



*Seeing through the Archival Prism: A History of the Representation of Muslims
on Dutch Television*

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English summary

In recent years considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to examining representations of Muslims and Islam in Western media, but so far the Dutch context has remained overlooked. Besides, the majority of these studies are set in the post 9/11 era and lack a historical perspective. This thesis tries to fill these research gaps, by examining the history of the representation of Muslims and Islam on Dutch public television from the arrival of the first Islamic guest workers in the sixties until the recent era of the 2000's in which Islam became such a salient and contested issue and was pushed to the centre of the public debate. By turning the spotlight on the historical dimensions of Dutch television coverage of Muslims and Islam, and by examining both the repetitive patterns of coverage and the transformations of the narratives and imagery of Muslims and Islam, this study deepens the understanding of the emergence, the transformation, and the resilience of stereotypical stories and images of Muslims and Islam.

This historical investigation is based on material from the Institute of Sound and Vision and takes as its starting point the collection of television programs that are preserved and stored in this archive in Hilversum. The aim of this dissertation is twofold: to investigate the history of Dutch television coverage of Muslims and Islam, and to analyse how the logic of both the medium of television and of the archive has created an (historically variable) iconography –various repertoires of (stereotypical) images- of Muslims and Islam. The leading notion of this research is that the archive of Sound and Vision is an active player in media culture. This study departs from the idea that this archive has a history of its own that on the one hand mirrors the changing perspectives on Muslims and Islam, and that on the other hand shapes the reuse and circulation of images Muslims and Islam. By studying the history of television representation of Muslims through the very archive that holds the broadcast material, this thesis offers a new perspective on both the changing televisual discourses of Muslims and Islam, and on the cultural dynamics of the circulation of clichéd images of Muslims and Islam on Dutch national television.

The first chapter of this dissertation (*The Archive is Alive: Seeing through the Archival Prism*) introduces the theoretical body of work on the archive that has informed this study. In this chapter I conceptualize an epistemology of the archive, inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, Jaques Derrida and various archival researchers. I investigate the stakes of the “archival turn” that took place in the humanities and social sciences. I examine the current concerns with the politics of the archive and with the relationship between the archive and public memory, and focus more specifically on the audiovisual archive, and question the status of the archive in our current visual and digital culture. In this chapter I describe the major paradigm shift in archival theory from the archive as a static, neutral and material site of knowledge retrieval to a dynamic, contextual, virtual space of knowledge production. And by doing so, I provide the theoretical framework that has informed my research in the archive of Sound and Vision and that has guided my analysis of its collection

of broadcast material about Muslims and Islam. Finally, this chapter indicates how I look at this broadcast material through the prism of the archive.

The second chapter (*Setting the Scene: Muslims and Islam in the Archive of Sound and Vision*) presents a general overview of the history of television coverage of Islam and Muslims through the lens of the archiving practices of Sound and Vision. I provide a short biography of the archive of Sound and Vision and describe its selection and retention policies throughout the years, discuss the practice of archival description, and show that the archiving practices of Sound and Vision spring from its function as a company archive for various broadcasting organizations, and largely results from the archive's task to facilitate reuse for the broadcasters. This results in an elaboration of the method that I have used to navigate through Sound and Vision's iMMix catalogue and to read the archive "along the grain". I trace the programs that have been labelled with the keywords "Islam" and "Muslims" through five decades of television history. Of each decade I identify the frequencies of coverage, the thematic patterns of this coverage, and the (generic) images that television has used to visualize its stories. Besides, I reflect on how the material has been archived and what generic stock shots (non-specific images that can be reused in different contexts) have been elevated for reuse by the archival descriptions.

This chapter reveals how television coverage of Islam and Muslims has evolved over the course of fifty years. In the sixties and seventies, the issue of Islam was almost exclusively addressed in relation to religious celebrations and other Islamic rituals of Moroccan and Turkish guest workers. In this discursive regime of the low-skilled single male guest worker, the Islamic religion of these workers was very much in the margins of coverage and in the rare instances that it was addressed, television's gaze displayed a fascination for his exotic religious rituals. Communal prayers and mosques dominated the visual repertoire of Islam. In the eighties, ethnic minorities whose relationship to the Netherlands was rearticulated as permanent replaced the guest workers. In this new discursive regime, Islamic children and teenagers entered the repertoire, and the variety of topics associated with Islam increased. With the Rushdie affair, the issue of Islamic fundamentalism emerged in television's news agenda. Core images were communal prayers and mosques, children in Quran School, girls with headscarves in classrooms and demonstrating crowds of Muslims during the Rushdie affair. In the nineties, the figure of the *allochtoon* who should integrate into Dutch society dominated television coverage of the multicultural society, and in this discursive regime the visibility of Muslims increased further. Television reported on the increasing fear of Islamic fundamentalism, on the emerged hostility towards Islam, and on various issues relating to the integration of Muslims. This decade witnessed television's discovery of the figure of the veiled Muslim woman. Besides the familiar images of mosques, communal prayers, and girls at Quran School, the visual repertoire of Islam consisted of images of veiled women on streets and markets and Muslim men in public spaces. And finally, in the 2000's, television privileged stories about the radicalization of young Muslims, home-grown terrorism, hate-preaching imams in contested mosques, the spreading of fundamentalism by Islamic schools, and

