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The ISIM solicits your response to the ISIM Newsletter. If you wish to contribute to the Newsletter, style sheets may be obtained upon request from the ISIM Secretariat or on the ISIM website. In order to offer update information on activities concerning the study of Islam and Muslim societies, along with news on vacancies, grants, and fellowships, the ISIM relies on its readers. The information will be made available on the ISIM Website.

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The Millennium is not an Islamic event, but it developed into a global event making it difficult to ignore or avoid. Eschatological sentiments feed on global occurrences such as the increase in armed conflicts, population crises, and the digital phantom of the Millennium Bug, but also on the desire for the fulfilment of prophecies of justice and social equality. The growing sense of global interdependency – in particular in frames of (potential) conflict of interests or, conversely, of consensus – grants reliability and authority to advocates of universalist schemes, including those elaborating upon the notion of equality through the New Media and those building upon seemingly more traditional religious concepts. The champions of the information revolution may well be critiqued for their social optimism (Lawrence, p. 9), but their appeal is strong and the experiments impact on society (Lotfalian, p. 8). The millenniums may not be representative of the larger communities of faith, but they are too indicative of the fluidity of devotional practice and narrative. The remarkable mix of images and ideas taken from diverse religious and spiritual traditions and discourses by the Naqshibandi-Haqqani leadership (see cover), combined with the extensive geographical spread of this Sufi order, illustrates the complexities of the current movements of people and ideas. The order embraces what are thought to be Christian concepts of the End of Time, synchronizes with the Gregorian calendar, and addresses concerns of a broader public in the West in order to further its spread, in particular in North America. This trend of fusion is not restricted to clearly transnational organizations such as the Naqshibandi-Haqqani organization, also in the Middle East one finds a vivid Arabic eschatological discourse in which elements adopted from Western millenarianism play a prominent role. The shared historical sources of this particular religious genre may partly explain this phenomenon, but, evidently, apocalyptic imageries are open to a great variety of signs and omens, thus globalizing the Millennium 2000 and making it relevant to – at the least some – Muslim audiences. The inclusion of recent and current events, for instance the Gulf War and the wars in the Balkans and in the Caucasus, also puts the West on the apocalyptic stage, even allowing for the endorsement of Western Clash of Cultures and End of Histories theories (Furnish, p. 22). Merchandizing the Millennium occurs in the Muslim World, too, albeit not on a scale comparable to the West. It is mostly a highly fused phenomenon in which elements from ancient traditions are freely combined with high-tech imageries of global consumerism. In Gizeh, for example, a golden top is airlifted on the largest pyramid when the hour of the Millennium strikes, a costly event which arouses opposition from various circles, including Muslim ones.

But it is not only the final hours of a century that set the stage for transcultural experiments: the constant migration of people and ideas can also be a catalyst to experimentation elsewhere. The romantic encounters between Pakistani men and Philippine women in Hong Kong and the subsequent conversion of the latter to Islam are a case in point (Hawwa, p. 10). Several contributions to this issue show that the line between defending and inventing tradition is blurred in societal debates on what is considered fashionable and socially desirable in the context of migrant communities. Transnational in character, mi-

grant communities are not only confronted with views and customs of local majorities, but also become part of local communities through schooling, career and intermarriage, a process that put their social, religious and/or national identities to the test (Van den Bremen, p. 7; Amiraux, p. 30; Buitelaar p. 29; Lewis p. 28). The situation of old Muslim minorities differs from that of migrant communities in that they put greater stress on preservation (of local majority status; see Attan, p. 11) or on the idea(l) of re-establishing their communities (Armijo-Hussein, p. 12; Szajkowski p. 27). A remarkable situation exists in an area where the Muslim World converges with that of Ethiopian Christianity: repeated collective migration from the one religion to the other (Abbink, p. 24). In other cases not people but spirits seem to have migrated, as in the case of Muslim Shamanism of Central Asia (Garrone, p. 15).

