This report covers Middle East Section activities for the past two years that I have served as MES President. I succeeded Fadwa El-Guindi (El-Nil Productions) after the 2000 meetings. At the end of the 2002 MES business meeting in New Orleans on November 22nd, Daniel Varisco (Hofstra) assumed the MES presidency to which he was elected in the Spring 2001 AAA elections.

Section Governance.

The Middle East Section has an executive committee or board of 6 members elected by the Section to serve three year terms and a president who serves for two years, plus one year as president-elect and one as past-president. A section treasurer and secretary to the board are appointed and attend executive board meetings ex-officio, as do the immediate past president and president-elect overlapping with the sitting president.

* Retiring members of the executive board in 2002 include Donald Cole (AUC) and Oystein La Bianca (Andrews), whose original two-year term was extended by the board until the 2003 meeting to assure the presence of an archaeologist on our governing board.

* Other continuing board members are Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (2003), Niloofar Haeri (2003), Jessica Winegar (student member, 2003), and William Beeman, elected in the 2002 AAA elections to serve a three-year term through the 2005 meetings.

* Past attempts to introduce staggered terms for executive board members provided by MES by-laws, to have a student member and an archaeologist on the executive board, plus a mistake on the 2002 slate (from which members should have been instructed to select two out of the three nominees and not one) mean that in the 2003 elections, MES will have to mount slates for a student member (2 years), for the archaeologist seat (3 years), and two additional members (3 years each) for the board, as well as candidates for president-elect. This will position us to elect two members in the 2004 elections that will bring the board to full strength and position us to elect two members each in future rounds.

* To this end, the executive board accepted recommendations of the outgoing and incoming presidents to form a non-board nominating committee that will solicit candidates and prepare slates for the AAA elections in Spring 2003. Marcia Inhorn (Michigan) and Thomas Barfield (Boston U) have agreed to serve on this committee, and when it is fully constituted with a third member, president Daniel Varisco will appoint one as chair. AAA by-laws provide that this committee may also propose candidates to the AAA nominations committee for Association-wide offices.

* Gregory Starrett (UNC-Charlotte) finished a two-year term as treasurer and Hsain Ilhaine (Iowa State) a two-year term as secretary for the executive board in 2002. Flagg Miller (Chicago) was appointed treasurer and Laurie King-Irani (Victoria) as board secretary and webmaster for the Section website (MESNET) for the next two years.
Other committees approved by the executive board include one for the 2003 program that Gregory Starrett will chair as MES Program Editor for 2003 and a committee for the Section's Student Paper Prize that incoming board member William Beeman will chair. The Section awarded its first prize (of $500) in 2001 to Andrew Gardner (Arizona) but collected no submissions in 2002.

Special Programming.

The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and events in their wake have particular reverberations for members of the Middle East Section. The bulk of the 2001 business meeting was given over to an informal discussion of impacts on populations we work with and how we might put our expertise to work with them that was led by Albert Mokhiber, past president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Andrew Shryock (Michigan) who has studied and worked with the large Arab and Arab-American populations around Detroit, and Donald Cole, who teaches in Cairo. This was especially useful to many of us engaged in rising outreach activities. Member Laurie King-Irani published a note in the Anthropology News on issues addressed.

Positive comments on the event prompted me to devote a similar portion of our 2002 business meeting to discussing professional issues. Mary Ellen Lane, the executive director of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (which include interdisciplinary research centers in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Jerusalem, Morocco, the American Institute of Maghrebi Studies, and a new one in Syria, among others), led a discussion of changes in flows of funding for research and teaching on the Middle East, scholarly exchanges, and impacts on fieldwork. She was joined by Dale F. Eickelman (Dartmouth), who has extensive experience with scholarly exchanges, most recently in collaboration with European institutions, and Thomas Barfield (Boston U), who chairs a department overweighted with Middle East specialists and recently returned from field trips in Central Asia, and by enthusiastic participation of members attending the business meeting.

Additionally, some very active student members, who also run a listserv for students interested in the Middle East, conceived and conducted a survey in Fall 2002 on teaching and teaching materials that address the current crisis. They plan soon to publicise their results through MES and other channels.

We have used email through the AAA secretariat to notify members of these events as well as our Spring elections and MES-vetted panels on the Fall meetings. Richard Thomas in AAA's Membership Services and earlier Lori Van Olst cheerfully and efficiently made this run smoothly and certainly to paid-up members.

Continuing Programming.

Board member Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban (Rhode Island College) managed review of panels and papers as Program Editor for 2001, and Margaret Mills (Ohio State) served as Program Editor for the 2002 meetings. I assisted with both, joined by then board member Ted Swedenburg (Arkansas) for 2001 and Jessica Winegar (our student member) for 2002, who had to be released
to avoid potential conflicts of interest due to the number of submissions from her university (NYU). A sound idea collided with the reality that "active departments tend to produce active and engaged students," as Margaret Mills put it in her report to the board, and will be revisited.

