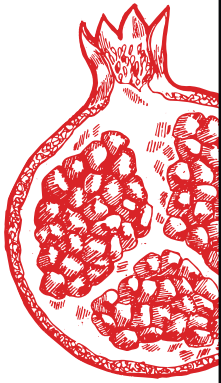
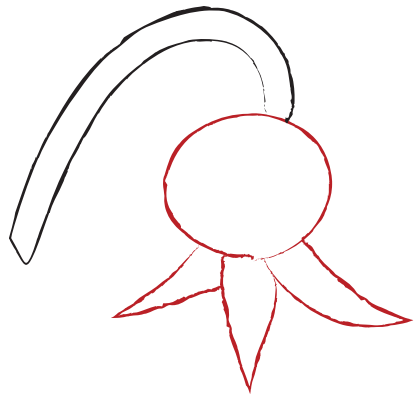


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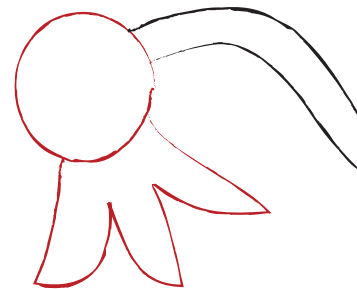


AABNER

ADVANCES IN ANCIENT BIBLICAL
AND NEAR EASTERN RESEARCH



*Inaugural Issue:
Conceptualizing
the Divine in the
Levant and
Mesopotamia*



EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK





AABNER

ADVANCES IN ANCIENT BIBLICAL
AND NEAR EASTERN RESEARCH

INAUGURAL AABNER EDITORIAL

The editors-in-chief:

Izaak J. de Hulster, Valérie Nicolet,

Ronit Nikolsky, Jason M. Silverman

Source: *Advances in Ancient, Biblical, and Near Eastern Research*
1, no. 1 (Spring, 2021): 1–12

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and Jason M. Silverman, via a CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Abstract

We, the founding editors-in-chief, describe our motivations, goals, and editorial principles for launching the new open access, forum peer-review journal, *AABNER*.

Nous, l'équipe de rédaction en chef initiale, présentons nos motivations, buts et principes éditoriaux pour le lancement de la nouvelle revue *AABNER*, une revue "open access," basée sur un système de "forum peer-review."



Wir als Gründungsmitglieder und Chefredaktion erläutern unsere Beweggründe und Ziele sowie die redaktionellen Prinzipien der neu gegründeten, auf ‚Forum-Peer-Review‘ basierenden Open-Access Zeitschrift *AABNER*.



Source: *Advances in Ancient, Biblical, and Near Eastern Research*
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INAUGURAL AABNER EDITORIAL

The editors-in-chief:

Izaak J. de Hulster, Valérie Nicolet,

Ronit Nikolsky, and Jason M. Silverman



Introduction

This is the first issue of the new journal, *Advances in Ancient, Biblical, and Near Eastern Research* (AABNER). Along with an increasing number of collaborators, we have founded this new journal to address some pressing problems in the fields of study related to the ancient Mediterranean, Near East, Bible, and their reception. Two key features of this journal make it different from the crowd of journals already in the field: 1) being diamond open access and 2) replacing the traditional double-blind peer review with forum peer-review, a newer and more transparent method of reviewing submissions. It is our opinion that these two features address concerns within the field, on which we elaborate below.

Origins of the Journal

Work on this journal began within the European Association of Biblical Studies, c. 2014, as part of a discussion concerning ways to actualize the society's ethos of equality, non-discrimination, and rigorous academic interdisciplinarity. As many academic societies have journals, one affiliated with the EABS was a logical idea to consider. Meanwhile, Martin Faßnacht suggested the possibility to collaborate in publishing an open access journal, for which the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen provides the technical environment of hosting and connecting it with its "Index Theologicus." We quickly came to the realization, however, that the structure of the academic field itself requires reform, and that academic publishing is integral to the structure of the field. And so we got to work, to build a journal that is open access, interdisciplinary, and aware of power imbalances in the field of Biblical Studies broadly understood. Part of these imbalances concern who gets to be a voice in the discussion, but also what constitutes "the field." *AABNER* is committed to diversity of voices *in* the field, but also to working with a broader definition of the field, one which allows for methodological diversity and insures that various literary corpuses, geographical, and cultural contexts are taken into account, alongside a broad time span – not only Biblical Studies, but also the ancient Near East, Classics, and their receptions.



