

"New Perspective on Agricultural Origins in the Near East"



Melinda A. Zeder

**Senior Research Scientist and Curator of Old World Archaeology
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution**

The domestication of plants and animals and the emergence of agricultural economies based on domesticates has been an enduring area of inquiry in near Eastern archaeology for 60 years or more. The past decade has seen remarkable advances in analytical methods and in our general understanding of process of domestication and how to track it in the archaeological record that have radically transformed our understanding of how, when, where, and even why domestication and agriculture developed in this region. This lecture examines how these advances have changed our understanding of this major transition and explores some of the directions for future research.

Melinda Zeder is a Senior Research Scientist and Curator of Old World Archaeology in the Department of Anthropology of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Zeder received her PhD from the University of Michigan in 1985. She came to the Smithsonian in 1981 as a pre-doctoral fellow, was a Smithsonian Research Associate from 1982 until 1989, Deputy Chair of the Smithsonian's Department of Anthropology from 1989 to 1992, and in 1992 assumed the position of a research scientist in the Archaeobiology Program (now the Program in Human ecology and Archaeobiology), which she directed from 2002 to 2010.

*Her research interests include the domestication of animals, the social and environmental implications of early agriculture in the ancient Near East, and the development of specialized subsistence economies in early complex societies. She is also interested in the intersection of archaeology and genetics in documenting the domestication of plant and animal species. She has worked in Iran, Israel, Turkey, and most recently in Syria. She is the author of the book *Feeding Cities: Specialized Animal Economy in the Ancient Near East* and the lead editor of the 2006 book *Documenting Domestication: New Genetic and Archaeological Paradigms*.*

Monday

May 13, 2013, 3:15-5:00 pm

Conference Room, Building 50, Room 51A

ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM