Submitted by Dan Varisco, MES President

This report covers MES activities since November 22, 2002, when I became President. I extend my thanks to Past-President Jon Anderson for his efforts on behalf of MES since the 2000 AAA meeting. Under his leadership MES membership expanded, a number of innovative AAA panels were presented and the section's visibility was greatly enhanced within AAA.

1) Accomplishments during the period covered.

Board Members and Officers

Several board members finished their terms at the end of the 2003 meeting. These include Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, Nilofar Haeri, Sten LaBianca and Jessica Winegar (student representative). Since the last cycle of AAA elections, the newly elected board members are Dawn Chatty and Sayed El-Aswad as at-large members, Mitchell Rothman as archaeologist member and Andrew Gardner as student representative. The newly elected President-elect is Jenny White. My thanks go to Dr. Najwa Adra, who chaired the Nominations Committee this year. At the last meeting Flagg Miller was appointed to be section treasurer and Laurie King-Irani as secretary. I express my thanks for those who worked on the board and welcome the new members aboard.

Membership and Finances

As of September, 2003, MES membership has reached an all-time high of 334 paid members (with 105 additional lapsed members since 6/1/2000). At a time when the Middle East is a central topic in the news, it is all the more important that anthropologists with expertise or interest in the region use the facilities of MES to provide knowledge to combat stereotypes and misleading rhetoric and also to encourage resolution of conflict. The Net Assets of MES as of September, 2003 were $12,558.36 (before expenses associated with the annual meeting). This is a substantial increase since September, 2002, when the assets totaled $9,656.57. We are thus in a good position to consider some new initiatives.

The Program for the 2003 AAA Annual Meeting

In 2003 MES sponsored two invited panels. On Friday (Nov. 21) Ted Swedenburg and Farha Ghannam chaired "Anthropology and the Middle East: The Politics of Knowledge During a Time of Crisis" as a double session co-sponsored by the American Ethnological Society. This was a dynamic demonstration of the work we can do as Middle East anthropologists during a time of continuing political and moral crisis.

On Saturday, Nov. 22, MES presented "Studying the Middle East: a Roundtable Discussion between Anthropologists and Historians." This was a forum with historians Richard Bulliet, Fred
Donner and Alexander Knysh in conversation with myself and Engseng Ho about ways in which historians and anthropologists can better communicate for studying the Middle East.

A number of MES members presented papers or served as discussants at the annual meeting. I request that any MES member who has a paper accepted for 2004 let Laurie King-Irani or myself know next summer, so we can provide a list of member papers for the membership.

2) Future plans or activities (3-5) year time frame

Planning for the 2004 AAA Meeting

In my election statement I noted my intention to find ways to improve contact with anthropological colleagues in Middle Eastern countries. To this end I have appointed new board member Sayed El Aswad as chair of a new Committee on Middle East Anthropologists. One of the tasks of the committee will be to create an invited panel for the 2004 meeting with anthropologists and archaeologists from various countries in the Middle East to report on their research and the opportunities for collaborative research with American scholars. Discussions are underway to work with MESA, which will have its annual meeting in San Francisco in 2004 and overlap with AAA for two days. In addition to the invited panel, it is possible for MES to sponsor a workshop. Members are also encouraged to pursue other opportunities, such as the AAA poster sessions.

MESNET: Transition Time for the Website
Laurie King-Irani has agreed to take over responsibilities for the MES website, which is in need of updating and expansion. It is very difficult for any one individual to develop and maintain a professional website, so here is an area where MES members (especially graduate students) are invited to help out. You need not be an expert in html these days to assist in providing content, illustrations or actually creating webpages.

New MES Initiative: An Online Journal
Past-President Jon Anderson and I have been in contact with the planners for the proposed AnthroSource Web Portal, which will in the future house electronic versions of all AAA publications. MES has proposed an online journal (and only an online version) for the study of the virtual Middle East. In an increasingly wired world, more and more people are finding out about Middle Eastern cultures through the internet, web access is expanding in Middle Eastern countries and we anthropologists have come to rely on the web as a tool and resource for teaching, research and publication. In the coming year I plan to work with AAA in developing this new MES journal for the Web Portal. This will be an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, online journal devoted to how Middle Eastern peoples, cultures and religions are represented on the internet. Preliminary information on the proposal can be found at: http://www.ahjur.org/cyberorient/cyberorient.html. Thus far some thirty contributing editors have been lined up.

New MES Initiative: Speakers and Writers Bureau
As the MES panels at this and previous AAA meetings well illustrate, our membership has a range of expertise on the major issues in the ongoing crises about the Middle East. A few members have been active in writing op-ed pieces or speaker to community organizations, but many more could be, and probably want to be, more involved. I have proposed a "Committee on Middle East Anthropologist Outreach" to explore the possibilities for facilitating outreach of our members to the media and community groups looking for speakers. In the near future, a survey will be sent to the membership to see who is interested in participating.

**MES Board and Officers (2003-2004)**

**President:** Dan Varisco (anthdmv@hofstra.edu)  
**President-elect:** Jenny White (jbwhite@bu.edu)  
*Past-President:* Jon Anderson (anderson@cua.edu)  
**Treasurer:** Flagg Miller (flagg.miller@lawrence.edu)  
**Secretary:** Laurie King-Irani (lkirani@uvic.ca)

**Board Members:**

Bill Beeman (William_Beeman@Brown.EDU) 2002-2005  
Dawn Chatty (chattymylne@dsl.pipex.com) 2003-2006  
Sayed El-Aswad (melaswad@hotmail.com) 2003-2006  
*Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (cfluehr@ric.edu) 2000-2003  
Andrew Gardner (gardner@email.arizona.edu) 2003-2006 (Student Rep)  
*Niloofar Haeri (nilooh@yahoo.com) 2000-2003  
*Sten LaBianca (abianca@andrews.edu) 2000-2003 Archaeology  
Mitchell Rothman (rothman@pop1.science.widener.edu) 2003-2006 Archaeology  
*Jessica Winegar (jessicawinegar@hotmail.com) 2000-2003

**Ex-Officio Members:**

Column Editor: Gregg Starrett (gsstarre@email.uncc.edu)  
MESA Liaison: Larry Michalak (otis@uclink4.berkeley.edu)

*Term concluded at end of 2003 Board Meeting*