moments of religious devotion undisturbed and the camera gazes intriguingly. The item allows Muslims themselves to extensively talk about the meaning of Ramadan and the problems they encounter in Dutch society. What is also striking about this item is that it does not homogenize the identity of the Islamic guest workers, as it explicitly designates ethnic differences between Turkish and Moroccan Muslims. The item speaks from a position that considers religion as a very important aspect of Dutch society. By invoking the hospitality of the Dutch Remonstrant Church as a natural responsibility – even more so by suggesting that this Church has past its prime and that the amount of Muslims have by far outnumbered the Remonstrant community – the voice-over underlines the overall argument of the item that Muslims have an obvious right to acquire facilities to practice their faith. Eventually, the item tells an ambivalent story about the Dutch nation; it figures the Dutch nation as a nation that is respectful to religious devotion but not yet hospitable enough to translate religious tolerance into actual facilities for Muslims. This report on Ramadan finally implicitly critiques Dutch hospitality.

Figure 31 a-b. Stills from ’T Zand (KRO, 14-06-1979)
Similarly, the actuality magazine of the pastoral broadcasting ‘T Zand (broadcast in 1979) invoked Ramadan in relation to the lack of prayer rooms for Muslims.\(^{291}\) The item portrays a Turkish guest worker who works for the Dutch railway and who participates in Ramadan. He is filmed at work, where his Dutch colleagues comment on his fasting respectfully, in the mosque during a Ramadan service and at home with his family eating *iftar*, where he explains that his experience of Ramadan is different in the Netherlands than in Turkey. Again, the item shows long observational scenes of prayer during the Ramadan service. The voice-over extensively dwells on the lack of mosques, and on the complications that this causes for many Islamic guest workers that want to live up to their religious obligations. The item ends with a lengthy interview with a Dutch woman, who is committed to arranging a mosque for Turkish guest workers in Amersfoort, and who passionately explains that Muslims should feel at home and should not be alienated from their own culture. She also stresses the fact that Muslims cannot hold their services in Catholic churches, because of the prohibition of images in Islam. So again, this item advocates the right of Islamic guest workers to obtain facilities for prayer and speaks from a position of solidarity that seems very much rooted in identification with religious devotion. Further, the Dutch nation is figured as a nation that is reined by the principle of religious pluralism and should therefore live up to its hospitality and adapt to the needs of guest workers.

Thus, in the discursive regime of the sixties and seventies, the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* followed the same thematic tendencies as the general television coverage of foreign workers that I described in the previous chapter and focused on their struggle for emancipation in the sphere of religion. The actuality items of religiously inspired broadcasting organizations stressed the role of the Church in providing places for worship for Islamic guest workers and have quite explicitly commented on the lack of Dutch hospitality toward the religious needs of guest workers. The programs obviously spoke from a position that valued religion as an important part of people’s identity, despite the different beliefs of Muslims. But also the neutral news items have taken a respectful attitude toward the religious identity of guest workers and raised the issue of the lack of facilities to practice their faith. Clearly, television has not represented these religious needs as being at odds with the values of Dutch society. On the contrary, the Dutch nation has been imagined as a place where pillarized pluralism and religious diversity should result in

\(^{291}\) ‘T Zand (KRO, 14-06-1979).
tolerance, hospitality and in the adaptation of the Dutch to the needs of Islamic guest workers.

3.4 Ramadan and the Christian Comparative Framework

In the discursive regime of the eighties, guest workers were replaced by ethnic minorities whose relationship to the Netherlands was rearticulated as permanent, Muslims became more visible on television and the variety of topics associated with Islam increased. In addition to the coverage of Islamic celebrations and rituals, television reported on the second generation of Muslims, Muslim women, Islamic education, and towards the end of the decade sporadically on Islamic fundamentalism. In this period, 31 items have addressed the celebration of id al-fitr and/or the ritual of Islamic fasting, of which the majority (23 in total) were special Ramadan programs broadcast by the IOS (Islamic broadcasting organization) or episodes of Paspoort.\(^{292}\) The NOS news did not cover Ramadan celebrations in this period, and the 8 remaining items, actuality magazines and talk shows broadcast by religiously inspired broadcasting organizations KRO/ RKK and IKON, and didactic and informative programs broadcast by the educational broadcasting organizations RVU, FEDUCO and STV.\(^{293}\) Like during the sixties and seventies, the coverage of Ramadan was aimed at providing factual information about the nature of the Islamic religion and at raising awareness and sympathy for Muslims. What is striking is that television increasingly began to frame Islamic fasting comparatively and invoke Islam in relation to Christianity. At this point the second generation entered the coverage of Ramadan.

Keeping Ramadan alive in the Netherlands

The first item that addressed Ramadan in this period, the KRO actuality magazine Brandpunt (1983), is also the first item that brought up the issue of the second generation and their decreasing religiosity.\(^{294}\) The item is a double portrayal of two

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\(^{292}\) The word "Ramadan" results in 30 programs/items that address the Dutch domestic context. The word "Suikerfeest" gives 2 results- both episodes of Paspoort, of which one has also been described with Ramadan. Suikerfeest obviously had not yet penetrated the archival descriptions of Sound and Vision.


\(^{294}\) Brandpunt (KRO, 04-07-1983).
Turkish men, which revolves around their experience of Ramadan in the Netherlands and the reactions of the Dutch. The two men are filmed at work (a melting furnace in Beverwijk and the Dutch railway) while the voice-over states that the observance of Ramadan demands a large adaptability of the Muslims, because the companies lack a place for worship. A lengthy scene of prayer of one of the Turkish men in an office illustrates this statement. The men are interviewed about the significance of Ramadan and talk about the difficulties they encounter with the observance of Ramadan in the Netherlands, such as the hard physical labour they must perform while fasting. The voice-over states that the industry has displayed a growing empathy with Islam during the last few years, but then wonders whether Islamic traditions can actually survive in a Western society. The Dutch imam van Bommel is then interviewed about this issue. He says that Islam is not a static religion and that Muslims certainly experience Ramadan more intensely in their home countries. He furthermore explains that the first generation tries to hold on to Islamic traditions, but that their children assign less value to Ramadan. One of the Turkish men is filmed and interviewed at home while eating iftar with his family and his Dutch neighbours, and says that he tries the utmost to raise his children according to Islamic traditions. His son explains that he participates in Ramadan for the first time. To the reporter’s question of whether Ramadan is important to him; he replies that it is his father who considers it important. The item ends with a lengthy scene of a nightly prayer in a mosque in Utrecht where hundreds of men have gathered. The voice-over says that the end of Ramadan will be celebrated during a huge festivity called Suikerfeest and that the meaning of this festivity can be compared to the significance of a Christian Christmas.

Both in style and tone, Brandpunt’s item resembles Ramadan coverage of the sixties and seventies. The item obviously speaks from a position of solidarity and empathy with the religious dedication of the Turkish men and the camera observes their prayers with fascination and curiosity. However, the item is not so much an accusation of the lack of facilities to practice the Islamic belief – like the coverage in the previous decades – but revolves more around the question of how Turkish Muslims manage to keep alive their religious traditions in the Netherlands and how their state of exile unavoidably brings about changes in the experience of their religious rituals and beliefs. The item depicts the Turkish men as flexible, well adapted and hospitable to Dutch society, and their Islamic identity as elastic and changeable. By focusing on the decreasing importance of the ritual of Ramadan for the second generation, the item suggests that Islamic rituals are not necessarily
static or fixed. Dutch society is portrayed as cooperative and accommodating and the Islamic identity of the men is not in any way imagined as being in conflict with the values of Dutch society. On the contrary, by comparing *id al-fitr* to Christmas, the item stresses the holiness of this Islamic festivity and advocates respect for this sacred celebration. Although the comparison between Islam and Christianity might reveal an Eurocentric approach to Islam, the item unmistakably aspires to generate compassion with and tolerance for Muslims in the Netherlands.

The similarities between Islam and Christianity

Although more items have addressed Ramadan in relation to the second generation, it is now useful to take a closer look at a selection of programs that are exemplary for television’s tendency to frame the ritual of Ramadan comparatively. In 1984, KRO’s religious talk show *Er is meer tussen hemel en aarde* explicitly compared

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295 The educational program *In Holland staat hun huis* (STV, 20-02-1984) portrays Turkish children who talk about their religious rituals. And in the talk show *Sjappoo* (IKON, 16-04-1989) two Islamic youngsters are interviewed about their experience of Ramadan and about their view on the Rushdie affair.
Islam to Christianity and was aimed at promoting more understanding for Islam.\textsuperscript{296} The talk show was recorded in the Dom Church in Utrecht and was nearly completely dedicated to the issue of Islam and fasting. The program opens with the statement of the presenter that the Dutch are ignorant about Muslims living in the country; that he intends to change this and remove the prejudice. Firstly, a Moroccan and a Surinamese Muslim talk about their religious beliefs. They speak about the difficulties of keeping their faith in Western society, about the abuse of the Quran by Khomeini, about their religious obligations, such as Ramadan, and about the similarities between Islam and Christianity. Thereafter, a Dutch converted women talks extensively about the similarities between Islam and Christianity. She explains that Allah is the same god as the Christian one, and then talks about the prominent roles of Jesus and Mary in the Quran. Besides, she elaborates on the position of women in Islam, and says that according to the Quran man and woman are equal. Then a new guest is introduced, a parish-priest who has opened the door of his church to Muslims. He explains that these Muslims do not have a place for worship and that the Church is therefore obliged to help them. He talks about the beautiful relations between Muslims and Christians in his parish and states that Islam is a tender religion. The rest of the program is dedicated to interviews with Dutch people about Catholic fasting. Clearly, the nature of this item echoes the Catholic roots of the KRO. It depicts religious belief as connecting people and as an important source of respect for one another. The program is explicit about its aim to fight ignorance of and prejudice against Islam, and does this by constantly emphasizing the similarities between Muslims and Christians. The ritual of Ramadan seems to be the perfect illustration of these similarities, as it has an equivalent in Christianity. The identity of Muslims is imagined as similar, instead of strange and other; the Dutch nation as a place that offers space to any religion and a place in which hospitality is very much contingent on religious faith.

Various educational programs also framed Ramadan comparatively during this period. For example, in 1985 the RVU (educational broadcasting organization) broadcast a series called \textit{Levende Rituelen} about the rituals of the major religions.\textsuperscript{297} The first part of the episode is about the celebration of carnival in the south of the Netherlands and about the beginning of Lent; the catholic period of fasting, on Ash Wednesday, and the second part is about a Moroccan family that participates in

\textsuperscript{296} \textit{Er is meer tussen hemel en aarde},(KRO/RKK, 27-11-1984). The title means: there is more between heaven and earth.

\textsuperscript{297} \textit{Levende Rituelen} (RVU, 21-05-1985). The title means: living rituals.
Ramadan. The father extensively discusses the significance of Ramadan and states that it is harder to fulfil this religious duty in the Netherlands because the atmosphere is different and certain Dutch people react negatively. So once again, television stresses the similarities between Muslims and Christians, and constitutes the identity of Muslims as the same as the Dutch. This is also the case in the informative program about Islam, *De Islam*, which was broadcast in 1987.\(^{298}\) The program departs from the statement that Islam has obtained a firm foothold in the Netherlands. It oscillates between archive footage of the Middle East, footage of the Mubarak mosque and other footage of the Dutch context, of which many scenes derive from the previously discussed episode of *Brandpunt*. It portrays a Moroccan family and an imam who extensively discusses the ritual of Ramadan. The voice-over explains that the Dutch Islamic community entails various ethnicities, such as Indonesians, Moluccans, Surinamese, Turks and Moroccans. The program then cuts back to Middle East, and tells the story of the birth of Islam. A large amount of time is dedicated to explaining the characters from the Bible who are also present in the Quran, such as Jesus, Mary, Abraham and Jacob. The item ends with images of a market in the Middle East and one in the Netherlands, accompanied by a positive voice-over statement about the transformed street views due to the arrival of foreigners. Also in this educational program, Islam is framed comparatively to encourage identification with Muslims living in the Netherlands and to show that they are the same as we are.

Conclusively, television coverage in the eighties has focused not so much on the celebration of *id al-fitr*, but more on the Islamic practice of fasting that was discovered to have an equivalent in Christianity. In these years, Ramadan had been addressed by the religiously inspired and educational broadcasting organizations only, mainly to provide factual information about Islam and to fight prejudice. Apparently, with the acknowledgement that Islamic immigrants were here to stay, the urgency to inform the Dutch audience about their religious practices had increased. The lengthy observational reportages of the sixties and seventies began to be replaced by shorter items and talk shows in which Muslims themselves (of the first and second generation) were given the floor. The comparative framing of Ramadan and Islam of this decade was clearly aimed at constructing the values and beliefs of Muslims as very much in line with the Christian faith. And although these acts of cultural translation might reveal a Eurocentric attitude towards Islam and make explicit the hegemony of Christianity, they also expose the attempt of

\(^{298}\) *De Islam* (STV, 09-12-1987).
television programs to promote tolerance and respect and to show that the religious identity of Muslims is not incompatible with the values of the Dutch nation. Lastly, television continued to visualize stories with prayer scenes and Quran recitations, but in less long-lasting observational scenes that were so dominant in the previous decades. Apparently, the performance of Islamic religious rituals had lost a bit of its exotic appeal.

3.5 Ramadan and the Framework of Multicultural Relations

In the discursive regime of nineties, in which televisual stories concentrated on old city quarters, Moroccan criminals, and other issues relating to the integration of allochtonen, Muslims had yet again become more visible on television. Both the amount of coverage and the variety of topics associated with Islam had increased substantially; the issues of Muslim women, Islamic fundamentalism and fear of Islam had emerged as new topics. During this period, the coverage of Ramadan and/or id al-fitr also increased, as 72 items addressed the issue, of which a total of 38 were magazines from one of the Islamic broadcasting organizations or episodes of Paspoort.299 The remaining items range from actuality programs, (religious) talk shows, educational programs, to children’s programs.300 Like in the eighties, items were aimed at giving factual information about the ritual of Ramadan and about the Islamic religion, while other items continued to frame the ritual comparatively. Moreover, what is remarkable in this decade is that television began to invoke the topic of Ramadan in relation to the multicultural society and its issues and problems.

The coinciding of Ramadan and Lent

Not surprisingly, the coinciding of Ramadan and Lent in March 1992 resulted in items that framed the ritual of Ramadan comparatively. For example, the actuality

299 The word “Ramadan” results in 69 programs that address the Dutch context. The word “Suikerfeest” results in 12 programs, of which 9 have also been described with “Ramadan”.
program NOS Laat seized the occasion to dedicate an item to the similarities and differences between Catholic and Islamic fasting. The item opens with the voice-over statement that the program revolves around the ritual of fasting in two different religions; one that is rising and one that has passed its prime. Images of Catholic chapelgoers oscillate with images of Muslims performing communal prayer, while the voice-over presents information about the decline of church attendance among Catholics and about the growing amount of Muslims in the Netherlands. The item portrays a Dutch family that observes Lent and a Turkish family that participates in Ramadan. Besides, a priest is interviewed about the decline of church attendance among the Dutch, and a Turkish couple is interviewed about the attitude of the Dutch towards Ramadan; an attitude that is in their view not always full of understanding. The item emphasizes the similarities between Islam and Christianity by the juxtaposition of images of the Catholic ritual of Ash Wednesday in a Church and images of Muslims performing prayer in a mosque, and of images of the sober dinner of the Catholic family and the early breakfast of the Turkish one. Clearly, this item resembles the items from the eighties that frame the Islamic ritual comparatively. The item wants to give factual information about the meaning of religious rituals and show that the Islamic religion is not quite that different from Christianity. Strikingly, this comparison is also used to tell the story of the decline of religious belief among the Dutch and of the rise of Islam in the Netherlands. The Dutch nation is imagined as secularizing, while a new religion is rising within its borders. This is not imagined as problematic, and the Dutch nation seems to be once again depicted as a place where people with various beliefs can coexist peacefully; where the rise of Islam is not whatsoever considered a threat, and where Muslims have the right to exist.

The KRO actuality program Kruispunt seized the coinciding of Ramadan and Lent to reflect on problematic intercultural relations in the old city quarter of Zuilen in Utrecht. The item departs from the question of why it is so difficult for foreigners and Dutch to live together, and the voice-over announces that the item will investigate the problems between Turkish and Moroccan allochtonen and Dutch autochtonen in Zuilen. The item intermingles interviews with Dutch residents about their negative sentiments regarding foreigners with interviews with Dutch people who attempt to promote dialogue. Then the voice-over states that the coinciding of

301 NOS Laat (NOS, 05-03-1992). The shots that are highlighted in the description are (among others): “Turkish woman (veiled) preparing a meal” and “religious service in a mosque in Amsterdam; praying Muslims”.
302 Kruispunt (KRO, 08-03-1992).
the beginning of Ramadan and Lent could be a good opportunity to get to know each other a little bit better. Images of Catholics who receive ashes in a church are juxtaposed with images of Muslims performing communal prayer in a mosque. The voice-over comments on these images with the statement that the occasions were nonetheless celebrated separately. A pastoral worker tries to explain this and points to Dutch ignorance about Islam; a Dutch woman says that she took her Turkish neighbours to church and that she will join them in the mosque during *id al-fitr*. The voice-over concludes that this woman is an exception. Clearly, this item speaks from the Catholic perspective of the KRO, as it represents religion as a connecting force and sees the coinciding of Ramadan and Lent as an opportunity to promote dialogue between *allochtonen* and *autochtonen*. Once again, the ritual of Ramadan is framed comparatively, and juxtaposed images of prayer in a church and a mosque are used to illustrate the similarities between Christians and Muslims. The item explicitly laments the lack of understanding for Muslims and the lack of intercultural dialogue in this old city quarter, a topic that, as I established in the previous chapter, became one of the dominant themes on television and one of the symbols of disturbed multicultural relations in this period.

**Ramadan and the next generations**

While in the eighties Ramadan was only sporadically addressed in relation to the second generation, in the nineties the amount of coverage of Ramadan in relation to the beliefs and practices of the second and third generation intensified. Apart from various children’s programs that portrayed Islamic children who explained their religious rituals, numerous talk shows gave the floor to Islamic youngsters to talk about their experiences of being a Muslim in the Netherlands. For instance, in 1994 the NOS program *Binnenland* used the occasion of the beginning of Ramadan to interview two young Moroccan men about their experience of Islam and sexuality. The premise of the program is the decline of religious belief among youngsters. The voice-over states that these youngsters – in contrast with their parents – are not zealous visitors to the mosque and seem to only live up to the obligations of Ramadan. Two young Moroccan men are interviewed about their daily reality, in which they need to compromise between adapting to Dutch society and respecting the traditions of their parents. They talk about the difficulties they experience with their Islamic traditions, such as the obligation to refrain from sexual intercourse before marriage and they explain how they struggle with the expectations of their parents.

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303 *Binnenland* (NOS, 11-03-1994). This was a youth series about foreigners in the Netherlands.
parents. Similarly, VARA’s talk show Barend & Witteman seized the occasion of Ramadan to interview young Muslims about their experiences with their religion in the Netherlands and about love, relationships and sexuality. Yet again, young Muslims talk about how they balance between Dutch society and the traditions of their parents.

What is interesting about these television items is that the rituals of Islam have not been depicted as rigid and unchangeable, but as flexible and malleable. These young Muslims were represented as less religious than their parents, while still embodying some of the values of their parents, but in a very much-modified form. These items show how the context of living in Dutch society has brought about changes in religious attitudes and practices of the next generations. The religious identity of these young Muslims has not been essentialized; they have been represented as caught between Dutch society and the traditions of their parents, as being Dutch and Muslim simultaneously, and as fully participating in Dutch society. Their Islamic identity has not been imagined as being in opposition with the values of Dutch society, and has been depicted as adaptable and open to change.

Iftar for the Dutch

In this period, several television items about *id al-fitr* began to report on the efforts of Muslims to involve the Dutch in the celebration this religious festival. Already in the eighties, some items had implicitly addressed the hospitality of Muslims during their holy month and had shown Dutch neighbours participating in *iftar*. In the nineties, more programs emerged that explicitly addressed the participation of the Dutch in Islamic rituals. For instance, in 1996 another episode of KRO’s *Kruispunt* was dedicated to Ramadan, and portrayed an Islamic family from Limburg who had invited their Dutch friends and neighbours for iftar to celebrate the end of Ramadan.304 The purpose of the item was to denounce Dutch ignorance about Islam and to promote understanding. Once again, this KRO program framed the ritual comparatively to achieve this, as it also showed the Islamic family celebrating carnival with their Dutch Catholic friends. Further, in 1997, a short NPS documentary (*Vreemd Land*) portrayed a North-African shop in Groningen, where Dutch employees participated in Ramadan, and where the Tunisian owner walked around on Dutch wooden shoes.305 Both these items tell a rosy story about intercultural

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304 *Kruispunt* (KRO, 03-03-1996).
relations in the Dutch multicultural society, in which the mutual sharing of rituals between Dutch and Muslims is imagined as the perfect illustration of the possibility to live harmoniously together and adapt to each other.

