

Annual Business Meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists

Held at the University of Manchester

Thursday 17 July 2003, 5.30-7.15 p.m

1. Present

Mukulika Banerjee, Juan Bestard-Camps (guest), Maureen Bloom, Hilary Callan, Pat Caplan, James Carrier, Alberto Corsin Jiminez, Sara Delamont (guest), John Eade, Richard Fardon, Ronnie Frankenberg, John Gledhill, Sarah Green, Ian Harper, Gustaaf Houtman, Tim Ingold, Wendy James, Iris Jean-Klein, Lisette Josephides, Roger Just, Helen Lambert, Roland Littlewood, David Mills, Susanna Narotzky (guest), David Parkin, Jonathan Skinner, Marilyn Strathern, Peter Wade, Richard Werbner.

2. Apologies

Marcus Banks, Ruth Finnegan, Sue Jennings, Sarah Pink, Veronica Strang.

3. Minutes of the last ABM, at SOAS on 6 March 2002

No matters arising from the minutes, which were approved.

4. Commemoration

A moment's silence was observed to think of recently deceased ASA members Professor Isaac Schapera (past chair), Professor Daniel de Coppet, Dr Peter Forster, and Dr Keith Nicklin, and also of Dr Obi Igwara who was not an ASA member but was well known to many of us.

5. Matters for Report

a. Report from the Chair

The Report was tabled, and Richard Fardon spoke to various items. (The introduction of New Committee Officers was deferred. See item 8.)

Annals, Directory of Members, Membership Database

The Chair explained the series of technical difficulties and mishaps that led to the late appearance of the Annals (publication of which has been returned to an annual basis) and of the Directory (to be produced biennially as a separate volume). The Membership Database had not been used previously to generate the Directory of Members, however this is clearly the most efficient way to proceed so as to avoid double entry of data (into both the Membership database and Directory). The numerous difficulties that arose in trying to integrate and update the Membership Database and Directory demonstrated how far out-of-date was the Association's information technology. The Chair sought permission from the ABM to invest in professional information technology support. This will involve both start-up and, as importantly, maintenance costs. There had also been problems moving the Annals from production as camera-ready copy to supply of PDF to printers. These problems had largely been resolved – but they had been the cause of further delay.

Consultation culture and Standing Conference of Heads of Anthropology Departments

The Chair reported on consultations with the membership over nomination for the ESRC council and on responses to various ESRC and AHRB consultations as well as to the Roberts Review process (consultations on a response to the final Roberts Report are currently in progress). He stressed how helpful it was if HoDs – in consultation with their own staff – were able to respond to the Chair's invitations for comment. He realised that HoDs

had busy schedules and that consultation processes were often short. He hoped that HoDs would contribute to the ASA's response to the Roberts Report which had to be formulated during September. The Chair (again) expressed regret that HoDs had been unable to reconstitute SCHAD (Standing Conference of Heads of Anthropology Departments) since John Gledhill stood down as convenor two years ago. SCHAD could act as a forum in which the discipline might formulate a collective joint strategy for the future; enquiries from HEFCE about the constitution of RAE panels would be upon us relatively soon. In the absence of SCHAD, the Chair would continue to endeavour to consult HoDs by e-mail on these and other matters. With the support of C-SAP, via Dr David Mills, a meeting of HoDs would be convened in the autumn to discuss policy issues and opportunities for improving the HoDs' network without imposing a burden of responsibility on any particularly HoD.

Publication Issues

The Chair was involved in continuing negotiations to secure one or more publication deals following the ending of our relationship with Routledge (Taylor and Francis). A proposal for a relaunched and retitled conference volume series was being actively considered by publishers. Ironically, subsequent to the termination of our contract on current monographs, the ASA had concluded an agreement with Routledge to reissue the first twelve volumes of the ASA Monographs. Royalties on this contract, like all others for ASA conference volumes, would be transferred to the Radcliffe-Brown Fund to provide small grants to postgraduate students.

Conferences

The ASA Conference of 2004 will take place in Durham. The Committee received a proposal to host the 2005 Conference from the University of Aberdeen. Professor Tim Ingold spoke persuasively to the ABM on the conference theme of 'Creativity and Cultural Improvisation' which the meeting endorsed with enthusiasm. A conference in Aberdeen was especially appropriate given the very successful relaunch of anthropology as a discipline there. The convenors were asked to bear in mind that there should be *differential rates for members and non-members*.

On behalf of the Association and the ABM, the Chair thanked the organisers of the 2003 Conference in Manchester, including the conference administrator Rohan Jackson, for their impressive preparations.

Research Funds

The Chair reminded members of three ASA award schemes for postgraduate students (run jointly with the RAI): the Radcliffe-Brown awards supported by ASA royalties, the awards sponsored by the Sutasoma Foundation, and the Firth Family awards funded from the Firth Funds. The Trustees periodically update application procedures which are clearly spelt out on the ASA/RAI websites. Supervisors and other referees of postgraduate students who applied for awards should encourage the applicants to read through the forms and procedures very carefully. Several applications in recent rounds seemed unaware of the maximum awards, or of the recent requirement that either the applicant was a student member of either the RAI or ASA, or that one of the two referees was an ASA member.

