



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF
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Dr. Rebecca M. Seifried
Chairperson, AIA Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology Interest Group
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Dear Dr. Seifried,

After receiving your letter with the request that the scope of the *American Journal of Archaeology* be expanded to include the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods, I brought this request before the *AJA*'s Advisory Board and the Committee for Research and Academic Affairs of the AIA's Governing Board.

I provided the members of the *AJA*'s Advisory Board with the text of your letter and asked for their responses. An interesting and lively email discussion ensued in which almost all the members of the Board participated. A majority of the Board members think that the scope of the *AJA* should remain as it is presently defined. At the same time, the Board members agree that field projects whose main objectives lie within the scope of the *AJA* should include recovered data that pertain to post-Antique periods, especially when such data provide information about continuities or breaks between Antiquity and post-Antiquity. Board members similarly agreed that post-Antique material may be pertinent in interpretative articles focused on topics within the scope of the *AJA*. Several members suggested the inclusion of an occasional article beyond the *AJA*'s core focus that raised methodological issues or in some other way intersected with the interests of archaeologists working within the present parameters of the *AJA*, and several members favored allowing the Editor-in-Chief to consider post-Antique submissions at her/his discretion.

When the AIA Governing Board met in Washington last April, I provided the members of the Committee for Research and Academic Affairs with copies of your letter and the request for an expanded scope was again discussed. The Committee members did not endorse the request to expand the *AJA*'s present scope; my sense was that the Committee felt that the definition of the journal's scope should be left to the Editor-in-Chief and the Advisory Board. The Committee members did, however, concur that field reports and interpretative articles primarily focused on material within the journal's scope should include post-Antique material that is relevant for understanding continuities and breaks or is otherwise pertinent.

Both the Advisory Board and the Committee for Research and Academic Affairs thus essentially endorsed the present editorial policy of the *AJA*. As your letter pointed out, the *AJA* currently publishes both field reports and interpretative articles that include material outside the journal's

defined scope. However, these field reports and articles have their primary focus within the scope of the *AJA*. Just as no responsible excavators or surveyors who encountered chronological periods outside their areas of particular interest would ignore that material, the *AJA* should not exclude material from periods outside its scope in field reports or when pertinent in interpretative articles as long as the primary focus of a given report or article is within the *AJA*'s parameters. This flexibility, however, does not include the publication of articles that are primarily concerned with periods outside the *AJA*'s scope.

It is true that some Book Review Editors have solicited and accepted reviews of books that address post-Antique topics. As Editor-in Chief, I have left the choice of books to be reviewed to the Book Review Editor, and I believe that the book reviews generally reflect the policy of the *AJA* regarding other content.

Members of the *AJA*'s Advisory Board and I believe that there are important reasons for keeping the present definition of the journal's scope. One of these is the strong reputation that the *AJA* now has within its present parameters. It is important for the identity of a scholarly journal to maintain a clear focus. This identity insures that readers interested in that focus will regularly consult the journal and that authors will consequently wish to publish their work there.

The present scope of the *AJA* is already very broad. In fact, some members of the Advisory Board argued that the present scope is too expansive. These members suggested that, for example, it would be a good idea to reconsider the inclusion of field reports on the Bronze Age Near East or articles on ancient Egypt.

Every definition of scope involves decisions of where to draw the boundaries. As one Advisory Board member pointed out, the scope of the *AJA* does correspond, though of course not exactly, to existing ways in which training and research in the field of archaeology is now divided by geography and time periods. The expanded chronological scope of *Hesperia* is balanced by its geographical restriction to Greece. The geographical range of the *AJA* is much broader. The Advisory Board members who expressed interest in including later periods all mentioned later periods in the region of Greece and Cyprus but would exclude later periods in regions now within the journal's scope (e.g., Medieval England). There is a perceived need to balance the extent of the chronological range against the geographical range. An expansion in the chronological scope would be likely to include a geographical restriction.

Another clear consideration is financial. The difficulties just discussed could be obviated by adding a fifth issue of the journal each year devoted to post-Antique content. This, however, would increase the budget of the *AJA* by 20%. There is, at present, a strict page limit for each issue. This limit is based on the resources available to the journal. The decision of what to include is thus a zero-sum undertaking. The inclusion of post-Antique material would necessarily mean that the present amount of pre-Medieval material would be reduced.

Your letter expressed the belief that "all members of the AIA should have access to the *AJA* as a publication venue." The membership of the AIA includes not only archaeologists of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East and archaeologists of the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods but also some primarily interested in North, Central, and South American archaeology and other

archaeological fields as well. The broad mission of the AIA is the support of the archaeology of all places and times. The scope of the *AJA*, like that of virtually all other journals of archaeology, is a restricted subset of all archaeology. The mission of the AIA and the scope of the *AJA* are not coterminous.

It should, in addition, be noted that the *AJA* does not publish only the work of members of the AIA. The content of the journal represents the research of scholars from 20 or more countries, and a very significant proportion of these scholars are not members of the AIA. An enlargement of the scope of the *AJA* to include Medieval and Post-Medieval periods would mean that all scholars working in these fields, whether in North America, Europe, the Middle East, or elsewhere could submit their work to the *AJA*.

In discussing MARMA's request, the members of *AJA*'s Advisory Board and of the AIA's Committee for Research and Academic Affairs virtually all expressed interest in and enthusiasm for archaeological research dealing with the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. The preponderant belief that the *AJA* should not expand its present scope by no means reflects an opinion that later periods are less important than the pre-Medieval periods. I think that I speak for all members of the Advisory Board and of the Committee for Research and Academic Affairs, and certainly I speak for myself, in saying that the increased profile of Medieval and post-Medieval archaeology is very welcome and appreciated. Nevertheless, the growth of post-Antique archaeology does not mean that research in this field ought to be included in an existing journal.

As there have been increases in Medieval and post-Medieval archaeology, there has also been growth in the research concerned with pre-Medieval archaeology. In addition to the constant increase in data produced by excavation and survey and the ever-expanding range of interpretations, this growth includes, as examples, new scientific applications and new theoretical approaches. More resources are continually needed for the publication of pre-Medieval archaeological research. No doubt this is also true of Medieval and post-Medieval archaeology. The solution should not be to reduce the opportunities for publication in ancient fields but to create more opportunities for publication in post-Antique fields. Perhaps the solution would be a new journal for Medieval and post-Medieval archaeology under the auspices of the AIA.

Finally, I would like to respond to the suggestion that submissions focused on post-Antique material are not treated fairly by the *AJA*'s editorial process. The *AJA* receives a rather large number of submissions that do not fall within its defined scope. When such a submission is received, it is the *AJA*'s routine procedure to reply to the author that the submission will not be considered for publication because its primary concern is outside the defined scope of the journal. The scope of the journal is stated clearly on the *AJA*'s website; it is not unfair to deny consideration to submissions that lie outside the stated parameters of the journal. Declining such a submission, however, is not the same thing as a rejection, which would indicate that the submission was refused because the quality of the research or the presentation was judged unsatisfactory. The word "reject" should not be used in responding to a submission outside the *AJA*'s scope, and I certainly apologize if it has been.

I believe that I and the members of the Advisory Board have benefitted from the discussions that your letter stimulated. The policies of the *AJA* should be re-examined periodically. I truly hope that this reply will not be considered in any respect as reflecting a negative perception of post-Antique archaeology. On the contrary, MAPMA has our genuine support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane B. Carter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jane B. Carter
Editor-in-Chief
American Journal of Archaeology