

## BOOK REVIEW



*Foragers and Farmers of the Northern Kayenta Region: Excavations along the Navajo Mountain Road*, by Phil R. Geib. 430 pp., 167 figures, Index, References Cited. University of Utah Press. 2011. \$70.00 (Hardback). ISBN 978-1-60781-003-2.

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Phil Geib has crafted an engaging and data-intense book that summarizes the Navajo Nation Archaeology Department's (NNAD) work in the 1990s on the N16 road right-of-way in northeastern Arizona. Through seven chapters, Geib describes and encapsulates excavations at the thirty-three sites that lay wholly or partially within the road right-of-way. He also includes discussion of Atlatl Rock Cave, an important Archaic site near N16 on the Rainbow Plateau, which was tested with additional funding. Chapter one introduces the project and provides a discussion of general methodology. In chapter two, Geib summarizes the Kayenta-Anasazi region, its archaeology, and its environmental background. Chapter three discusses each of the N16 sites excavated and includes many maps and figures. Chapter four provides a summary and overview of Archaic sites on the project; chapter five does the same for Basketmaker II sites. Chapter six interprets Pueblo era sites along the N16 road. Finally, chapter seven summarizes and offers conclusions on the research.

Reading the book, I was impressed with Geib's ability to compress the results and interpretations from a complicated, large, data recovery project reported in multiple volumes into a single, well-written, and organized text. Much of this success can be attributed to the skillful use of many figures and tables. Geib provides a prodigious amount of data in the book within only 430 pages. One minor note about the figures: some simply combine too much information into a single package (e.g., Figure 6.21), reducing the understandability of the figure. Nevertheless, this does not take away from Geib's chief accomplishment in the book—presenting volumes worth of data in a relatively compact and highly readable format.

*Foragers and Farmers* packs a punch with its discussion of the Archaic and Basketmaker II period sites along the N16 road. These periods are truly Geib's forte, and the detailed descriptions and interpretations offered clearly illustrate this strength. For example, the large number of radiocarbon dates generated dur-

ing the project allow for refinement in the Archaic sequence and a clear initiation of the Basketmaker II period at 400 BC. Geib is fortunate that the record of the Rainbow Plateau (which the N16 road traverses) allows for an easy separation of late Archaic remains from early Basketmaker II. The simple presence of corn—dated as early as 400 BC in the area—allows him to divide these periods. Certainly some archaeologists would disagree with Geib that the mere presence of corn should mark the beginning of the Basketmaker II period. Other locales in the northern Southwest show the presence of corn by 1000 BC, but this does not necessarily herald the Basketmaker II adaptation. Nevertheless, I agree with Geib that little beyond the presence of maize allows for separation of groups on the “Pueblo path” from the Archaic folks who merely incorporated corn into their annual round.

With Geib’s quite appropriate emphasis on non-typological approaches to the N16 archaeology, I find it surprising that he chose to follow the traditional and, to my mind, outdated approach that continues A. V. Kidder’s Basketmaker and Pueblo split. This approach groups Basketmaker II and III and considers the Pueblo I period to be the transitional period of the sequence. Basketmaker III remains are clearly more closely tied to Pueblo I than Basketmaker on the Rainbow Plateau and across the northern Southwest. The graphs on page 372, for example, would have been more informative with the Basketmaker III sites included.

Geib’s comparison of radiocarbon dating of wood versus sage is quite informative. On the N16 Project, sage was ultimately found to be less reliable than wood. The problems with “old wood” are well known in Southwest archaeology. Geib and his colleagues found similar problems with sage dating hundreds of years too early. Direct comparisons of wood and sage charcoal from the same features revealed older dates for sage in many cases. For me, this reinforces the need to be extremely careful in selecting plant materials for radiocarbon dating. Annual plants such as corn or native plants are the best choice.

Geib’s summary of Pueblo period sites on the N16 road is well done, even with a considerably smaller sample of data. Many of the Pueblo I–II sites produced data in line with prior research, particularly work associated with the mammoth Black Mesa Archaeological Project in the 1970s and ’80s. Geib and his colleagues address the ubiquitous problem of the “field house” in the Pueblo Southwest, revealing a more complex interpretation of these structures that belies a simple model. The N16 work also tracked the emergence of larger villages from smaller hamlets in the mid to late Pueblo III periods (ca. AD 1225–1275). One of the key contributions for the later periods is Geib’s series of graphs tracking population changes over time in the Kayenta region. These constitute the single best summary (along with the accompanying text) of Kayenta demography that I have read.

In sum, Phil Geib has made a significant contribution to the archaeology of northeastern Arizona. His work shows the considerable payoff from doggedly

pursuing publication of “gray” cultural resource management projects that often languish for various reasons—politics, restrictive policies, lack of funding, or just plain indifference. As a former NNAD project director who completed multiple projects across the northern Navajo Reservation in the 1990s, I understand these challenges and applaud Geib’s efforts. I have no doubt that the N16 project data and interpretations in this book will inform southwestern archaeology for many years to come.