![Figure 33. Still from Kruispunt (KRO, 03-03-1996). Islamic woman with Dutch neighbour eating iftar.](image)

Besides the initiatives of individual families to involve the Dutch in their religious practices, television also reported on the initiative of a mosque to involve Dutch residents of the neighbourhood in the celebration of *id al-fitr*. In 1994, the NPS program *Binnenland* broadcast an item entitled: “Ramadan for non-Muslims”. The item is about a mosque in Ijmuiden where Dutch neighbours were invited for *iftar*. The item follows the Turkish secretary of the mosque, while walking around the neighbourhood to invite Dutch residents for *iftar*. After a series of street interviews with Dutch residents about their opinion on the initiative (the answers vary from “I don’t know any Muslims, but I will come” and “my husband is not so interested, he doesn’t like them so much”, to “I don’t think we will be served a drink or a pork-chop there”) the item shows the gathering of Dutch and Muslims in the mosque, the singing of the imam to break the fast, and the partaking of supper. Some of the guests are interviewed and express positive feelings about the event. The initiator of the event explains why the Dutch and the Turks have not been sitting side by side, and he points out that this was the first time he organized an event like this, and that it will get better in the future; when uneasiness and ignorance diminishes. The program ends with a lengthy scene of the performance of communal prayer. So

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306 *Binnenland* (NPS, 19-02-1995)
again, this program spoke from a position that clearly valued the intercultural
dialogue that the Turkish Muslims have tried to initiate. By contrasting the efforts of
the secretary of the mosque to invite the Dutch residents with statements of these
residents that displayed ruthless ignorance, the item has emphasized the hospitality
of the Muslims and their willingness to involve the Dutch in their religious practices,
to abolish prejudices and establish peaceful intercultural relations.

Conclusively, in the nineties the scope of the thematic structure of the
coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* began to widen compared to the eighties, while
beginning to move beyond the realm of religion and religious belief. In this period,
television began to cover Ramadan and *id al-fitr* within a framework of
multiculturalism. The comparative framework of the eighties still persisted (mainly in
the coverage of the religiously inspired broadcasting organizations) but also in these
items, the focus shifted to the intercultural relations between Dutch and Muslims in
(problematic) residential areas. In the items about the practicing of Ramadan of the
next generations, Moroccan youngsters were spoken about in terms of integration
and participation; their religious identity was depicted as flexible and adaptable.
And, as Muslims began to, in Baumann’s phrasing, actively implicate others in their
rituals, television began to cover their efforts to involve the Dutch in their religious
practices from a perspective that clearly valued encounters between Dutch and
Muslims. While television continued to visualize these stories with images of
communal prayer in mosques, it also increasingly illustrated stories with images of
*iftar* meals in homes of Muslims and images of Dutch and Muslims partaking in
festive meals. On a visual level, television began to focus less on the introverted
sacred aspects of Ramadan and more on the social aspects of the ritual.

### 3.6 Ramadan as Showcase of the Successful Integration of Muslims

Following the traumatic events of 9/11 and the murder of Theo van Gogh, the
amount of coverage of Islam exploded and the issues of multiculturalism, integration
and Islam became very much intertwined. In this new discursive regime of the first
decade of the new millennium, television perpetuated stories about the failure of
integration, about the radicalizations of young Muslims, about homegrown terrorism,
hate-preaching imams and repressed veiled women. The coverage of Ramadan and
*id al-fitr* increased substantially, and in this period a total of 268 items have
addressed the issue of Ramadan and/or *Suikerfeest*, of which 113 were broadcast by
one of the Islamic broadcasting organizations.\textsuperscript{307} The NOS news (both the \textit{Journaal} and the children’s version \textit{Jeugdjournaal}) and various short actuality items began to regularly cover the beginning and ending of Ramadan, which indicates that Ramadan and Suikerfeest had become self-evident aspects of Dutch reality and had gained recognition as being part of Dutch society.\textsuperscript{308} Furthermore, various educational programs that gave factual information about the nature and the daily practices of Ramadan continued to be broadcast in this period.\textsuperscript{309} The bulk of the programs and items that addressed Ramadan, however, revolved, in one way or another, around the place Muslims have or should have in Dutch society. Television repeatedly reported, for instance, on the debate about giving Suikerfeest the status of a national holiday.\textsuperscript{310} And as the discursive entanglement between the Islamic religion and issues of integration that had begun to emerge in the nineties was consolidated in these years, the ritual of Ramadan and the celebration of \textit{id al-fitr} were increasingly addressed in relation to issues of integration, national belonging and intercultural dialogue.

\textbf{The coinciding of Suikerfeest and Sinterklaas}

It is useful to begin here with the coverage of the coinciding of \textit{Suikerfeest} and the Dutch national celebration of \textit{Sinterklaas} in 2002.\textsuperscript{311} Various news, actuality programs and talk shows reported on this exceptional event and framed it as a typical test case for the achievements of integration. Leading up to the event, television covered the debates that emerged and that mainly revolved around the question of whether schools should postpone the celebration of \textit{Sinterklaas} by one day so that

\textsuperscript{307}“Ramadan” results in 239 items about the Dutch context (excluding the items about Tariq Ramadan and fiction series), of which 113 have been broadcast by NMO or NIO. “Suikerfeest” results in 29 items that have not been described with Ramadan and that have not been broadcast by the Islamic broadcasting organizations.


\textsuperscript{309} See for example: \textit{Levensbeschouwing in beeld} (NOT, 10-09-2001 and 27-09-2005).


\textsuperscript{311} \textit{Sinterklaas} is a national celebration, in particular for children. The festivity originally celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas, and thus has a Catholic background, but the feast has never been officially recognized by the papacy. Besides, some elements of the celebration might have a pagan origin.
Islamic pupils could also join the celebration, or whether we should celebrate *Sinterklaas* and *Suikerfeest* simultaneously. For example, the debate program for youngsters, *Het Lagerhuis: Jongeren*, dedicated a part of the episode to this discussion. In a column of the actuality program *Buitenhof*, politician Ronald Plasterk argued that the postponing of *Sinterklaas* should be considered the pinnacle of integration. On the very day itself, television reported mainly on schools that had decided to celebrate the two feasts simultaneously. Take for instance, the item from the NOS *Journaal* which was announced by the presenter as being about an integral *Sintersuikerfeest* (Santasugarfeast), the item portrays a Muslim girl, who starts the day with a visit to the mosque and then goes to school to celebrate *Sintersuikerfeest*. A voice-over explains that the two festivities have much in common: sweets and presents to reward the virtues of control and discipline. The school director explains that this *Sintersuikerfeest* is the culmination-point of integration. The item ends with the statement of the presenter that we will need to wait another 365 years for the next *Sintersuikerfeest*. The *Jeugdjournaal*, the news magazine for youngsters, broadcast a comparable item about the same girl who goes to the mosque in the morning and then to school to celebrate *Sinterklaas*. Both these news items thus stress the fact that the celebration of *Sinterklaas* and *Suikerfeest* can perfectly go together, and tell a hopeful story about the Dutch nation where both Muslims and Dutch belong.

An item of the actuality magazine *Twee Vandaag* even more explicitly brought the issue of integration into play, as it seized the occasion to take a stance against the position of the LPF, the political party founded by Pim Fortuyn, that demanded repercussions against schools that decided to celebrate *Suikerfeest* and *Sinterklaas* simultaneously, because the Islamic celebration would be in conflict with the Dutch tradition of *Sinterklaas*. The presenter opens the item with the question of whether the position of the LPF, that considers the coinciding of the two celebrations as a danger to integration, does justice to reality. The item subsequently portrays an elementary school in Zuilen where the two festivities were celebrated simultaneously. Two Turkish mothers talk about the background of *Suikerfeest* and about the typical *Suikerfeest* sweets that they brought to the *Sinterklaas* celebration in the school. The reporter asks one of them whether she considers *Suikerfeest* compatible with *Sinterklaas*; she whole-heartedly responds

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312 *Het Lagerhuis: Jongeren* (02-12-2002).
313 *Buitenhof* (NPS, 24-11-2002).
314 *Journaal* (NOS, 5-12-2002).
315 *Jeugdjournaal* (NOS, 5-12-2002).
positively. After an interview with a schoolteacher who displays his enthusiasm about the fact that most of the Islamic parents attended the school’s *Sinterklaas* celebration, the item ends with the final thought of the presenter: *Suikerfeest* and *Sinterklaas* can uncomplicatedly go hand in hand. And finally, the reality program *Man bijt hond* also dedicated an item to the coinciding of *Sinterklaas* and *Suikerfeest* that advocated a similar message about the successful integration of Muslims.\(^\text{316}\) The item is announced as “Imam meets *Sinterklaas*” and opens with the statement of *Sinterklaas* himself, who says to the camera that if it is up to him *Suikerfeest* can always coincide with his birthday. The item then cuts to a scene of a communal prayer in a Zwolle mosque, accompanied by the jingle of a typical *Sinterklaas* song. Various children in the mosque talk about the multiple festivities of *Suikerfeest* and *Sinterklaas* and about the joy they experience on this very special day. Then *Sinterklaas* himself enters the mosque, and congratulates the imam with the end of Ramadan, whereupon the imam wishes him a happy birthday. The item ends with images of children in the mosque singing *Sinterklaas* songs.

This item from *Man bijt hond* employs the symbolic power of the amalgamation of symbols of the Islamic cultural identity (such as the mosque, the performance of communal prayer, the imam) with these of the Dutch national identity (*Sinterklaas* and typical songs that belong to this national festivity) to bring its message about the harmonious encounter of Dutch and Muslims across. In a nutshell, the item illustrates the general tendency of Dutch public television to seize this special occasion (the coinciding of *Sinterklaas* and Ramadan) to promote the values of multiculturalism. All the items that report on the December 5\(^{\text{th}}\) events exhibit this tendency to stress the uncomplicated way in which an Islamic celebration can go hand in hand with a Dutch one. The items underline both the willingness of the Islamic parents to participate in Dutch national traditions and the already self-evident way in which their children experience these traditions. The constant emphasis on the fact that for them it is a double party endorses the typical multicultural ideal of the enrichment of society that comes with cultural diversity. And again the Dutch nation is imagined as a place where Islamic traditions can peacefully co-exist alongside Dutch customs.