Firth Tikopia Appeal

The Tikopia Appeal – launched by the three Firth Funds (ASA, LSE and RAI) and the Firth Family – to support a reconstruction project in Sir Raymond's name following the hurricane at New Year 2002/03, had raised in excess of £5,000. Thanks to all those who contributed. A project for 'Coconut Rehabilitation on Tikopia and Anuta' had been identified which would cost almost exactly the sum raised and moreover struck members of the committee set up to disburse the Firth Tikopia Appeal Funds as highly appropriate to Sir Raymond's memory. Advice was currently being taken on the best way to deliver this gift to its intended recipients. Without diminishing the input of others (including RAI), the Chair wanted to offer a special word of thanks to Gill Shepherd for the energies she had invested in this matter.

Networking and Postgraduates

The outgoing Committee had identified initiatives aimed to network anthropologists either working outside the academy, or within the academy but not in anthropology departments, as a priority for its successor. The Committee's networking officer, Sarah Pink, successfully applied to the ESRC for a series of workshops, two of which had already taken place (in March and June) with a final, third, meeting scheduled for September. As part of the groundwork for establishing thematic networks within the ASA, Sarah was seeking legal advice on the status of such networks (the 'Anthropology of Britain Network', which is in the process of forming, would be an example).

A second priority of the outgoing committee had been networking of postgraduate students. The new ASA/RAI joint Associate Membership package was attracting an encouraging number of new members. This provided a platform for further development.

The Chair thanked Stella Mascarenhas-Keyes who has continued to apply successfully to ESRC to organize postgraduate training courses on behalf of the ASA. These courses largely concern the application of anthropology outside the academy, and continued to attract strong student interest despite changes to provision of postgraduate training by departments at the behest of ESRC. Dr Mascarenhas-Keyes' term of office had come to an end but the Chair asked the meeting to suspend the normal regulation on length of service to allow her to act *ex officio*. Dr Mascarenhas-Keyes had signalled her willingness to continue in this role, and the Committee was unaware of anyone else with her contacts and competence to deliver such courses. The Chair further proposed to invite Dr Ian Harper to join the Committee. Ian has worked on postgraduate matters with Mukulika Banerjee, and he has organized the conversion of 'Anthropologymatters' (a web-based postgraduate journal funded by C-SAP) into a recognized ASA initiative that both ASA and C-SAP hope will add continuity to postgraduate student provision. (See also Item 8). *Both proposals concerning committee membership were approved by the meeting.*

Committee Matters—Cycle of Meetings

The Chair expanded on the point made in his report that – thanks to the use of email and the employment of a professional administrator (Maureen Bloom) – it was now sufficient for the committee to meet three (rather than four) times a year: a cycle that fitted well with the rhythm of business. Given a Committee representative of the different regions of the UK, cutting back on even one meeting represented a considerable saving in expenses.

Questions/Comments on Chair's Report:

One member was interested to know the figures for student associates. These were currently between 30-40, although uptake should increase as the scheme became better known.

Marilyn Strathern proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair, Richard Fardon, for his efforts during the past year.

b. Report from the Hon. Treasurer

The report was tabled. Jonathan Skinner, the outgoing Treasurer, spoke to the figures. Jonathan explained that – on the advice of our new accountants – the format of the accounts had been changed from a simple Income and Expenditure Account to a 'Statement of Financial Activities'. He then stressed the healthy levels of subscription. However, there was still room to improve the proportion of eligible anthropologists who were ASA members, and a proportion of members not paying by standing order were in arrears. Some measure of responsibility for this had to be put down to problems with our database which, as the Chair had reported, we were in the process of addressing. It might prove possible to raise income from subscriptions from roughly £10k per annum to £12k per annum. If funds from donations seemed low compared with 2001, this was only because there had been exceptional payments to the Firth Fund in previous years in the form of a gift and bequest from Sir Raymond. That aside, donations were healthy.

The Treasurer thanked Maureen Bloom, the administrator, as well as the Chair and the Committee for their help over the years. The Chair responded that the Association owed Dr Skinner a debt for his dedicated efforts in turning around the Association's financial standing during his term of office.

Chair and Treasurer underlined that we were entering a period of expenditure (on the 2003 Annals and Directory) as well as on a comprehensive IT makeover. The accounts next year would reflect this and must not be expected – on the face of it – to look as good as these.

