

Evolutionary Anthropology Society

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The Short History of EAS: Birth of an AAA Section

By Bill Irons

Past President of EAS

During the 1980s and the 1990s and number of anthropologists began to apply ideas take from behavioral ecology to the study of human populations. These included such ideas as optimal-foraging theory, kin selection, sexual selection and mating strategies, and parental investment theory. The results of this research were extensively published in *Evolution and Human Behavior* and *Human Nature*. Occasional articles also appeared in the *American Anthropologist*, *Current Anthropology*, and in a few volumes such as those edited by Chagnon and Irons in 1979, Betzig, Borgerhoff Mulder, and Turke in 1988, Eric Smith and Bruce Winterhalder in 1992, and Cronk et al. in 2000. In addition books such Sarah Hrdy's *The Women Who Never Evolved* and *Mother Nature*, and Hill and Hurtado's ethnography of the Ache, established the new paradigm of behavioral ecology in anthropology. To the extent that this new paradigm had a home in a professional organization, it was the Evolution and Human Behavior Society formed in 1989 and serving a membership of psychologists, psychiatrists, and biologists as well as anthropologists. However, around 2002, a number of evolutionary anthropologists became convinced that this new paradigm needed to be represented in an AAA section. This would allow more consistent and systematic representation of behavioral ecological and related research in both the AAA annual meetings and the discipline of anthropology more generally.

The Evolutionary Anthropology Society (EAS) began with various informal discussions at the Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES) meeting in 2002 and 2003 and at the AAA meeting in Chicago in 2003. These initial discussions involved James Boster, Jane Lancaster, Frank Marlowe, John Patton, Eric Alden Smith, and William Irons. As a result of these initial discussions John Patton and Frank Marlowe solicited, through a widely circulated email inquiry, a list of anthropologists who would be interested in joining a new AAA Section devoted to behavioral ecology and more broadly to evolutionary anthropology. Eric Smith wrote a mission statement, which is the one we have now, and Jim Boster wrote a set of bylaws and set up a websites (<http://www.anth.uconn.edu/eas/>). At the AAA meeting in Chicago the initial EAS organizing committee (Boster, Smith, and Irons) discussed plans for this new section with Kim Baker, the AAA Section Liaison, who clarified the procedure for requesting a new section.

In the spring of 2004, the organizing committee sent a formal letter to the AAA President and Executive Board requesting that the society be recognized as an official AAA section. At this point, EAS had a mission statement, a set of bylaws, a website, a list of roughly 300 anthropologists interested in joining the new Section, and an initial roster of people who had agreed to serve as the initial officers of the society: Irons as President, Eric Smith as President-elect, Jim Boster as Secretary/Treasurer and Webmaster, and, as Board members, Kristen Hawkes, Jane Lancaster, Frank Marlowe, and John Patton. In May of 2004, the AAA Executive Board recognized EAS as a probationary section. Recognition as a probationary section is standard procedure while

a new section recruits the minimum number of dues-paying members, 250, for an AAA Section. Soon after recognition as a probationary section, Mary Shenk agreed to serve as the EAS *Anthropology News* Contributing Editor, and since that time EAS has contributed columns regularly to *AN*. In May 2006, the Executive Board gave EAS full recognition as an AAA section. At that point we had well over 300 members. We fielded our first slate of candidates in the spring 2006 AAA election. Pat Draper was elected President-elect, Brian Madison Wood was elected Student Representative, and Elizabeth Cashdan and Lee Cronk were elected as Board members.

A central function of EAS is to organize sessions for the AAA annual meetings. Our first session were held at the 2005 annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Eric Smith and Jim Boster served as co-chairs of our first EAS Program Committee and they organized five sessions (one jointly with the Society for Psychological Anthropology and one jointly with the Biological Anthropology Section). Pat Draper served as chair of our Program Committee for 2006 and organized four sessions. The details of the 2006 sessions are on the EAS website. All of these sessions have been very well received.

In June of 2005, the Editor of the journal *Human Nature* (*HN*), Jane Lancaster, and the EAS Board worked out a special relationship with *HN*. *Human Nature* agreed (1) to offer EAS members a reduced subscription rate, (2) to devote one issue a year to publishing one of the EAS AAA sessions, and (3) to publish the New Investigator and the Student award papers each year pending *Human Nature* review. The relationship is especially valuable to EAS in light of the fact that *Human Nature* is ranked 4th out of 50 anthropology journals by ISI Journal Citation Reports in terms of impact measures. More than any other journal, *HN* covers the interests of a large portion of our membership.

EAS performs an important role in the AAA by show-casing the best current research by anthropologists applying evolutionary theory to the analysis of human behavior and culture and by facilitating discussion among the scientists pursuing this kind of anthropological research. Those interested in our section should visit our website (www.evolutionaryanthropologysociety.org).

Announcement

Please see <http://www.qualquant.net/training/> for a host of great research methods training opportunities for both graduate students and faculty.

Contributions to this column are welcomed and may be sent to mshenk@unc.edu. EAS columns are archived at www.evolutionaryanthropologysociety.org.