

Comparing the onset of Jewish and Islamic schooling in Utrecht (the Netherlands) 1835/1988

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1) Introduction

This paper is about two types of comparison. The first is the comparison between the events following requests for the subsidising/public funding of two religion based primary schools: a Jewish school for the poor (“*Armenschool*”) in 1835 and an Islamic school in 1988. In both cases it would be the first publicly funded school of the type in the city and in both cases the college of Burgomaster and Alderman issued an initial refusal. And in both cases the school type was eventually accepted a few years later.

The second type of comparison deals with the perspective from which the events are being observed. Any comparison – by its nature – has its weaknesses: some aspects of the object under consideration may be similar, others may be totally incomparable. So, if a comparison is to make sense, at least a reasonable number of aspects must be analogous or at least comparable in terms of the same criteria. Now we may have our reasonable doubts about the comparability of education in the early 19th century and in the late 20th century. Both the education and its place in society were rather different, and so was the type of government. So, which aspects – if any - might be comparable at all, and to which extent? In § 2 we will discuss a number of perspectives from which to look at the cases. The perspectives can be considered as yardsticks to measure an object; but each yardstick measures in its own way and can give its own dimension, criteria and results (say as were it divided in meters, kilograms or years). Our comparison will then necessarily be about the relevance of these dimensions for the two cases studied as well.

Of course our selection of the two cases is not a random selection from the possibly hundreds of schools from various denominations being started in the 19th and 20th century, even in a relatively small town like Utrecht. Our selection was based on two grounds:

- a) in both cases the city was confronted with a new ethnic, cultural and religious minority group. The members of these groups were mostly communicating in a foreign language, and were in both cases largely belonging to the lowest social class¹. The children who were to visit the schools belonged uniquely to the minority. The parents and/or the minority group wanted to guard the cultural and religious heritage of the minority and the majority was confronted with - so far unknown and possibly conflicting - cultural habits.
- b) in the 19th century the members of local majority society belonged still almost entirely to Christian churches, and – even though church membership had strongly decreased in the 20th century – even then, the majority society was still full of aspects of Christian culture, including the sense of belonging². Against this background we may suspect the public reaction to show a fear for what Gil Anijar described as a “*reality of invisibles*”, an *uncannily dangerous group – now concealed, now visible, most often both at once – at*

¹ The indication lower class may be somewhat inaccurate, as it supposes a more or less fixed class structure in a stable society. Migrants do initially not yet have a clear position in the ordered class ranks, and as a result are considered as “outcast” or at least as “*hors catégorie*”. Usually they are a source of competition for the existing lower class, and not long after that, of the middle class as well.

² a.o. expressed by the early 21st century discussion on the (Jewish)/Christian roots of western society and European community. Also Talal Assad showed at several occasions that in the secular states of the west the whole society is still soaked with Christian culture, as could be experienced in many aspects of daily life.

*the internal and external borders of the Christian West: the Semites*³ or what is called in more plain terms *“Anti-semitism and Islamophobia: hatreds old and new in Europe”*⁴.

The similarity of the situation of the Jews then and the Muslims now has been noted before, as reported a.o. by Maleiha Malik⁵ and in a more extensive comparison by Esther Benbassa⁶, but others e.g. Bunzl⁷ place remarks about the comparability. One of our aims in this paper is to see to which extent the two are indeed comparable, and where the differences manifest themselves.

After a limited discussion of the perspectives in § 2 we will deal with the description of the cases and their backgrounds in § 3, and the discussion on the comparisons, both of the cases and of the perspectives in § 4.

This paper will not deal with the status of recent anti-Semitism⁸, especially among young Muslims nor with a current synchronous comparison of the status of islamophobia and anti-Semitism⁹. Our comparisons will try to identify mechanisms at work in a diachronous, historical context.

2) Perspectives

The perspectives given here to evaluate our cases, represent only some major – even partly interrelated – dimensions; we try to sketch them in large strokes, no exhaustiveness is aimed at:

a) Ideas about the “Other”

We mentioned above Anidjar’s treatment of the “Semite” as the European “Other”. The “Other” exists in the world of ideas, he/she is an image, a phantom.

Following Derrida’s work, Anidjar¹⁰ indicates, that *“it is not that here are no differences, be they historical, sexual, social, and even – if this may be conceded – racial, but rather that the way in which these... differences are constituted as historical, as sexual, and so forth must be interrogated..”*. Anidjar indicates, that the *“modes of difference”* imply a *“set of marks that silently governs and functions as if determining”*. They form a governing structure, which he equates to the épistème of Foucault.

Or in simpler words: it is not that the stranger has different properties – nobody in society is the same – it is all about the way people in a certain area and mode of thinking distinguish and position him/her as stranger, as “Other”.

But this said there are apparently different ways of handling the idea of the “Other”, possibly related to different epistèmes.

Werbner¹¹ gives three archetypes of what she calls *“the racist gallery of folk demons”, “fantasized demons”*. These are all the expression of a certain fear of what Appadurai calls *“the identity of the threatened majority”*¹²

³ Anidjar, G – Semites – race, religion, literature – Stanford University Press, Stanford California 2008 – ISBN 978-0-8047-5695-2

⁴ Bunzl, M. - *Anti-semitism and Islamophobia: hatreds old and new in Europe* – Prickly Paradigma Press – Chicago 2007 – ISBN-13: 978-0-9761475-8-9; also: *American Ethnologist* **32**(4) p.499-508 (2005)

⁵ Malik, M. *Muslims are now getting the same treatment Jews had a century ago* - The Guardian Feb. 2, 2007

⁶ Benbassa, E. – *La République face à ses minorités, les Juifs hier, les Musulmans aujourd’hui* – Paris: Mille et une nuits/ArthèmeFayard – 2004 – ISBN 2-84205-831-3

⁷ Bunzl, M. op. cit. see note 4

⁸ See: Wieviorka, W. – *La tentation antisémite, haine des Juifs dans la France d’aujourd’hui* – Hachette Littérature – Paris – ISBN 201 279301-0

⁹ As Bunzl op.cit. does, to our opinion neglecting some of the diachronous parallels

¹⁰ Anidjar op.cit. p.15

¹¹ Werbner, Pnina – *Islamophobia, incitement to religious hatred-legislating for a new fear?* - *Anthropology today* 21 (1) Feb. 2005

¹² Appadurai op.cit. p. 54

Benbassa indicates that for the great persons of enlightenment the “Other was above all the Jew”¹³. Judaism was considered opposite to the values of the emancipation, and the Other would be “unassimilable’ if he remained as he was”.

