

BOOK REVIEW

Madeleine J. Hinkes,¹ *Ph.D.*

A Review of A Field Guide for Human Skeletal Identification

REFERENCE: Bennett, K. A., *A Field Guide for Human Skeletal Identification*, Charles C Thomas, 2600 South First, Springfield, IL 62794-9265, 87 pp., \$20.75.

The title of this book exactly describes its contents. Bennett has assembled a collection of 55 tables in 4 areas of skeletal identification, with the intention of providing "easy access to numerical information while in the field." It is an unfortunate fact of forensic science life that our examinations often take place under suboptimal conditions: out of doors, in poorly equipped facilities, under time constraints, away from labs and reference materials. This manual should make examinations easier under these circumstances.

The tables are divided into four subject areas: three tables of Metric Data for the Attribution of Ethnic Affiliation; twelve tables of Non-Metric and Metric Data for the Attribution of Sex; twenty-six tables of Non-Metric and Metric Data for the Estimation of Age; fourteen tables of Equations and Tables for the Estimation of Stature. Footnotes with each table contain information on sample size and composition, and reference the original source of the table. Bennett is careful to note that all tables are based on data derived from U.S. populations and may not apply to other populations. In addition, no tables of discriminant functions developed on prehistoric American Indians are included. A working knowledge of forensic anthropology is assumed, as this guide does not come with instructions on how to use the information contained in the tables.

My evaluation of this book is based on its applicability to my own work, which is not too different from that of other forensic anthropologists. For the most part, I work with skeletal remains in a lab environment, but occasionally I am called out to a current death incident, involving anywhere from 1 to over 200 individuals. Depending on the circumstances, the references I take with me include T. D. Stewart's *Personal Identification in Mass Disasters* [1], W. M. Krogman's *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine* [2], and a small atlas of anatomy. The purpose of this field guide is not to supplant these other references, but to put the vital data contained within into a single manageable format. In fact, 31 of the 55 tables are from *Personal Identification in Mass Disasters*, and include all the tables relevant to stature and macroscopic aging, which are the pages I use most often.

There are a few tables not included which I feel should have been. The standards for pubic aging of McKern and Stewart (males) and Gilbert and McKern (females) are included, but not those of Todd. I prefer to use Todd, and the recently developed Suchey and Brooks modified Todd six-phase system suggests that his may actually be the more accurate stan-

¹Physical anthropologist, U.S. Army Central Identification Lab, Fort Shafter, HI 96858-5480.

dards [3]. Nine pages devoted to the formation and resorption of three deciduous teeth could easily have been replaced by the single-paged and more comprehensive charts of Gustafson [4], Logan and Kronfeld [5], or Schour and Massler [6].

There is some duplication of tables on age evaluation of the medial clavicle and iliac crest: both the 1957 McKern and Stewart data and the 1985 Webb and Suchey data are included. The earlier tables cover just a 6-year age range, while the later data set covers ages 11 to 40 and is divided into male and female standards.

To be of general use, the field guide correctly places emphasis on sex, age, and stature, more so than on race. Determination of racial affinity is often qualitative, based on personal experience and familiarity with regional peculiarities.

In keeping with its role as a field guide, the book is thin enough to fit on a clipboard or in an instrument case, it is spiral-bound, and relatively inexpensive. The value of this manual is further enhanced by careful editing. I checked the tables with the original references and could find no errors. The tables are uncrowded and easy to read, set off nicely by the buff page color.

Bennett's field guide does fill a need for forensic anthropologists. I can leave my copy of Stewart back in the lab, although I will continue to carry along Krogman for its inspirational value. I will be supplementing the field guide with the latest data from Suchey and Brooks, the aforementioned dental charts, and the standards of racial determination which I have found most useful.

References

- [1] Stewart, T. D., *Personal Identification in Mass Disasters*, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1970.
- [2] Krogman, W. M., *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, IL, 1962.
- [3] Katz, D. and Suchey, J. M., "Age Determination of the Male Os Pubis," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Vol. 69, 1986, pp. 427-435.
- [4] Gustafson, G., "Chart: Schematic Representation of Tooth Formation and Eruption," in *Forensic Odontology*, American Elsevier, New York, 1966.
- [5] Logan, W. H. G. and Kronfeld, R., "Chart: Chronology of Human Dentition," *Journal of the American Dental Association*, Vol. 20, 1933, p. 379.
- [6] Schour, I. and Massler, M., "Chart: Development of the Human Dentition," American Dental Association, 1944.