News of Members

Hania Abou al-Shamat, University of Southern California, received her PhD in Political Economy and Public Policy in 2008. Her dissertation is “The Religious Educational Divide in Nineteenth-Century Lebanon: Institutional Roots of Communal Educational Choices”. Dr. Abou al-Shamat was the Graduate Student Representative on the board of the Syrian Studies Association from 2006-2008.

Zayde G. Antrim, Trinity College, USA, participated in the SSA-sponsored panel "Before Nationalism: Land and Loyalty in the Middle East" at MESA 2007 with a paper on the idea of "watan" in texts from Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria. In the spring of 2008, Prof. Antrim gave a paper called "Abode of the Prophets" on images of Syria in al-Muqaddasi's geography at a Princeton University colloquium called "Landscapes of the Saints: Hagiography and Land in the Near East and Europe, ca. 500-900." She delivered a paper in Istanbul as part of the International Symposium on Baghdad, Madinat al-Salam, held b between Nov. 7-9, 2008 and sponsored by Marmara University and the Organization of Islamic Conference. Prof. Antrim will appear in a documentary film called "Jerusalem: Center of the World," airing on PBS on April 29, 2009.


Nimat Hafez Barazangi, Cornell University, was invited by the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs to participate in a conference on Inter-religious and Inter-cultural Dialogue from Gender Perspectives. The conference/workshop was held in Vienna between 22 - 26 June 2008 and included 30 women mainly from Europe and the Middle East & North Africa. Dr. Barazangi made two presentations at the conference: "The Absence of Muslim Women from Making Islamic Thought: Challenges for Inter-religious Dialogue" and “Equilibrated Living: The Foundations of Muslim Women’s Contribution to Social Transformation in the Middle East and North Africa.”

Dawn Chatty, Oxford University, was awarded a one-year grant in June 2008 from the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) of the British Academy to take part in a multi-disciplinary study of the French-mandate Quarter of Sha'lan in Damascus. This project has been long dreamed of by Sarab Atassi, the Scientific Officer at IFPO in Damascus. She has pulled together a team of architects, geographers, sociologists and anthropologists to study this important quarter of Damascus and try to understand the process of change over the near 100 years it has been a concrete entity. Dr. Chatty’s role in this effort is to interview the oldest surviving residents of the quarter starting with the members of Emir Nuri Sha'lan's family. The Emir Nuri was the founder of the quarter, purchasing one of two pre-existing Ottoman houses in the midst of agricultural fields and orchards sometime around 1918-1919. She aims to interview about 20 long-time residents. Thus far, she has interviewed six elderly residents. “Each has a
particular story to tell and each opens up fascinating details about this rich and complex cosmopolitan quarter of Damascus.”


**Randi Deguilhem**, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Institut de Recherches et d'études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman/La Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (IREMAM/MMSH), Aix-en-Provence, published: "The *Waqf* in the City," in Salma K. Jayyusi, dir. with Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli and André Raymond, *The City in the Muslim World* (Leiden: Brill, 923-950) which explains the structural role of endowments within urban areas in the Islamic world with examples from Syria. In May 2008, she co-directed the second conference on "The Law of Waqf" program with Frank Vogel and Peri Bearman, and the Islamic Legal Studies Program (ILSP) at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, USA where there were presentations on *waqf* in Syria and one on Shi'i *waqf* in Lebanon. The details of this conference are on the ILSP website: http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/events/CFPWaqf2.php Prof. Deguilhem also saw the publication of the last volume in the collection she directed called "The Islamic Mediterranean". This volume was directed by Robin Ostle and titled *Sensibilities of the Islamic Mediterranean. Self-Expression in a Muslim Culture from Post-Classical Times to the Present Day* (London: IB Tauris: 2008). This collection includes eight volumes reflecting some of the research conducted within the European Science Foundation (ESF) program, "The Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World" which was chaired by Robert Ilbert (University of Provence) and coordinated by Prof. Deguilhem. A number of the articles in the "The Islamic Mediterranean" collection are on Syria.

