

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Handbook of Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology*

REFERENCE: Morse, D., Duncan, J., and Stoutamire, J., Eds., *Handbook of Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology*, distributed by Bill's Bookstore, 107 South Copeland St., Tallahassee, FL 32304, 1983, 259 pages, \$10.95 (paper), \$16.95 (cloth).

When an investigation involves buried, or even scattered, human remains, archeological field methods are useful in recovering the remains, as well as reconstructing the exact circumstances of their deposition. Many forensic physical anthropologists have sufficient training (and inclination) to do their own archeology, while others prefer to call on colleagues for assistance in such cases. For several years, the editors have taught a course in forensic archeology and conducted various workshops on the subject. This handbook seems to have developed from these activities.

The contributors of this handbook detail the procedures necessary to seek, recover, and identify human remains, as well as analyze any pathology or damage that might be present in the remains, and to give an estimate of the time of death.

The three chapters on search and recovery techniques deal with bones buried or scattered on dry land or under water. These are followed by individual chapters devoted to osteology, identification, trauma and postmortem damage, time of death, evidence interpretation, and a discussion of a forensic anthropology course design. Three appendices are included on deterioration of textiles, paper, and plastics; deterioration of buried hair; and a computerized technique of facial profile reconstruction.

This book suffers from the lack of critical review and editorial control found in many self-published books. This is particularly reflected by the quality of many of the figures, especially in the chapter on identification, and the layout of photographs in the chapter on trauma. Correction of errors with "white out" in every individual copy might have been avoided as well.

As stated in the introduction, this book is intended as a supplement for regular university courses and for short-term workshops given to law enforcement investigators. This reviewer has some difficulty believing that courses of only a few days will train someone without previous archeological training to supervise adequately the excavation of buried bodies. If the object is to recover the remains and any objects found in the grave, then it might be sufficient. On the other hand, if the object is to recover all of the above and to interpret the grave profile and other evidence about the circumstances of burial, no one can replace the experienced archeologist. Indeed the use of such a person is recommended several times in the book, but the

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use of someone trained by a short course (two to five days) is offered as an alternative (pp. 2 and 21). Archeologists have a unflattering term for someone who digs a site to recover only the objects without contextual information. In all archeology, forensic and otherwise, considerable training (at least a full-time field school) should be required before one supervises independent excavations. Short workshops are best used to demonstrate what can be done, but, in the case of forensic archeology, cannot replace the properly trained professional archeologist.

Despite these and other faults, there is much to be recommended in this book. The chapter entitled, "Principles of Evidence Interpretation," contributed by Joseph H. Davis, is outstanding and should be required reading by all forensic anthropologists. Likewise, the appendix on deterioration of scene evidence (textiles, paper, and plastics), by Dan Morse, has been eagerly awaited by many of us and will be quite useful. The clothing size tables will also be widely used for weight estimates of skeletal remains found with articles of clothing. This reviewer has already reduced these to a few regression formulae for ready use.

The remainder of the chapters are clear and applicable. This book will undoubtedly be used as a text in many beginning level courses, as well as a sourcebook for some very worthwhile tables. The course outline presented here will serve as a model for many courses, books, and research in the future. This book, and the courses from which it developed, must be viewed as valuable pioneering efforts in the young field of forensic archeology and received by many of us with gratitude.