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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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Europe has witnessed yet another round of religion-related violence; again a Muslim population has suffered dramatically from 'ethnic cleansing'. The violent replacement of ethnic groups in areas that once were part of the Ottoman polity has left few communities untouched, and the dismantling of mixed societies which date back to pre- and early modernity continues. Again, the rationale of nationalism exposes the dark side of the modern condition. In the broader context of Europe, the paradox is that, on the one hand, attempts are made to form a society based upon the ideal of a multi-cultural identity while, on the other hand, the coexistence of divergent identities is put to trial. Whereas the Muslim population in Europe in general has increased markedly due to recent migrations, Europe's indigenous Muslims suffer major setbacks. Perhaps we should not read too much religion or ideology into the tragic events, but in the case of the Serbian extremism directed against the Albanians of Kosovo it seems hard to locate possible material motivations. The horrors of Bosnia and now Kosovo cast deep shadows over the future of remaining minorities in the now-battered Serb Republic, in particular the Muslims of the Sancaq area. In this edition of the ISIM Newsletter, Ger Duizings (p.1) demonstrates that traditionally mixed religious practices in Kosovo had already come under severe pressure in the decade preceding the war. Michael Sells (p.31) describes how religious symbolism in the Balkans has been politicized by nationalists whose devotion to 'historic' land has produced a horrid caricature of the history of inter-communal relations in the Balkans.

Recent outbreaks of communal fighting in Indonesia and the renewed clashes in Kashmir have further brought to the fore the realities of political religion. In a recent meeting in Beirut, a Lebanese scholar critiqued a specific statement in the Research Approaches and Thematic Profile of ISIM (see Newsletter 1, p. 3) which seems to downplay the importance of political radicalism as a topic of scholar-

ly concern; although they constitute a minority, radicals often provide leadership to those who would normally be considered to be moderates. Serb politics of the 1990s may be a case in point. Marc Gaborieau (p.21) while being careful not to speculate about the ultimate goals of the movement, questions the non-political nature of the Tablighi Jama'at – an icon of moderation – suggesting that religious politics are not only a matter of purpose, but also of style.

Although the series of recent events forces us to reflect upon the political uses of religion, only few states and societies are actually ruled by distinctive religious ideologies. Much space in this issue is devoted to less direct ways of disseminating ideas and practicing ideals in Muslim societies, ranging from performance of song, to the exhibition of religious manuscripts, to the writing of women into national history. A series of articles deal with material culture, in particular architecture, and with the various uses of space in – mainly – urban contexts. Urban, sacred, and moral spaces constitute a field of research that seems to call for a clearer multi-disciplinary approach than many other fields. Diverse diasporic experiences are covered in various contributions. Helene Basu (p.39) reports on her experiences in field research among the African diaspora in India, and Andr e Feillard (p.17) on the meetings she had with Indonesian ulema, indeed a category for which we invite more contributions. The same goes for critical essays on current trends in the study of the Muslim world. In a sweeping argument, Hammed Shahidian (p.5) opposes the centrality of religion in the understanding of these societies. He criticizes the emphatic treatment of trends that – in his eyes – may limit the freedom of groups and individuals. Institutes like ISIM, which concentrate on the study of Islam and societies of Muslims, have only to benefit from their critics. ◆

**DICK DOUWES**  
editor

MISCELLANEOUS

**Conference on the 'Transformation Processes and Islam in Africa'**

Co-Sponsored by the ISIM

Islam has always been a vehicle of economic, political and ideological re-orientation in African societies. The explosive increase in communication has intensified these processes, transforming the face of both Islam and Africa, also in regions which, until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE / 14<sup>th</sup> century AH, had remained virtually untouched by Islam. This conference aims to bring together Dutch researchers investigating transformation processes related to the presence of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. The invited international scholars, Louis Brenner (SOAS, London UK) and Lamin Sanneh (Yale University, New Haven CT), will place this topic into a wider perspective. Louis Brenner will deliver a keynote address on 'Recent developments and challenges in the study of Islam in Africa: international perspectives'. The rest of the day's programme will be fixed on the basis of the abstracts submitted.

**Organizers:** Africa Studies Centre (ASC) in co-operation with the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM)

**Convenors:** Wim van Binsbergen, Anneke Breedveld, José van Santen  
**Place of event:** African Studies Centre, room 1A27, Pieter de la Courtgebouw, Wassenaarseweg 52, Leiden

**Date of event:** Friday, 15 October 1999

**Contact person:** Ms. Dr. Anneke Breedveld, African Studies Centre; P.O. Box 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, The Netherlands,  
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**Attention!**

We kindly asks that you consult the ISIM Website regularly for information and announcements concerning the upcoming ISIM PhD and post-doctoral fellowships. Information of the opening for the position of ISIM Chair in Amsterdam will be placed on the Website in the coming months. Electronic forms for all of these as well as for the ISIM Advanced Degree programme can be found on the site as well. ◆

**Retraction**

In the ISIM Newsletter 2, the following errors were made in our 'info pages':

— The e-mail address of the Islamic Area Studies Newsletter of the University of Tokyo, Japan, which was listed on page 46, had an incorrect e-mail address. The correct address is: i-office@i.u.tokyo.ac.jp

— On page 47 an academic meeting was listed under 'Beyond the Border: a New Framework for Understanding the Dynamism of Muslim Societies, to take place from 8-10-99 to 10-10-99, in Kyoto, Japan. The title for that meeting should read: '1999 International Symposium' and the correct fax is: +81 3 5684 3279.

— We have also been notified that in the meantime, the telephone and fax numbers for the Islamic Area Studies Project in Tokyo have been changed.

The new numbers are:  
tel. +81 3 5841 2687, or 8952,  
and the fax +81 3 5841 2686.

— We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience. ◆

## ISIM Advanced Degree Programme Applications for 2000

The ISIM starts its Advanced Degree programme in November 1999 (deadline for applications is passed). For the year 2000, the Advanced Degree programme will begin in late September. ISIM invites applications for 2000. The closing date for applications is 1 January 2000.

The Advanced Degree programme prepares students (holders of a Master's degree or its equivalent) for PhD research. It is open to graduates in the humanities, social sciences, and religious studies. The applicants must specialize in a field specifically related to the study of modern Islam and Muslim society. The programme lasts for one academic year and includes, among others, training in social science and cultural-historical approaches and methods, and topic specialization through workshops and tutorials. The programme combines course work and individual supervision. Staff of the ISIM and the participating universities, as well as visiting fellows are engaged for the programme, which is offered in cooperation with several institutes abroad. The emphasis in the selection is clearly placed on proven outstanding academic capacity. Although the Advanced Degree training is a preparatory programme for PhD research, this does not guarantee entry into an ISIM PhD programme.

The tuition fee is 10,000 guilders (currently approximately 5,000 USD). However, (partial) waivers may be obtained in certain cases. For the academic year 2000-1 a limited number of grants will be offered. For information and application forms, please contact the ISIM secretariat or consult the ISIM Website. ◆