**Sarah Gualtieri** holds a joint appointment in the Department of History and Program in American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Her current research examines the history of Arab racial formation in the United States. She recently completed a book titled *Between Arab and White: Race, Nation, and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* to be published by the University of California Press in 2009.

**Joshua Landis**, University of Oklahoma, continues to write Syria Comment every day. It is read by some 40,000 unique readers a month and serves as a clearing house for all things Syrian. He consults frequently in Washington and has appeared many times on al-Jazeera in both Arabic and English as well as NPR, BBC and other news outlets. Landis wrote an article on the Syrian opposition for a London Middle East Institute-sponsored volume edited by Fred Lawson and some articles for the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. He won a University teaching award and will head to Syria for the summer of 2009.

Fred Lawson has edited a collection of essays on contemporary political, economic and cultural affairs entitled Demystifying Syria. It will be published in the spring of 2009 by Saqi Books in London. SSA members Myriam Ababsa and Joshua Landis contributed papers on the expansion of Shi’i religious sites and the dynamics of opposition movements, respectively. The book can be ordered at a substantial pre-publication discount through Amazon.com.

Kevin Martin, Indiana University, wrote a “quick study” for the “As You See It” department of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (41: 2, 2009) titled “Peasants into Syrians?” for the February issue of the journal.

Hussein I. El-Mudarris, independent scholar living in Aleppo and Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Aleppo, and Oliver Salmon are busy publishing material on historical documents and photographs of Aleppo. One can see their projects on-line (and order their publications) at Aleppo Art: http://www.aleppoart.com/

Paulo Pinto is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Universidade Federal Fluminense, where he is also the director of the Center for Middle East Studies. Last year, several of his articles were published including: “Sufism and the Political Economy of Morality” in Paul Heck ed. Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2007); “Sufism, Moral Performance and the Public Sphere in Syria”, Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée, nos. 115-116 (2006), 155-17; “Pilgrimage, Commodities and Religious Objectification: The Making of Transnational Shi’ism Between Iran and Syria”, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, v. 27: 1 (2007), 109-12; “Religions et Religiosité en Syrie” and “Le Soufisme en Syrie” and “Les Kurdes en Syrie” in Baudoin Dupret, Zouhair Ghazzal, Yussef Courbage & Mohammed al-Dbiyat, eds., La Syrie au Présent: Reflets d’une Société (Arles: Sindbad/Actes Sud) 2007. In October of this year, he made two presentations at the American University of Beirut: “Visiting Zaynab: Piety, Entertainment and Mass Pilgrimage at the Shi’i Shrines in Syria” and “The Negotiation of Arab and Muslim Identities in Contemporary Brazil: Inscribing Ethnicity and Religion in the Urban Space”.

Nasser Rabbat of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology writes that the Syrian-American Cultural Council is now a registered non-profit social organization in Ohio that aims at enhancing the cultural, educational, scientific, and social ties between American society, Syrian society, and the Syrian-American community. For more information check their website: http://www.saccusa.net/ A new website on cultural Syria with a special focus on the art scene and on classical sites in the country has been active since 2007. http://www.discover-syria.com/ The site also provides a calendar of cultural events in Damascus. Prof. Rabbat is supervising a PhD dissertation at MIT by Anneka Lenssen on the 1960s generation of modern Syrian artists with a special focus on Fateh al-Mudarres. Anneka is in the process of building a database on modern Syrian art and would appreciate any information members might be willing to share. You can reach her at Anneka Lenssen <annekalenssen@gmail.com>. A new book in Arabic on the "Dead Cities" by Prof. Rabbat will appear in late 2008-early 2009. It is titled Al-Mudun al-Mayyita fi Suriya: Durus min Madhiha wa Ru‘an li-Mustaqbalih (Damascus: Dar al-Aws, forthcoming).