Naturally, debates on fashion and social codes are also very common in predominantly Muslim societies (Popenoe p. 5; El Guindi p. 6; Ahmad, p. 16; Ensel p. 23). What makes the debates in these societies more pertinent is, perhaps, the different political significance of Islam – being the religion of the majority of citizens or the religion of state, or both. In Europe, the US or China, Islam is on the political

agenda, but those speaking in its name do not, or hardly ever, set the agenda, albeit that in the Balkans Muslim votes count (Chukov, p. 26). In many Muslim countries Islam is integrated into the political system in the sense that governments and oppositional groups make use of its institutions and vocabulary, and like their constituencies ascribe to its general values. Political uses of Islam are not new phenomena, and the political relevance of Islam to modern state building has been recognized by many, starting with the Ottomans (Rogan, p. 19). At present its political potential often favours linkage between political and religious elites (Noor, p. 13; Van Hoven, p. 25). In internal or external conflicts modern Muslim conceptions of political rights and wrongs challenge alternative expressions; and often, as in the cases of Kashmir and Jordan/Palestine, the political appeal of Muslim groups transgresses state boundaries (Rao, p. 17; Al-Khazendar, p. 20-1).

Research on societies and their systems of beliefs can only be pursued in a successful manner when criticism is expressed. Subsequently, reviews of recent research, even state of the arts reports, are vital. In this issue the study of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa (Brenner, p. 31) and in Post-Soviet Russia (Bobrovnikov, p. 32) are critically reviewed. News on institutes, projects and conferences relevant to the study of Muslim societies and communities constitutes another pillar of this Newsletter. Given the multitude and wide variety of initiatives, both old and new, ISIM would like to invite as many contributions to this category as possible, also in view of the development of an electronic guide. Linking of research – also to the study of non-Muslim societies – and access to results of research remains problematic. Apart from conducting original research, ISIM aspires to connect the various traditions, trends and aspirations in the broad field of the study of Muslim society and to help in making them accessible. ♦

**DICK DOUWES**  
*editor*

NEWS

## The University of Nijmegen Joins the ISIM

It is with great pleasure that the ISIM welcomes the University of Nijmegen as a full partner in the Institute. The University of Nijmegen – located in the east of the Netherlands – is one of the largest Dutch national universities. Founded in 1923 as a result of the emancipation of the Catholic community in the Netherlands, the university developed into one of the main centres of learning in the country. Today, it offers 73 training courses, attracting well over 12,000 students, and employs nearly 4,000 staff members distributed over 9 faculties.

Over the last decades, the University of Nijmegen has contributed strongly to the development of the study of Islam and Muslim societies in the Netherlands and beyond. The regional emphasis at the various relevant departments and institutes (Middle Eastern Studies, Anthropology, Centre for Women's Studies, Religious Studies, Third World Centre) is on the Middle East and North Africa. However, Sub-Saharan Africa and South-east Asia, as well as migrant communities in Europe, constitute part of the research interests.

The University of Nijmegen was involved in the early stages of discussions leading to the foundation of the ISIM. With its participation, the ISIM strengthens its national basis. Profiting from the expertise in Nijmegen, the new input enables the ISIM to further expand its activities. As is the case for the other participating universities, a special ISIM Chair will be established at the University of Nijmegen. The appointment will be announced in the next ISIM Newsletter, but may well be published on the ISIM Website and elsewhere earlier.

VACANCY

## ISIM Chair: University of Amsterdam

The ISIM and the University of Amsterdam invite applications for the ISIM Chair for the Study of Contemporary Islam at the University of Amsterdam, at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. This faculty organizes 11 degree programmes, an extensive international study programme and conducts a series of research programmes at 8 institutes. The faculty employs over 400 permanent staff members and counts more than 7,000 students. A multidisciplinary approach and international cooperation are actively encouraged.

Candidates should:

- possess an established international reputation in the study of contemporary Muslim societies from the social science perspective;
- have extensive knowledge of one or more regions and be well versed in comparative social science research;
- have a strong record of field experience;
- have wide-ranging academic contacts, particularly in the Muslim world;
- have an excellent command of languages relevant to their field of research as well as fluency in English; and
- have experience in teaching and supervising postgraduate programmes.

The holder of the ISIM Chair will be expected to carry out the following tasks at both the ISIM and the University of Amsterdam:

- develop research programmes and conduct research within the framework of the two institutions;
- teach classes and provide supervision to undergraduate and graduate students; and
- contribute to various other academic activities such as conferences and special lectures.

This ISIM Professorship is a full-time position for a maximum of five years with the possibility of extension. Female candidates are especially encouraged to apply.

*Review of applications will begin on 1 March 2000.*

*Applicants should send a full CV, including list of publications, to: Prof. Muhammad Khalid Masud  
ISIM, P.O. Box 11089, 2301 EB Leiden, The Netherlands*