\(^{316}\) *Man bijt hond* (NCRV, 05-12-2002).
Ramadan and the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue

In this decade of societal and political upheaval, many television items about Ramadan reported on the attempts of Muslims to bring about intercultural dialogue following traumatic events such as 9/11, the murder of Theo van Gogh and other incidents. In the weeks after 9/11, the NOS Journaal covered for example the distribution of roses to Dutch neighbours by Muslims during the celebration of Suikerfeest.\footnote{Journaal and Jeugdjoumaal (NOS, 16-12-2001).} An item from Opium, a program about arts and culture, reported for instance on an art project to stimulate dialogue after 9/11 between a Dutch and Moroccan artist.\footnote{Opium (AVRO, 01-12-2001).} The item is announced as: “Albert Heijn and Allah have united in the West of Amsterdam” and portrays the two artists, who have transformed an empty branch-office of the supermarket Albert Heijn into a prayer space for Muslims during Ramadan. They slightly altered the familiar logo of the supermarket, so that it can also be read as the Arabic word Allah. The item shows images of Muslims performing communal prayer in the supermarket building, while one of the artists explains the concept of the artwork, and says he wants to show that cultural background determines what people actually see: if they think that the praying Muslims are worshipping Albert Heijn, they obviously observe from a narrow Western perspective. The item clearly displays appreciation for the way these artists try to bridge cultural differences and try to stimulate dialogue between Dutch and Muslims during the aftermath of 9/11.
In 2002, an item of the actuality magazine Twee Vandaag reported on the attempts of Muslims to promote dialogue by a shared *iftar* between Dutch and Moroccan inhabitants of Venlo after the murder of a young Dutch man by a Moroccan man.\(^{319}\) The organizer of the *iftar* is interviewed and explains that the aim of the gathering is to promote dialogue and to counter the on-going stigmatization of the Moroccan community. The program then looks back at the events, the funeral of Rene Steegmans, the silent march that followed, and the upheaval in the media after statements of the parents of the perpetrator were publicized. An alderman from Venlo states that the Moroccan community should reflect upon their participation in Dutch society. The item ends with images of the opening speech of imam Haselhoef and the shared *iftar* meal that followed. Also, after the murder of van Gogh in 2004, the news covered *Suikerfeest* in relation to the issue of intercultural dialogue. *Journaal* reported on the visit of Prime Minister Balkenende to a mosque in Eindhoven, where he was invited for the celebration of *Suikerfeest* less than two weeks after the murder.\(^{320}\) The presenter announces the item with the statement that Balkenende participates in the important Islamic celebration of *Suikerfeest* to show compassion with Muslims and to condemn the sharp divisions in society that had emerged after the murder. The item shows images of Balkenende who was welcomed in the mosque by the imam, accompanied by the voice-over of the reporter who states that these images of our Christian prime minister in a mosque on Sunday morning are quite unique. The items then recounts the speech that Balkenende delivered, in which he condemned the recent attack on an Islamic school in Eindhoven and plead for tolerance. Also *Jeugdjournaal* reported on Balkenende’s visit to the mosque in Eindhoven and showed people in the mosque who expressed positive opinions about his speech.\(^{321}\) This item also stressed his attempt to counter prejudice and hostility against Islam.

In this period, various programs of the religiously inspired broadcasting organizations addressed the issue of dialogue on the occasion of Ramadan. Like during the eighties and nineties, many of these programs framed the ritual comparatively to promote interreligious dialogue. For instance, in 2004 the NCRV broadcast the program *Reliruil* that followed two people who “swopped” their faith for a few days – a protestant woman and an Islamic man – during the month of Ramadan.\(^{322}\) The program aims to remove prejudice from both sides and interviews

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\(^{319}\) *Twee Vandaag* (EO, 18-11-2002).

\(^{320}\) *Journaal* (NOS, 14-11-2004).

\(^{321}\) *Jeugdjournaal* (NOS, 14-11-2004.

\(^{322}\) *Reliruil* (NCRV, 15-01-2004).
the two people about the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity. In 2006, an episode of the religious talk show Schepper & Co was completely dedicated to the practice of fasting in Christianity and Islam. One of the invited guests, an Islamic woman, talks extensively about her choice to celebrate the end of Ramadan in a church to promote interreligious dialogue and solidarity. A year later in 2007, the talk show Soeterbeeck devoted a complete episode to the similarities between Catholic and Islamic fasting. Another episode of Soeterbeeck from that year covered a public iftar in Utrecht. It is enlightening to delve into this episode a bit deeper in the following section, in which I concentrate on the coverage of these public iftars.

**Iftar as public event**

The topic of shared iftar meals that had already emerged in the nineties became a popular subject of television items in this decade of upheaval. Television continued to occasionally report on local initiatives and initiatives of individuals (like in the nineties) and from the second half of the decade shifted its attention to the new phenomenon of “national iftar”. The “national iftar” was organized for the first time in 2002 by the Islam and Citizenship Foundation (Stichting Islam en Burgerschap), and was aimed at bridging the gap between Dutch and Muslims and at stimulating dialogue. Various (local) politicians, representatives of diverse religious organizations and others gathered for iftar, musical performance and lectures. Over the course of a few years, the “national iftar” developed into a Ramadan Festival, that entailed all sorts of activities, such as fashion shows, cooking competitions, debates and lectures that revolved around the multicultural society (Sunier: 2012). As Thijl Sunier has argued, drawing on Baumann’s theory of rituals, this “national iftar” became a public event through which Muslims negotiated their place in Dutch society and performed national belonging; in which the media played an important role (ibid).

In 2005, the NOS Journaal covered the first Ramadan Festival organized in Amsterdam. The item shows interviews with the organizers of the festival.

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323 Schepper & Co (NCRV, 27-03-2006).
324 Soeterbeeck (RKK/KRO, 27-02-2007).
325 Soeterbeeck (RKK/KRO, 02-10-2007).
326 Officially, the event was named “national dialogue meeting”. In order to receive state subsidy, the organization was forced to omit all references to religion, because the state maintains the principle of the separation between state and church and thus does not subsidize religious events. See: Sunier (2012).
327 Journaal (NOS, 04-10-2005).
(Mohammed Baba and Ahmed Larouz), and with the mayor of Amsterdam (Job Cohen) who explains that the festival should help restore cohesion in Dutch society. Furthermore, the item shows images of Muslims and representatives of several religions sitting around large tables for iftar, while the mayor gives a signal for breaking the fast, accompanied by a video message of Prime Minister Balkenende saying “Ramadan Mubarak” (a blessed Ramadan). The year after, in 2006, the NOS Journaal reported twice on events that took place during the Ramadan Festival. The first item covered the opening of the “multicultural Ramadan Festival” in the Passengers Terminal in Amsterdam. It shows the opening ceremony, people singing and reciting from the Quran and the gathering of people of various backgrounds for iftar. The initiator Ahmed Larouz elaborates on the central theme of the festival – the Encounter (de Ontmoeting) – and mayor Cohen gives a speech about the necessity to fight tensions in society. Various participants are interviewed about their motivations to take part in the festival and talk about the benefits of these kinds of encounters. Two weeks later, Journaal reported on an iftar meal on the Dam Square in Amsterdam that was organized by the Ramadan Festival. A voice-over explains that, since the way to the heart is through the stomach, Muslims and non-Muslims were brought closer together through a shared meal. Again, Ahmed Larouz talks to the camera about the benefits of dialogue. The voice-over comments ironically that the smell of “culinary correctness” dominates the party tent on Dam Square. It then explains that the overarching Muslim organization CMO has expressed doubts about the Ramadan Festival and is concerned that the serious religious nature of Ramadan will be surpassed by commercial intentions. The voice-over ends the item with the statement that dialogue makes for a heavy meal, both for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

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328 Journaal (NOS, 24-09-2006).
329 Journaal (NOS, 14-10-2006).
330 Contactorgaan Moslims Overheid
Besides the NOS news items, several actuality programs and talk shows paid attention to this new phenomenon of national iftars.\textsuperscript{331} I bring to a close this section by examining the episode of Soeterbeeck that I mentioned earlier, broadcast in 2007.\textsuperscript{332} The episode revolves around the question of whether the presence of large amounts of Muslims threatens the Dutch national identity. The program opens with a voice-over that declares that in the Netherlands men and women are equal, homosexuality is accepted, the principle of freedom of speech is highly valued and that many people are afraid that Muslims jeopardize these Dutch values. The program then cuts to reportage about a national iftar in Utrecht, where the reporter interviews various participants and inhabitants of Utrecht about this issue. The reportage opens with images of people singing and reciting from the Quran and of images of people sitting behind long tables to eat iftar together. Various people comment on the question of the reporter and mention values such as tolerance and solidarity as belonging to the Dutch national identity. Most people display appreciation for the shared iftar meal during the Ramadan festival and maintain that the initiative proves the fact that multicultural reality entails an enrichment of society. Following this reportage, Ahmed Marcouch, the leader of a notorious city district in Amsterdam talked about the significance of these kinds of encounters for integration and cohesion in Dutch society. This item thus explicitly invoked the issue of the nature of Dutch cultural identity in relation to the phenomenon of national iftar, and once again stressed the benefits of the intercultural dialogue and the blessings of multicultural society.

\textsuperscript{331} See for example: Alziend Oog (IKON, 16-10-2005), Goedemorgen Nederland (KRO, 12-10-2007), Knevel & van den Brink (EO, 03-09-2008).

\textsuperscript{332} Soeterbeeck (RKK/ KRO, 2-10-2007).
To conclude part one, during this decade in which Islam had become the focal point of debates about integration and Dutch national identity, and in which television coverage of Islam focused on terrorism, fundamentalism and the failure of integration, coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* became discursively entangled with the issues of integration, national belonging and intercultural dialogue. The various items about the coinciding of *Suikerfeest* and *Sinterklaas* stress the unproblematic way in which an Islamic celebration can go hand in hand with an important Dutch tradition. And as Muslims began to increasingly explicitly implicate the Dutch in their ritual of Ramadan to negotiate their place in Dutch society, and transformed *iftar* into a national public event, television represented this trend as a sign of the successful integration of Muslims and as the perfect illustration of how multicultural society can succeed if hospitality is mutual. Thus, in the discursive regime of this decade, of *allochtonen* whose integration had failed, of radicalized Muslims and home-grown terrorists, television showed a tendency to display Ramadan as the perfect occasion to ally the societal and political tumult about Islam, to celebrate the benefits of our multicultural society and to stress the Dutch nation is as a place where Islamic traditions can co-exist peacefully with Dutch customs. The repertoire of images that was used to visualize these stories reflects this tendency, as the familiar scenes of prayers in mosques were increasingly replaced by harmonious *iftar* meals and (prominent) Dutch people participating in celebrations and the Ramadan Festival.

**PART TWO**

**TRACING TELEVISION COVERAGE OF ID AL-ADHA AND RITUAL SLAUGHTER**

**3.7 Id al-adha and the encounter between Dutch and Muslims**

During the first two decades of Islamic immigration, the coverage of *id al-adha* was quite similar to the coverage of *id al-fitr*, both in terms of quantity and in terms of thematic content. In this period, a total of eight items addressed the celebration of *id al-adha* and/or the issue of ritual slaughter. Of these, four new items (the NTS *Journaals*) covered the celebration of *id al-adha*, respectively in a church in

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333 The word “*Offerfeest*” results in 2 items/programs that dealt with the Dutch context. The word “*ritueel slachten*” also results in 2 items that dealt with the Dutch context. The other 4 items have been described with either *kurban bayrami*- the Turkish word for *id al-adha*- or with “(the celebration of) Abraham’s sacrifice”. The words *id al-adha* and *halal* do not result in any hits in this period.
Enschede in 1965, in a church in Hengelo in 1968, in a tent in Amsterdam in 1969, and in a tent in Utrecht in 1971. In this period, only the NCRV actuality magazine *Attentie*, the item I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, completely circumscribed the issue of ritual slaughter. The IKOR actuality program *Kenmerk* also addressed the issue of ritual slaughter in 1977, but since the program is no longer present in the archive, it is impossible to analyse the content of the item. In 1968, *Kenmerk* dedicated an item to the celebration of *id al-adha* in a tent in Amsterdam, and in 1979 it has covered a strike of Moroccan workers in a meat-processing factory during *id al-adha*.

