Middle East Section Annual Report Form for 2010

Briefly provide the information requested on the form below. If the question does not apply to your Section, please note that it is “not applicable” instead of leaving it blank.

Please try to keep the responses to questions below as succinct as possible

**I Please provide, names and e-mail addresses of the Section officers and board members during the period covered:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregory Starrett, President</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gsstarre@uncc.edu">gsstarre@uncc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farha Ghannam, President-Elect</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fghanna1@swarthmore.edu">fghanna1@swarthmore.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilana Feldman, Board Member</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ifeldman@gwu.edu">ifeldman@gwu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>David McMurray, Board Member</td>
<td><a href="mailto:david.mcmurray@oregonstate.edu">david.mcmurray@oregonstate.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moain Sadeq, Archaeology Board Member</td>
<td><a href="mailto:msadeq@qu.edu.qa">msadeq@qu.edu.qa</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yasmin Moll, Student Board Member</td>
<td><a href="mailto:yasmin.moll@nyu.edu">yasmin.moll@nyu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Flagg Miller, Treasurer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fmiller@ucdavis.edu">fmiller@ucdavis.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara Leichtman, Secretary</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mara.Leichtman@ssc.msu.edu">Mara.Leichtman@ssc.msu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**II Status, Activities and Accomplishments this year**

1) Provide the most recent membership numbers and list any factors you think may be increasing or decreasing your Section membership:

| Number of Members | 360 average over 2010 |

Factors affecting Membership:

- Low membership cost, interest in Middle East is steady

2) Provide the most recent financial balances for Section budgets (and publication sponsored budgets, if applicable). Also list any factors you think are affecting your Section’s finances:
Financial Balance: $17,870

Publications: (if applicable)

Online journal *CyberOrient*, costs covered by our partner, Charles University in Prague.

Factors affecting Finances:

We spend money on an annual reception after the business meeting, on an annual Student Paper Prize, a biennial Distinguished Scholar Award, and payments to our web hosting service and travel subvention for our graduate student board member.

3) List the titles of your Section’s AAA meeting invited sessions, co-sponsored sessions, and any special events your Section sponsored or in which it participated. Check with your program chairs if needed: When providing session information please note if these are invited or co-sponsored and if the later please list them.

**Sessions:**

**INVITED:**

1) 3-0835 “Iraq in Context: Environment, Technology, and Humanitarianism in the Post-2003 Field,” organized by Bridget Guarasci (Michigan). **Co-sponsored by the Anthropology and the Environment Section**

2) 3-0975 “Pluralism, Islam, and the Limits of the Secular in the New Europe,” organized by Matti Bunzl (Illinois) **Co-Sponsored by the Society for the Anthropology of Europe**

3) 2-0770 “Secularism/Religion/Nationalism Reconfigured: African and Middle Eastern Perspectives,” organized by Mara Leichtman and Benjamin Soares (Afrika-Studiecentrum, Leiden). **Co-sponsored by the Association for Africanist Anthropology**
**PRE-ORGANIZED:**

4) 2-0765, Circulation of the “Rights” Discourse in the Middle East (organized by Ceren Ozgul and Ayse Parla) **Co-sponsored with the Society for Cultural Anthropology**

5) 4-0745, Movers of Things, Shakers of Borders: Circulators, Regulators and Constellations of Mobility (organized by Naor Ben-Yehoyada and Emrah Yildiz) **Co-sponsored by the American Ethnological Society and the Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology**

**DEVELOPED BY MES PROGRAM COMMITTEE:**

6) 1-0660 Religion, Islam and the State

7) 2-0405, Nations and Public Negotiations in the Middle East

8) 4-0100, Gender, Desire, and Exchange in the Middle East

9) 5-0185, Commodity Aesthetics and Media in the Middle East

**Other Events:**

Board Meeting
Business Meeting
Reception

4). List spring meeting activities (if applicable): NA

1)  

2)  

3)
5) List awards presented this year on behalf of your Section, if applicable (please provide the title of the award, date presented, and full name, affiliation, and title of the project/paper/accomplishment of the awardees):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Award</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Project/Paper/etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Paper Prize, Honorable Mention</td>
<td>11/20/2010</td>
<td>Natalia K. Suit</td>
<td>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</td>
<td>“Mushaf and the Material Boundaries of the Qur’an.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) Mentorship efforts (at or beyond the AAA meetings) to any of the following:

1) Undergraduate and/or graduate students:

Student Paper Prize competition, graduate student board membership

2) Early career scholars:

NA

3) Independent scholars:

NA

7) Additional outreach efforts (at or beyond the AAA meetings) to other sections, interest groups, and scholarly societies, government agencies, public education/community engagement, and underrepresented minorities:
Generally NA as a section, although various members, including Board Members, are actively involved in public outreach of all of the above.