But the impossibility to assimilate was not absolute. He could be “regenerated” as part of a civilising mission. And in one of the vicissitudes of the French revolution the Jews of France (and a little later also the Netherlands) were given equal civil rights. The civilising mission followed from Napoleonic times on.

This potentially changeable and inclusive view of the Other is thus less absolute than “*the late nineteenth century’s variant of Jew-hatred*” which was anchored in the notion of race, and “*gave Jews an immutable biological destiny*”¹⁴. But anyhow “*all majoritarianisms have in them the seeds of genocide*”¹⁵.

Crucial steps in the development from ‘liberal majoritarianism’ to evident pathology are in our view the step from inclusion to exclusion and of course the transgression to violence.

As not the difference but the dealing with differences is crucial in the constitution of the ‘Other’, also a term such as ‘minority’ is risky. It tends to be the first step towards exclusion. Which properties are supposed to label the owners as not belonging to the group which constitutes the majority and sets the norm? And who determines the result? Is it the “minority” which decides that it wants to be different (as an own identity) or is it the majority that determines against the will of the minority group to label them as outsiders? Already Sartre¹⁶ indicated that minorities could be invented. In modern terms this has been called “othering”.

On the other hand we must be aware that the “foreigner” is of all ages. His/her being different from the local population is –at least for some time – obvious to all. But how long remains the foreigner a stranger. And to which extent are exclusion phenomena at work to cause that a group of foreigners develops into a minority i.e. “*a continuous group [persisting over generations] which cannot take part effectively in regular policy making and occupies a ‘lower’ social position*”¹⁷?

In the perspective explained here, we evaluated the following questions for our cases:

- to which extent is the idea of the “Other” noticeable or even dominant? And if so:
 - can we speak of forced “othering”, i.e. the ideological expansion of possibly existing differences to create an “Other”?
 - is the “Other” considered as an ‘*Angstgegner*’, an enemy by fear, or as an example of undesirable properties contrasted to an own idea of the positive image of men?
 - is the attitude towards the Other exclusive or inclusive?

b) The state and its cultural minorities

This perspective is about the structural components which determine the position of a minority. Especially the state has the possibility to determine the ‘rules of the game’ in the form of legislation and polity. And often it can also have its influence on the actions of civil society, markets etc. Thus the state can have a major influence on the position of a minority. But to which extent does the state allow for differences in religious and cultural backgrounds? The traditional concept of the liberal state puts emphasis on formal equality, impartiality and a sharp public/private distinction. But in effect many practices are based on the values of the majority culture. And furthermore, the state may try to seek forms of communality.

¹³ Benbassa, E. op.cit. p.115 “L’Autre, pour les Lumières, était avant tout le Juif”

¹⁴ Bunzl, M. op.cit. p.12

¹⁵ Appadurai, A. Fear of small numbers, an essay on the geography of anger – Durham/London: Duke University press – 2006 – p.57

¹⁶ Sartre, J-P. Réflexion sur la question Juive – Paris: Mornyien - 1946

¹⁷ definition slightly modified from: F.Brassé –“Heeft minderheid toekomst, in “*Balans van het minderhedenbeleid – 4 jaar na de nota*” – *Nederlands Centrum Buitenlanders – Utrecht 1988*

Talal Asad¹⁸ summarizes: *“To be fully part of the democratic community, citizens holding different religious beliefs (or none) must share values, that enable them to have a common political life. These values reflect the unity of the state that represents them. Without shared values there can be no integration, without integration no political stability, without some measure of stability no justice, no freedom and no tolerance”*. But he continues to indicate that a ‘community of shared values’ does not mean that the state should prescribe the *“proper place of religion”*¹⁹. And *“the question of feelings of belonging to the country is distinct from that of the rights and duties of citizenship; the former relates to dreams of nationalism, the latter to practices of civic responsibility”*

Habermas stresses the need of mutual acceptance of divergent worldviews with equal respect to everybody and a framework of a common political culture.²⁰

Baumeister²¹ thinks that Habermas’ emphasis on rational consensus underestimates the depth of diversity and the fundamental nature of value conflict. She mentions, that ‘liberal value pluralists’²² stress, that the solution must be found in ‘*hear the other side*’, negotiation and compromise. Baumeister adds to this the need of realisation through institutional mechanisms.

Key questions here:

- which were the ‘rules of the game’ the state determined?
- did the state prescribe the ‘proper place of religion’?
- how is the presence of different value systems accommodated for?

c) Integration/assimilation

In the twenties of the 20th century the Chicago School of sociology, led by Robert Park, tried to understand the processes migrants went through in the cities of the USA, and devised a model of four stages: contact, competition, accommodation and as a final stage **assimilation**. One definition of the latter by Park e.a. was²³: *“a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life”*. Although the process leading to integration was not seen as the adaptation of a minority to a majority, and *“does not require the erasure of all signs of ethnic origin”*, these are the ways many have interpreted the term; ethnic groups would have to *“unlearn their cultural traits”* and *“learn the new way of life necessary for full acceptance”*. Other *“key flaws”* of the *“old assimilation conception”* are according to Alba & Nee²⁴:

- the seeming inevitability of assimilation,
- the equating of assimilation with successful incorporation,
- the ethnocentrism in which the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle class was taken as a normative standard,
- the lack of room for a positive role for the ethnic group.

