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One of the challenges of this atelier, in which researchers from the South and the North will participate, is the possibility of formulating a research proposal with researchers from different African areas. Such a proposal could further develop methodologies in an interdisciplinary perspective. Emphasis is placed on exploring texts in relation to contexts.

Resurgence of Islam

In the last decades, both the popular media and the academic world focused on the so-called resurgence of Islam. In these discussions, emphasis has been on areas that are traditionally associated with the Muslim world, including North Africa, while large parts of the Islamic communities outside this area (e.g. Sub Saharan Africa) are often ignored. In ‘peripheral’ regions, challenges posed to Islamic communities by processes of modernity, modernization and globalization in some cases differ from and in others resemble processes taking place elsewhere in the Islamic world. One such issue is the Islamic resurgence also referred to as fundamentalism, political Islam, or Islamism.

Islamist movements make use of ‘moral discourses’ which prescribe the ‘right’ attitudes, beliefs and conducts of Muslims. Similitudes in rhetoric and discourses which occur in different parts of the Islamic world might suggest uniformity and homogeneity among the subject positions and in the meaning of Islam in everyday life. Nevertheless, differences in historical background have their bearing on current political, social-economic and cultural processes, and in turn influence the interaction of local groups with these Islamic discourses.

When studying Islam in Africa, Orientalist debates interact with ideas related to ‘Africanism’. The imagery related to Orientalism/Africanism results in diverse and peculiar notions and presuppositions among scholars about the ways in which Islam in Africa has influenced local communities and the formation of group identities.

Textuality

Related to the problem of Orientalism/Africanism is the implicit association of Islam and Muslim Intellectuals.

The ISIM held a conference on 14 June 2000 for the ISIM MPhil Programme in Islamic Studies

The one-year ISIM MPhil programme in Islamic Studies was inaugurated in November 1999. The first group of ISIM MPhil students obtained their degrees on Monday, 24 July 2000, with a graduation ceremony in the historic Academy Building in Leiden. The ceremony was followed by a reception at the Hortus Botanicus. The academic quality of the MPhil studies as well as their enthusiasm and hard work greatly contributed to the success of the programme in this first year. A group photograph of the students and the titles of their theses can be found on the ISIM website under the link ‘Education and Training’.

Seven students, from Germany, Pakistan, Sudan, Taiwan, the USA, and the Netherlands, were admitted to the MPhil programme in 2000-2001. Professor Johan ter Haar (Department of Languages and Cultures of the Islamic Middle East, Leiden University) delivered the opening lecture on ‘Recent Developments in Iran: Progress in the Persian Style’. This year, the programme consists of eight courses and a thesis. A number of scholars from abroad, including Professor Maribel Fierro (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid), Professor Abderrahmane Lakhassii (Université Mohamed V, Rabat), and Professor William Roff (University of Edinburgh), will contribute to the programme. The dates of their lectures will be announced on the ISIM website.

The MPhil prospectus for 2000-2001 and an application form for next year can be found on the ISIM website; a paper copy may be obtained from the ISIM office. The deadline for applications for the MPhil programme is January 1st of the calendar year in which one wishes to begin the programme. The conference will cover the concept of human rights and their universality and cultural/contextual relativity. Furthermore, it will offer an overview of the main human rights treaties, their implementation, and the role of non-governmental organizations, with special reference to Turkish Islamic societies. (See for the announcement of the masterclass p. 2).

The ISIM invites PhD students who wish to participates in the masterclass to send a brief curriculum vitae and an explanation of why they wish to attend to Nathal Dessing (dressing@rullet.leidenuniv.nl) at the ISIM by 1 November 2000. The fee for the master class is NLG 750.Fee waivers may be granted in certain cases.

Those interested in participating in the regular discussions may contact the ISIM or one of the organizers:

- Karin Willemse, Department of Cultural Anthropology, University of Leiden
  E-mail: k.willemse@fhk.eur.nl
- Karin Willense, Department of World History, Erasmus University, Rotterdam
  E-mail: k.willemse@fhk.eur.nl

The ISIM office. The deadline for applications for the MPhil programme is January 1st of the calendar year in which one wishes to begin the programme.

Format of the atelier

The atelier is based on current research conducted by José van Santen, coordinator of the atelier, who has vast research experience in Islamic Northern Cameroon (since 1986), and Karin Willense has conducted fieldwork in Darfur, Sudan, since 1985. Two researchers from the South will be added as soon as possible. The main mode of exchanging ideas and experiences will be the workshops, held once every fortnight with members of the atelier and other invited scholars. They will be organized by convenors, members of different networks both in the Netherlands and abroad.

The atelier aims to enhance the contacts and exchange of ideas between researchers coming from different networks and backgrounds. The atelier will focus on the following topics:

- ‘Africanism is the implicit association of Islam and Muslim Intellectuals’
- ‘Modern Islamic Discourses’, and by Professor Martin van Bruinessen on ‘Ulama and Muslim Intellectuals’.
- ‘Key Issues in Human Rights’.

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