repressed veiled or fully covered Muslim women. Besides the generic images of mosques, communal prayers, girls and women wearing *hijab*, and Muslims in public space, new generic images emerged, such as women in *nikaab*, hate-preaching imams, and orthodoxly dressed Muslims. Besides, television began to increasingly rely on archival footage to illustrate its stories. The visual repertoire of Muslims and Islam ultimately became an amalgam of the familiar generic imagery and of compulsively repeated archival footage of the Dutch and global contexts (such as footage of the murder of Theo van Gogh, excerpts from *Fitna* and *Submission*, footage of 9/11, terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, and footage of the Danish Cartoon crisis).

Besides describing the transformation of television's thematic and visual repertoires of Islam, this chapter argues that the compelling logic of the medium of television- in particular its constant need to visualize abstract stories- has resulted in a rigid iconography that has made Islam instantly recognizable, but has also reduced Islam to a handful of emblematic images that now carry connotations far beyond their initial significance. The chapter maintains that by obsessively repeating the same images (e.g. of mosques, communal prayers, veiled women) over and over again in stories that did not necessarily deal with the rituals and appearances of the Islamic religion, television has suggested causal relationships between the religion of Islam and all sorts of societal problems, such as the failure of integration and the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism and even terrorism. Furthermore, this chapter argues that the archiving practices of Sound and Vision- since they have always been at the service of the compelling logic of the medium of television- also play a role in the emergence and persistence of the rigid iconography of Islam. The archival descriptions have constantly highlighted each decade's core images, both in the form of stock shots (generic images for reuse) and in the form of dupes (reused archival footage). While these archival descriptions on the one hand only mirror the imagery that television has used to visualize Islam, I suggest that on the other hand they play an autonomous role in the cultural dynamics, which over and over thrusts the same clichéd images in circulation. The archival descriptions that put certain repeatable visual units on a pedestal and isolate these as having a potential for reuse (e.g. "a praying Muslim", "veiled women on the market", "Muslims on the street") have a performative effect. These stock shots have been cut loose from their original semantic content and become ready to be cited and quoted in new contexts.

In the third chapter of this dissertation (*Reporting on the Rituals of Islam*), I further investigate what stories and visual repertoires of Muslims and Islam have been perpetuated by 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. A focus on the repeated television coverage of these rituals reveals how Dutch television has imagined, visualized and constructed the religious identity of Muslims vis-à-vis the Dutch cultural identity throughout five decades. The chapter is divided in two parts. In the first part, I trace the coverage of the ritual of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan and of the Festival of Fast-Breaking (*id al-fitr*), and in the second part I focus on

the coverage of the Festival of Sacrifice (*id al-adha*) and the issue of *halal* slaughter. The chapter reveals that during the sixties and seventies, the coverage of *id al-fitr* and Ramadan and the coverage of *id al-adha* (and the very sporadic coverage of ritual slaughter) was very similar in terms of its thematic tendencies and its framework of reference. Television raised the issue of the lack of facilities for Muslims to practice their faith, reported on their struggle for emancipation in the sphere of religion from a framework of hospitality and solidarity, and visualized the stories about Ramadan and *id al-fitr* with images of prayers and Quran recitations and the stories about *id al-adha* with images of festive roasts, where Muslims and Dutch were eating together. 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 the coverage of *id al-fitr* and Ramadan, 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 of Muslims as in line with the Christian faith, and as 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 television reported on the controversies and debates that revolved around the question to what extent the freedom of religion should prevail over animal rights. While television continued to visualize the stories about *id al-fitr* and Ramadan with images of prayers and Quran recitation, the visual repertoire of *id al-adha* was reduced to images of abattoirs and the slaughtering of sheep. In the nineties, the disparities between the coverage of *id al-fitr*/ Ramadan and *id al-adha*/ ritual slaughter further intensified. The thematic structure of the coverage of Ramadan began to move beyond the realm of religious belief and began to accrete around the participation of Muslims in Dutch society, and around intercultural relations between Dutch and Muslims. At the same time, *id al-adha* practically disappeared from television and the controversy about ritual slaughter kept engulfing the festivity. And finally, in the 2000's, these trends further intensified. Muslims began to perform their national belonging by transforming *iftar* into a national event, and while television depicted these *iftars* as showcases of hospitality, adaptation and effective integration of Muslims, *id al-adha* and ritual slaughter kept being depicted as gruesomely bloody affairs, that might commit Muslims to values that are incompatible with Dutch national values. Finally, this chapter shows that the more Islam became a contested issue, 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 Muslims, 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. Lastly, I suggest that the stereotypical figure of the well-integrated and domesticated Muslim is the flipside of the same coin that figures the frightening maladjusted Muslim with bloody habits.