For the 2001 meetings, the board assented to inviting Oystein LaBianca to organize a panel addressing recent archaeological and ethnological research to "Globalization in Antiquity" for MES's "invited" session and Dan Varisco to organize another on "Re-Orienting the Anthropology of the Middle East." LaBianca's panel was coordinated with another at the 2001 meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research and will be published next year as volume that he will edit. For the 2002 meetings, the Program Editor elected to designate as MES's invited session a panel on "Mix Cities/Trapped Communities: Historical Narratives & Spatial Dynamics in Palestinian Israeli Mixed Towns," organized by Daniel Montarescu and including its own mix of Palestinian, Israeli, US- and Canada-based researchers. The 2002 Program Editor also assembled 5 individually volunteered papers into a panel on "Discourse and the Social Life of Identity in the Middle East," which I agreed to chair and a journal editor has solicited for a possible special issue.

Our Program Editors encounter familiar and recurring ambiguities in their tasks and responsibilities - from when and how to communicate with submitters of panels and individually volunteered papers to the disposition of Section reserved time on the program, to scheduling, which is the responsibility of the AAA's Program Chair, and other matters formal and informal. Some of these were identified in a detailed report by 2003 Program Editor Margaret Mills. We decided at the 2002 MES board meeting to condense institutional memory into a brief to be passed on to (and suitably modified by) future Program Editors. The first iteration will be prepared by outgoing president, Jon Anderson, who served as AAA Program Chair in 1995, and Margaret Mills, who has done similar service in the American Folklore Society.

Among other matters, I attended the 2001 and 2002 AAA Section Assembly meetings as MES President and passed on to the MES board information about the Association's Mellon grant for constructing an anthropology resources Web portal. MES already has a Website (MESNET) with resources for teaching about and research opportunities in the Middle East that has been maintained by incoming president Daniel Varisco and now passes to Laurie King-Irani. We will also make known to our current and soon-to-be-elected new student member of the MES board the Association's plan to set up an Assembly of Student Leaders.

**Membership & Finances.**

Paid membership in the Middle East Section ($15 on top of AAA dues) increased from 283 in October 2001 to 317 a year later. Lapsed members declined from 122 in September 2001 to a low 90 in January and February and climbed to 122 by the end of this September. It would appear that the Section is growing, and faster than in previous years since passing the bar for Section status, and that the number of lapsed members declines after the annual meetings. The net is a widening demographic and sample of the Association membership as a whole, particularly in new members.
Section expenses for the past year include only reimbursements of the 2001 Program Editor's mailing expenses, $500 for the Student Paper Prize given in 2001, emailing to members, refreshments for the 2002 board meeting, and projected costs for Mary Ellen Lane of CAORC to come to the 2002 business meeting. In October 2002, we had a balance of over $9000 to cover the latter two items and expenses going forward into 2003. No monies have been spent on officers' travel or other expenses, and we are now in a position to seek matching grants for colleagues from Middle Eastern countries to participate in the future.

Looking Forward.

Next year's annual meeting of the AAA in Chicago will, for the first time, not overlap with the Fall annual meetings of either the Middle East Studies Association or the American Schools of Oriental Research. MESA is the principal umbrella for interdisciplinary social science and humanities scholarship on the region and ASOR a primary venue for its archaeologists. When their meetings overlap with AAA's, as they often do because scholarly associations cluster meetings in the time blocks when convention hotel rates decline (such as before and after Thanksgiving), our members and those who could be members have to choose, and attendance is diluted. Area studies remain one of the more interdisciplinary arenas of engagement, and an important career phase if not an anthropological career path as in the past. Next year, we should anticipate increased attendance by a wider range of Middle East specialists, and thus the possibility of increasing membership in the AAA's Middle East Section.

Inside the AAA, it is encouraging that nearly as many panels and papers by Middle East researchers or with Middle East content on this year's AAA program were reviewed through other Sections as those designated on the program as reviewed by the Middle East Section. This is a gratifying indicator of region-based work being integrated in and featured through other Sections with topical/conceptual identities. It should assuage worries about fragmentation in the Association, while absence of cross "sponsorship" affirms that Sections can serve the fundamental function as units of review without fostering a paradigm of meetings-within-the-meetings.

Outside the AAA, Middle East and allied studies are growing in interdisciplinary venues to which anthropology contributes. September 2002 saw an unexpectedly successful first World Congress of Middle East Studies (WOCMES) in Mainz, Germany. Participation was high, particularly from the growing body of graduate students in Europe and by colleagues in the Middle East and wider Muslim world; the balance was much more in favor of anthropology, sociology, geography, and planning studies from architecture to business than is typically the case at MESA, along with a larger portion of archaeologists for all periods than AAA meetings normally attract. I was a member of the WOCMES international advisory committee and was invited to give one of the Congress's keynote addresses (along with anthropologist Dale Eickelman, historian Stephen Humphreys, political economist Roger Owen, and Annemarie Schimmel, a specialist on Islam). In addition to scientific panels and workshops, WOCMES also arranged an extensive program of outreach and community involvement. A planned second WOCMES to be held in a Middle Eastern country in five years is an opportunity for the AAA's Middle East Section members and others to bear in mind for future programming.
We are well situated to address these surrounding environments. Incoming MES president, Daniel Varisco, was elected on a platform stressing positive efforts to engage colleagues and counterparts in Middle Eastern countries. Efforts to include archaeologists of the region, colleagues from the region, and graduate students have been central to MES efforts and will continue to be as we go forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon W. Anderson, President
Middle East Section (2001-02)
December 3, 2002