

# New Perspectives on Integrative Anthropology

## Fall 2024 Speaker Series

### *When the Margins Weren't Marginal: Kites, Wheels, and Houses in the Black Desert of Jordan*

Once viewed as a hiatus, the Late Neolithic period of the southern Levant was often neglected, despite the immediate connection to the “collapse” of the previous Pre-Pottery Neolithic (B) system in the early 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (c. 6,800 cal BC). This was particularly true in the arid and hyper-arid regions beyond the arable lands, virtually uninvestigated by archaeologists until the 1980s and 1990s. In this arid zone, the Black Desert of eastern Jordan or “Land of Conjecture” to the royal aviators flying over in the early 20<sup>th</sup> c., is increasingly coming into focus. Rather than a marginal zone with only temporary and ephemeral human visits, recent field investigations demonstrate the existence of thousands of structures stretching across the broken landscape, from substantial stone buildings to the enigmatic ‘wheels’ and the better known ‘desert kites’. The thousands of linked desert kites – individual animal traps sometimes extending kilometers – functioned as Neolithic infrastructure stretching from Syria to Saudi Arabia. The construction of hunting infrastructure on such a substantial landscape scale required an on-going, extensive, and organized labor investment, perhaps creating demarcation of the land. As people adopted new technologies and intensified subsistence strategies, the construction and use of these traps indicate a major shift in pre-urban human manipulation of the landscape, with broader ramifications to social interactions and interregional contacts.

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**Friday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> 2:30-4:30pm**  
**278 Corbett Family Hall**