

Report on the Conference

The International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (I U A E S)

Commission on the Middle East
Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

August **10-12, 2017**

*“Continuity and Change:
Diaspora, Religion, Kinship, Food, Art and Architecture”*

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Dear Professor Harrison,
President of the IUAES

Dear Professor Junji Koizumi,
Secretary General of the IUAES

I would like to make a short report on the Conference of the Commission on the Middle East. I have already sent you the program. This conference was held successfully and I am attaching a picture from the first day, 10th of August. We had about 40 presentations from scholars coming from 17 countries (Austria, Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Germany, France, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Qatar, U.K.,U.S.).

Below you have my Welcome Speech:

Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends

We are very pleased to begin this IUAES, Commission on the Middle East Conference 2017, in Krakow, Poland. This Commission which was born in 2009 passed a few years with the IUAES Inter-congresses and a Congress, till I could acquire the approval of our colleague Dr. Marcin Brocki and his university to hold our conference in one location. For me, our journal *Anthropology of the Middle East* and our Commission Meetings are settings for scholars who are working on the Middle East to voice their views. We are not here to voice what politicians and newsmen have told us. As anthropologists we gather raw information, we are holders of quite a bit of data which we have gathered with great diligence and patience, all in search of truth. We need each other to listen to us, that is why I try to keep our sessions within one room, so that we respectfully listen to each other, beyond what we know from outside. We do not want to prove anything, we do not want to win anything, we want to share, we want to provide concrete facts, what has been gathered with great pain and thought by us.

We want to show how anthropologists, students of culture and everyday life of people can be together for three days, listen to each other and give their views and build a temporal community, an academic terrain. We do not come here just to present a paper and report to our universities and get credit for it, we come here and stay the three days together and exchange ideas. We want to strengthen academic domain, this very old ephemeral space of reflection. We do not want to voice any government or press view, we know about these, we come here to shed these skins, and to continue our dedication to finding truth and voicing it as best as we can. So we are ready, as our profession demands of us, to listen and to

empathize, not to claim knowledge beyond what the other says, but to speak and become clearer on various topics and stand points.

As you know, every year we give a prize to the best article published in our journal *AME*, so this year we are very happy to announce who has won this prize and offer it to her/him. We are keen to offer the prize Zubaydah Ashkanani Prize, (Zubaydah herself is an anthropologist) to young scholars.

We are also very pleased to announce that three of our sessions became double sessions, what shows the increasing interest in our Conferences. Commission meetings of the IUAES can take place three years away from the Inter-Congresses or Congress of the Union, so next year we must go to IUAES Congress in Brazil. We shall be talking about it more during the Commission Business Meeting and of course the site of the Congress could give you further information. The merit of joining the IUAES is that for one thing we can present to them the strength of our work, and for the other, our members can benefit from other Commissions of the IUAES. I am looking forward to holding joint Commission Conferences, in Brazil. You will be posted on this matter also.

May I thank all our Panel organizers and chairs, all our participants, our Executive Secretary, and our dear host here in Krakow. Let us begin our sessions, and if there is anything we can do to make your collaboration more fruitful, please do not hesitate to tell us. I personally would appreciate all criticisms and welcome all views and hope we will become a center for exchanging ideas which would claim more and more centrality and voice in the academia concerning the Middle East.

S.Shahshahani, August 19th, 2017, Krakow, Poland.

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I have received a number of messages from the participants, and I would like to send you a few excerpts from the participants,

It was a great pleasure and honor to meet you in Krakow....this amazing conference and meeting... a scholarly and wonderful conference...thanks to your vision and perseverance this has gone from strength to strength and is now fully established. I found the panels very interesting and most of the presentations of high quality...this great and inspiring conference. I enjoyed it very much. Once again thank you for all interesting discussions...Your energy, passion and love to your work are the reasons that have gathered all these scholars from all over the world...The growth in number of the panels, and diversity of the papers this year and creative ideas and suggestions for the incoming years discussed during our Business Meeting have been the result of tireless efforts put by the organizers in making this year's conference a great achievement....

As mentioned in one of the remarks, we have already discussed the topics for next year. I would like to hold our Commission Meeting in Brazil, and am looking forward to receiving a message from the secretariat so that we can inform our colleagues the soonest possible regarding this important event.

I thank you for your attention, your continued support of our Commission, and would like to see a reflection of this report on the IUAES site. If I could make any further explanations to make the report more accessible, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Soheila Shahshahani