![Figure 36. Circustent in Vondelpark for celebration *id al-adha*.](image)

**Communal roasts in circus tents**

One of the earliest items about the celebration of *id al-adha* was an episode of IKOR's *Kenmerk*, broadcast in 1968. The description of the material tells us that it is about Turks and Moroccans celebrating Abraham’s sacrifice in Amsterdam’s *Vondelpark*. Only the visuals and the sound that was recorded on location have been preserved. The item opens with a lengthy sequence of a communal prayer: men praying, an imam singing from the Quran, close-ups of shoes, and men kissing and congratulating each other after prayer. The item then cuts to the tent in the *Vondelpark* and shows images of roasting sheep outside the tent, of meat cutting,

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335 *Attentie* (NCRV, 11-02-1966).

336 *Kenmerk* (IKON, 02-11-1977). The description of the material says: “arrival of guest workers at a farm”, “arrival of guest workers at abattoir, ritual slaughtering of sheep”, “statement of inspection official”, “eating of the sacrificial animal”.


338 *Kenmerk* (IKOR, 11-03-1968).
and of guest workers and Dutch eating together inside the tent. One of the initiators of the event, a member of the foundation for foreign workers, talks to the camera and explains how they tried to anticipate an emergency situation because of a huge lack of facilities for foreign workers. He elaborates on the activities they organize to facilitate social encounters and says it was their explicit intention to bring Dutch people in contact with these strangers. The item ends with images of a Moroccan dance performance. Transparently, this item shows the performance of communal prayer in a style that is quite similar to the way religious practices of Ramadan were depicted in these years: the gaze of the camera displays both curiosity and respect for these exotic rituals. Also in terms of its thematic content, the item resembles the coverage of *id al-fitr*, since it explicitly addresses the lack of facilities (religious and social) for foreign workers. What is striking is that the item stresses the celebration of *id al-adha* as a moment of encounter between Dutch and foreign workers. Besides the interview with the initiator of the event who explicitly talks about this encounter, the item shows images of Dutch families partaking in the meal and participating in the celebration. The visuals of the item explicitly emphasize the festivity of the event.
The news items about the celebration of *id al-adha* also show the encounter between Dutch and foreign workers on the occasion of this festivity. A year later, in 1969, the NTS *Journaal* covered another celebration of *id al-adha* in a circus tent in the Vondelpark.\(^{339}\) Yet again, only the visuals and sounds recorded on location are available; they show the circus tent, the roasting of sheep outdoors, the cutting and dividing of the meat, the partaking of Dutch people in the meal and musical performance. Additionally, in 1971, NTS *Journaal* showed another celebration and roast in a circus tent.\(^{340}\) The archival description tells us that it is a gathering of Moroccans in Utrecht. And again, the explanatory voice-over has not been preserved. The imagery is very similar to that of the other items: it opens with images of men roasting sheep on a large barbeque, followed by images of people-Dutch and Moroccans- gathering, celebrating, and drinking beer in a great circus tent. Then an imam (the description of the material tells us his name is Hadj Arough) sings and recites from the Quran, while people (both Dutch and Moroccan) listen. The item ends with images of men cutting up and dividing the meat, while a band is playing Oriental music. So obviously, during these initial decades, the majority of items that addressed the Festival of Sacrifice focused on the joyful gatherings of Muslims and Dutch, on the roasting of sheep and on the banquets and musical performances that followed. Although it is impossible to analyse the exact tone of these items, it seems they depict the encounter between the foreign workers and the Dutch as a natural consequence of mutual hospitality.

\(^{339}\) *Journaal* (NTS, 02-03-1969).

\(^{340}\) *Journaal* (NOS, 13-02-1971).
Ritual slaughter at the margins of coverage

The only available item in this period that explicitly raised the issue of ritual slaughter was the episode of Attentie broadcast in 1966.\(^{341}\) As I revealed in the introduction of this chapter, the item invoked the issue of ritual slaughter in relation to (a lack of) Dutch hospitality and the lack of facilities for slaughter according to the Islamic rite. As I demonstrated, the item displayed a certain discomfort with this religious need of the guest workers, but certainly also testified to respect and curiosity towards the Islamic religion. Both in its framing, its thematic content and its style, the item very much resembles the coverage of Ramadan during these years. The serene images of the communal prayer in the opening sequence even originate from the Journaal item about the Ramadan celebration in a church in Enschede that I discussed earlier in this chapter.\(^{342}\) Apparently, television had not yet entangled the issues of *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter, since the above-described item of Attentie did not address *id al-adha* and the items that covered *id al-adha* celebrations did not raise the issue of ritual slaughter.

\(^{341}\) Attentie (NCRV, 11-02-1966).

Apart from the above-described episode of Attentie, an episode of IKON’s *Kenmerk* is the only item that has been described with “ritual slaughter” in this period. The item was broadcast in 1979 and covered the strike of illegal Moroccans on the occasion of the Festival of Sacrifice. This 23-minute item opens with images of Moroccans buying sheep on the street in front of the Amsterdam abattoir, accompanied by a voice-over that explains that on this day Moroccans ritually slaughter their sheep to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham. It then states that 25 illegal Moroccans who work for one of the 50 companies located in the abattoir seized the opportunity to campaign against the miserable working conditions and went on strike. The item shows a speech by a Dutch representative of the FNV (the trade union) in which he extensively argues that the conditions in the abattoir are a disgrace for Dutch business, and that we collectively need to take a stance against this lack of hospitality and exploitation. The voice-over then states that the management of the abattoir has prohibited the film crew to enter the building and that the Moroccans on strike have invited them for a festive celebration. The rest of the item shows images of Moroccans cooking and images of the gathering of Moroccans and Dutch during the festive meal. A Dutch woman who is present talks about the lack of hygiene in the company and the recent firing of illegal Moroccans, who do not have any rights whatsoever and who should be given a general amnesty. The item ends with images of a Moroccan man walking on the street and carrying a dead sheep in a plastic bag. So clearly, this item does not deal with the issue of ritual slaughter and the word was only mentioned by the voice-over to explain the nature of the celebration of *id al-adha*. The item furthermore does not encompass the nature of the religious celebration, but only the harsh working conditions of (illegal) guest workers. The item clearly speaks from a position of solidarity with Moroccan workers and depicts Dutch employers as inhospitable and exploitative. Again, the item shows the celebration of *id al-adha* as a moment of encounter between Dutch and foreign workers.

To conclude, in the sixties and seventies the coverage of the Festival of Sacrifice and the incidental coverage of ritual slaughter followed the same thematic tendencies as the coverage of foreign workers that I described in the previous chapter. The topics that were raised were the lack of facilities for foreign workers, the harsh working conditions and the topic of illegal workers. Like in the coverage of Ramadan, television employed a framework of hospitality and Dutch solidarity. The items seemed to focus less on the religious aspect of *id al-adha* and more on the

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343 *Kenmerk* (IKON, 07-11-1979).
worldly pleasures of food, music and social interaction. Some items depict communal prayers and Quran recitations in the typical observational style that stressed the serenity of the rituals and that testified to curiosity for these religious acts. But whereas the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* focused almost exclusively on these introverted acts of religious devotion, the coverage of *id al-adha* stressed extrovert aspects of the celebration and depicted the Dutch as being “implicated” in these ritual celebrations. The visual repertoire of the coverage of *id al-adha* during these years was dominated by images of festive banquets, Dutch and Muslims partaking in meals, the roasting of sheep and musical performance in circus tents.

### 3.8 Ritual Slaughter and the Issue of Animal Welfare

In the eighties, the decade in which guest workers transformed into ethnic minorities and in which the presence of Muslims was discovered to be permanent, the coverage of *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter began to follow a completely different logic compared to previous decades. Muslims became more visible on television and the variety of topics associated with Islam increased. While television continued to cover Ramadan and *id al-fitr* in order to provide factual information about the Islamic religion and began to invoke these rituals in relation to Christianity, the celebration of *id al-adha* was pushed to the periphery of coverage. In this decade, fierce controversies over ritual slaughter emerged and television merely incidentally reported on the commotion. In this period, a total of only eleven programs addressed the celebration of *id al-adha* and/or ritual slaughter; of which five were programs broadcast by the IOS or episodes of *Paspoort*.\(^{344}\) It is constructive to look closer at the few sporadic instances in which television reported on the issue of ritual slaughter and/or the Festival of Sacrifice.

#### Animal rights versus the freedom of religion

The first item that revolved around the commotion about ritual slaughter, the TROS actuality magazine *AKTUA*, was broadcast in 1980.\(^{345}\) The presenter opens the item with the statement that lately there has been much turmoil about ritual slaughter by Muslims on certain holidays, days on which the head of the family is expected to cut

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\(^{344}\) The word “*Offerfeest*” results in 6 programs/items that address the Dutch context. The word “*ritueel slachten*” results in 8 programs that address the Dutch context, of which 4 were also described with “*Offerfeest*”. The word “*halal*” gives no results.

\(^{345}\) *AKTUA* (TROS, 10-11-1980)
the throat of a sheep without sedation and let it bleed to death. Then the co-
presenter adds that the Foundation SOS for pets has taken legal action against
Dutch abattoirs that carry out these ritual slaughters. The presenter continues and
says that the foundation SOS for pets wants Muslims to adapt to Dutch customs and
sedate the animals before slaughtering them. He says that it might be surprising that
this foundation does not oppose Jewish ritual slaughter, but then suggests that this
might be because Jews only allow experts to do the slaughtering, while Muslims
would do it themselves if they get the chance. The item then cuts to a scene of
communal prayer and Quran recitation in a mosque, while the voice-over states that
Muslim leaders are concerned that the commotion over ritual slaughter will be
abused to stir up xenophobia. Then imam van Bommel, a Dutch Muslim spokesman,
elaborates on the issue of freedom of religion and declares that some people use
ritual slaughter to argue that Muslims do not belong in the Netherlands. After this
interview, a representative of the foundation is interviewed, a women standing in
front of a little goat, and she demands that Muslims adapt to Dutch norms. The
item then cuts back to the scene of prayer, while the voice-over says that the discussion
about manners and mores of minorities should be conducted with caution, the more
so because Muslims already suffer from a bad reputation since ayatollah Khomeini
has risen to power. Imam van Bommel further elaborates on the “Khomeini-
syndrome” and pleas for more public information about Islam. The item ends with
archival images of guest workers in a factory, while the voice-over concludes that
Muslims could avoid much negative sentiments if they make sure only experts
perform the slaughter, like the Jews, and that Muslims deserve to live in dignity
since we need them in our workforce.