Currently, the journal is owned by a non-profit association in France, *Ami•e•s de la Revue Advances in Ancient, Biblical and Near Eastern Research (A.AABNER)*,¹ and it has benefited from start-up funding from the Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions (CSTT) and the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires (ANEE).² The necessary infrastructural support for a diamond Open access journal comes from the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen. We are indebted to various people that have participated and still participate in supporting the journal in various ways. It is the pleasure of a first issue to have the opportunity to thank them by name here:

¹ The editors-in-chief have formed this association for the purposes of launching the journal.

² Both funded by the Academy of Finland. PI of CSTT is Martti Nissinen (also one of the Advisory Board members), and the PI of ANEE is Saana Svärd.

- Our inaugural advisory board members – Professors Martti Nissinen, Catherine Hezser, Jorunn Økland, Hugh Pyper, Kristin De Troyer, and Risto Uro – for their advice and support in launching this journal. We look forward to continuing to work together.
- Martin Faßnacht, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, director of the IxTheo-Open-Journal project there, and Axel Braun, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, OJS technical support, for their vital infrastructural support.
- Shani Tzoref, an editor-in-chief 2018–2019, for her enthusiasm and work in building the editorial community.
- Martti Nissinen, once more for his ongoing encouragement and for his role in providing start-up funding.
- George Brooke and Outi Lehtipuu, for their encouragement and efforts towards establishing collaboration with the EABS.
- Mélissa Tanguy, designer, for designing the *AABNER* logo and journal template.
- Duncan Burns, our professional copy-editor and type-setter, for his excellent work and understanding concerning delays.



It is also with joy that we thank the EABS membership for their support, as well as those colleagues who joined the editorial team as field editors (listed on the website) and have otherwise shown interest in the project and demonstrated their support by acting as forum reviewers. It is exciting to see that many in the field are ready to see a new journal and welcome our editorial guidelines as necessary in the current setting. We are still recruiting people for our forum, and will seek to reach out to people inside the EABS and more widely, partly through EABS contacts but also worldwide.

Diamond Open Access

AABNER is a diamond open access journal, meaning that it is free for the author and free to the reader; copyright for published articles remains with the author (though the author must grant *AABNER* and its host, Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, the right to publish and

distribute it). We have chosen to use a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license, which allows authors to republish their own material, provided they cite its original publication in this journal.

Open Access is increasingly becoming a requirement for researchers, especially in Europe; many funders, including the ERC (<https://erc.europa.eu/managing-project/open-access>), make it incumbent upon grantees, and many universities are doing the same. This means that for an increasing number of scholars, open access publishing is mandatory rather than a choice; yet, the suitable venues for publication within ancient Near East fields remain limited and unable to handle such large demand. This alone requires some sort of rectification.³ Certain forms of open access, the formerly so-called Gold, Green, and Hybrid Open Access systems⁴ each have problems.



So-called Gold Open Access, or those publishers that require a fee for authors to publish (so-called Article Processing Charges or APCs) are currently the majority. However, the trend towards APCs for publishing open access distorts the field even more than traditional publishing, by favoring well-endowed research centers over scholars at smaller institutions, independent scholars, and scholars in poorer countries. These charges are often exorbitant, taxing the resources of libraries and scholars, at times lining the pockets of for-profit publishers. Hybrid models, where a subscription journal charges APCs, is even worse – essentially making institutions pay twice for the same content. The so-called Green option, whereby scholars post a prior version of their publication is unsatisfactory, as it complicates citation, increases versions, eliminates the value of proper review and copy-editing, and is often hidden on poorly ranked institutional repositories, making it hard to find.

Despite these problems, the advantages of open access are plain to see. Open Access articles often reach wider audiences and receive more citations. By eliminating a paywall, research becomes available to independent scholars, scholars outside wealthier countries, and

³ The EABS organized a panel discussion concerning these issues in the Warsaw meeting, 2019. For various options, cf. Cohen et al. 2013..

