

Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies

Board Meeting, 17 June 2021, Zoom

Present: Mark Sedgwick, Pekka Tuominen, Olof Heilo, Helena Lindholm, Laura Wickström, Magnus Halsnes, Charlotte Lysa, Ulla Prien, Thorir Jonsson Hraundal

Minutes: Olof Heilo

1. Opening (11:00 CEST)

- a) Approval of the agenda: no additions.
- b) Review of minutes from last meeting: It was decided to review the topic of lectures under point 8.

2. Reports

- a) Membership (Olof): since the last meeting in October, the Society has gained a few more members, mainly from Finland.
- b) Website and online presence (Pekka): Pekka shared statistic of visitors to the FB page. In the last few months, the call of papers for the workshop, the master thesis submission and a job posting received a very conspicuous rise in visitors and shares, whereas other posts did not. Mark raised the question whether the Society should be more active on Twitter. Twitter requires a very active use and might be mainly important during conferences, in which hashtags should be used.

3. Finances

- a) Accounts: We have a slight surplus compared to last year.
- b) Budget: the option to buy MidEast Wire is mostly used by board members. Others may not be aware of it, and we need to announce it regularly. Budget approved. Board members who may need assistance in travelling to Reykjavik are requested to inform the treasurer in advance.

4. Coming events

- a) The 2021 thesis award (Charlotte): The deadline in two months. Still no contributions; we should advertise it more during the summer. Pekka and Olof will remind the members of both the thesis award and the MidEast Wire subscription through Facebook and mail, respectively.
- b) The 2021 PhD school on zoom (Laura): 13 applications have arrived, far better than expected. Most students come from Finland but also Norway, Denmark and Sweden are represented. Laura has made a complete program including a keynote by Dr Amro Ali. Board members suggested that the students should comment on each other's papers, preferably in a "chain" involving all participants rather than in small thematic groups, to ensure maximum level of interaction and networking. The panels will be chaired by board members that will serve as timekeepers, but also provide academic backup for the feedback and offer a wrapping-up by the end. Each presentation should last no longer than 30

minutes including discussion, but some extra stretch in the program will probably be needed. Charlotte suggests recording them in advance, but this was not widely supported. A leisurely evening program might enable informal interaction despite the online format. Pekka suggests online cooking.

- c) The 2022 Conference on Iceland (Thorir): a preliminary timeline was suggested, with a call for paper going out in September 2021, and a deadline for abstracts in January or February 2022. The board members will be expected to read and give opinions on the abstracts. Participants would receive answers by April and the program be finished by June.

It is difficult to decide on a date for the conference. Mid-to-late August is inconvenient to many universities, but so is early August due to summer. Thorir checks if late September (around 22–24) might work; it would be in accordance with earlier conferences of the Society. No one knows what travel restrictions will look like in a year; if traveling is possible as normal, Iceland is a good location for inviting American scholars. Still, hybrid solutions should be considered and online participation made available. In case the conference will have to take place online only, participants should receive their fees back.

5. Board positions in 2022

Pekka is on the board for his third term and should be replaced after the next conference. Charlotte and Ulla are on their second terms and replacements should be sought for them as well, though Charlotte is happy to stay on if necessary. Magnus is also unsure about his future and it would not be ideal if both Norwegians leave at the same time. There is apt time for thinking about it as the electoral committee will have to know in January 2022 at the latest.

Mark left the discussion and in his absence the other members of the board decided that they would like him to stay on as chair for one more term.

6. Policy on petitions and statements

This discussion has emerged in the wake of a discussion on email. The Society has been asked to forward petitions with content that is of partly political nature, which could tentatively be understood as a form of endorsement and hence not in agreement with the rules. A proposal to add a rule not to forward any position was voted down, leaving the question open to be decided in future cases should similar requests come.

7–8. General brainstorming / any other business.

The meeting had to be concluded without further discussions due to constraints of time.

Meeting ended (14:00 CEST)