

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Forensic Methods: Excavation for the Archaeologist and Investigator*

REFERENCE: Connor MA. Forensic methods: excavation for the archaeologist and investigator. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press, 2007.

Archaeological methodology has represented a long-term integral component of forensic anthropology and recovery initiatives, especially in regard to buried evidence. In recent years, the importance and recognition attributed to forensic archaeology techniques have been enhanced due to the increasing awareness of the value of incorporating archaeological perspective within recovery efforts and the specialization of those with advanced skills and training in this area. Considering these developments, publication of this new book is quite timely. The volume provides general summaries of the legal arena for archaeologists considering entry into forensic applications, as well as information about basic archaeological approaches for those considering the addition of archaeological perspective to their recovery initiatives. This well-written volume also provides considerable practical information about excavation procedures and broad coverage of the diverse methodology potentially involved.

The book begins with a discussion of forensic science aimed at archaeologists who might be considering such involvement. Basic information is provided about the nature of crime scenes, evidence management, chain of custody, court procedures, and related topics. Readers of *JFS* will find little new information here, but its inclusion is important to educate archaeologists on just what they are getting into if they decide to become involved in forensic investigations. Although the author provides thoughtful discussion about the importance of honesty and professionalism, I thought more emphasis would be useful on objectivity. Archaeologists entering the forensic arena for the first time should understand that their involvement is aimed at proper recovery and interpretation of

evidence, not to decide if individuals are guilty or innocent. The authors' summary statement 2 for Chapter 1 (p. 15), "the goal of most forensic work is to be able to try the guilty person in a court of law" does not convey this level of detachment and objectivity. Archaeologists who participate in forensic activity should understand that the evidence they gather may be either incriminating or exculpatory, but it must be interpreted in an objective and unbiased manner.

The follow-up Chapter 2 addresses the other end of the academic spectrum: informing forensic investigators about the nature of archaeology and what they can expect from inclusion of that perspective. Discussion includes a useful section on "Archaeological Language" that should enhance communication and understanding.

The remainder of the book (nine more chapters, an appendix, glossary, reference section, and index) provides rich detail on many aspects of fieldwork planning, mapping procedures, soil interpretation, approaches to surface finds, location of buried remains, excavation procedures, the nature of recovered evidence, the importance of documentation, and the definition and role of the forensic archaeologist. Included in this wealth of information is detail on different remote sensing methodology, discussion of approaches to the excavation of different contexts (e.g., standard graves, latrines, cisterns, landfills), and varied mapping procedures. Embedded within most chapters are useful summaries, glossaries of terms used, and suggested further reading. The text is supplemented with seven tables and 72 illustrations.

Although all readers with an interest in archaeological approaches to forensic situations will find useful information in this book, it likely will be of greatest benefit to those archaeologists who need to become aware of the unique nature of forensic applications and those nonanthropologists in the forensic field who are involved with recovery efforts.

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