⁴ SHERPA/RoMEO, however, have now retired these classifications (<https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/about.html>).

to the general public. Open Access obviously also reduces the strain on library budgets. Further, since journals such as this one are born digitally, they are much easier to archive permanently. Thus a move towards Diamond Open Access publishing is also a move towards a more egalitarian scholarly discourse, one that need not unduly privilege wealthier researchers and institutions.

AABNER is Diamond Open Access and non-profit. It does not charge readers, authors, or libraries for submission or access to articles or issues. This does *not* mean it has no production costs. The infrastructure provided by existing projects (Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Fachinformationsdienst (FID) Theologie; <https://ixtheo.de> and the Center for Open Science; <https://www.cos.io>) covers the majority of publishing, distribution, and archiving costs. *AABNER* still incurs the regular production costs of professional copy-editing and typesetting. We are still working on developing a sustainable, long-term funding solution that will nevertheless not burden authors or readers.

AABNER articles are hosted and archived in the OJS of the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen and additionally on SocArXiv.org. Authors and readers therefore need not worry that a glitch in a computer server or a problem with the website will make the journal issues disappear. The authors are also encouraged to upload their articles on their personal websites and their university repositories. Soon the journal issues will also be available via print-on-demand, so libraries may place issues on their shelves and scholars who need print editions for tenure applications may present bound versions of their *AABNER* articles.



Forum Peer-review

AABNER is a peer-reviewed journal, but unlike any other journal in related fields, it uses a system of forum peer-review – for details, please see the subsequent editorial explicitly on this. We hope it will prove to be fairer, faster, and more rigorous than double-blind peer review can be.

Editorial Concerns

AABNER seeks to address some of the systemic problems present in academic research. It elaborates a model that is cooperative and community-oriented, with a concern for inclusivity and interdisciplinary. While we acknowledge that these keywords are often paid lip-service by the guild, we are convinced that the forum review model allows us to integrate a diversity of voices and methodologies in *AABNER*'s issues. We are committed to publishing both thematic issues which allow specialized perspectives on a problem, but also to having strong *varia* issues, to display the diversity of the field. The forum review model also aims to create an environment that is supportive of daring, unaffiliated scholars with innovative ideas which are out of the box and academically rigorous. We hope to embody ways of working together as a community, where authors benefit from the critical yet constructive engagement of their peers who take into account various perspectives and fields. This can also include practices of multi-authorship and encourages scholars at all stages of their career to submit articles. This implies that we are providing a non-discriminatory environment that actively seeks to include authors, editors, and reviewers representing human diversity in terms of gender, age, identity, race, health status, national origin, relationship status, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religion. Thus we want to foster being an inclusive community for the community.



Interdisciplinarity

We welcome and encourage new and innovative research approaches to the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean material and its reception, as well as interdisciplinary approaches. While focusing on rigorous academic approaches, we want to encourage the bridging of different disciplinary fields. The journal also embodies this interdisciplinarity in including a variety of combinations of approaches and topics, for example in thematic issues. We resist the temptation of the humanities to splinter into many small specialized fields. This still allows space for specialized contributions by including them within this broader context.

Communal Integrity

AABNER endeavors to build a community with integrity. We expect participants in the journal, both journal staff as well as authors, to conduct themselves as responsible members of society. This means that aspects outside academic content, such as citation practices and interpersonal behavior, require careful consideration. We particularly have in mind serious issues that impact the integrity of the community, such as harassment, racism, and felony convictions. As an academic community, we must learn to deal with such issues seriously, without devolving into mere rumor mills or populist shaming. These are complex issues and they cannot be resolved quickly and in a general manner. They demand case-by-case consideration. However, we also are convinced that we need to take up this discussion in the journal and we are planning to publish a thematic issue discussing these ethical problems, such as the citation of convicted scholars, rumors, etc. In doing so, we hope to contribute to healthier academic communities.



