

sought for instructional or training purposes. But for many other cultural resource colleagues, this volume would not directly apply to their work; they might find selected articles interesting, however. It is a well-produced, small “travelogue” volume that is truly “Anthropology Explored.”

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Archaeobiology

By Kristin D. Sobolik. *Archaeologist's Toolkit Vol. 5*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003; 139 pp., photographs, tables, notes, index; cloth \$69.00; paper \$24.95.



Sobolik's goal in writing this book is to describe specialties of archeobiology in terms of their history, goals, and recovery and analytic techniques.

Among these specialties are zooarcheology (the study of archeological faunal remains, including shell and bone) and archeobotany (the study of plant remains, including wood, seeds, pollen, and phytoliths). Along the way, Sobolik presents archeological site types, preservation factors, and case studies involving archeobiology.

From the outset, Sobolik emphasizes that there is no single, “right” way of undertaking archeobiological studies. She offers, instead, what she believes to be the “best and easiest ways” to interpret archeobiological remains, providing literature sources and diverse case studies largely, though not exclusively, drawn from projects she has worked on. This gives her readers an intimate portrait of the goals, processes, and results of projects. On this level, the book functions as a primer, which is its greatest strength.

On another level, however, the book pushes an agenda intended to persuade its readers that the future of archeobiology lies in its practitioners' abilities to insinuate themselves into the nascency of archeological cultural resource management (CRM) projects. Whether the reader agrees with Sobolik's argument, its inclusion does result in a book that tries to reach at least two distinct, and not necessarily compatible, audiences—archeologists and cultural resource managers. In the forward, the series editors suggest that “the book can stand alone as a reference work for archeologists in public agencies, private firms, and museums, and as a textbook and guidebook for classrooms and field settings.” This implies that the book is for archeologists who seek general information on archeobiology. But elsewhere, Sobolik seems to be addressing those who want to hire archeobiologists to help manage cultural resources. At times, the book develops into a polemic chastising both archeologists and archeobiologists—the former for not giving due respect to archeobiologists, the latter for not striving for positions that would warrant that respect. She writes—

if the archaeobiologist wants to be treated as purely a technician rather than a scientist, he or she can keep accepting boxes of bone and bags of soil, along with a paycheck... If, however, the archaeobiologist would like to contribute to the understanding of peoples and environments...he or she should get involved in all stages of the recovery process.

The call of archeobiologists to arms is most strongly declaimed under a heading entitled “The Role of CRM in the Development and Future of Archaeobiology.” Here Sobolik describes what archeobiologists should do and be, rather than what they do and are. Sobolik leaves the realm of instructor and enters that of advocate. She stresses CRM over non-CRM research as the future avenue for archeobiologists to pursue. Her reasoning is simple enough—there are more funded CRM projects. But she also suggests that analysis of plant and animal remains is “essential for any CRM project

and report," while non-CRM driven projects "do not legally need to recover, analyze, and interpret archaeological material." In actuality, neither type of project has such statutory requirements. Whether working on a CRM or pure research project, the principal investigator, not a statute or regulation, determines the need for archaeological analyses; it is he or she who argues the merits of the decision with the funding or review agency. Reviewing agencies have conducted and accepted thousands of federally mandated Section 100 survey and Section 106 excavation projects and uncounted archaeological mitigation projects, without requiring archaeological analyses.

Sobolik's rallying cry does serve to highlight some of the problems archaeologists face in teaming up on multidisciplinary projects and incorporating specialists (archaeobiological or otherwise). One such problem is determining the appropriate role for the specialist. Sobolik argues that specialists need to be in on the ground floor of archaeological projects if they are to provide archaeologists with the full weight of their insight. However, many projects simply do not require the specialist's full weight. While the book does well to inform CRM project managers of the need to incorporate archaeobiologists early and often, it would have benefited the reader to provide guidance under what conditions CRM projects do not need to entertain such involvement.

Continuing her advocacy, Sobolik encourages would-be archaeobiologists to become "scientists" rather than technicians. "Anyone can put in the hard work to become a technical expert in archaeobiology, but to become an archaeological scientist involves using botanical or faunal remains to answer broader-ranging questions." This view might help archaeobiologists in their individual career goals, but it does not serve archaeology well. Arguably, archaeology needs more trained technicians than what Sobolik terms scientists. Today it is nearly impossible to find a zooarchaeological technician to analyze samples that a project

archaeologist might usefully employ in interpreting a site or addressing a research question. While Sobolik argues that archaeologists need "biological experts," not mere technicians, to provide them with "potential insight and authority," the point of fact is that many archaeologists, while not specialized in archaeobiology, are certainly capable of interpreting the data the subdisciplines provide. Despite Sobolik's lament to the contrary, archaeobiologists have succeeded so well in gaining respect and faculty positions over the last 20 years, that few technicians (that is to say, those guys decried as "accepting boxes of bones...along with a paycheck") remain either unassociated with such faculty or on the market for hire.

Although not her primary focus, the author's persistent advocacy for developing the business and discipline of archaeobiology is the most fascinating aspect of the book—the issues raised deserve far more attention, but perhaps elsewhere. Most readers will likely gloss right over Sobolik's aggrandizing passages and concentrate on the instructional sections in the book. To supplement the book's contributions, readers may want to look at the various archaeological subdisciplines on the web and in more detailed books such as Elizabeth J. Reitz and Elizabeth S. Wing's *Zooarchaeology* and Deborah M. Pearsall's *Paleoethnobotany: A Handbook of Procedures*.¹

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1. Elizabeth J. Reitz and Elizabeth S. Wing, *Zooarchaeology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Deborah M. Pearsall, *Paleoethnobotany: A Handbook of Procedures* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2001).

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