On a scholarly level these interpretations have been dropped. New models, including the possibility of cultural pluralism / multiculturalism and of “segmented” assimilation have been developed, avoiding these flaws. Alba & Nee give a (neither normative nor prescriptive) pragmatic “model” based on that of the Chicago School to describe the causal mechanisms for assimilation, which they define as: *“the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary*

¹⁸ Asad, Talal – Trying to understand French Secularism (p. 494) in: H.de Vries & L.E.Sullivan – Political Theologies Fordham University press New York 2006

¹⁹ ibid. p.526

²⁰ Habermas, Jürgen – ICON 1 (2003)(1) pp 2-12

²¹ Baumeister, Andrea T. – Habermas: Discourse and Cultural Diversity – Political Studies 31 (2003) pp.740-758

²² she mentions Hampshire, Bellamy, Gray, and Parekh

²³ Park, R & E.W.Burges as cited by Alba,R. and V.Nee – Remaking the American Mainstream, Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration – Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press – 2005(2003) – ISBN 0-674-01813-3 – p.19

²⁴ Alba & Nee idem. p.3

*cultural and social differences*²⁵. The causal mechanisms are divided in two groups: those which operate at the individual and social networks level and those which are embedded in large structures such as the institutional arrangements of the state, firm, labour market. Although the scholars dropped the above-mentioned normative prescriptive ethnocentric models, the politicians did not. Many political proposals take them as norm. Our evaluation of the cases in §3 will therefore take the attitude toward integration/assimilation in consideration.

Key question:

- Were the integration views of the authorities based on forced “learning the new way”, or was there space for multiculturalism or segmented developments.

d) Political: strategics & tactics

Distinction of a minority is often translated into practical political programmes, not so much as a practical way to tackle practical problems of living in a diverse society, but for the realisation of other general political purposes. Such secondary purposes may even result in unconscious ‘othering’.

Bunzl draws attention to the phenomenon that “Islamophobia is rapidly emerging as the defining condition of the new Europe”²⁶. A bit surprisingly he contrasts this to “traditional anti-Semitism that has run its historical course with the supersession of the nation-state”, thus apparently having more eye for “historical transformation” than for similarity of phenomena in different historical context. Even if his view be true, one cannot deny the role of anti-Semitism (and other forms of racism) in the building of national identities in the past and the similarity of the mechanism at play. Possibly the scale moved from the national to the supra-national level and apparently a shift took place choosing the victims of the racists action. But even here we can doubt if it is all that new. One can see similar phenomena at work - already then at an European level - when the Catholic church called for the crusades²⁷, thus creating an external Muslim and an internal mainly Jewish “Other” while aiming at internal power and unity.

How this be, certainly we cannot forget the nation building function of anti-Semitism in Nazi-Germany and the deliberate use of racism for political purposes. Talal Assad²⁸ is aware of the “*role of anti-Semitism (as well as Islamophobia and of varieties of racism) in the construction of French national identity*”.

Appadurai²⁹ cites Hannah Arendt (1968) that “*the idea of a national peoplehood is the Achilles’ heel of modern liberal societies*”. He draws on the ideas of Mary Douglas to suggest that “*the road from national genius to a totalized cosmology of the sacred nation, and further to ethnic purity and cleansing, is relatively direct*”.

Nina Glick Schiller³⁰ in her reaction to Bunzl brings this argument even a step further when she speaks about “*the racial roots of the concept of ‘nation’*” and that this idea is “*growing in the wake of contemporary migrations and dissemination of concepts of ‘diaspora’*”.

The deliberate use of racist and xenophobic ideas as a political tool is not limited to the evident case of Nazi-Germany. Many of the rightist politicians from Le Pen to Fortuyn and Wilders used this strategy. Dietrich Thranhardt³¹ gave a review of the onset of “*Political uses*

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 11

²⁶ Bunzl, *op.cit.* p.4

²⁷ 1099

²⁸ Assad, T. Trying to understand French secularism p.513 in: Vries, H.de & Sullivan, L.E. – Political theologies – New York: Fordham University Press - 2006

²⁹ Appadurai, Arjun – Fear of small numbers – Duke University Press – Durham/London – 2006 p. 4

³⁰ Glick Schiller, Nina – *Am. Ethnologist* 32 (4) (Nov.2005)(p.517-532) p.523

³¹ Thranhardt, D – Europe – a new immigration continent; Policies and politics since 1945 in comparative perspective, p.51 in: Thranhardt, D (ed.) – Europe – a new immigration continent – Lit Verlag – Münster/Hamburg 1992

of *xenophobia*” in various European countries. He shows, that gradually mainstream politicians also used these motives and reminds that a.o. M.Thatcher spoke already in 1978 about “*the ‘swamping’ of Britain by too many immigrants*”.

So key questions based on this perspective in the cases studied are:

- to which extent have decisions been taken strategically or tactically for secondary political purposes? If so, what was the hidden agenda?

3) Cases

a) 1835 background

During the Middle Ages Jews had been expelled from the Netherlands and only after the reformation around the start of the 17th century they were admitted to the cities of Holland, which had a mostly a pragmatic attitude towards the Jews (especially at first towards the Sephardic Jews who were instrumental in opening up international trade relations). However, the cities in the Republic of the United Netherlands (prior to 1795) were autonomous in their “foreigner” policy. Utrecht, in the centre of the country and without foreign trade, was restrictive until mid 18th century³², when it opened its gates for Jewish merchants during day time and year markets only, and only in 1789 Jews were allowed settlement. From that moment on a relatively small Jewish community started. No exact figures are available about the economic position of that community on the whole, but at least a few of the leaders could be considered “upper middle class” or even “moderately rich”. Among these families which had previously lived in the nearby village of Maarsse, and who already had commerce in Utrecht before. On average it is likely that the community was less poor than e.g. the Ashkenazi Jews in Amsterdam.

It is known that around 1836 the majority of this community still spoke Yiddish, as they protested when their leaders organised a sermon in Dutch (by a special guest speaker) in the synagogue for a non-Jewish audience at the occasion of the 200 year anniversary of the Utrecht University³³.

