

# From the Editor-in-Chief: New Statement of Purpose for the *AJA*

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Thirty-two years ago, *AJA* Editor-in-Chief Fred S. Kleiner wrote an editorial letter in which he expressed the need to expand the meaning of the motto, *virum monumenta priorum*, on the seal adopted by the AIA in 1889. That motto, Kleiner wrote, reflected the 19th-century view of what archaeologists were interested in—that is, grand testimonials of the past.<sup>1</sup> Kleiner's editorial pointed out that, in the advanced 20th century, *monumenta* include even the most modest artifacts, the remains of ancient *mulieres* and freedmen are valued along with those of ancient *viri*, and archaeologists collect botanical remains that are not human-made at all.

After a year in which ongoing failures of social justice in the United States have been painfully clear, it is time for a similar re-articulation of the mission of the *AJA* in order to address the lack of diversity among the authors published in the journal and, very probably, among the readers of the journal. The present statement of the *AJA*'s purpose emerged in the mid 1980s. According to Editor-in-Chief Brunilde S. Ridgway, writing in 1985, “the mandate of the Archaeological Institute of America is for the journal to cover the art history and archaeology of the Mediterranean area in particular, with Near Eastern and European topics also included,”<sup>2</sup> though a newsletter article by Robert C. Dunnell on “Americanist Archaeology in 1984” appeared in the last issue of *AJA* that year.<sup>3</sup> What became the canonical statement of the *AJA*'s mission appeared in Kleiner's first editorial letter: “In accordance with long-standing editorial policy, *AJA* will continue to be devoted to studies of the art and archaeology of ancient Europe and the Mediterranean world, including the Near East and Egypt, from prehistoric to late antique times.”<sup>4</sup>

This statement does not adequately represent what the *AJA* must include. It has become obvious in the last half century that responsible scholarship in all areas requires self-consciousness about its past and present procedures and conclusions. The archaeology of the ancient Mediterranean and related regions has been shaped from its beginnings by prejudices that have acted to exclude many people and points of view from its exploration of the past. It is the responsibility of scholars in this discipline to assess how prejudices and unexamined assumptions have structured our archaeological interpretations,

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<sup>1</sup>F.S. Kleiner, “*Monumenta virum priorum*,” *AJA* 93:3 (1989) 315–18 (see esp. 316–17).

<sup>2</sup>B.S. Ridgway, “Editorial Statement,” *AJA* 89:1 (1985) 1.

<sup>3</sup>R.C. Dunnell, *AJA* 89:4 (1985) 585–611. This was the last of Dunnell's Americanist newsletters in the *AJA*; previous installments had appeared starting in 1979.

<sup>4</sup>*AJA* 90:1 (1986) 1. Repeated in editorial letters by Kleiner in *AJA* 90:4 (1986) 379 and 93:3 (1989) 316 n. 13.

and the *AJA* should publish such studies. While we examine *how* we have studied the past, we should also consider *why* we do. If this archaeology is relevant to contemporary lives, we must find ways to communicate its importance to a greater diversity of people.

The expansive geographical compass of the *AJA*'s mandate should be represented by a correspondingly broad range of viewpoints. The phrasing of the *AJA*'s scope, with its foregrounding of "ancient Europe," seems to favor the northern side of the Mediterranean, and in fact these regions—Italy, Greece, and western Turkey—have always predominated in the pages of the *AJA*. Although the Near East was added almost as an afterthought, the lands east of the Mediterranean have also had a consistently strong presence. Yet the scope of the journal includes all of North Africa (with Egypt and Sudan) as well as all of Europe (with the British Isles). One objective of reframing the journal's statement of purpose is to attract content that reflects the whole of the *AJA*'s mandated geographical extent.

All of these perspectives are needed in the pages of the *AJA*. To that end, the Governing Board of the AIA, on 1 May 2021, approved the following expanded statement of purpose for the *AJA*:<sup>5</sup>

The *American Journal of Archaeology* (*AJA*), founded in 1885, is published by the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). The *AJA* publishes original research on the diverse peoples and material cultures of the Mediterranean and related areas, including North Africa (with Egypt and Sudan), Western Asia (with the Caucasus), and Europe, from prehistory through late antiquity.

Manuscripts that address the history of the discipline, archaeological methodologies, theoretical approaches, pedagogy, and the politics and ethics of archaeological heritage are welcome. The *AJA* encourages submissions that explore the intersections of ancient Mediterranean cultures with other regions and periods, the reception of these cultures in later times, and their ongoing significance in the present.

In accordance with the AIA's Statement on Archaeology and Social Justice ([www.archaeological.org/aia-statement-on-archaeology-and-social-justice/](http://www.archaeological.org/aia-statement-on-archaeology-and-social-justice/)), the *AJA* is committed to advancing equity and inclusion in archaeological publication. The journal seeks to publish diverse viewpoints, especially from members of historically underrepresented groups, to acknowledge and examine the appropriation of Mediterranean archaeology by racist, nationalist, and colonialist ideologies, and to address critically the biases that have shaped the discipline.

The *AJA* affirms the critical importance of archaeological context and the responsibility to provide documentation of provenance in archaeological publication. Submissions should follow the *AJA*'s policies regarding the citation of excavated objects and objects in public and private collections ([www.ajaonline.org/submissions/antiquities-policy/](http://www.ajaonline.org/submissions/antiquities-policy/)).

If the *AJA* succeeds in fulfilling this mission, it will continue to be a distinguished journal of the archaeology on all sides of the Mediterranean.

Jane B. Carter  
Editor-in-Chief

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<sup>5</sup>The statement was drafted by several members of the *AJA*'s Advisory Board, the academic editors of the *AJA*, and First Vice President of the AIA Elizabeth S. Greene. Before its submission to the Governing Board, the draft was reviewed by the whole of the *AJA*'s Advisory Board, AIA President Laetitia La Follette, and AIA Vice President for Research and Academic Affairs Thomas Tartaron.