2008 Officers
William O. Beeman, President (until November 2008)
Greg Starrett, President-Elect
Flagg Miller, Treasurer
Mara Leichtman, Secretary
Anne Meneley, Awards Chair
Lynn Swartz Dodd, Nominations Chair
Frances Trix, Board Member
Jessica Winegar, Board Member
Yasmin Moll, Student Representative
Emilio Spadola—Newsletter Editor

1. Status, Activities and Accomplishments.

- Membership numbers (for 2008). List any factors you think may be affecting Section memberships.
  The membership of the Middle East Section has increased to 373 persons by November, 2008. We have experienced steady growth over the past decade, and anticipate that this will continue. Increased interest in the Middle East assures that more anthropologists are directing their attention to this region. Also, anthropologists of Middle Eastern or European origin with both a U.S. and a foreign passport have greater ease in traveling to the region.

- Financial balances for both Section budgets and publication sponsored budgets, if applicable (for 2008). List any factors you think are affecting finances.
  As of November, 2008, the Section budget balance was $16,397 and growing. The Middle East Section has no paper publication, but we do endorse the Middle East oriented web publication, CyberOrient edited by past president, Dan Varisco.

- AAA meeting highlights, 2008
  The Middle East Section sponsored three panels, one workshop, and served as reviewer for several other panels, thanks to the efforts of Lara Deeb, program chair, and her program committee, Esra Ozyurek and Sherine Hamdy. The sponsored panels and workshop were:

  CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

  THE CULTURE CONCEPT IN POLITICAL STRUGGLE: INSIGHTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (SCA-MES)

  SAINTHOOD IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION (MES-SAR)

  Teaching Middle East Anthropology Workshop

  In addition, the program committee reviewed 5 additional panels that appeared on the program. This represented a record number of Middle East oriented panels at the AAA Annual Meeting. Strong interest in presenting panels on the Middle East continues.

  The Section also awarded its annual student paper prize to Suncem Kocer for her paper, “Media Production and Transpolitics.” Ms. Kocer delivered a short version of her paper at the Section
business meeting. Honorable Mention was awarded to Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins for her paper: “The Hamas Effect.” Summary versions of both papers were published in the Section column of the Anthropology Newsletter. The Section thanks the Awards Committee, Anne Meneley, Chair with Lucia Volk, Lisa Wynn, and Lila Abu Lughod as members for their hard work.

William O. Beeman, departing President, gratefully acknowledged a gift of a Moroccan carpet presented by the membership.

A reception followed the business meeting.

- Internal communications including website development and use of a list serve (if applicable).

The Middle East Section Website will be migrating to the AAA Central Server in 2009. William O. Beeman, who became Past-president at the end of the 2008 meeting will oversee the migration.

2. Future plans or activities (3-5) year time frame including efforts to increase membership
   - What projects does your Section have underway?

The Section will award its senior scholar prize next year. Nominations are currently being solicited.

The Section will have a large turnover on its board in 2009. The nominations committee under the Chairmanship of Lynn Swartz Dodd has done an excellent job in keeping our elections on target.

3. Other Items. Please tell us what your chief concerns and issues are, especially if they are not previously noted.
   - What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the Long-Range Planning Committee?

Our section finds itself in the admirable situation of having a healthy budget balance. We are actively working to find meaningful ways to spend our budget to advance Middle East Anthropology. We still do not feel ready to think about launching a journal, but are interested in supporting scholarly dissemination in other ways. The new officers will be soliciting creative suggestions for the use of our funds over the next year.

- What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the AAA Executive Board?

The Middle East section is exemplary of healthy sections with moderate enrollment that represent a distinct constituency within the Association. We appreciate the continued efforts of the Executive Board to preserve a voice for sections like ours. We continue to solicit membership from anthropologists both in the United States and abroad, and actively solicit student membership.

The Middle East Section has a particular problem. The AAA Annual meeting frequently overlaps with the annual meetings of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), and the American Society of Religion (ASOR). This creates difficult logistical problems for our members. Last year, several attended the AAA meetings for a day, then flew to Washington from San Francisco to attend the MESA. We realize that it is impossible to avoid all overlaps, but coordination with other scholarly organizations would be appreciated.

Submitted by  William O. Beeman, Past President
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