In 1806 under influence of the French occupation new legislation on schooling was established in line with the new ideas on separation of church and state. Of the three types of schools only the public school – which was supposed to teach the social and Christian virtues – was at least partly publicly funded³⁴. People who could afford it gave private education to their children. Poorer children got some education at church related or public schools for the poor. The overall percentage of children attending school was probably no more than 40-50%.

In 1817 a Royal Decree of King William I was issued to regulate the education of the Jewish children. It stated a.o., that the “*degenerated High German or so-called Yiddish*” had to be fought against. Only Dutch and Hebrew (another Jewish language, but of higher reputation among the protestant majority and among the Jews) would be allowed³⁵.

This decree was part of a general policy, which continued the policy started during the French time, and which was quite similar to that in France. The organisation of the Jewish community was hierarchically subordinate to the Ministry for the Reformed (and other) churches. A “Head Commission for the affairs of the Jews” – quite emancipation and integration oriented - was central in the web. It gave advice, which was often followed

³² Interestingly even in the time the town was not yet open for Jews some 80, mainly Sephardic Jews were allowed to get their doctorate at the University of Utrecht already from 1649 on.

³³ Zwarts,J. – “De beide oudste synagogefeesten van Utrecht” – Centraalblad voor Israëlieten in Nederland 16-02-1939. This example also shows that the leadership of the community was quite integration oriented and were in that respect way ahead of most of the community members

³⁴ Dodde,N.J. –*Joods Onderwijs in Nederland van 1815 tot 1940* in H.Berg (ed.) –*De Gelykstaat der Joden* JHM Amsterdam & Waanders Zwolle 1996 p.68

³⁵ Royal Decree of May 10th 1817 litt E No 146 No XIV

(unless it had financial consequences). The commission also succeeded often to mediate in cases of discrimination by local or central government³⁶.

In educational affairs it focused in the years after 1817 on the selection of teachers who could teach in Dutch and the development of schooling materials³⁷. Around 1840 this policy had resulted in the availability of sufficient numbers of such teachers. An inspector was appointed to see to the quality of the lessons and their being given in Dutch (reward could be result dependent).

b) 1835 case

Although it is likely that some form of religious schooling took place in the synagogue previously, a first Jewish school for the poor was opened in 1820. No financial support was asked for this school from the local authorities until 1835, possibly because the education did not yet meet the requirements of the 1817 Decree, or possibly because the education was limited to religious matter, while the general education was still followed at the public school. On Nov.26th 1834 a Jewish local school committee, which is formally a sub-commission of the Head Commission, mentioned above, writes to Burgomaster and Alderman (B&A), that they have "*established with great sacrifice*" a new institution, where the poor youth will be made aware of their "*religious and social duties*" - which is to "*produce the desired fruits for the social order*". As "*the Israelite religion asks for much education in its requirements, its sacred language, its scriptures and its history*", it would take too much time for the kids to go to the community school and move back and forward between schools³⁸. So the commission thinks it better to unite the religious and the social (i.e. general) education in the same institution and asks for approval³⁹ (reed probably also share in the funding as care for the poor, see below).

Upon advice of the local school committee B&A decide on Jan 12th 1835 with a formal argument. Before the school can be admitted, dispensation from His Majesty must be obtained from the requirements of the Royal Decree 1817, which says, that in those places where community schools are available, Jewish pupils get the social education there. In Utrecht such a school is available, so no combined religious/social education without dispensation.⁴⁰

On Dec. 1st 1837 the leaders of the local Jewish congregation write a long letter to B&A. in which they regret that the subsidy to their fund for the poor has not been increased as requested. Major reason is apparently the support given by the congregation to the school (another is the incidental support to passing travellers from outside Utrecht).

A few of the points they stressed were:

- o the local belonging: "*the privilege to belong to the subjects of HM the king of the Netherlands*", "*the fortune to be Dutch Israelites*",
- o submission to the local rules: "*duties according to the laws of the country*", "*according to the existing Regulation*")
- o the positive role of religion: learning of prayers, use of the holy language (in the then strongly religious community signs of obedient behaviour)
- o stress on use of the Dutch language ("*translation into Dutch of the holy scripture*")
- o risk of hooliganism ("*which may be foreseen with so large a number from the lower class of which the parents do not give much care to the education*" when sending the kids along the streets (i.e. while going from the public to the religious school or v.v.))
- o no different costs if the children visit also the public school

³⁶ Wallet, B. Nieuwe Nederlanders, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 2007, p. 82 - 95

³⁷ ibid p.137-141

³⁸ The programme on general and religious matters as stipulated by the Royal Decree of 1817 is quite overloaded. School hours in Utrecht in the new school were from 9-13 and 15-18 h (Reinsma,R. Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis 77(1964) p.460 (p. 448-465))

³⁹ Minutes Burgomaster & Alderman of Jan.12, 1835 appendix no 48

⁴⁰ Minutes Burgomaster & Alderman of Jan.12, 1835

- o the need for an additional under-master with almost 60 children in one class

B&A⁴¹ ask again for advice to the local school commission, which⁴² repeats the formal argument, but feels obliged to add the evaluation by two of their members who visited the school. The combined religious and general education had been in effect for a little more than three years and the teaching of the art of writing, the Dutch language, the national history, geography, calculus etc. are fully effective. They express their satisfaction with the *“exceptional capability of the young teacher”*, so the 74 children get *“quite excellent instruction”*. The school commission adds a.o., that:

- the school is under the supervision of two well esteemed citizens of the city
- the Israelite school commission has undertaken to apply all existing regulations
- walking from school to school would take indeed much time (dearly needed for the teaching of Hebrew),
- being under the supervision of the same masters would be desirable
- similar schools exist in other places.

B&A decide not to take a decision (apparently in view of the formal side of the issue)⁴³.

