

COFFEE AND ASSORTED BONES

July 29, 2011 Emily Lena Jones Day of Archaeology 2011, Environmental Archaeology, Museum Archaeology, Post Medieval, Science A.D., diet, Emily Jones, Navajo, Navajo Nation, Navajo people, Navajo tribe, New Mexico, protohistoric period, Southwestern US, subsistence, United States, zooarchaeological analysis

I'm starting off this morning in the lab, cup of coffee by my side, working with some borrowed museum collections. This picture shows what I'm looking at right now:



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These bones are from a site in northwestern New Mexico; the site was occupied (we estimate) around 1660 A.D., by historic Navajo (or Diné) peoples. This is just one of a suite of sites I'm examining, all Navajo-affiliated, and all from the 16th and 17th centuries. Most archaeologists think Athapaskan-speaking Native Americans (including the Navajo) entered the southwestern US in the 15th century, though some argue for earlier or later arrival. Early on, it seems, the Navajo were mostly hunter-gatherer, maybe with a little agriculture, but at some point they adopted sheepherding with great enthusiasm. I'm interested in learning about this transition in subsistence, which is why I'm analyzing the zooarchaeological remains from these sites.

So far, I've been really impressed with the diversity in subsistence strategy represented. Many of these sites seem to be evenly split between agriculture, hunting, and gathering of wild resources...and there are a few domestic sheep/goat sneaking in to the record in the 17th century, as well. Earlier sites seem to have been used for more activities than later ones; it seems like the later sites are more often either hunting-specific or agriculture-specific. I'll have to wait to see if this pattern holds up when I get to the statistical analysis!