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### Personalia

*Royal Dutch Academy Medal for 2006 to Emeri Johannes van Donzel*

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## Personalia

### Royal Dutch Academy Medal for 2006 to Emeri Johannes van Donzel

Short version of the Laudatio for Professor Dr. Emeri Johannes van Donzel, pronounced by Professor Dr. Frijhoff, chairman of the Department of Literature of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences May 8, 2006.

On the recommendation of the Department of Literature, the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences has decided to grant the Academy Medal for 2006 to Emeri J. van Donzel.

He receives this distinction for his unselfish effort for the publication of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* recently completed in eleven volumes. It is the most authoritative reference work in the field of Islam and related cultures. Without his unremitting care, this huge enterprise, published in an English and a French version under the patronage of the International Union of Academies, to which hundreds of scholars from all over the world have contributed articles would never have been realized. He personally saw to it that the entire pioneering work is opened up by means of a vast Index of Proper Names, a reference work in itself.

Editorial secretary in 1965, the laureate became editor in 1970 and secretary-general in 1990. He knew how to motivate, and at the right moment to take upon himself the ungrateful but essential task of slave-driver. At this moment in particular, in which Islam is penetrating into the western world, such a strictly scientific work as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* is of eminent importance.

The laureate's first publication, *Anqäṣä Amin* already contained in a nutshell his further scientific career. Ethiopia continued to keep his interest, as is clear from various studies on the history of that region, but the field of study spread to Eastern Africa and Arabia. From 1974 to 1990 the laureate was Director of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East and the Historical/Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. Next to being a great scholar, he also was an excellent organizer of science. Through his amiable personality he was able to build an international network of, and to motivate them to high performances.

This Academy medal crowns the unselfishness which is an essential condition for international scientific cooperation. Besides as organizer and editor, he also served the *Encyclopaedia* as translator into excellent French, a rather unusual performance. This extra effort, highly appreciated by many, shows how the laureate has laid a bridge between two great linguistic regions, sometimes widely separated and developing independently from one another.