



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Role of Kites in the Neolithic Desert Cultures of Southwest Asia

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Abstract

Desert kites are communal game traps comprised of drive lanes and containment structures that were used to harvest herds of gazelle, onagers and perhaps other species, in the arid environments of Southwest Asia. Currently, there are more than 6,000 known kites, mostly through the study of satellite images. The oldest, in Jordan, were dated to the 9th millennium cal B.C., and Neolithic dates are also assigned to other kites in Jordan, Syria and the Negev. The kites vary substantially in their settings, shape and size. These differences are attributed to environmental conditions, to the target species, and to the relevant Neolithic cultures. Kites were commonly studied independent of their cultural context, although this is changing in recent years. Here we discuss a long-debated issue: what was the kites' role in the economy of the desert Neolithic cultures and if and how were they integrated in the ritual sphere. Through the study of the mundane and the spiritual realms, we also address the social aspects of communal hunts in Southwest Asia.

Keywords

Desert Neolithic, Communal hunting, Kite construction, Trade

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