Obviously, with these concluding remarks, the presenter takes a stance
against the discriminatory sentiments that had emerged about the practice of ritual
slaughter. The item also clearly aims to cover the commotion in a balanced manner
by spotlighting both an opponent and an advocate of ritual slaughter. By situating
the woman in the meadow in front of a goat and the imam in a mosque with scenes
of prayer, the item shows in a nutshell what the stakes are of the commotion: animal
rights versus freedom of religion. And although the voice-over keeps emphasizing
that one should not deny Muslims the right to live in dignity, and that ritual slaughter
is not necessarily at odds with their national belonging (as the women argues when
she demands Muslims to adapt to Dutch norms), the item indeed displays a certain
unease with the Islamic ritual. The voice-over implies that Muslims tend to slaughter
not cautiously enough and are inclined to illegally do it themselves, instead of
letting experts handle the slaughtering. These statements seem to tap into the cliché of clandestine slaughters in bathtubs and balconies that had emerged in the sixties and seventies in public discourse. However, despite this unease, the item maintains that this Muslims ritual should not be abused to stir up xenophobia and to stigmatize Muslims even further.

Five years later, ritual slaughter was still causing upheavals and the AVRO talk show Karel van de Graaf dedicated an episode to the issue. In the studio, a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim spokesman, a woman who represented the foundation “rights for all that lives”, a veterinary inspector and a representative of the animal protection foundation discuss the issue. The Muslim spokesman, Mr. Ates, explains the religious background of the ritual and argues that the ritual is abused to stir up racism and to depict Muslims as animal abusers. He says that the press keeps publishing sensational stories and states that the freedom of religion is at risk. The woman talks about floundering animals in abattoirs; the representative of the animal protection foundation says that ritual slaughter is often not executed carefully enough. So again, the issue of ritual slaughter was discussed in relation to the question of whether Muslims must adapt to Dutch norms, and to the question of to what extent should freedom of religion prevail over animal rights.

Discomfort with the Festival of Sacrifice

In this period, the Festival of Sacrifice has only been addressed by two news items and by an educational program for youngsters. In 1986, the NOS Journaal reported on the upcoming celebration of the Festival by Dutch Muslims. The item opens with the statement that 16,000 sheep have been brought to abattoirs by Muslims to be ritually slaughtered, without sedation. The item interviews an animal rights activist who opposes slaughter without sedation, and a Muslim representative who advocates that the freedom of religion should guarantee the practice of Islamic ritual slaughter. The item is illustrated with images of an abattoir and the slaughtering of sheep. A year later, in 1987, the NOS Journaal once more covered id al-adha. Again, the item was recorded in an abattoir. The voice-over elaborates on the fact that during the Festival, after the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims ritually slaughter sheep, illustrated by images of sheep waiting to be slaughtered. The item shows an interview with a Muslim who is asked to comment on Khomeini and on the events in Mecca, where a massacre had taken place after a

346 Karel van de Graaf (AVRO, 01-04-1985).
clash between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi forces. He states that Khomeini violates Islamic law. The item ends with images of Muslims carrying slain sheep in plastic bags.

In both items *id al-adha* was addressed in relation to ritual slaughter and both items illustrated their stories with bloody images of abattoirs and sheep. Once again, these items invoked issues such as animal rights and the freedom of religion. Apparently, in this period, the festivity of *id al-adha* was overshadowed by the fuss over ritual slaughter. In this respect, what is quite telling is that in 1987 the Muslim Broadcasting Organization (IOS) broadcast a two-part special series called “the Festival of Sacrifice in the Media”, that completely revolved around the prejudice about and the stereotyping of this sacred Islamic festival.\(^\text{348}\) The programs show inflammatory headlines about *id al-adha* in newspapers and interviews with various experts who claim that ritual slaughter is not inhuman, that all the fuss is the result of ignorance of and prejudice about Islam, and that Islam is increasingly associated with sensational cases such as Khomeini. Besides, the programs elaborate on the religious background of *id al-adha* and on the story of Abraham. Finally, the programs show the preparation by Muslims of a festive meal, and the Dutch neighbours who were invited to partake. Clearly, this aspect of *id al-adha* that had been so present on television in the sixties and seventies had disappeared from television in the eighties.

Conclusively, during this period in which it was acknowledged that Muslims were here to stay and in which Islam was gradually institutionalized, ritual slaughter became a contested issue and its negative associations began to engulf the Festival of Sacrifice. While in this period television reported on the ritual of Ramadan and *id

\(^{348}\) *Het Offerfeest in de media* (IOS, 30-07-1987 and 06-08-1987).
al-fitr from an urgent need to inform the Dutch audience about religious practices of Muslims and framed the ritual of Ramadan comparatively, the coverage of ritual slaughter and *id al-adha* began to follow a different logic. The festive banquets and encounters between Dutch and Muslims disappeared from television and hardly any background information about the nature of the festival was given. The comparative framework that was so dominant in the coverage of Ramadan was absent in the coverage of *id al-adha*, despite the fact that the story of Abraham is also present in the Judeo-Christian Bible. Television focused on the commotion about ritual slaughter and animal rights and visualized its stories with images of sheep waiting in abattoirs for slaughter. Strikingly, in some items connections were made to Khomeini, and despite the fact that these items aimed to reflect on the stigmatization of Muslims as a result of developments abroad, it is telling that at the very moment debates emerged about the incompatibility of this Islamic ritual with Dutch values, Muslims were asked to clarify their allegiance to Muslims abroad.

### 3.9 The Disappearance of *Id al-Adha* and Ritual Slaughter from Television

In the nineties, the decade in which ethnic minorities transformed into *allochtonen* and in which their integration became a dominant topic on television, and in which Muslims were addressed in relation to an increasing variety of topics, such as Muslim women, Islamic fundamentalism and fear of Islam, the issues of *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter were pushed to the periphery of coverage. While in this period the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* increased, coverage of the celebration of *id al-adha* and the issue of ritual slaughter did not increase compared to the eighties and remained in the margins of coverage. In this period, a total of only twenty-one items addressed the celebration of *id al-adha* and/or ritual slaughter, of which the majority (15) were programs broadcast by the IOS or NMO or were episodes of *Paspoort*.

Of the remaining six items, one was an educational program for children about celebrations in various religions, two were actuality programs, one about the debate about Islamic celebrations and national holidays and one about the lack of

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*The word “Offerfeest” results in 11 items/programs that address the Dutch context. The word “ritueel slachten” results in 12 items/programs that address the Dutch context, of which 3 have also been described with “Offerfeest”. The word “halal” results in 6 items/programs (all broadcast by IOS or NMO), of which 5 have also been described with “offerfeest” and/or “ritueel slachten”.*
knowledge of Islam among the Dutch; one was a documentary about the Amsterdam fire brigade, and two were nature/animal programs.\footnote{Achter het Nieuws (VARA, 06-06-1992), Binnenland (NPS, 07-05-1995), Feesten met een verhaal (NOT/TELEAC, 18-03-1999), Midas (VARA, 11-11-1993), Midas (VARA, 03-10-1995), Mene Tekel (VPRO, 19-04-1998).

350 Midas (VARA, 11-11-1993).}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure40.png}
\caption{Stills from Midas (VARA, 11-11-1993).}
\end{figure}

**Reporting on the abattoir**

Strikingly, in this period the VARA program Midas, a program in which the biologist Midas Dekkers presented his views on humans, animals and nature, addressed the issue of ritual slaughter twice. In 1993, the program was dedicated to the theme of death.\footnote{Midas (VARA, 11-11-1993).} Among the various perspectives on the phenomenon of dying and the death of animals, one was the ritual slaughter of animals by Muslims. The voice-over of the presenter opens this short report about an abattoir with the statement that Muslims have ritualized the killing of animals, followed by a sequence of images of sheep in an abattoir, of a butcher immobilizing sheep, close-ups of throat cuttings and of blood spewing from their bodies, accompanied by slightly menacing music. Then the Dutch wholesaler of *halal* meat is interviewed about the nature of ritual slaughter and states that ritual slaughter is a humane way of slaughtering animals. This statement is illustrated with images of the skinning and evisceration of sheep, followed by an interview with the Islamic man who is responsible for the actual slaughtering. He elaborates on his lengthy education, on the rules of hygiene that he must obey, and states that the Quran and the animal protection foundation want the same thing. Then the report ends. While the program obviously aims to take a neutral position towards the nature of Islamic ritual slaughter, it does not pay any attention to the background of the ritual – which in itself is not surprising.
considering the character of the nature genre – the visuals seem to suggest that Islamic ritual slaughter, although it might be humane, is above all abundantly sanguinary.

In 1995, the program Binnenland (a youth actuality program about foreigners in the Netherlands) also dedicated a reportage to the ins and outs of an abattoir on the occasion of the upcoming Festival of Sacrifice.\textsuperscript{352} The episode of Binnenland revolved around the outcome of a survey, conducted by the editors of the program, on the general knowledge of Dutch people about Islam. As I established in the previous chapter, with the emergence of public hostility towards Islam, television began to occasionally address the issue of the developing fear of Islam, and this episode of Binnenland is an example of a program that responded to Dutch ignorance and fears of Islam. The program opens with street interviews with Dutch people who comment on the presenter’s question about the nature and background of \textit{id al-adha}. After these ignorant statements, the presenter of the program states that wild stories circulate about ritual slaughter, stories that are wrong, because ritual slaughter does not take place on balconies and in bathrooms, but in abattoirs under strict supervision. Then the program cuts to a reportage about an abattoir. The reportage opens with the statement that a veterinary inspector checked whether the abattoir is in good condition and capable of slaughtering 2000 sheep the following week. The inspector and the owner of the abattoir are both interviewed and explain the strict regulations that apply to the abattoir. The reportage is illustrated with various images of the abattoir’s interior, of the slaughtering of sheep, and of butchers covered in blood. While this program clearly reports on the abattoir’s efforts to fight existing prejudice about ritual slaughter and the Festival of Sacrifice, again the program visuals are bloody and unpleasant.

Of the other programs that addressed ritual slaughter and/or \textit{id al-adha} in this period, only the educational program \textit{Feesten met een verhaal} (which shows scenes of prayer in a mosque and images of the pilgrimage in Mecca) and the actuality program \textit{Achter het Nieuws} (which shows interviews with people about the lack of national holidays for Muslims) have not visualized their stories with images of animals slaughter and interiors of abattoirs.\textsuperscript{353} Clearly, the controversy over ritual slaughter that arose in the eighties and the discomfort with the Festival of Sacrifice that

\textsuperscript{352} \textit{Binnenland} (NPS, 07-05-1995).

