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Dear Dr. Carter,

I am writing on behalf of the Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology Interest Group (MAPMA) of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). The purpose of this letter is to request that the *American Journal of Archaeology* (*AJA*) address a concern that has been raised recently among our membership. We would like to note that this letter was pre-circulated to the group and approved by current members before being sent to you.

The members of MAPMA have raised concerns about the temporal definition of the *AJA*'s editorial policy. The policy currently reads:

The scope of the *AJA* is defined by the Governing Board of the AIA as “the art and archaeology of ancient Europe and the Mediterranean world, including the Near East and Egypt, from prehistoric to Late Antique times.” The *AJA* Editor-in-Chief welcomes the submission of manuscripts on any subject within that definition [emphasis ours].¹

Although the specific event that sparked this concern is no longer immediately relevant, we feel it may help explain the reason for this letter if we provide some general information on the matter. In 2016 an anonymous member of our interest group submitted a manuscript to the *AJA*. The article focused on archaeological materials dated to the Byzantine period. The Editor-in-Chief at the time allegedly rejected the manuscript without sending it for review, justifying this decision on the grounds that the manuscript's temporal focus was not in line with the *AJA*'s editorial policy. The author brought this exchange to the attention of the MAPMA Chairperson at the time, and the topic was discussed at our interest group meeting in January 2017.

Because of the change in leadership—I was elected as Chairperson at the 2017 meeting and officially assumed my responsibilities this year—substantial time has passed between that event and the writing of this letter. The author involved in the exchange has since published the manuscript in another journal and does not wish the specific incident to be revisited. Further, the Editor-in-Chief who allegedly rejected the manuscript due to the *AJA*'s editorial policy is no longer in that post.

Thus, the purpose of this letter is to represent the MAPMA members as a collective whole in ensuring their opportunity to publish articles in the *AJA*. Borrowing the words of Pedar Foss and Rebecca Schindler in their 2008 solicitation of books for review (Vol. 112.2), “the *AJA* remains one of the premier archaeological journals in the world.” We believe that all members of the AIA should have access to the *AJA* as a publication venue, and to this end, we request that the temporal scope of the journal's editorial policy be expanded to include the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods.

¹ <https://www.ajaonline.org/submissions/editorial-policy>

There is good justification for the *AJA*'s editorial policy to be reconsidered. The journal regularly publishes field reports, review articles, and book reviews on topics that cross the Late Antique chronological cut-off. The most recent example, published in 2017 (Vol. 121.4), is Alex Knodell and colleagues' field report, "The Brown University Petra Archaeological Project: Landscape Archaeology in the Northern Hinterland of Petra, Jordan." Their project not only encountered material "from the Lower Paleolithic to the present" but also sought (among other goals) to document an Islamic-period village. Of the book reviews published in the past 10 years, roughly 10 percent (82 out of 759) deal with Medieval or Post-Medieval phases or are applicable to all archaeologists, whether they focus on prehistory or more recent times. The *AJA* also receives many books for review that deal with later periods; the January 2018 list alone contains 6 books that explicitly discuss post-Antique subjects.² The topics covered by these manuscripts include contemporary approaches to archaeology, the history of the field, and most importantly, the results of diachronic field projects, which necessarily encounter, analyze, and publish Medieval and Post-Medieval materials.

Further, MAPMA's status as an official Interest Group of the AIA underscores the increasing importance and validity of research on the periods that follow Late Antiquity. Since its foundation in 2005, MAPMA has sponsored 11 colloquia at the AIA Annual Meeting, and in recent years it has sponsored the maximum number of two colloquia each year. Our roster includes over 70 active members of the AIA, and our Facebook page has over 1,100 members from across the globe, reflecting the diverse interest in these phases of European and Mediterranean history. Members of MAPMA have advocated for the inclusion of Medieval and Post-Medieval phases in other journals such as *Hesperia*, which now accepts submissions "from earliest prehistoric times onward."³

We believe that a reconsideration of the *AJA*'s editorial policy would reflect the changes that have taken place in European and Mediterranean research as a whole, and therefore will be an important way to foster the kind of intellectual dialogue that will keep the *AJA* a vital scholarly organ well into the future. In a forward to the 115th anniversary issue (Vol. 104.1), the Editor-in-Chief, R. Bruce Hitchner, wrote:

It is perhaps an appropriate moment to recall the priorities of the *AJA* as defined by its first editor, Arthur Lincoln Frothingham, Jr. He proposed that the *Journal* serve as "an instrument of centralization, in which all the important work done in the field of Archaeology may be brought to a focus and made accessible" ... This means publishing articles, field reports, newsletters, and reviews that reflect the vast changes in the scope, diversity, and complexity of the study of the art and archaeology of western Eurasia and northern Africa over the past half-century.

The field of archaeology in Europe and the wider Mediterranean world has shifted substantially in the 18 years since Hitchner's call to action, and this shift is reflected in the activities of current AIA members. Even when their primary interests are the prehistoric or ancient periods, archaeologists must deal with Medieval and Post-Medieval phases as they conduct surface survey and excavations. Increasingly, members of the AIA are leading archaeological projects that are diachronic in nature or deal explicitly with these later phases, and the AIA regularly

² <https://www.ajaonline.org/books-received/3610>

³ <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/publications/hesperia>

awards fellowships (such as the Olivia James Traveling Fellowship) to individuals studying later periods. In addition to its lecture series and magazine, the very mission of the AIA reflects its broad coverage and openness to embracing the archaeology of all time periods:

The AIA promotes archaeological inquiry and public understanding of the material record of the human past to foster an appreciation of diverse cultures and our shared humanity. The AIA supports archaeologists, their research and its dissemination, and the ethical practice of archaeology. The AIA educates people of all ages about the significance of archaeological discovery and advocates for the preservation of the world's archaeological heritage [emphasis ours].⁴

With the editorial policy of the *AJA* as it stands, our members are concerned that manuscripts dealing with these later phases will not be treated fairly during the journal's editorial process, and may in fact be denied consideration solely on the basis of their temporal focus.

As the current Editor-in-Chief, we ask that you consider updating the *AJA*'s editorial policy to reflect the full scope of scholarship that is being undertaken by AIA members and to ensure that all members—regardless of the chronological focus of their research—have access to this journal as a publication venue.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request.

Yours sincerely,



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⁴ <https://www.archaeological.org/about/whoweare>