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Intro Matter

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Preface

Reflecting trends in ecological anthropology as a whole, the Georgia Journal of Ecological Anthropology continues to grow and mature. I recently had the privilege of organizing a session for the American Anthropological Association meetings in Washington, DC entitled “What’s New in the New Ecological Anthropology: Defining Future Approaches.” This session showcased the wide array of approaches that exemplify a growing interest in understanding human ecosystems in all their diversity and complexity. While the title was admittedly propaganda (in the original sense of the word (i.e. to promote), there is in fact a revitalization taking place within ecological anthropology driven by a new generation of scholars.

In large part, the near and not-so-near future of ecological anthropology will be defined by theoretical and methodological innovations that are currently taking place. For this new ecological anthropology to succeed it will have to avoid engaging in hype and blather, but rather utilize previous inquiries in an implicitly transgenerational approach, while at the same time crossing and transcending disciplinary boundaries. As Abel notes in his contribution, anthropology needs to embrace complexity, engage in, learn from and also contribute to other disciplines. The papers presented herein are in many ways representative of this “new” ecological anthropology. They demonstrate the applicability of ecological approaches across the space/time matrix and throughout the four subfields—for example, Keyes’ paper in anthropological linguistics and Zarger’s paper in archaeology.

This issue also serves as historical documentation of a theoretical approach at the University of Georgia called information ecology. An early attempt within this framework is presented in this volume by Etheridge and originally dates to 1993. Some of the formative concepts and ideas were subsequently picked up and reworked by Roberts and Zarger during 1997, and also appear within this volume.

As the field of ecological anthropology continues to expand its practitioners need to avoid succumbing to the security of reductionism and commit to holism, not only with regard to the research questions they ask, but also in the approach they utilize to answer them. In the meantime, the Georgia Journal of Ecological Anthropology will continue to provide a forum for innovative and, at times, controversial hypotheses and inquiries.

John R. Stepp, Editor

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