Editorial Principles of the Journal

AABNER intends to be both high quality and innovative, thus the editorial policy strives to balance academic merit and methodological rigor with methodological innovation and novelty. We feel that two problems need to be addressed. On the one hand, some longer-established venues can be susceptible to “conservatism” in regards to topics and methodologies, due to the nature of the old model of peer review: typically, reviews are done by older, well-established scholars, who are more familiar with older paradigms and sometimes defensive of their own scholarship. On the other hand, academic work recently has been developed in important and meaningful ways in group projects. While the value of this production is clear, research that does not fit in the hierarchical academic networks might be ignored. This can lead to a narrowing of the variety of topics: similar subjects and methods are repeated endlessly, erasing other questions and other approaches. The journal hopes to rectify these problems and increase opportunities for a wider set of scholars, including junior scholars and independent researchers, using innovative, relatively untested methodologies, without surrendering over-all quality. A transparent review process

facilitates this: all reviewers can see all the reviews, and discuss and negotiate arguments for accepting or rejecting an article. Below we list the principles by which we strive to assess all submissions to the journal.

Academic merit. Academic merit largely consists of four things: knowledge of the relevant material, critical acumen in its analysis, awareness of relevant literature, and the positing of new questions and/or answers. The editors will ensure that all published articles fulfill these criteria.

Methodological innovation. Vibrant scholarship progresses not only through the application of tried methodologies, but in the development, refinement, and application of new ones. The editors will seek to publish articles which attempt to create or refine methodologies more than ones that rehearse older methodologies.

Methodological rigor. A methodology is useless if it is not utilized in an appropriate manner, extent, or context. The editors will ensure that methodologies used in articles are appropriately justified, adapted for the article's stated aims, and thoroughly applied as appropriate.

Topical importance. Not all important topics are “trendy.” The editors will seek to evaluate the relevance of an article on the inherent value of the topic chosen rather than on the popularity of the topic at the time of publication. Moreover, by retaining a broader disciplinary scope than many journals, the journal will be able to promote discussion across artificial disciplinary boundaries more easily. For example, topics related to imperialism are just as relevant to the Hebrew Bible as the New Testament, the Talmud, Gilgamesh, and the later receptions of these texts. Keeping the scope broad will therefore enable themed issues across traditional subfield boundaries.

Topical novelty. The above criterion means that the editors will also attempt to prioritize new topics of interest where possible.

Transparent peer review. There are numerous critiques of the double-blind peer review system, not least of which is the fact that in small fields anonymity is often not possible. The journal therefore follows the lead of some of the natural sciences in making the process of review more transparent and open (see the discussion of forum review in the subsequent editorial).



Editorial discretion. Since studies have shown that truly novel and innovative research has difficulty in getting funded or published, the editors will have the discretion to choose risky publications that are nevertheless ground-breaking and innovative, in the understanding that they will generate discussion and debate.

Ethics. The journal is committed to the highest ethical standards for its publications. For this reason, the journal will not accept for publication any works which have been published previously, plagiarize material, or falsify evidence. Any article which is found to have done so after publication will be withdrawn. The journal also will not publish post-1972 unprovenanced materials for the first time.⁵ Previously published unprovenanced materials, if cited, should be flagged as such.

Onwards and Upwards!

Thankful for all the various kinds of support, tried and tested by setbacks, we are glad to present to you the first issue of *AABNER*. In light of the challenges that there are in founding a new journal, we have shared our reasons for our endeavor and express our hope and confidence that this new journal will grow further into a community effort, as a Diamond Open Access journal can only function as a community service for and by the academic (and wider) community. For years the seed has been growing and, with this issue, the seedling sees the light and awaits different kinds of communal care (input) in order to flourish and serve the community.

Above we have sketched how *AABNER* grew as a European initiative – although the editors-in-chief by academic affiliation reflect these roots, their backgrounds, networks, and activities go much beyond this; moreover, *AABNER*'s group of field editors and forum members shows an even larger diversity.

⁵ See the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>. Both ASOR and SBL have the same policy, albeit they have a so-called Cuneiform exception that we do not have. ASOR: <http://www.asor.org/about-asor/policies/policy-on-professional-conduct/>; SBL: https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SBL-Artifacts-Policy_20160903.pdf



There are different ways for you to join *AABNER* (aabner.org) in its service for the academic community:

- Submit an article or idea for a thematic issue;
- Offer your expertise for the review forum;
- Donate;
- Discuss with your institution's library possibilities for supporting the infrastructure via cataloguing or donation;
- Read, share, and cite the articles published herein.

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