

EDITORIAL

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Dr Abdulmir Al-Hamdani earlier this year, and bitter indeed that this issue of *Iraq* contains both his obituary and an article co-authored by him. Amir was an extraordinary colleague and friend to so many, with a deep love for the heritage of Iraq and a strong vision for its protection and future management. He will be very much missed.

This year's issue contains several larger articles dealing with new archaeological work in South Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and research in both regions is clearly thriving. These articles appear alongside a number of smaller pieces dealing with philological matters, publishing or re-publishing cuneiform tablets from the Fara period up until the Neo-Babylonian era. As usual and fitting for this journal, some of these are currently housed in the British Museum, while others continue themes and histories that have previously appeared in the journal. We are also pleased to publish articles on social and religious history from the 3rd through to the first millennia BC.

We have decided to raise our word-limit for articles submitted to *Iraq* to 15,000 words, particularly (but not exclusively) to support publication of large multi-scale archaeological projects. Hopefully this will encourage authors to feel more confident submitting longer articles, although we have recently unfortunately had to turn down several excellent pieces that were well in excess of this limit.

The Editorial Board and the BISI Council have recently been debating our Open Access policy. Currently we are a subscription-only journal. The question is whether to remain as such, which means there is no possibility for publishing Open Access in this journal, or to pursue Open Access options. A hybrid Open Access route would mean that some articles could be published Open Access and others would be viewable by subscription only, while a full Gold Open Access would mean all articles would need to be published freely accessible. We would all prefer the last option on principle, but this is extremely expensive: on average across the sector it costs £2,500 to publish an article with Gold Open Access. The hybrid route, however, means that only those authors or institutions that can afford it will be able to publish Open Access, while others will not. This results in an unequal treatment which is clearly weighted against financially poorer people, institutions, and countries. On the other hand, the more Open Access publications there are, the better it is for knowledge all round, and it is especially important that readers in the countries of the Middle East where archaeological research is undertaken have access to the results of that research for free. Hopefully we will be able to reach a clear position on the way forward in this discussion soon.

Thanks are due as usual to Saadi al-Timimi for translating abstracts into Arabic, and to Rana Zaher for further Arabic-language advice. We are also very grateful to our anonymous peer reviewers who give their time for free to improve submitted articles and help us make editorial decisions; to the rest of the Editorial Board for their time in discussing matters of editorial policy as well as individual cases from the perspectives of their expertise; to Ali Khadr, executive officer at BISI, for keeping things running and being a communications lynchpin to other parts of the organisation; and to Craig Baxter and Olivia Hassall at CUP.

AUGUSTA MCMAHON AND MARK WEEDEN