

**BOOK REVIEW**

Krista E. Latham,<sup>1</sup> Ph.D.

## Review of: *Forensic Anthropology 2000 to 2010*

**REFERENCE:** Black S, Ferguson E. *Forensic anthropology 2000 to 2010*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011, 409 pp.

This book was written by undergraduate students at the University of Dundee, and supervised and edited by faculty and staff from the Centre for Anatomy and Human Identification at the same institution. The goals of this book are to summarize “the vast collection of international literature that has developed over the past decade” (back cover) and to be “an ideal starting point for advanced exploration” (back cover) of the areas addressed within the text. While this book does provide a robust list of references, it glosses over or fails to include several publications relevant to the field of forensic anthropology that have been produced in the last decade. As conveyed by Professor Black in her preface, the explanations in some of the chapters are simplistic in nature. However, the scope and purpose of the book do not necessarily allow for more in-depth discussions as it is a text geared toward undergraduate students written by undergraduate students. Overall, it is well-written, articulate, and robust considering the level of experience of its contributing authors and its intended audience.

All of the chapters focus on summarizing publications and research that have been conducted in the past 10 years, and many include references to seminal works conducted prior to 2000. The first four chapters address basic parameters of biological profile construction: age, sex, stature, and ancestry. Chapters 1 and 2 address age estimation in juveniles and adults. These chapters include references to a wide range of techniques that focus on both osteological and dental analyses. Chapter 3 focuses on sex determination from skeletal remains. It discusses the unreliability of sexing juvenile remains and summarizes various techniques used in sex determination of adult remains that utilize nearly every region of the body. Chapter 4 focuses on stature estimation and provides references to more traditional techniques, such as the Fully Method, as well as references to research that has been conducted over the past decade. Chapter 5 tackles issues of race and ancestry in a forensic context. It highlights the debate concerning the meaning and use of the word race, as well as its practical applications in aiding the identification process.

Chapter 6 considers the advantages and limitations of dental identifications, and highlights the debate regarding bite mark evidence. Chapter 7 focuses on skeletal trauma and provides a robust list of references spanning over 30 pages long. Yet, the authors suggest that trauma research has remained static over the past decade and call for more quantitative research rather than anecdotal case studies. Chapter 8 discusses common bone pathologies that might be relevant while conducting forensic anthropological case-work. Chapter 9 addresses forensic taphonomy and discusses the theoretical basis for taphonomic studies, as well as research that has been conducted in the past 10 years. This chapter appears overly pessimistic and critical of taphonomic applications in a forensic context at first glance, but goes on to suggest forensic anthropologists take this as a challenge to improve the scientific rigor of their studies rather than an insult. Chapter 10 provides a brief introduction to the benefits and limitations of different techniques used in comparative osteology. Chapter 11 deals with the identification of soft tissues and discusses how the hands, lips, and ears, among other human traits, can be used for identification purposes. The final chapter, Chapter 12, addresses recent research in forensic facial reconstruction. It addresses research regarding manual and automated reconstructions, and discusses the reliability and accuracy of the different techniques.

In conclusion, this book contains summaries of advancements that have occurred over the past decade, but no new research is proposed in the text. The chapters range in size, amount of information, and quality. However, the stated purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to the field of forensic anthropology for undergraduate students, and it does so nicely by providing simplified and easy to understand summaries of progress in the field over the past decade. The book stresses the need for a multidisciplinary approach to human identification and highlights the need to improve scientific rigor in forensic anthropology research by incorporating a quantitative approach to forensic anthropological investigations. This book will serve as a great reference text for laboratories conducting forensic osteological research and students entering the field of forensic anthropology.

<sup>1</sup>University of Indianapolis, Biology and Anthropology Departments, 1400 East Hanna Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46227.