

Foreword

In the last eighteen years, *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Studies* (JAAS) has established itself as one of the most prestigious publications in the modern history of the Assyrians. It has been slowly, but steadily promoting scholarly studies, cultivating genuine interest in the Syriac language and literature and building national and cultural unity among all Syriac-speaking people embodied in the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Surianis and Maronites. Our national unity is a valued goal that JAAS espouses and strives to attain through the promotion of knowledge and the pursuit of a more objective assessment of our past civilization and a more realistic understanding of our future.

As an indicator of JAAS' qualitative progress as a research tool and a medium of openness to international circles, its editorial board had decided to dedicate some of its issues in honor of some international scholars who have spent long years documenting the civilizational achievements of our people and defending our historical identity as an ancient people of the Middle East. The first issue of its 16th volume was dedicated to Professor Simo Parpola of Helsinki University, Finland for maintaining a very constructive rapport with the Assyrian people and defending their historical, ethnic and national identity. Parpola's recent article 'Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today' is the most needed scholarly and scientific evidence to the continuity of the Assyrian history and the unity of all Aramaic-speakers at a time when such evidence is the most needed.

This issue of JAAS is proudly dedicated to Professor Sebastian P. Brock of the Oriental Institute, Oxford University. The decision, thus far, to honor Professors Parpola and Brock in this symbolic fashion has not been arbitrary from JAAS' perspective. The contributions of each of these two scholars to our history, language and culture are, in essence, complementary in nature. Parpola's focus is primarily on our pre-Christianity era, whereas that of Brock is on the post-Christianity one.

Professor Brock is one of the most distinguished scholars in the world who has devoted his research and scholarship to the language, culture, religion and history of the Syriac-speaking people. If any Syriac-speaker wants to know more about the religious, linguistic, cultural and historical connection of his ancestors to that of the Greeks, Romans and Arabs, he/she should rather consult Professor Brock's works. Every native speaker of Syriac— whether Chaldean, Assyrian, Suryani or Maronite— and every international scholar interested in the civilization and history of the Syriac-speakers is in deep debt to Sebastian Brock for his prestigious scholarly works. His works are invaluable for the understanding and appreciation of the contributions of our ancestors to human civilization, in general, and the Middle East civilization, in particular.

JAAS' editorial board is extremely delighted to dedicate this issue to Professor Brock; in fact, it is an honor to do so. This dedication is only a small token of appreciation to a prominent scholar. JAAS also thanks our colleague Dr. George Kiraz for writing an introductory note on Professor Brock's life and

works. Readers are advised to read Dr. Kiraz's introduction thoroughly prior to reading Professor Brock's three very significant and impressive articles. The introduction does not only tell you how great of a scholar Brock is, but also how humble and devoted he is. It is humility and devotion that make a scholar more venerable.

Dear readers, we hope you will enjoy reading Professor Brock's contributions to this issue. *Also, please, maintain your support for JAAS to enable us to serve you in the best way possible.*

Editorial Board