On August 6th the local Jewish school committee (though apparently not able to produce a formal ministerial dispensation) sends a letter⁴⁴ with a recent ministerial disposition⁴⁵ on the subject. Apparently the formalities laid down in the Royal Decree of 1817 are not generally followed anymore, but the disposition is rather vague. On the one hand the regulations of the old Royal Decree are underlined, on the other hand procedures are given for the fulfilment of vacancies for teachers in the Israelite schools in the same way as in other schools in agreement with the general school committee.

B&A asks again for advice to the school committee. The school committee⁴⁶ repeats that the school *“deserves legal recognition because of its good arrangement and its benefit aimed at by combining social and religious instruction”*, but also gives the formal argument, that the new disposition is fully based on the Royal Decree so formal dispensation would still be required. A few days later B&A took their final decision⁴⁷: *“Although the school would deserve the recognition, it formally needs to ask for dispensation and the applicants need to handle conform the existing rules”*⁴⁸.

The school existed until 1870, as in the wake of a new Law on education of 1857 the subsidisation of the mixed religious/social education had been abolished and the route through public education was made more acceptable.

c) 1988 background

- o In the sixties and seventies an influx of migrant workers, especially from Turkey and Marocco resulted in a large increase of the number of residents in the Netherlands with an Islamic background. Due to the unification of families the number of children in school age rapidly increased in the eighties. These children initially visited public as well as Christian schools. Islamic education was often given in separate religious forms of instruction. By the end of the eighties part of the parents of these children preferred to send the children to Islamic primary schools. A few foundations were established to set up Islamic primary schools, giving general education according to the local standards in an Islamic surrounding and with additional lessons on Islamic subjects.

⁴¹ Minutes Dec. 7th 1837 F.I.# 69

⁴² Letter 12 May 1938

⁴³ Minutes B&A May 21st, 1938

⁴⁴ Minutes B&A August 23 1938 appendix F.I. # 195 A & B

⁴⁵ Ministerial disposition no. 6 of July 27th 1837 Minister..for the affairs of the Reformed church etc.

⁴⁶ Minutes B&A September 26th 1938 appendix F.I.#62 letter dated Sept. 18th

⁴⁷ Minutes B&A September 26th 1938

⁴⁸ Details about subsidisation afterwards still to be studied.

- o The Dutch schooling system used to be divided according to confessional “pillars”. This situation was the result of a “school struggle” (schoolstrijd) which was fought in the 19th and early 20th century as a reaction of various confessional groups against a rigid Protestant oriented public education. The struggle resulted in 1848 in constitutional “freedom of education” and in 1917/1920 in the right of public financing for both the public and religious elementary schools on an equal basis, provided the schools were conform the quality requirements by the state. In the mean time basic education had also become compulsory. In the twenties of the 20th century the number of religion based schools had rapidly increased, and around the end of the 20th century the percentage of public primary schools was only about 30%
- o New Islamic primary schools had thus a principal right to be established on the same basis. Although the separation into confessional “pillars” tended to crumble down in the Dutch society since the seventies, these schools still fitted in and found their place, though most of the children of migrants did visit nevertheless public and other non-muslim schools.

d) 1988 case

On March 25th 1988 the Islamic Foundation for Instruction and Education (ISNO) – a just recently founded organisation – sent a request to the city council – aiming at the opening of a new Islamic school per August 1st 1989. They also requested the school to be taken up in the planning for school housing and for the provision of required financing, educational materials and school furniture.

Signatures of 372 supporting parents were provided, as well as a list of 160 names of intended pupils that would reach the age of 4 years after the foreseen starting date.

After receipt the alderman asked his administration to check the legality of the request and to see from which schools pupils would be transferred to the new school.

The city did not want to follow the request. Argument given for refusal is, that the Law on the Primary schooling stipulates (art.7), that the provisions of the Law are not applicable in case the school will be exclusively for children which do not have the Dutch nationality (this clause was intended for schools for the children of diplomats, where instruction would be in a foreign language and according to an own system, which might lead to opposition between the Dutch laws and the foreign laws).

When the foundation ISNO found out that the Alderman did not intend to comply with the request, they asked for a meeting. In the meeting they explained, that other cities did not see a problem in the specific clause, and that the school is not specific for Turkish or Moroccan children, in fact not even for Muslim children only, but for any child that wants to follow the Islamic instruction.

The Alderman replied that the prognosis indicated that only Turkish children would participate. Furthermore he asked about known practical problems such as the availability of qualified teachers and the unresolved question of a supervisory board. He did not change his opinion, after which the city council followed his proposals.

On Sept. 29th B&A replied that the city council had decided on Sept 22nd to dismiss the request, c.q. refuse the co-operation. The schooling plan for the next period was sent to the provincial authorities without inclusion of the new school.

The real motives of the Alderman, who refused admission of the Islamic school, may be understood from an interview in NRC-Handelsblad⁴⁹. The request for the school enhanced a development, which he had tried to fight in the course of 19 years: the segregation between the Dutch children and those from abroad. Contact between children is in his view a first condition for esteem and respect. He considers it the responsibility of the school to care, that

⁴⁹ NRC Handelsblad, April 19th 1989

the pupils can learn the Dutch language (in and outside the class). In local discussions and by co-ordination the Alderman has – as he says – always managed to limit the segregation into “black and white” schools to a minimum. ISNO came from outside the city, did not participate in those discussions and lobbied for an undesirable segregation.

Upon discussion in the city council the Christian-democratic fraction (CDA) was against the decision of the Alderman.

Their argumentation:

- the freedom of education is guaranteed in the constitution
- some of the parents and/or children have the Dutch nationality, people from different nationalities, including the Dutch, can confess the “Muslim belief”
- equal rights and equal duties exist as regards the quality of the education

The social-democratic party (the party as the Alderman) argued, that they are not against Islamic schools, but:

- the actual list of supporting parents indicates that it will be practically an exclusively Turkish school

The two liberal parties (VVD & D66) stated that they had not heard major arguments, either before or against the proposals, but voted divided.