\textsuperscript{353} \textit{Achter het Nieuws} (VARA, 06-06-1992), \textit{Feesten met een verhaal} (NOT, 18-03-1999). The remaining two items- \textit{Midas} (VARA, 03-10-1995) and \textit{Mene Tekel} (19-04-1998)- address the issue of ritual slaughter only casually, and are described with “ritual slaughter”, because they show a scene of the ritual slaughter of an animal.
emerged as a consequence persisted in this period. While in the nineties, television began to invoke the ritual of Ramadan and the celebration of *id al-fitr* in relation to the issue of the multicultural society and the intercultural relations between Dutch and Muslims, the Festival of Sacrifice practically disappeared from television. In the scarce instances in which the Festival and the issue of ritual slaughter were addressed, television focused on the ins and outs of abattoirs and visualized its stories with haematic images of sheep slaughter. Despite the fact that these programs aimed to counter stigmatization, the visual repertoire of the Festival of Sacrifice continued to be gruesome.

### 3.10 Persistent Debates about the Place of *Id al-Adha* and Ritual Slaughter in Dutch Society

In the following decade, the coverage of Islam increased exponentially and televi...}(354) Ritual slaughter continued to be a contested issue in societal debates about multicultural society; various politicians such as Geert Wilders and Marianne Thieme of the Party for the Animals, demanded a ban on slaughter without sedation. After the murder of van Gogh in 2004, ritual slaughter even attained gruesome connotations as rumours spread that he was ritually slaughtered. While in this period news and short actuality items began to regularly report on the beginning and end of Ramadan, this was less the case for the celebration of the Festival of Sacrifice. Only the *Jeugdjournaal* began to cover the celebration of *id al-adha* on a

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354 The word “*Offerfeest*” results in 39 items about the Dutch context, of which 18 have been broadcast by NMO or NIO. The word “*ritueel slachten*” results in 11 items about the Dutch context, of which 1 has also been described with “*Offerfeest*”, and of which 3 have been broadcast by NMO. The word “*halal*” results in an additional 13 items (excluding the items that have also been described with “*ritueel slachten*” and/or “*Offerfeest*”), items broadcast by the Islamic broadcasting organizations and programs that addressed “*De Meiden van Halal*”.

355 For instance, Hirsi Ali reacted to the murder of van Gogh with the statement that she was furious about the fact that van Gogh had not been put under guard and had to undergo this ritual slaughter.
regular basis, in short items that informed their audiences about the background of the celebration and in which children were interviewed about the festivities.\footnote{356 See for example: \textit{Jeugdjournaal} (NOS, 16-03-2000 and 20-01-2005 and 10-01-2006 and 08-12-2008 and 27-11-2009).} In the bulk of the programs, however, the Festival of Sacrifice and the issue of ritual slaughter continued to be addressed in relation to the issue of animal welfare.

**The endurance of the framework of animal welfare in the coverage of \textit{id al-adha}**

In the beginning of the decade, various actuality items and talk shows addressed the question of whether the Festival of Sacrifice should be granted the status of a national holiday.\footnote{357 \textit{Middageditie} (NPS, 16-03-2000), \textit{Het Lagerhuis: Jongeren} (VARA, 13-03-2000), \textit{Barend&Witteman} (VARA, 15-03-2000).} For example, in 2000 the AVRO talk show \textit{Barend & Witteman} dedicated an episode to this discussion. Three Muslims (a man, a Dutch converted women and the chairman of the Dutch Muslim Council), a protestant MP and the director of an elementary school are invited to discuss the issue. After a discussion about the question of whether giving \textit{id al-adha} official status as a national holiday would advance the integration of Muslims and the mutual understanding between Dutch and Muslims, the topic of ritual slaughter is raised. The presenter asks the question whether the Dutch might be hesitant or unwilling to grant the Festival of Sacrifice the status of a national holiday, because the celebration revolves around the ritual slaughtering of sheep. The Muslim chairman explains the religious background of ritual slaughter and states that there is no scientific proof that animals suffer more. Although none of the guests advocate an anti-ritual slaughter viewpoint (the protestant MP even talks about the infiltration of the animal protection foundation by right-wing extremists) the episode is a clear example of how the contested issue of ritual slaughter continued to envelop the Festival of Sacrifice, and how the issue of the national belonging of Muslims was connected to the issue of animal welfare.
This tendency to report on the Festival of Sacrifice from a framework of animal welfare can also be found in various news and actuality items. For example, in 2006, the NOS Journaal reported on the celebration of Dutch Muslims of id al-adha. After an explanation from the presenter of the religious background of the celebration, the program shows a short report about an abattoir. The voice-over states that ritual slaughter is only allowed in abattoirs, under the supervision of veterinary inspectors who make sure that the killing is carried out according to the rules, in a humane way and without the animal suffering. In the same year, an episode of the youth program Moveyourass was dedicated to the question of to what extent is the Festival of Sacrifice is animal friendly. The first part of this program is also set in an abattoir, where a veterinary inspector – surrounded by dead, blood-soaked sheep – explains how the bleeding process must be carried out. In the second part of the program, a women who is introduced as an animal specialist is interviewed. She states that as long as the slaughter is not carried out in a bathtub and as long as the animals are sedated, she does not oppose ritual slaughter and does not consider the Festival of Sacrifice barbarian. Thus, in both examples, the Festival of Sacrifice is invoked in relation to the issue of ritual slaughter and animal welfare; although these programs do not speak from a position that judges the Festival of Sacrifice as harmful for animals, they visualize the celebration of id al-adha with bloody images of abattoirs.

Before proceeding to coverage addressing ritual slaughter without referring to the Festival of Sacrifice, it is useful to have a closer look at an item from De Wereld Draait Door about the Festival. In 2009, the item De Jakhalzen (a daily

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358 Journaal (NOS, 10-01-2006).
359 Moveyourass (LLINK, 18-01-2006).
360 De Wereld Draait Door (VARA, 08-12-2008).
recurring short report that often ironically comments on actuality) was dedicated to the celebration of the Festival of Sacrifice and was set in an abattoir. The reporter opens the item with the statement that he is standing in the Mecca of the Netherlands, at the place where hundreds of Muslims slaughter their sheep for the Festival of Sacrifice. Images of sheep waiting outside are shown, accompanied by a sound track of the song “What a beautiful day”. Then, the reporter asks a Muslim man: “you celebrate the Festival of Sacrifice because the prophet was willing to sacrifice his son, would you also sacrifice yours?” while pointing to his little son. The reporter then interviews an employee of the abattoir about the number of sheep “finished off” this day, illustrated with bloody images of viscera and a severed sheep’s head. The reporter continues, and interviews various Muslims about their willingness – as they are obliged to donate some of the meat to the poor – to give a kilo of their meat to Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders. Then the reporter interviews the owner of the abattoir and his mother about their experiences on this special day. The mother says she always experiences it as a cosy day, whereupon the reporter comments: “so you think the decapitation of 1500 sheep is cosy and you think these Muslims are quite ok?”. The woman replies that she likes them and thinks they are special people. Then a scene is shown in which the reporter looks at bloody abattoir waste and walks out while pretending to regurgitate, followed by a scene in which the reporter asks various Muslim men what they are planning to prepare with the meat: “Sheep cake? Sheep ice cream?” The item ends with images of the reporter carrying a dead sheep on his back, while walking away and saying: “salam aleikum”.

Obviously, this item wants to ironically comment on tensions in Dutch society between Dutch and Muslims. Despite the fact that the depiction of Muslims in this item as barbarian animal abusers might be meant as an ironic comment on this stereotype, the item does in any case reactivate the stereotype. The ignorance that the reporter displays about the nature of the Festival of Sacrifice (he wrongly claims it was the prophet who was willing to sacrifice his son, and he implies he actually did it) and his suggestive questions to Muslims both constitute these Muslims as barbarian and uncivilized. By setting the item in an abattoir and by illustrating the item with nauseating sanguinary images, and of the disgusted vomiting reporter, the Festival of Sacrifice is depicted once again as a bloody and even repelling event that centres on the ruthless slaughter of a great number of sheep.
The selling of *halal* meat in Islamic butcheries and Dutch supermarkets

During this period, various actuality programs and consumer programs addressed the issue of selling *halal* meat in shops in the Netherlands, and once again these programs approached this issue from a framework of animal welfare.\(^{361}\) For example, in 2004, the consumer program *Keuringsdienst van Waarde* (the title is an allusion to the commodity inspection department) dedicated an episode to the nature of *halal* meat.\(^{362}\) The reporters visit an Islamic shop and butchery where they interview the owner about the nature of *halal* meat and about the Islamic slaughter method. They interview a professor at the University of Wageningen who is introduced as an expert in the field of animal slaughter. He elaborates on the differences between regular and Islamic slaughter; he states that the Islamic ban on the sedation of animals implies that the animal might suffer. He also says that some non-orthodox Muslims allow sedation with an air pressure gun. This interview is illustrated with images of the ritual slaughter of a cow in an abattoir. The program ends with an interview with a man who is responsible for a *halal*-quality label. This item thus again connects *halal* meat to the suffering of animals and once again visualizes the story with repelling images of slaughter.

The same logic runs through the television coverage of yet another controversy over ritual slaughter in 2006, when Albert Heijn supermarkets decided to begin selling *halal* meat. For example, the consumer program *Radar* addressed the issue.\(^{363}\) The program opens with images of the birth of a calf, accompanied by a voice-over that states that it is now possible to buy *halal* meat in Dutch supermarkets: meat that is ritually slaughtered which means that the animals have been slaughtered without sedation. The program then cuts to images of the slaughtering of an animal, while the voice-over continues and says that Dutch law consciously allows the slaughter of animals without sedation because of the principle of freedom of religion. The program then shows a telephone interview with a customer service representative of the supermarket who confirms that *halal* meat derives from animals that have been slaughtered without sedation. The program then cuts back to the studio, where the leader of the Party for the Animals (Marianne Thieme) pleads for the removal of *halal* meat from the shelves of Albert Heijn. Also the talk show *Pauw en


\(^{362}\) *Keuringsdienst van Waarde* (RVU, 16-11-2004).

\(^{363}\) *Radar* (TROS, 23-10-2006).
Witteman addressed the issue, and invited a Dutch halal butcher to explain the differences between normal and ritual slaughter. Before the discussion begins, the program shows an intensely bloody report on an abattoir that was introduced by Jeroen Pauw (one of the presenters) as a report that could be experienced as shocking. In the discussion that followed, the butcher represented the pro-ritual slaughter viewpoint, while Joost Eerdmans (a former LPF politician) advocated the view that ritual slaughter is barbarian (he talks about slaughter on balconies) and should not be allowed. Although these programs do not explicitly condemn ritual slaughter, they do indeed depict ritual slaughter as a very bloody affair; by raising the issue of animal suffering and by showing sanguinary images of slaughter in abattoirs, they seem to suggest that it might be a ritual for which there is no place in Dutch society.

