

Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies

Board Meeting, 21 September 2022, onsite and Zoom

Present: Mark Sedgwick, Pekka Tuominen, Olof Heilo (link), Elena Chiti, Laura Wickström, Magnus Halsnes, Charlotte Lysa (link), Ulla Prien, Thorir Jonsson Hraundal

Minutes: Olof Heilo (until 18:20)

1. Opening (15:00 GMT)

- a) Approval of the agenda: no additions.
- b) Review of minutes from last meeting: replacements of leaving board members were briefly addressed.

2. Reports

- a) Membership (Olof): the Society has gained a total of 28 members since the last survey in 2020. The overwhelming majority of them have applied for membership to attend the conference and as corresponding members from non-Nordic countries. The particularly low number of ordinary members from Finland was discussed, especially since the last board meeting seemed to report a slight increase in members from Finland. It was decided that the senior board member from each country would check the list of regular members for their country and contact personally any obvious people who were not members but probably should be.
- b) Website and online presence (Pekka): Facebook remains the society's main information channel. Even if we get limited attention on a daily basis, whenever we post something significant it is duly noted. For instance, when the conference was announced, the post reached 2000 people. However, less young people use Facebook these days which should be taken into account if we want to reach out to students. Pekka suggests that his successor should work to extend the social media presence of the society to Instagram, which now is part of the same system as Facebook (Meta), is easy to handle in tandem with Facebook, and has better outreach in that age category. The suggestion was accepted by the board as a proposal to the new social media person.
A more general question concerns our internal communications to society members, like the EURAMES newsletter. Olof is forwarding it from Jürgen Meier every week, but it remains unclear how many members actually read it. The option of creating a specifically Nordic newsletter, or perhaps a blog, that could also highlight new publications, was discussed. Such communication will be a matter for the next media person to consider.
- c) 2021 and 2022 thesis award (Charlotte): the 2021 award was a success with several strong contributions. The result of 2021 will be presented at the conference by Laura. It was decided to extend the deadline for submissions for 2022 to October 15. To increase interest in future applications, the possibility of paying travel expenses for winners to present at the conference was also brought up for discussion again. Given the society's economy, however, it is difficult to imagine how.

- d) 2021 PhD workshop (Laura): Due to pandemic restrictions, the workshop took place on Zoom. Dr. Amro Ali (American University in Cairo) gave a keynote, while board members (Mark, Helena, Thorir, Olof and former board member Hannu Juusola) read and commented on the students' contributions. Feedback was very good, especially given the circumstances. For the future, smaller and more frequent online courses might be considered in addition to the workshop every third year. The discussions will be resumed on the first meeting of the new board.

3. Finances

- a) Accounts for 2020–21 (Ulla): Expenses were low given the pandemic.
b) Accounts for 2019–22 (Ulla): Having the accounts in DKK is still profitable. As always on conference years, the current surplus is largely due to the conference surplus passed to the society.

The accounts were approved.

4. Proposal for new electoral committee

- Ulla Prien (DK)
- Pekka Tuominen (FI)
- Susanne Olsson (SE)
- Liv Tønnessen (NO)
- No-one (IS)

The proposal was accepted.

5. General brainstorming

Mark noted that the shape of the field was changing with the growth across the Nordic region of programs and research in Islamic Studies and Islamic Theology. After discussion, it was decided that the Society should neither draw up the drawbridge nor throw the gates wide open, as its central mission is regarding Middle East area studies, but should expand the welcome for scholars working in Islamic Studies and Islamic Theology if working on Middle East-related topics. The next conference organizational team may consider adding in the conference CFP that papers on Middle East area studies and other related studies are welcome.

6. Any other business

There was no other business.

Meeting ended (18:30 GMT)

Last minutes done by Laura Wickström.