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**Nicholas Márquez-Grant, Linda Fibiger (Editors), *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeological Human Remains and Legislation*, Routledge, 2011, 774 pages, ISBN 978-0-415-85940-0**

This edited volume is composed of chapters addressing the state of laws, protocol, and practical information for the treatment of archaeological human remains for more than 50 countries. It is an essential reference manual for those who deal with this complicated aspect of the archaeological record. As the issues surrounding the discovery, excavation, and subsequent treatment of human skeletons are extremely diverse in different cultures and political states, a reference material such as this volume is clearly necessary.

*About the Editors and Authors*

The editors of this volume represent two of the main career fields that require an in-depth knowledge of the treatment of archaeological human remains: forensic anthropology/ archaeology and osteoarchaeology (referred to as bioarchaeology in the United States). Nicholas Márquez-Grant is currently a Research Associate at the University of Oxford and a Lecturer in the Cranfield Forensic Institute of Cranfield University. His research interests include methods for determining age and sex in human skeletons, taphonomy, trauma, and the legal and ethical issues surrounding archaeological human remains. Linda Fibiger, currently a Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, is an osteoarchaeologist whose research focuses on violence in the European Neolithic. Both work extensively with human skeletal remains in varying spatial and temporal contexts.

The authors of the chapters within this volume represent a huge array of researchers and professionals from universities, research centers, museums, and government offices. Some

chapters are authored by researchers native to the country, culture, or region discussed, while others are written by foreign scholars whose research and familiarity with the legislation, protocol, and particulars of working with human remains in a specific place allow them to write detailed accounts.

### *Summary*

This handbook starts with an alphabetical list of all contributors and their affiliations (pp. xv-xxii) and a forward by Don Brothwell (pp. xxiii-xxiv), as well as notes and an introduction by the editors (pg. v and pp. xxvi-xxvii). The main body of the text is divided into two parts: part I includes 42 chapters each focused on a different European country (including Turkey and Russia despite their partially Asian land masses) (pp. 1-492), and part II with 18 other countries, continents, or territories representing the rest of the world (pp. 493-688). The book finishes with concluding remarks by the editors (pp. 689-690). Additionally, the volume includes four appendices addressing (1) British overseas territories (pp.691-700), (2) Gibraltar (pp. 701-710), (3) burials related to recent military conflicts with case studies from France (pp. 711-717), and (4) the Vatican City State (p. 718).

Each chapter, dedicated to one country or territory, addresses the treatment, legislation, protocol, and academic climate of disciplines that deal with the discovery and deposition of human skeletal remains. The chapter titles list the English version of the country or entity's name, followed by the name used internally. Each contributor was asked to answer six key questions in the body of their chapter, explaining the main legislation regarding human remains, what typically happens following the discovery of remains, the role of an osteologist or Physical Anthropologist at sites, whether or not remains can be sent outside the country for analyses, and country (or population) specific methods for determining age, sex and stature. Each chapter includes an introductory

section that discusses the history and current state of physical anthropology in the area (which often contains practical information on education, research, and training programs), a summary of legislation surrounding human remains, a description of any country/population-specific analytical methods, and a conclusion or discussion on the future for research in human skeletal studies. Most chapters also include a list of useful contacts including websites, institutions of high importance and government office contact information. Some chapters go further, providing additional information such as case studies to give a more in-depth view of the state of this subject in their context.

### *Review*

The creation of a reference manual that details the protocols, legislation, and practical information surrounding the discovery of human skeletal remains in different cultural contexts was without a doubt extremely necessary. One only has to look at the state of laws regarding this subject in countries such as the United States or Israel to know that it can be a very complicated and sensitive issue, requiring a solid understanding of how differently this aspect of the archaeological record is treated in different political states around the world. The editors embarked on a very difficult but imperative journey to pull this information together in one, easy-to-use reference manual that can (and should) be available in all major academic and public archaeology institutions.

The criticisms of this text are only a few, and all of them were addressed preemptively by the editors in the introduction, aware of the limitations to their final product. The first issue with this handbook is a lack of full standardization of the internal chapters. Working with over 130 different authors from many different backgrounds to produce the chapters, it is easy to see how true standardization would be nearly impossible. While all contributors were asked to address the

same key questions and structure their chapters similarly, there is considerable diversity. The editors mention in the introduction this was a challenge for them. One possible explanation for the diversity in length and detail is the infancy of physical anthropology in some countries in stark contrast to regions with well-developed academic disciplines.

In addition to chapter variety, it is clear by the number of countries included in part I (Europe) and the number included in part II (the rest of the world) that this book has a heavy emphasis on the European continent. A larger part II would provide an even more useful reference. That being said, the editors mention this short-coming and intend to acquire more chapters for part II in future editions. Difficulties in attaining these additional chapters, along with an original intent to focus solely on Europe are stated in the introduction as explanations for the dominance of European material. While the handbook could have just included part I and only discussed the legislation and protocol of human remain discoveries in European countries, the editors' attempt to create a global handbook is commendable and will prove increasingly useful as subsequent editions evolve.

Regardless of any short-comings, it is clear that this handbook should be a reference on every osteoarchaeologist's book shelf-next to Buikstra and Ubelaker's standards manual<sup>1</sup> or BABAO's guidelines paper<sup>2</sup>, Tim White et al.'s Human Osteology<sup>3</sup>, and other equally important reference texts used around the world. It is especially helpful for graduate students starting work on international projects, new academics hired by institutions in foreign countries, or individuals who work with international and multinational research agendas. Prior to starting a project that might uncover human remains anywhere, this text should be consulted. A new edition

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<sup>1</sup> Buikstra, Ubelaker 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Brickley, McKinley 2004.

<sup>3</sup> White et al. 2012.

of this handbook will hopefully be printed periodically, keeping researchers up-to-date on this information. Working with human remains is considerably different than other specializations in archaeology. This aspect of the archaeological record can be laden with an entirely different set of rules and issues. Entering into a project without understanding potential problems with political and legal bodies or reactions from the public if human remains are uncovered is irresponsible. Additionally, understanding curation techniques, deposition protocol, and the proper permission decorum is imperative if attempting to use archived material. References such as *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeological Human Remains and Legislation* assist researchers in applying the special attention to the study of human skeletal remains that is both necessary and critical.

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