

JOURNAL OF NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SETH RICHARDSON

Work continued apace at the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (*JNES*) this year, despite pandemic conditions, with both issues of the academic year coming out on schedule: *JNES* 79, no. 2 (October 2020), weighed in at 250 pages, and *JNES* 80, no. 1 (April 2021), at 230 pages. These issues between them included nineteen major articles and thirty-one book reviews. Our authors from outside the U.S. hailed from Istanbul, Paris, Liverpool, Tehran, Turin, Berlin, Ankara, Cambridge, Jerusalem, and Barcelona; our reviewers from Amsterdam, Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Rome, Ankara, London, Çanakkale, Vancouver, Marburg, Tokyo, Durham, Istanbul, Leiden, Birmingham, and Göttingen. Among our published articles were studies of ancient Egyptian funerary literature, the relationship of Islamic to Roman law, the seasonal breeding patterns of sheep and goats in Mesopotamia, the reconstructed biography of a Babylonian physician traveling to Hattuša, animal-bone oracles from the Levant, and emerald mines in Roman Egypt. Our April issue also featured two important studies of early Qur'anic manuscripts and premiered a new and permanent Forum section of the journal featuring a critical dialogue between the author of one article and an invited panel of other scholars.

Some statistics to help illustrate the work of the journal: from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, *JNES* received 110 new article manuscripts submitted for consideration. Of them, the editors rejected 82, returned 11 to the authors for revision, have 7 under current review, and have accepted 10. (The journal's current acceptance rate thus stands at 9 percent.) 43 of the 110 manuscripts were sent out for review to 140 reviewers; in only one instance was a reviewer invited to read more than one manuscript (i.e., two). Of these 141 invitations to review, more than half (75) were sent to scholars at non-U.S. institutions (reflecting the international reach and standing of the journal), including colleagues working in Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, China, and Japan. Sixty-four full formal reviews were completed through our double-blind process, where the author remains anonymous to the reviewers and vice versa. The (often voluminous!) reviewer comments returned to authors provide invaluable critical feedback for revision even when manuscripts go on to be published elsewhere. Many University of Chicago colleagues contributed reviews and advice this year, both informally and formally: Fred Donner, Dennis Pardee, Martha Roth, Holly Shissler, Cornell Fleischer, Ahmed El Shamsy, Simeon Chavel, Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee, Brian Muhs, Sofía Torallas Tovar, Jeffrey Stackert, John Wee, Foy Scalf, Ray Johnson, Theo van den Hout, Hervé Reculeau, Frank Lewis, James Robinson, Emily Teeter, Chris Faraone, Phil Venticinque, Kate Morgan, Jean Evans, Kiersten Neumann, Bruce Williams, Morag Kersel, Luiza Osorio da Silva, and Ella Karev. We are grateful to them and to all our reviewers, without whom the work of the journal could simply not be accomplished.

The number of people and range of expertise it takes to produce *JNES* tells us something about why and how it differs from other journals. It is true that the journal is a *grand dame* (at the ripe young age of 138), with prestige and genealogy and so forth. But the Chicago imprimatur doesn't exist for ivory-tower reputation (alone): it exists because *JNES* so energetically continues its work as one of the last great area-studies journals with a generalist outlook. It is not a journal specializing in Islamic law, cuneiform literature, landscape archaeology, or any one subject area; nor does it specialize in the prehistoric, ancient, or medieval period alone. Instead, *JNES* embraces all these disciplines and epochs and, in a day and age of specialization, continues to strive to bring a diversity

of scholars and studies into conversation with each other. For all these reasons, the work we publish must both make important new research contributions *and* communicate findings to scholars working in other and allied fields of study. So we do not and cannot rely on an editorial board only of insiders—of four or six or eight decision-makers. Instead, we rely on the entire world-community of scholarship: to evaluate and critique, but mostly to connect.