Finally a small rightist (xenophobic) party (CP) was:

- against the increasing pillar formation and apartheid,
- if the parents want “*non-Dutch education*” they should “*look for financing by their home countries*” or the proponents of this type of instruction / if groups “*want to refuse assimilation in our society, they must accept the consequences*”,
- they want to fight “*unlawful subsidisation of ethnic education*”

In his answer the Alderman states that:

- he is not against pillarization nor wants to favour public education
- his argumentation is purely formal: the school is only intended for children of non-Dutch nationality (according to the prognosis by ISNO)
- furthermore inclusion in the school plan is for the time being out of order, in view of the non-availability of qualified teachers etc

Shadid & Van Koningsveld⁵⁰ gave a global summary of the discussions on the subject in the city councils (and their educational subcommittees) of Rotterdam, Eindhoven, the Hague and Utrecht. Because of the broader base we may expect, that their result is more representative for the attitudes at that moment than the results we reported so far. They remind, that the establishment of Christian schools would not evoke any discussion in these forums, as these are a common phenomenon, as is the aim of these schools to keep up an own religious culture. So the discussion is mostly based on other arguments and partly prejudices.

They also summarized the arguments of the discussions in those cities:

- o The arguments in favour of the acceptance of the schools were:
 - o the freedom of education is a constitutional right, financing of religious schools is an established right
 - o especially the christian-democrats and the liberals see the importance of “integration while preserving the own identity”
 - o some council members see the schools as supporting the emancipation of the ethnic group (it as a desired form of self-organisation leading to this aim, and historically it also helped the Catholics in the then Protestant Netherlands in their emancipation)
- o Arguments used against the establishment of the schools were mainly:
 - o political viewpoints against the special (religious) education in general (especially amongst the non-confessional parties)
 - o the opinion that the educational system is a general system, not intended for “categorical provisions” (i.e. for special groups)⁵¹,
 - o special schools are supposed to hamper integration

⁵⁰ Shadid, W.A.R. & Koningsveld, P.S.van – Discussies over de islam in Nederland, Vooroordelen, onbegrip en paternalisme – Utrecht: De Ploeg uitgeverij – 1990 - ISBN 90 658 4071 0

⁵¹ it must be noted that religious categories have been generally recognized, so here ethnic categories are meant.

- o special schools were supposed to have a detrimental effect on the outflow to secondary schools (at an adequate level)

After the treatment at the city level the foundation ISNO appealed at the provincial level against the decision of the city council not to take up their school in the school planning. The Province of Utrecht (which includes not only the city of Utrecht, but is the next higher administrative layer) decided to reject the decision of the city on the Islamic school, as the school was intended for any child who wants to follow this type of education, independent of the nationality. So all legal requirements had been fulfilled.

The city of Utrecht still made a weak attempt to get the decision of the province rejected at the highest Court of Appeal (Raad van State), but did not have the slightest chance. Islamic schools followed soon after also in the city of Utrecht.

As an overall conclusion on this subject Shadid & Van Koningsveld conclude, that

1. Apart from the support from the Christian-democrats, who support the special (confessional) education in general, the establishment of the schools would probably not have succeeded without the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of education
2. The discussions showed a strongly paternalistic spirit.

4) Discussion

a) The Other

Both in 1835 and in 1988 the groups discussed (Jews resp. Muslims) were considered as distinct group, different from the mainstream, but this fact can hardly be considered as forced “othering”. Both language and cultural differences were still largely too obvious to oversee. In the case of the Turkish and Moroccan migrants the parents were still mostly “foreigner” (in the sense of a foreign nationality and often some intention to go back to the country of origin). In the Jewish case a major influx had taken place already in the 18th century so a higher percentage may have been second or later generation, at least in the Netherlands. And indeed until 1796 – the year in which the Jews got equal civil rights in the Netherlands – strong exclusive tendencies had played a role. As mentioned, Utrecht excluded Jews from settlement until 1789 and from civil citizenship until 1796.

From the French time (1806-1813) on at least at the formal level the policy was directed towards inclusion. The obligation in the Royal Decree of 1817 that the poor Jewish children should follow the instruction in the public basic schools for the poor, was not only a practical way to have them learn Dutch in the absence of a sufficient number of Dutch speaking Jewish teachers. It was a major change toward inclusion from the former exclusion; before, they had frequently not been allowed to participate in the Protestant schools (in those places where they were admitted). Though the Other had previously not been completely immutable (inclusion was possible through conversion), now the label ‘Other’ could be removed or reduced through a form of integration into the Dutch society. That is to say, by modification, being civilized in such a way that they could be tolerated.

Did that mean, that the Jew was no longer an Other? Not necessarily! During a visit to Utrecht in 1808 Napoleon had once expressed to the local Jewish leaders, that he disliked the Ashkenazi Jews. He was not the only one. The Maatschappij tot Nut van het Algemeen (Society for Public Welfare) did not admit Jews during most of the 19th century. So anti-semitic feelings may well have played a role in decision taking. But at least in the 1835 case, that was not explicitly expressed. In the contrary, the pressure was towards a form of inclusion. And both the government and the progressive leaders of the community thought that a civilizing project was needed to realize the inclusion. Public schooling was part of it.

In the 1988 case we found a peculiar contrast. The Muslims who were regular citizens of the town, and some of whom had even the Dutch nationality, were 'othered' by the Alderman (labour party). As Turks they were not allowed a religious school, which would have been their right as Dutchman. But even though the Alderman got the full support from the xenophobic rightist party, his action can probably better be seen as an attempt to counteract the increasing segregation. Hence, his motives have probably been directed rather to inclusivity and reduction of contrasts than to othering. In his view the othering was being done by the request for special education.

Whether the fear for the Other has played a role beneath the surface, is difficult to say. From limited statements in the minutes it is difficult to draw far-going psychoanalytical conclusions. For the rightist party in the 1988 case the attitude may reasonably be presumed, but unqualified practising of psychoanalysis – by suggesting deeper motives - may give interesting explanations, but must yet be characterised as unscientific '*hineininterpretieren*' (too far reaching interpretation).

b) Role of the state

With the rise of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, after the French occupation, circumstances in Europe had changed drastically. All citizens of the new state had to become faithful subjects to His Majesty the King, not only the mainstream protestant Dutch, but also those adhering to another religion. Religions had to know their place and were guided by the Ministry for Religious Affairs, which had two main branches one for the Catholic and one for the Protestant (and Other) Cults.

