

Innovative Aspects of Forensic Archaeology

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Description

The terms 'forensic archaeology' and 'forensic anthropology' are frequently misused in today's popular media, which can lead to confusion. The word forensic comes from the Latin word *forensis*, which means "open court," and "forensic evidence" refers to evidence related to a crime or a court of law [1]. Techniques from archaeology and anthropology can be applied and adapted to the forensic context.

Over the last few decades, separate strands of research have emerged in anthropology and archaeology to adapt and develop skills for forensic cases [2]. For example, a great deal of research has been done on the rate of disintegration of bodies in various situations, as well as what happens to a body when it is burned. This information is then used to assist police in investigating incidents of decomposing or rotting bodies [3]. This information is then used to assist investigators in the investigation of decomposing or burned human remains found at crime scenes. The application of excavation and archaeological expertise to forensic situations is known as forensic archaeology. These abilities include:

Locating bodies

Understanding the relationship between the grave and other buried features (such as soil layers, personal belongings, and drainage ditches) and what happens to the body when it is buried (known as depositional and taphonomic processes). Forensic archaeologists can also excavate graves and document the relationships between artefacts, bodies/skeletons, and burial site features [4].

To ensure that remains are recovered in a controlled and forensically acceptable manner, forensic archaeologists use their understanding of suitable excavation techniques. When human remains are discovered partially or completely buried, appropriate excavation will ensure that any evidence found on the bones is preserved [5]. The difference between forensic archaeologists and forensic anthropologists is that where forensic anthropologists are trained specifically in human osteology and recovery of human remains, forensic archaeologists specialize more broadly in the processes of search and discovery. In addition to looking for bones, archaeologists are taught to search for things in and around the excavation site. These objects can include anything from wedding rings to potentially probative evidence such as cigarette butts or

shoe prints. Their training extends further to observing context, association and significance of objects in a crime scene and drawing conclusions that may be useful for locating a victim or suspect. When typical archaeological techniques are unable to be used to explore crime sites, a forensic archaeologist must be able to use innovation and adaptation. For example, one particular case study was conducted on the search and recovery of the remains of a missing girl who was found in a septic tank underground. This instance required unique methods unlike those of a typical archaeological excavation in order to exhume and preserve the contents of the tank. There are three main areas in which forensic archaeologists are concerned. One component is assisting with crime scene research, investigation, and the recovery of evidence and/or skeletal remains.

Processing mass fatality or terrorist sites (i.e. homicide, mass graves and war crimes, and other human rights violations) is a sector of practise that forensic archaeologists are also involved with. Forensic archaeologists can assist in the identification of possible grave sites that have been ignored. Soil differences can aid forensic archaeologists in locating these sites. A little mound of soil will form during the burial of a body due to the filling of the grave. Different types of plant growth are encouraged by the loose soil and increased nutrients from the decomposing body than in the surrounding areas. Grave sites usually have looser, darker, and more organic soil than the surrounding environment. During the examination of genocide and mass graves, searching for other burial places can be beneficial.

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