

## **Notes on Anthropology of Religion Interest Group Business Meeting**

The Anthropology of Religion Interest Group held its business meeting on Saturday, November 23, 12:15-1:30 pm. The meeting was chaired by Daniel Ponech, and attended by 35 people.

The bulk of the business meeting had to do with ARIG's concern with the efforts of some individuals outside the Interest Group to form a Section of the AAA concerning the anthropology of religion. These individuals (including two past presidents of the AAA) chose not to be affiliated with the Interest Group, and wished to establish their own organization with their colleagues to be on the organizing committee.

The ARIG members were nonplussed.

A meeting was scheduled at the annual meeting at 5:00 to discuss the issue. Representatives of ARIG were chosen to meet with the organizers of the new Section to smooth out the differences.

At 6:15 that evening the Anthropology of Religion Section Organizational Meeting was held. The meeting was attended by 54 people. Sarah Caldwell, representing Roy Rappaport (U Michigan), spoke briefly. She indicated that the organizers had agreed to work with ARIG and also another non-AAA group, SoFAR (Society for the Anthropology of Religion) to coordinate efforts to organize a new Section.

For your information, the following are the approved guidelines for forming new Sections of the American Anthropological Association:

### **Policies and Procedures for Creating a New Section** *approved by the AAA Executive Board October 7, 1995*

Groups wishing to create a new Section of the AAA should use the following policies and procedures, approved by the AAA Executive Board on October 7, 1995.

1. Requests/applications asking the Executive Board to create a new Section will be referred to the AAA Administrative Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Finance Committee (see below) for review, comment, and recommendation.
2. The names of new Sections will use the word "Section" rather than "Association," "Society," "Council," etc.
3. The AAC will review requests to determine that:
  - A. The group meets the minimum number of members (see below).
  - B. The proposed Section's mission and goals are consistent with AAA missions and goals, will help advance AAA mission and goals, and do not compete with any existing AAA Section.
  - C. The proposed rules of procedure are consistent with AAA policies. (Before being sent to the AAC, proposed Section rules of procedure will be reviewed by the AAA attorney and staff.) The

groups are encouraged to take a minimalist approach to rules of procedure and Section organization. The focus should be on content and service(s), not on structure.

4. When applying, the group's application must also state its initial dues and the services to be received in return for the dues. (The group must understand that the initial dues will be collected over the course of its first year (see below) and in all likelihood will be unable to deliver any services in the first year.) The proposed dues and services will be reviewed by the Finance Committee as well as the AAC, and referred to the Executive Board for action.

5. Any requests to begin a publication (journal, review, newsletter) will be considered by the AAA Publications Committee, the Finance Committee and the Executive Board after a Section has been authorized (in keeping with the new guidelines for starting new publications.)

6. The group must present a list of at least 250 prospective members (complete names and addresses) when asking the Executive Board to create a new Section. The list may include any number of non-AAA members.

7. The approval of a new Section will come in two steps:

A. A group meeting all of the required tests will be approved on a probationary basis for one year, giving the group time to build its official membership to the 250 minimum.

B. If the Section has 250 paid members at the end of the year, the Section will automatically move from probationary to fully authorized status. If not, a probationary Section may ask for a one-year extension. If a Section fails to meet the membership minimum within two years, the Executive Board will either reclassify the group as an AAA Interest Group or disband it, depending on the number of the group's members and the wishes of the group.

This two-step procedure is necessary for the following reasons. A person must pay Section dues to be a member of the Section. Because there will be no paid members when a Section is initially approved, and because an individual's AAA and Section memberships start at the same time, people will officially join the Section during the year.

When a group is initially approved as a Section, and assuming the Section dues have been established, staff will:

A. Immediately bill any non-AAA members on the list of prospective Section members.

B. Immediately add a billing for the new Section's dues to the annual dues notices of AAA members who have said they would join the Section.

8. A Section will qualify for space in the *Anthropology Newsletter* Section News when it is authorized as a probationary Section.

9. The *American Anthropologist* will automatically go to all members of a new Section as a benefit of Section dues, at a cost to be determined.

10. The annual schedule for considering requests to form new Sections will be:

- \* March 15--draft of purpose statement, proposed rules of procedure, initial dues and planned services to begin in Year II due at AAA office.

- \* March 15 to April 15--Staff and attorney review material and suggest revisions as necessary.

- \* May--AAC and Finance Committee review, comment on and recommend action(s) to the Executive Board.

- \* October--Executive Board considers and acts on request.

- \* November--Non-AAA members billed; Section dues added to dues notices of AAA members.

Groups that are considering authorization by the Executive Board to become new AAA Sections are encouraged to confer first with staff to determine if such a Section would compete with an existing Section and the proposed mission is satisfactory. Such an informal inquiry should be made by October 1 so the inquiry can be discussed at the AAC's November meeting, if necessary.

11. This procedure was approved by the AAA Executive Board October 7, 1995.

*Rick Custer*  
*December 3, 1996*