**James A. Reilly**, University of Toronto, spent the last two summers in Damascus in conjunction with the German Oriental Institute (DAI) working on projects in Hama and in Shayzar. Prof. Reilly’s focus is on the Ottoman centuries.

**Steve Tamari**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, is spending his sabbatical year in Lebanon and Syria thanks to a Fulbright grant. He is writing on the politics of identity in Ottoman (16th-18th century) Bilad al-Sham. As editor of the Newsletter he is trying as much as possible to get fellow Syria scholars to contribute news of scholarship and reviews of books on Syria. If you are interested in contributing short articles to the Newsletter please contact him at: stamari@siue.edu

**Elyse Semerdjian**, Whitman College, has just published "Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008). The publisher’s blurb reads, in part: “Drawing on a wealth of shari’a court records, Semerdjian brings to life Syrian society during the Ottoman period… Semerdjian argues that the actual treatment of zina crimes in the courts differs substantially from sentences prescribed by codified Islamic jurisprudence… Off the Straight Path presents a powerful challenge to the traditional view of Islamic law, enabling a richer understanding of Islamic society.” For more details, go to: http://www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu/fall-2008/off-the-straight-path.html

**Shayna Silverstein** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Music at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include popular music, nationalism, secularism, and memory. She is currently completing dissertation research in Syria in which she explores contemporary dabke practices at weddings, heritage sites, and other spaces of collective memory. She is also an active violinst with experience in classical and Near Eastern music ensembles.

**Andrea Stanton** is Assistant Director of New York University's Center for Dialogues and a list editor of H-Levant. She is the book reviews editor for the SSA newsletter. She spent the 2007-2008 academic year near Syria, as a visiting assistant professor at the American University of Beirut, where she pioneered a course on "Lebanese and Syrian Migration to the Americas".

**Mandy Terc**, a PhD student in Linguistic Anthropology at the University of Michigan, is in Damascus doing dissertation research.

**Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh** of the University of California–Davis, USA is currently the Alisa Bruce Mellon Senior Fellow at the Center for the Advance Study of the Visual Arts of the National Gallery. She is working on a project titled “The City and Its Reverse: Performing Space and Gender in Islamic Urbanism”.

**Keith David Watenpaugh** of the University of California-Davis, USA was appointed was appointed a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow in International Peace at the US Institute of Peace. He is working on a project titled “The Middle East and Human Rights: Mass Violence, Refugees, and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism”.

**Mary Christina Wilson**, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is finishing a manuscript on Syria for Cambridge University Press's country studies series. She writes that she hopes that her “News of Members,” Syrian Studies Association Newsletter XIV: 1 (2008).
peers “will find it useful in the classroom and in preparing lectures. Working on this book has been a challenge and a joy. The challenge is writing for a non-specialist audience. But since it is a synthesis and based on secondary sources, I have had the joy of discovering the excellent scholarship, both old and new, that has been done on Syria by colleagues in Europe, Syria, and the U.S.” In May of 2007, she visited Macedonia and Kosovo where she was struck by much earlier traces of the Ottoman Empire there than in Syria and by the agricultural richness of the region and, thus, the importance of the Balkans to the Empire.

Radwan Ziadeh is a founder and director of Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, Executive Director of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies, and is currently a fellow at the Harvard University Kennedy School for Government’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. His book Decision Making and Foreign Policy in Syria (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (in Arabic) was published in 2007 while he was a fellow at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). At Harvard University, he is working on a program called “Protection of Human Rights in the Arab World” which aims to empower local human rights organizations to use regional and international human rights mechanisms such as Human Rights Counsel in Geneva. Ziadeh’s latest article is titled "Promoting Democracy in Arab Countries: Practice Makes Perfect?" Arab Insight, II: 3 (Fall 2008), 21-29 [available in a .pdf version at http://www.arabinsight.org/pdf/Arabinsight27.pdf (Accessed 14 November 2008)].