In the fourth chapter (*The Single Male Guest Worker and the Angry Muslim Mob: An Archaeology of Iterating Archival Images*) I continue to investigate what stories and images of Muslims and Islam have been canonized by television, but I now turn my attention to an

analysis of iterating archival images: images from an episode of *Televizier* (1969) about the recruitment of Moroccan guest workers, and images of demonstrating Muslims during the Rushdie affair (1989) in the Netherlands. This chapter departs from the idea that the archive of Sound and Vision is an enormous reservoir of images that are constantly available for reuse, and it examines how two sequences of images have been canonized by television's constant repetition and have become part of cultural memory. Both images have been recycled frequently and have often been employed as visual illustrations of crucial moments in the history of Muslim presence in the Netherlands. I draw on a constructivist model of cultural memory and further theorize the recursivity of the medium of television and its reliance on archival footage. In the first part of the chapter, I trace the iterations of the *Televizier* images, and I investigate how these images have been re-contextualized over and over again, have constantly been reinvested with new meaning, and have transformed into "audiovisual *lieux de mémoire*". The analysis shows that the *Televizier* images have repeatedly been employed to mark the beginning of labour immigration, and to mark the moment to which retrospectively all the problematic consequences of immigration can be traced. In the original item, the Moroccan guest workers were depicted as victims of dehumanization by the Dutch government. In the eighties, the *Televizier* images began to operate as a reminder of the fact that the guest workers had come to the Netherlands as a result of active policy, that they had been economically exploited during the prosperity period, and that they were now being swept aside without any future prospects. In the nineties, they began to be employed to critique the indifference of the Dutch government and its failure to come up with proper integration policies. In retrospect, they began to operate as an illustration of the coming of Islam to the Netherlands. And in the 2000's the *Televizier* images surfaced in programs about all sorts of integration problems and the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism. This case-study shows that the *Televizier* images of the Moroccan men seem to be tailor-made for representing the generic identity of the victimized guest worker, and his later retrospectively constructed generic identities of the poorly-integrated *allochtoon* and the Muslim who might be susceptible to fundamentalism. Finally, this case-study argues that television's obsession for these kinds of condensed pieces of drama has transformed the *Televizier* images into a stereotyping symbol of the past, that not only reveals but also hides certain aspects of historical reality.

In the second part of this chapter, I move from an analysis of the constant repetition of ordinary television images to an analysis of the iterations of television images that refer to a very specific event: *Journal* images of demonstrating Muslims against Rushdie in The Hague and Rotterdam. In this case-study I investigate how the Rushdie affair has been re-appropriated throughout the years, and how the Rushdie images have often been employed by television as "template"; as a visual comparison that television employs to interpret unfolding events. This case study reveals how the Rushdie images, which were already instantly burdened with connotations of Islamic rage and fundamentalism, have circulated on television and have re-entered in new contexts. It shows that during the nineties television condensed the transnational Rushdie affair into a set of compulsively repeated

key images and began to use images of various demonstrations against Rushdie without differentiation. This is also reflected in the archival descriptions, where “rallies of Muslims” emerged as a distinct category of imagery. In the nineties, television repeated the Rushdie images in narrative about foreign fundamentalism on the one hand, and in narratives about the dangers of stigmatizing the Dutch Muslim community on the other. This framing of Islamic fundamentalism as a foreign problem and the depiction of the demonstrators against Rushdie as puppets of Khomeini abruptly came to an end after the murder of Theo van Gogh (2004). The meaning of the Rushdie images was subject to a radical contextual shift, and the Rushdie images began to systematically operate as the historical precedent of current problems and as a media template that offered an ignored history lesson. The Rushdie images now started to mark the moment that the Netherlands lost its innocence for the first time. This kind of reuse sustained and amplified the discourse of the threat of Islamic terror. Finally, this case-study shows that television’s dominant mode of visualizing the past is through a montage of archival images that connects multiple times and places, without an account of the selection and juxtaposition of archival footage and an account of the asymmetries between past and present.

The Coda (*Compiling Islam*) presents a final case study of the television series *Land of Promise* (2014), that centres on post-war European immigration history and that has been constructed out of archival material from Sound and Vision and several other European archives. Through an analysis of this series, I further reflect on the televisual logic of compiling stories from archival material and I recapitulate some of the central issues that this thesis revolved around. Recently, digital technologies have facilitated a greater and more immediate access to the archive and digitization projects have made an enormous amount of televisual material easily available for reuse. While television has always displayed a need to employ archival footage to visualize its stories about Muslim immigrants and Islam, the capacity of the medium to articulate past and present through archival material has attained new levels. The project of *Land of Promise* has obviously benefitted significantly from the availability of digitized archival material, but also raises the question whether this results in the circulation of a greater variety of archival footage on television and whether this stimulates new forms of televisual historiography. In this case study I investigate what archival footage has been selected to convey the extensive and complex history of post-war European immigration and what kind of historical narrative this selection eventually has produced. Finally, this coda argues that *Land of Promise* is quite exemplary for television’s tendency to compile Islam through a handful emblematic archival images and to reduce Islam to a limited amount of clichéd stories about fundamentalism and terrorism.