I have passed on word to the membership that Beth Baron of CUNY Graduate Center, the Editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (sponsored by the Middle East Studies Association of North America, MESA, and published by Cambridge University Press), is actively encouraging anthropologists to submit their research to her journal. Although *IJMES* is quite selective (their acceptance rate has fallen from 18% to 15%), anthropology articles generally have a higher than average likelihood of acceptance because, well, they’re better than average.

In **2011** there will be an organized Anthropology presence at the MESA meetings in Washington DC.

8) Status and use of Section internal communications such as a website, list serve, or newsletter (if applicable): Please list internal communication tools you use and what they are used for

The Middle East Section Website was comprehensively redesigned several years ago, but maintenance and updating have been an issue. For that reason, the Board decided in 2008 to move the site to the AAA Central Server. This process has been delayed by turnover on the Board, but the site has been updated now to reflect current news and events sponsored by the Section.

Although the MES does not maintain a listserv of its own, there is a well-subscribed listserv, aaamidadeast, utilized mostly by graduate students and maintained by members of the independent Task Force for Middle East Anthropology, which posts material of interest, including job announcements and other news. For official Section business we use the AAA master membership list, which reaches all current MES members. Student Board member Yasmin Moll of New York University is our Contributing Editor to *Anthropology News*, and also maintains a Facebook page for members of the Middle East Section.

9) Changes in bylaws or governance structure (if applicable):

NA
III What Initiatives does your Section have underway or planned for the coming year: Membership, publication annual meeting, mentorship, other?

The Section will again award its annual Student Paper Prize in 2011, as well as its biennial Distinguished Scholar Award. Nominations for both competitions are currently being solicited.

The MES has historically had some difficulty keeping the election cycles straight for Board positions and officers. This resulted in our being short two Board members during the last couple of years. To rationalize the procedure, Past President Gregory Starrett developed a spreadsheet for tracking open positions, committee composition, prize winners, and other information relevant to the leadership and running of the Section. This has been transmitted to President Farha Ghannam, and should help with record-keeping. As noted last year, the Board has recently become much more active in carrying out Section functions (running the nominations, prize and program committees, tasks which in the past were often contracted out to Section members who were not elected to the Board). This continues to be a positive development.

In Spring 2011, we will elect a new President-Elect and a new Student Board Member.

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. Our President Farha Ghannam is set to follow up on recommendations made by a committee she chaired last year, along with Board members David McMurray, Moain Sadeq, and Yasmin Moll. The proposal is to develop a sustainable program of workshops during the regular Washington DC rotation of the AAA meetings that will benefit the Section’s graduate student members. This plan includes supporting travel to the meetings by a scholar from the region (hopefully leveraging the new AAA non-member fee waivers and funding from the Council on World Anthropologies) to run a workshop with MES graduate students on a specific topic, as well as to deliver talks at one or more of the local universities, some of which have well-established Middle East Studies programs.
IV 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 Section Assembly leadership?

Mary Gray deserves a great big gaudy award for the extraordinary job she did as Section Assembly Convener.

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

I will repeat the concerns I expressed last year regarding a serious imbalance in the EB’s willingness to consider member resolutions regarding sociopolitical issues in the Middle East (e.g. Iraq or Israel/Palestine) versus the Americas (e.g. Honduras or U.S. labor relations).

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the AAA Staff?

No issues, except to say that I have been very happy with the staff’s dedication—particularly Kim Baker—to the Sections. AAA is generally blessed with great staff, and I would like to thank them all for making our jobs easier.

Respectfully Submitted 30 January 2011,

Gregory Starrett
Past President, Middle East Section