For the Jews who had equal civil rights since 1796, the rules were quite strict. These dealt not so much with the cult itself, as with organisational matters such as the use of Dutch instead of Yiddish language and appointment of rabbis who would be able to speak Dutch. Integration of the Jewish citizens to model Dutch citizens was aimed at. Religion was considered instrumental in streamlining civilised behaviour. The Yiddish language – still predominantly in use- was seen as uncivilised and had to be eradicated. One country, one language. In the schools the use of a local minority language Friesian and the various dialects were also curtailed: all Dutch children had to be instructed in General Civilised Dutch. In this respect there was no discrimination. The Law of 1817, which regulated the Jewish Religious schools can be seen as part of these policies⁵².

To get a better grip on the Jewish community, the government formed a "Head Commission for the Affairs of the Jews" (HC) in which a selection of well-integrated persons was appointed. A hierarchy of synagogues reported to the commission and the commission reported to the Ministry. In this way control was kept, and pressure exercised. The progressive integrated Jews, who were in favour of integration towards full participation in society, supported the Head Commission, (and from time to time sought its support to exercise influence in cases of local discrimination).

In the 1835 case it was a clear strategy of the Head Commission to start the civilising mission of the co-religionists through the education of a new generation of religious teachers who would be able to speak Dutch and understand the local norms⁵³. Apparently this strategy had success as the Utrecht school could dispose over a fully adequate teacher.

On the whole the policy effected that by 1850 little Yiddish was spoken anymore (closeness of Dutch and Yiddish may have been also of influence). It also caused a relatively rapid

⁵² Wallet, op cit. p.95-96

⁵³ Wallet, op.cit.

integration and participation of Jews in the Dutch society, while at the same time the “orthodox” cult and values were preserved⁵⁴?

Shadid&Van Koningsveld⁵⁵ explain the fact that (around 1990) it took relatively long period before the minority groups started their own categorial schools, by a lack of persons who could initiate and of qualified teachers in the relatively low educated community. This conclusion – although made for the recent situation – is probably partly right for the 1835 case as well, but other factors may additionally have caused the delay:

- initially limited size of the growing community
- the non-compulsory character of the general education
- public education was at the time an attainment for the group
- the more harsh limitations on the legal level (according to the laws of 1806 and 1817)

During the 19th century not only the Jews, but also the Catholics have emancipated and taken their share in civil society. As a result the so-called “pillars” (zuilen) developed, in which each confession had its own parallel civil society and its own government financed schools. This set-up, well grounded in the legal system, paved the way for Islamic schools as well.

The local move of the Utrecht alderman to exclude “Turkish” schooling, had no legal basis whatsoever, and was in fact only a minor disturbance in the normally smooth introduction of Islamic schooling in the Netherlands.

But we agree with Shadid & Van Koningsveld⁵⁶ that the ethnic groups could only take the barrier of the paternalistic discussions [in the city councils] by an appeal on the legal regulations. These legal regulations were indeed much more favourable for the new players in 1988 than in 1835.

c) Integration

In the 1835 case the integration model the authorities followed was strongly based on forced “learning the new way”. The Royal Decree of 1817 is very explicit in this matter. Not only the language used in the schools was prescribed, also the obligatory use of the public school was part of the rules. The approach resulted in a loss of the original language within few generations, and it can be considered as successful in terms of its aims.

Though not mentioned as explicitly in the 1988 situation, conformity to the Dutch schooling system still implied the use of Dutch as an obligatory language. But as a result of the ‘school struggle’ legal possibilities to open state funded religious schools was open to all religious communities (under certain conditions). This can indeed be seen as an attainment of a certain degree of multiculturalism. However, this “multiculturalism” is limited to religion. In practice the time available for teaching an own language or culture is very limited.

One possible result of this situation may be, that the emancipation of the group is stimulated, as was the case previously with the Jews. To some extent the process is hampered by the segregation in the educational system largely as a result of migrants being housed in higher concentration in certain areas. But this effect tends more to create an intermediate culture and mixed language, than the preservation of the culture of the parents. In Utrecht the effect is probably stronger now than it was in the case of the Jews, as a result of more concentrated housing. But this view can not be generalized as the concentration of Jews in certain areas was especially in Amsterdam in the 19th century also high.

⁵⁴ Unlike Germany, no Reform-judaism developed until mid of the 20th century, and “the elite looked for and found connection to the Dutch and European culture without need to pay the price of baptise (R.G.Fuks-Mansfeld ‘*Moeizame aanpassing 1814-1870*’ in Blom, J.C.H e.a. *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Nederland – Amsterdam: Balans publ. 1995*

⁵⁵ op. cit. p.77

⁵⁶ op.cit. p.107

An effect of these developments seems to be that, while the home cultural traditions of the parents are lost, the youth develops an own form of identity, partly based on transnational Islamic connections, which may have unexpected side-effects (including radicalisation). Since the 19th century the settings have changes as a result of far more intensive international communication by the 'diasporic' communities.

Overlooking the various modes of 'integration/assimilation in the course of time, one can question, what the principal differences are between:

- 18th century acceptance of Jews only if they converted,
- compulsory learning of the language and participation in public schooling in the 19th century, and
- need of 'integration' as a key for admittance to social development in the 20th century.