6. Amendments to Rules of Procedure

The Chair drew attention to proposed minor amendments to rules and procedures, italicized on pages 17 and 18 of the Annals which had been distributed on the day of the meeting. These mostly concerned the joint ASA/RAI Associate Membership scheme, and had to be made before the ABM in order to launch the scheme during the calendar year 2003. He asked the membership's permission to make these changes with effect from the beginning of 2003. *All amendments were approved.*

7. Proposal to affiliate to Standing Conference of Arts and Social Sciences (SCASS)

In accordance with ASA Rules of Procedure, the Chair asked permission from the membership to affiliate the ASA with the SCASS, a body representing the interests of the Arts and Social Sciences that is keen to have the ASA. He recommended the SCASS 'One Voice' document as a cogent response to government policy on research selectivity and pointed out that the ASA had been represented at the meeting when this document was drafted. The cost of our Association's membership would be £30 per annum. Dr Sara Delamont, a guest at the ABM, answered questions on behalf of SCASS about the cycle of SCASS's meetings and the nature of its activities. Wendy James added that annual conferences were organized around current themes and that activities concentrated on lobbying. SCASS had originally come on the scene to save the ESRC, at a time when Mrs. Thatcher wanted to do away with it. Since then SCASS had campaigned against various policies on grounds that ASA would share. *It was agreed that the ASA should join.*

8. Election of new officers

The chair reported that the ASA had lost the efficient and encouraging presence of former Honorary Secretary Veronica Strang soon after the last ABM when she gained a post in New Zealand. He proposed that the ABM ratify Iris Jean-Klein (Edinburgh), who had already been acting *ex officio* as a Radcliffe-Brown trustee, as the next Secretary. The Chair further proposed Lisette Josephides (QUB) as the new Treasurer to replace Jonathan Skinner, whose term of office had come to an end (see item 5b), and mentioned the happy coincidence of Jonathan moving to QUB which gave grounds for optimism about an unproblematic transition. The Chair thanked Iris and Lisette for contemplating taking on these roles. The Chair noted that David Mills was nearing the end of his term as both Archives Officer and as C-SAP liaison officer. He thanked David for establishing the archive (at the LSE) with procedures which he hoped would function without a dedicated Archives Officer. C-SAP was itself about to change shape, and so the meeting was invited to formalise the appointment to the Committee of Ian Harper (SOAS, moving to Edinburgh University), who had accepted nomination to the ASA committee with a brief to look into teaching initiatives. Another committee member would be required if Sarah Pink's initiatives on networks within the ASA proved popular, but no specific nomination would be made at this point. (On these issues see also item 5a, Networking & Postgraduate Matters.) *The ABM ratified all the proposed new officers, and endorsed the proposal to expand committee membership before the next ABM should that prove desirable.*

9. Election of new members

All the applicants proposed by the Committee were agreed: Nicolette Bethel, Michael Bloomfield, Monica Bonaccorso, Alison Kay Brown, Alberto Corsin Jimenez, Olga Demetriou, Eleanor Fisher, Robert Gibb, Ian Harper, Monica Heintz, Amiria Henare, Anita Herle, Alexander King, Vibha Joshi, James Leach, Yael Navaro-Yashin, Rajindra Puri, Todd Sanders, Alison Shaw, Angels Trias i Valls, and Robin Wilson.

The Chair stressed the importance of Heads of Departments encouraging new members of staff to join the Association and nominating them.

10. AOB

- a. The ABM heard a report from colleagues at Spanish Universities, presented by Juan Bestard-Camps (Barcelona) with Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge), about worrying developments for the future of Anthropology in Spain. The current government's revision of the higher education curriculum, might lead to the abandonment of undergraduate Anthropology degrees, notwithstanding the popularity of such degrees with students and healthy student enrolment in recent years. (Masters degrees would be continued.) The ABM was told that staff at Spanish universities were fighting to retain the BA degree, and Professor Bestard-Camps asked the ASA for its support in this campaign. It was agreed that Professor Bestard-Camps might write to ask the ASA for a letter of support, giving the Chair strong guidance on the most effective contents and timing of such a letter. The Chair would seek advice in the light of this.
- b. As a visiting ALSISS (Academy of Learned Societies in the Social Sciences) representative, Dr Sara Delamont (who also spoke on SCASS, see Item 7) appealed to the meeting to nominate another anthropologist to represent the discipline on the ALSISS council. Officially, Prof. Henrietta Moore represented anthropology, but other obligations prevented her from attending meetings, with the result that 'anthropology has been taken out of the debate.' The Chair responded that he had asked Heads of Departments to nominate people to become Academicians, but last year received only one nomination, which the nominee turned down. In part this was due to the £160 per annum fee payable by an Academician which was considerably more than the British Academy in which anthropology had a strong body of Fellows. The chair also urged the ALSISS representative to spell out the benefits of membership to ASA members: we currently paid both directly as an Association through a per capita levy, and indirectly through our six Academicians' payments. Pat Caplan reminded the meeting that there were two separate issues here: nomination of Academicians, and the representation of the ASA within ALSISS. A lengthy discussion ensued, in which it became clear that the membership fee, especially vis a vis British Academy, was seen as a major obstacle to finding people willing to be Academicians. It was agreed to look into the issue of representation on the ALSISS Council. As Dr Delamont confirmed, the Chair had regularly attended meetings of the representatives of Learned Societies within ALSISS.
- c. The next AGM is to be held in Durham in 2004.

Iris Jean-Klein