

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *The Bioarchaeology of Children: Perspectives from Biological and Forensic Anthropology*

REFERENCE: Lewis ME. *The bioarchaeology of children: perspectives from biological and forensic anthropology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

The forensic analysis of children's remains routinely addresses many key issues relating to interpretations of antemortem abuse, cause and manner of death, disease, evidence of physiological stress, age at death and identification. This volume summarizes much of the vast scientific literature relevant to such methodology, pulling together information from such disparate fields as forensic anthropology, bioarchaeology, pediatrics, growth studies and related areas of human biology. The result is a very well written and readable volume that integrates the complex literature into a cohesive and informative work focusing specifically on children.

The initial two chapters examine the development of anthropological interest in the analysis of children's remains, the varied approaches taken in the scientific literature and proper consideration of taphonomic and cultural factors in assessing samples from archeological and forensic contexts. Included in these chapters is a section specifically focusing on "children in forensic anthropology" including discussion of such relevant issues as diagenetic factors contributing to observations of "pink teeth."

Chapter three presents a very useful overview of methodology in estimates of age at death, sex, and ancestry. The discussion here is among the best I have read on these key topics in forensic anthropology. Basic methodology is explored with cognizance of population variation and the rapidly growing recent literature. Reasonable accuracy in age determination is presented as a reachable goal but reliable assessments of sex and ancestry remain elusive, despite considerable new research in these areas. The important distinction is made between biological sex and gender.

A chapter on growth and development presents the rich literature on environmental influences and the complex factors involved. This section is must reading for anyone attempting forensic estimation of age at death, as much of the information covered here must be considered in final interpretation.

Chapter five on "difficult births, precarious lives" covers the complexities of interpretations of child mortality, especially at the anthropological, population level. The difficulties of interpretations of infanticide are explored here with much discussion relevant to forensic applications.

A separate chapter (6) is devoted to weaning and dietary stress issues, summarizing the recent robust research on these topics. Much of the anthropological literature on weaning is coalesced here but also included are innovative approaches through studies of bone chemistry, again related to forensic analyses.

Two chapters (7 and 8) summarize pathological conditions and trauma involving the child skeleton. Information presented here is extremely relevant to forensic analyses since accurate pathological diagnosis can be key to identification and trauma interpretation is vital in assessment of possible physical child abuse and cause and manner of death.

A final section discusses future research directions providing provocative thought on potential new research and developments.

The vast reference section consisting of 58 pages listing over 1,000 references is indicative of the research depth of this volume. This literature represents a resource in its own right, as it is so comprehensive and up to date.

Although the title of this book emphasizes "bioarchaeology," much of the content is directly relevant to forensic science, especially forensic anthropology and related areas of forensic pathology and odontology. The analysis of children's remains calls for a broad and thorough methodology; such a perspective is presented in this book.

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