2008 Annual Report
Society for East Asian Anthropology,
American Anthropological Association

Submitted by Laurel Kendall, Jan. 16, 2008

2. Executive Board

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1. Membership and Budget
During the past year, the Society for East Asian Anthropology (SEAA) has continued in its mission of providing a public and professional forum for the anthropology of East Asia and fostering productive relationships between North America-based and Asia-based scholars. Our low $10 membership fee encourages participation by a membership that is also active in other AAA sections. **SEAA membership is at 475 as of November 30, 2008; 32 members more than last year at the same time, with numbers rising from April.** At the end of November, the section had net actuals of $3,453.04, nearly $1,000 over our projected budget of $2,500 and comfortably accommodating a higher than projected catering cost for our cash bar/reception, costs further compensated for because our student prize-winner did not use funds ear-marked for travel to the AAA meeting ($500). **The high cost of hotel catering will be a recurrent concern,** particularly if section memberships decline in the current economic climate. **Major expenses are the SEAA awards** (the Hsu book award, the Bestor award for outstanding student paper, and the Plath media prize) and then the **cash bar at AAA.** We will also contribute $6,000 toward a SEAA conference in Taipei in 2009.

### 2. 2007 AAA Annual Meeting Program

Gordon Matthews served a second term as program editor, working together with Anru Lee, James Roberson, Hikaru Suzuki, and William Jankowiak. **19 of 22 submissions appeared on the final program** (1 proposal was rejected by SEAA). Two sessions and one roundtable were invited. **In contrast to the preceding year, SEAA panels enjoyed a healthy spread over the full span of the conference:** 3 panels on Wednesday, 3 on Thursday, 2 on Friday, 5 on Saturday, 6 on Sunday. We were pleased that the scheduling concerns we had raised after ’07 were addressed. **Topics ranged from matters of purity” in contemporary Korea to changing socioscapes in rural China, to reconfiguring gender and negotiating neo-liberalism in global Japan.** Next year’s program editor will be Anru Lee, taking advantage of her hard work and experience on this year’s committee.

SEAA held its annual Executive Board Meeting and a well-attended annual Business Meeting and cash bar reception.

### 3. Mentorship

Scholars at all levels of their careers are represented on our executive board and in other capacities. **Two positions are reserved for Student Councilors. We give a student paper prize and partially subsidize the winner’s travel to the meetings.**

This year, Student Councilors Teresa Kuan and June Mee Kim, working through the student member list, organized **online writing groups**, an idea proposed at AAA 07 that grew into **a project involving 26 advanced graduate students organized into 7 subgroups by regional/topical interests**. The aim of the project is to provide a forum by which students may learn from each others’ work while receiving feedback and constructive criticism on their own work through the exchange of research proposals and dissertation chapter drafts. With participant feedback, the student councilors will be recruiting new participants and reorganizing the groups to accommodate emerging research interests.
Kuan and Junko Teruyama organized the 3rd annual SEAA graduate student dinner which took place in the back of a cozy Italian restaurant close to the conference site immediately after the Business Meeting.

**4. Communications**

In the year of 2008 Carolyn Stevens and Jennifer Hubbert served as co-editors of the SEAA column in *Anthropology News* and provided lively coverage of our activities. They continued to publish a series of dialogues between junior scholars and senior scholars focusing on where East Asian anthropology has come from and where it is likely going. The series is an important contribution to SEAA’s recognition and recording of the history of the anthropology of East Asia. Carolyn Stevens will rotate off, and Jennifer Hubbert will continue to serve for 2009, sharing responsibilities with Gordon Mathews.

David Wiggins continued as the Webmaster for SEAA webpage on the AAA Website, and the SEAA board is grateful to Wiggins for his continued service. The EASIANTH lists-serve, managed by Ted Bestor, remains primary forum for discussion and information sharing for the section.

**5. SEAA Awards in 2008**

The 2008 Francis L.K. Hsu Book Prize, recognizing outstanding work published in the previous calendar year (2007) was presented to David Palmer's *Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia* (Columbia University Press). The award committee, composed of William Jankowiak, (chair), Susan Long and Nancy Abelmann observed that while “anthropologists have often noted qi gong’s popularity, . . . none have engaged so successfully in the deep analysis that David Palmer achieves. His understanding of a movement that is both intensely collective and intertwined with individuals’ quest for meaning is a significant contribution to cultural anthropology, and to the interdisciplinary studies of Chinese society and of religious experience.”

A committee of Lisa Hoffman (Chair), Louisa Schein, and Robert Oppenheim awarded the 2008 Theodore C. Bestor Prize for Outstanding Graduate Student Paper to Kathryn Goldfarb, University of Chicago doctoral student for “Making the Oral Contraceptive ‘for Me’ in Japan: Signifying Subjects with Bodies.” Analyzing a website created by the director of the Tokyo Clinic of the Japan Family Planning Association, Goldfarb argues that a community of women who choose to take care of their bodies is in fact projected by this website through "discourses about the female body in language that explicitly summons it." The committee noted that this paper is not only well-written and that it exhibits an impressive command of social theory, but also that it contributes to East Asian anthropology with its innovative analysis of the Internet.

Since the David Plath Media Award is made in alternate years, there was no award given in 2008.

**6. SEAA Conference in Taipei, 2009**
Encouraged by the success of the SEAA’s mini conference in Berkeley in 2005 and its conference in Hong Kong in July 2006, **the SEAA board is planning another SEAA conference to be held in Taiwan in the summer of 2009 in collaboration with the Taiwan Society for Anthropology and Ethnology (TSAE).** These conferences are consistent with our vision of an East Asian anthropology that collaboratively engages practitioners based in both North America and Asia. The conference will be held in Taipei at the Institute of Ethnology (IOE), Academia Sinica in conjunction with TSAE’s annual meeting July 2-5 and sponsored by TSAE, the Graduate Institute of Anthropology at National Tsing Hua University, the College of Hakka Studies at National Chiao Tung University, and IOE. From the Taiwan side, the executive committee for this conference includes Shu-min Huang, Bien Chiang, and Shuenn-der Yu. SEAA’s program committee includes Anru Lee (chair), Laurel Kendall, Jennifer Robertson, Gordon Mathews, and Sara L. Friedman. Julia Huang at the Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing-hua University, Taiwan, has been an active and important liaison between these two committees. IOE has committed partial funding and additional funds are being sought. SEAA has allocated $6,000 to the conference.

7. Multilingual English, Chinese, Korean, Japanese online dictionary

A committee composed of Joseph Bosco, Sonia Ryang and Priscilla Song began the work of collectively assembling a future online dictionary of anthropological terminology. Committee members obtained permission to use an out-of-print text on Chinese-English terms as a starting point, and have also explored possible host sites for the dictionary. By October 2007, the committee began entering Chinese-English terms on a Harvard server, creating a site using Dokuwiki software so that it can be edited and expanded by users. The dictionary is currently in a test phase and is improving its layout and user interface before general release, after which it can still be continuously improved and enriched. Although this will eventually be a Japanese-Chinese-Korean-English dictionary, the committee has decided that it will initially focus on Chinese since the most expressed need was in this area. As in the previous year, the committee was able to mobilize Chinese University of Hong Kong graduate students working voluntarily and thus did not need to use SEAA funding.

8. Concerns

As a section we are committed to **broadening our professional interactions beyond North America,** as evidenced by our organizing Asia-based meetings, actively seeking the involvement of non-North America based anthropologists in section work, making better use of digital technology for communication and distribution, and **nurturing the next generation of scholars.** We anticipate learning from and participating in AAA’s own efforts in creating a broader anthropological community.