Attempts to implicate the Dutch in the Festival of Sacrifice
While in this period television coverage of Ramadan and id al-fitr focused very much on the issue of the successful integration of Muslims into Dutch society and on the benefits of multicultural society, this was hardly the case for the coverage of id al-adha. Apart from the regularly recurring items of the Jeugdjournaal, I found almost no programs that addressed the Festival of Sacrifice, without setting the story in an abattoir, without visualizing it with bloody images, and without using a framework of animal welfare. Only in 2006, when various imams sent out an appeal to the Muslim community to give away part of the meat to the food pantry, that some programs reported on this initiative from the framework of integration, participation and national belonging of Muslims which was so dominant in the coverage of id al-fitr during this period. For example, the NOS Journaal dedicated an item to this initiative on Festival celebration day. The reporter first interviews the Turkish initiator, who explains that Muslims are obliged to give one third of the meat to the poor, and then a Dutch employee of the organization that helped to collect the meat, who extensively talks about how this initiative shows the willingness of Muslims to integrate and participate. The item is illustrated with images of a communal prayer. Also the talk show Boter, Kaas en Eieren addressed the issue and showed a reportage in which various representatives of participating Muslim organizations were interviewed about the initiative and talked about how Muslims have become increasingly more Dutch, where becoming Dutch meant being integrated.\(^{364}\) These are some very rare instances in which television reported on the attempts of Muslims

\(^{364}\) Boter, Kaas en Eieren (RVU, 20-01-2007).
to implicate the Dutch in the Festival of Sacrifice in a comparable manner as in the coverage of Ramadan and *if al-fitr*.

In this decade, in which television was obsessed with stories about terrorism, fundamentalism and the failure of integration, television covered the enduring controversies about the issue of ritual slaughter and continued to invoke the Festival of Sacrifice and ritual slaughter in relation to animal suffering. While the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* predominately centred on the issues of the successful integration of Muslims and of the benefits of intercultural dialogue, television continued to display discomfort with the celebration of *id al-adha*. The framework of successful integration and national belonging of Muslims that was so dominant in the coverage of *id al-fitr* was practically absent in the coverage of *id al-adha*. Perhaps this is a consequence of the fact that Muslims have more explicitly and more frequently implicated the Dutch in the celebration of *id al-fitr* than in the celebration of *id al-adha*. However, it also seems that the Festival of Sacrifice and ritual slaughter are held captive in the realm of stereotyping. And although many of the programs that addressed *id al-adha* and/or ritual slaughter aimed to take a neutral position and did not explicitly support the stereotype of Muslims as barbarian animal abusers, the repertoire of images that these programs used to visualize the stories kept depicting the Festival of Sacrifice and the practice of ritual slaughter as bloody, gruesome and frightening events, which might not be compatible with the norms of Dutch society.

**Concluding Remarks**

My analysis of the television coverage of two annual Islamic celebrations, *id al-fitr* and *id al-adha*, and the two related rituals of Ramadan and *halal* slaughter has shed new light on how Dutch public television has framed the encounter between Muslims and Dutch society throughout the past fifty years and how television coverage has imagined the religious identity of Muslims vis-à-vis the Dutch national identity. During the sixties and seventies, in the discursive regime of the temporary single male guest worker whose Islamic religion was in the margins of coverage and was only addressed in relation to annual religious celebrations and other rituals, the coverage of *id al-fitr* and *id al-adha* was very similar in terms of its quantity, its thematic tendencies, its visual repertoires and its frameworks of reference. Both in the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* and the coverage of *id al-adha*, (the sporadic coverage) of ritual slaughter, television raised the issue of the lack of facilities for
Muslims to practice their faith and reported on their struggle for emancipation in the sphere of religion from a framework of hospitality and solidarity. While the coverage of Ramadan and id al-fitr focused more on introvert acts of religious devotion during communal prayers and Quran recitations – in long observational scenes that stressed the beauty and serenity of these rituals – the coverage of id al-adha focused more on extrovert aspects of the celebration and showed festive roasts and banquets, where Muslims and Dutch were eating and celebrating side by side. Furthermore, although in many of the programs the religious identity of the guest workers was depicted as strange and slightly exotic, these programs obviously spoke from a position that valued religion as an important aspect of people’s identity and advocated the view that the Dutch nation was a place where pillarized pluralism and religious diversity should result in tolerance, hospitality and adaptation to the religious needs of the guest workers.

In the eighties, the coverage of id al-adha and ritual slaughter began to follow a different logic than the coverage of id al-fitr and Ramadan. In this discursive regime of ethnic minorities, in which the presence of Muslims was rearticulated as permanent and in which Muslims became more visible on television, the coverage of Ramadan and id al-fitr was aimed at providing factual information about the nature of Islam and at fighting ignorance and prejudice. Television began to stress the similarities between Muslims and Dutch by reporting on the ritual of Ramadan from a Christian comparative framework and by depicting the values and beliefs of Muslims as very much in line with the Christian faith and consequently compatible with the values of the Dutch nation. This Christian comparative framework was absent in the coverage of id al-adha. During this period, ritual slaughter became a disputed issue, and id al-adha became merely associated with this contested practice and was propelled to the periphery of coverage. Television reported on the controversies about ritual slaughter that revolved around the question of to what extent the freedom of religion should prevail over animal’s rights, and around the question of whether this ritual was incompatible with Dutch norms and whether Muslims should adapt to these norms. Also in the sporadic coverage of id al-adha the issue of animal rights was invoked. While television continued to visualize the stories about Ramadan and id al-fitr with images of prayers and Quran recitations, the visual repertoire of id al-adha was reduced to sanguinary images of abattoirs and the slaughtering of sheep.

In the nineties, in which television began to privilege stories about the (lack of) integration of allochtonen, about problematic Moroccan youth and impoverished
city neighbourhoods, and about the emerging fear of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, the disparities between the coverage of *id al-fitri/Ramadan* and the coverage of *id al-adha/ritual slaughter* further intensified. The thematic structure of the coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitri* began to move beyond the realm of religious belief and began to accrete around the integration and participation of Muslims in Dutch society and around the intercultural relations between Muslims and Dutch. The Christian comparative framework of the eighties persisted in some of the coverage, but also in these items the focus shifted to the issue of multicultural relations and intercultural dialogue between Muslims and Dutch. Television began to cover the attempts of Muslims to involve the Dutch in their religious practices and rituals from a perspective that valued these encounters. The visual repertoire included – besides the scenes of prayer and recitation in mosques – increasingly more images of *iftar* meals and of Dutch and Muslims together partaking in festive meals. At the same time, *id al-adha* practically disappeared from television and in the scarce instances that the celebration was addressed, television focused on the ins and outs of abattoirs, on the issue of animal welfare and showed images of animal slaughter. The framework of successful multiculturalism was absent in the sporadic coverage of *id al-adha* and the controversy about ritual slaughter kept engulfing the festivity.

These trends persevered and intensified in the following decade in which television perpetuated stories about the failure of integration, about Islamic terrorism, fundamentalism and about radicalized Muslims, and in which Islam was propelled to the centre of integration debates. During these years, Muslims began to increasingly implicate the Dutch in their ritual of Ramadan and celebration of *id al-fitri*, and began to perform their national belonging by transforming *iftar* into a national event. Television depicted this trend as the perfect showcase for the successful integration of Muslims. Also, the other coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitri* revolved around intercultural dialogue between Muslims and Dutch and around the effective integration of Muslims, depicting the Dutch nation as a place where Islamic traditions can peacefully co-exist with Dutch customs. Images of harmonious *iftar* meals and Dutch people participating in celebrations and the Ramadan Festival dominated the visual repertoire. Conversely, the coverage of *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter continued to follow a completely different logic. Television reported on the persistent controversies about ritual slaughter and continued to invoke *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter in relation to animal suffering and to display discomfort with these practices. The framework of national belonging and successful integration
was absent in the coverage of *id al-adha*. Despite the fact that many of the programs spoke from a neutral position, many of the programs actually activated the stereotype of Muslims as barbarian animal abusers, by giving the floor to fierce opponents of ritual slaughter, or by displaying ignorance about the celebration, and most of all by constantly setting stories in abattoirs and by illustrating them with repellent sanguineous images of animal slaughter. So finally, while television depicted Ramadan and *id al-fitr* as showcases of hospitality, adaptation and the effective integration of Muslims, *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter were depicted as gruesomely bloody affairs, that might commit Muslims to values that are incompatible with Dutch national values.

What is striking, I argue, about the above described transformations in the patterns of coverage of Islamic rituals and celebrations is that the more Islam became a contested issue and the more integration became a central issue in the debates about the multicultural society, the more television coverage of Islamic rituals began to display two competing narratives about the religious identity of Muslims: one about the well-adapted, successfully integrated and even domesticated Muslim, whose religious capital was confirmed as sacred and in line with the values of the Dutch nation, and one of the maladjusted Muslim whose religious capital was contested and even delegitimized as being in conflict with the values of Dutch society. These two competing narratives have been supported by two different visual regimes, of which the first consisted of images of communal prayers and Quran recitations, harmonious *iftars* and gatherings of Muslims and Dutch; the latter of sanguineous images in abattoirs and animal slaughter. So clearly, as the religious rituals and practices of Muslims were, from the eighties onwards, increasingly evaluated in terms of integration, the televsional stories about *id al-fitr* and Ramadan began to increasingly revolve around the common denominators between Muslims and Dutch, while the televisual stories about *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter seemed to focus more on essential differences. Hence, television coverage of Ramadan and *id al-fitr* has increasingly stressed the successful integration of Muslims and their national belonging, while television coverage of *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter has displayed ever more suspicion towards the national belonging of Muslims, and has depicted these rituals as manifestations of Muslim belief that might be an affront to the Dutch nation.

I conclude with a note on the role of the logic of the medium of television in the emergence of these binary and stereotypical depictions of the religious identity of Muslims. In this chapter I brought to light how *id al-adha* and ritual
slaughter have been held captive, particularly since the eighties, in the realm of confined stereotyping. Although the negative and gruesome connotations of ritual slaughter and *id al-adha* – that stretch along a continuum from the guest worker who illegally slaughters sheep on balconies and in bathtubs, to the Muslim as barbarian animal abuser and even further to the extremist Muslim who ritually slaughters infidels – have mainly been produced outside the realm of television, I would argue that television’s constant repetition of formulaic stories about abattoirs and the constant parading of particularly bloody images have given these stereotypes greater currency. Even when these televisual stories called such stereotypes into question, they repeated and reiterated the associations. And finally, although the televisual stories about Ramadan and *id al-fitr* have followed a different logic – a logic according to which the exotic has been made intelligible and acceptable – I would argue that in this historical process of representation, a new and softer stereotype of the tolerable and well-adapted Muslim has emerged. Television’s compulsive repetition of stories about the common denominators between Muslims and Dutch and about the successful integration of Muslims seems to be driven by anxiety and fear as much as by pleasure and desire; the resulting comforting depiction of the domesticated and well-integrated Muslim might be just the flipside of the same coin that figures the frightening maladjusted Muslim with bloody habits. In the following chapter, I further investigate stories and images of Muslims that have been disseminated and canonized by television; I move from an analysis of recurring issues in the television coverage of Muslims to an analysis of iterating archival images.