In fact we think there is a gradual scale as in the table underneath⁵⁷:

individual differences	(partial) multiculturality			group differences	
① differences are not distinctive; accepted as part of diversity	② inclusive, mutual adaptation as result of natural process	③ inclusive, but desirable to adapt to majority for emancipation	④ inclusive, but need to regenerate	⑤ exclusive unless converted	⑥ exclusive, segregation, immutable difference

The situation in the 19th century in these particular cases must be evaluated as only slightly more to the right in the table than in the 20th century (position 3 and 4).

d) Strategies and tactics

hidden agendas

At the national level the policy for the integration of the Jews in the early 19th century was part of a more general strategic purpose: nation building. For this reason the Jews had to become more or less standardised Dutch, the first step of which would be the abolishment of the Yiddish language. Education for Dutch language was one of the first steps.

Also the repositioning of the group from a 'nation' into a local religion was a point. Benbassa indicated that in the French situation the term Jew (as sign of the Jewish "nation") was exchanged for the term Israelite (as indicative for the religion)⁵⁸. Also in the Netherlands we see the same phenomenon. The moulding of the Jews into purely a religion can be seen from a name given to their organisational framework as the "Nederlands Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap" (Dutch-Israelite Church Association).

In the 1835 case the government used the tactic to rule the Jewish community through a Head Commission composed of 'progressive' Jews, who fully supported what was seen at the time as civilising action.

In the late 20th century governments were also seeking for some kind of representation of minority communities, but the possibilities to govern top down were more restricted in the constitutional democracy of the time. The civic rights of religious communities are better guaranteed. Yet this representation may be liable to manipulation and the effect may be different. In those days the more progressive persons could be selected, where at the moment - due to the wish to limit particularity to religion - the non-religious cultural element may remain under-represented and the conservative religious element may be overrepresented.

⁵⁷ Note that the differences discussed here are more sociological than the ideological, literary, and psychoanalytical 'Other' discussed under a.

⁵⁸ Benbassa, E. op.cit. p. 66, she speaks in this context about the 'sacralisation' of the Jewishness

At the local level we do not know the motives of authorities in the 1835 case. In the 1988 case the real motive also seems to be hidden behind formal legalistic objections. But in view of the uttered wish to reduce separation by an Alderman of the Labour party, and the positions of the Christian-democrats supporting the confessional schooling, we must suspect that the conflict was still an offshoot of the school struggle. For the Christian schools the struggle was over, but for the Muslim schools there was a new round. The result can be considered as discrimination when judged at this point in time. As also other groups such as the Roman Catholics went through this process, one could question, if this is one of the standard patterns in emancipation.

Though such actions may be a barrier at the local level, the baseline for the final result is the legislation at the national level. In our 1835 case reference by the Jewish community to the Head Commission (in The Hague) has not been shown⁵⁹, though the presence of a recent ruling in their correspondence makes that probable. In the 1988 case the Islamic organisation did a direct appeal to the next higher government layer to get its rights. Although appeals to a higher level may not always be successful, they seem to make the minority less vulnerable to the local fiddles.

In both cases we could identify tactics by the authorities of delaying action and hiding behind formal regulations. The real motives may have remained hidden.

5) Conclusions

a) the perspectives

The Other

In neither of these cases the idea of the “Other”, as an enemy by fear, was of noticeable relevance. In both cases the local authorities followed a policy to include and to reduce apparent difference. The new citizens were not considered immutable, yet the other was not fully accepted in his way of being different either. A mutation to invisibly being like “us” would have been preferred. We can recognise this as part of the paternalistic and self-normative mode.

The state and its minorities

In this perspective pronounced differences existed between the cases, up to a point where these can hardly be compared. Where the state tried to civilise and mould the Jews to citizens of a new nation, the Muslims could use the civil rights of the modern liberal society and the attainments of the ‘pillars’-system. Where in the first case the state forcefully tried to reduce the cultural differences, in the second case some facilities for multiculturalism were in place, though not necessarily very effective to withstand a pressure towards assimilation. In both cases religion had to know its proper place, but in the 19th century this was effected through strict organisational control. In both cases the higher state level had the power to moderate excesses on the lower level.

Integration

Even though the methods used to obtain adaptation to the mainstream were far more authoritarian in the 19th century, much similarity can be seen. In both cases education played a major role. In both cases a certain place was left for realisation of the own culture, be it through religious schooling or through integrated religious/general schooling, but anyhow the formal requirements of the Dutch schooling system induced a pressure to integrate.

The attitude towards integration can in both cases be characterised as inclusive, but in the Jewish case there was more of a forced ‘civilisation’ where in the Muslim case we saw a slightly softer wish to integrate.

⁵⁹ further archival work to be done

Strategies and tactics

In both cases the authorities had secondary aims, which determined the pattern of the developments. In the Jewish case the hidden agenda was mainly one of nation building. A relatively progressive head commission with executive power was used as the tactical tool. In the Muslim case the hidden agenda was one to avoid segregation through opposition to confessional education, which can be seen as a late offshoot of the school struggle. In both cases the local authorities used formalism and delay tactics as a weapon.

b) Jews then, Muslims now

Although both the political and the educational regime had changed drastically between the occurrence of the two cases studied, still major comparable points could be distinguished. In both cases we had to do with the onset of a confessional school for the children of migrants who spoke another language than Dutch. In both cases the local authorities were reluctant to allow the school. In neither case this must be seen as a reaction of fear for the "Other", but rather as the result of authoritarian efforts to include the new group by pushing/forcing towards integration/assimilation. In both cases other political motives than the question self played a role. In both cases similar tactics were used.

Not comparable was the climate in which the cases took place. In the early 19th century an authoritarian regime wanted to create a centralised state in which the citizens were pushed to integration/assimilation. Strong pressure was exercised to abolish minority languages. Religion, however, was considered an essential part in the social order. So also the Jewish religion could play its role for this purpose. Use of Hebrew was respected. Only the schools for the poor were at that time government financed.

In the late 20th century a modern liberal state had developed with freedom of education. Also a previous school struggle had brought a right to establish state financed confessional schools. But even though this is to some extent a multicultural right, yet in both cases the framing of the school in the larger Dutch school system, with stress on Dutch language and the regular Dutch curriculum, had a clear integrating role. So even though the climate was quite different, the integrating role of the educational system is largely comparable.

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