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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.

The ISIM Newsletter is a tri-annual publication of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM). Responsibility for the facts and opinions expressed in this publication rests solely with the authors. Their views do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute or its supporters. The ISIM Newsletter is free of charge.

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The ISIM initiated a wide range of activities in 1999-2000, including the design of its education and research programmes, the organization of academic meetings and lectures (see pages 3 and 5), the construction of a database and a website, and the establishment of national and international networks of cooperation. These and other ISIM activities are an indication that ISIM is quickly expanding its horizons.

Within two years' time the ISIM has been shaped in such a way as to attract the intellectual curiosity of many in the broad field of the study of Islam and Muslim societies, in particular because of its unique thematic profile and its broad geographic focus. The ISIM has established its name in this international field, a process in which the *ISIM Newsletter* plays an essential role. While the diversified and dynamic approach of the ISIM is clearly reflected in this publication, the institute is far from being its only source. Its pages are filled with contributions by highly active researchers in the field. Its contents echo the trends, ambitions, and even future prospects of the study of Islam and Muslim societies.

Vital to the development of this field of research are methodology and theoretical approaches. Gudrun Krämer critically addressed a number of these issues at the ISIM Annual Lecture (page 6-7). She starts with the simple question: 'Why do we study Islam and how should we do it?' She advocates focusing on actors rather than systems, concentrating on intra-cultural variation rather than homogeneity. Another important issue is that of modernity, which is of particular interest to the ISIM as it forms one of the founding concepts of the institute. Patrick Chabal (page 9) approaches the concept of modernity in Africa by dissociating it from the notion of development. In a provocative essay, Sadik Al-Azm (page 11) calls for a critical reflection upon the position Arabs and Muslims take *vis-à-vis* modernity and the West. David Shankland (page 43) comments on current tendencies in the study of Muslim societies, in particular Turkey. He warns against overemphasizing Islamist trends and underestimating the importance of non-religious movements and practices.

In recent months, the position of Muslims within the Netherlands, and in the West in general, has gained prominence in the discussions of multi-cultural society. These discussions clearly demonstrate the need for further research as well as for a critical assessment of identity – whether that be cultural, national, religious, or ethnic identity. In this debate, an increasing number of players foresee the development of an European (or for that mat-

ter, Dutch, French, or German) Islam. Some even argue that this is the inevitable outcome of the integration of (post-)migrant Muslim communities. However, Olivier Roy (page 1) argues that other processes, such as individualization and restructuring of identities, are at work and that they prevent the coming into being of an European Islam. In some radical cases, individual believers have the choice of opting out of society. And although some of them may well be in the spotlight, they are unlikely to attract a large and lasting following as the case of Metin Kaplan shows (Werner Schiffauer, p. 27). The examples given in Yasha Lange's

article (page 29) demonstrate that no matter what direction is taken in the process of integration and (mutual) adjustment, the scrutinizing of existing laws and the seeking of new precedents can not be avoided. The problematic relationship between cultural, national and religious identities

informs the debate on the position of Islam in Europe, including the difficult position of Europe's autochthonous Muslims, in particular in the Balkans (Raymond Detrez, page 26) and Russia (Vladimir Bobrovnikov, page 25). The problematic of religion and nationality is nonetheless not limited to Europe; it is indeed a worldwide issue of particular interest in an increasing number of Middle Eastern countries (Henry Munson, page 10).

The *ISIM Newsletter* has once again tried to give attention to the diversity of approaches to Islam and Muslim societies. Among the most dynamic research domains at present, health and the body are dealt with in the articles of Sylvia Wing Önder (page 12) and Sabine Strasser (page 13) respectively. Yet another booming field of research is that of the role of the new media in the expanding public space (Jon Anderson, page 39). Media coverage strengthens the mobilizing force of Islamic notions of national and international order, including those concerning the politics of humanitarian aid in local (Imad Sabi', p. 24) as well as global contexts (Jerôme Bellion-Jourdan, p. 15). The persistent relevance of the more syncretic – and even heterodox – trends and movements in/to the lives of many Muslims is clearly demonstrated in the cases of Jammu (Yoginder Sikand, p. 19), Bengal (Anne-Hélène Trottier, p. 17), Iran (Matthijs van den Bos, 18), and Turkey (Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, p. 23).

The *ISIM Newsletter* would like to continue to expand on these and other issues, by tapping into new resources within the field. In order to do so, however, we depend on the critical input of our audience. ♦

DICK DOUWES | editor

MISCELLANEOUS

## ISIM Academic Committee New Members

The ISIM would like to announce the appointment of two new members to its Academic Committee. Kees Versteegh, Professor of Arabic and Islam and Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies of the University Nijmegen (the Netherlands) is now the representative of this participating university. He has published widely on linguistics.

Léon Buskens, Professor of Law and Culture of Islam at Utrecht University, succeeds Professor Martin van Bruinessen as the representative of his university in the Academic Committee. He has published on law and anthropology.

## Our Apologies

In the *ISIM Newsletter 4*, the following error was made in our Info Pages, page 39. The address of the New Masters of Arts Programme at the University of Melbourne, Australia, was inadvertently omitted. The relevant information is as follows:

Contact: Abdullah Saeed, Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies, the University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3252, Australia

Tel: +61 3 9344 5555 / 9344 / Fax: +61 3 9349 4870

E-mail: [enquiries@asian.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@asian.unimelb.edu.au)

URL: [www.arts.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.arts.unimelb.edu.au)

Further, we would like to apologize to Dr Elizabeth Attané (*ISIM Newsletter 4*, page 11) for having referred to her in the author's description as Dr Isabelle Attané.

ANNOUNCEMENT

## ISIM Fellowships

The ISIM invites applications and research proposals for various fellowships. Applications from candidates in all fields of the social sciences, humanities, and religious studies will be considered. Applicants should be competent in academic English. The ISIM fellowships include the following:

- *PhD fellowships* are granted for a period of four years to students who have an MA degree or its equivalent. The fellowships are awarded twice annually for a period of up to four years.
- *Post-doctoral fellowships* are granted for a period of up to two years and are available to junior scholars who have received their PhD degree less than 5 years prior to application.
- *Visiting fellowships* are granted for a period of up to 3 months. Some of these senior fellowships are offered upon invitation. Others are awarded in an open competition.
- *Sabbatical fellowships* are offered to academic staff of participating and other universities to conduct research. In specific cases, the ISIM makes funds available to finance the temporary replacement for teaching at the home university.

For more information on the various fellowships, please consult the ISIM website: <http://www.isim.nl/>

All those interested are invited to apply. Application forms may be downloaded from the website or obtained upon request from the ISIM secretariat.

ISIM Fellowship Programmes

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