



# MASSACRES

BIOARCHAEOLOGY AND FORENSIC  
ANTHROPOLOGY APPROACHES

Edited by Cheryl P. Anderson and Debra L. Martin

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“A book of great scope. Researchers of different disciplinary backgrounds problematize a simple question: What constitutes a massacre? Is it the number buried, their demographics, the cause of death, or the treatment of remains? This book represents a new foundation for the study of massacres.”—**R. BRIAN FERGUSON**, editor of *The State, Identity and Violence: Political Disintegration in the Post-Cold War World*

“The first coming together of bioarchaeological and forensic perspectives on mass killings. It emphasizes the importance of context—not only where and how bodies are found but also the contemporary forces influencing their interpretation.”—**REBECCA C. REDFERN**, author of *Injury and Trauma in Bioarchaeology: Interpreting Violence in Past Lives*

**T**HIS VOLUME INTEGRATES data from researchers in bioarchaeology and forensic anthropology to explain when and why group-targeted violence occurs. Massacres have plagued both ancient and modern societies, and by analyzing skeletal remains from these events within their broader cultural and historical contexts this volume opens up important new understandings of the underlying social processes that continue to lead to these tragedies.

In case studies that include Crow Creek in South Dakota, Khmer Rouge–era Cambodia, the Peruvian Andes, the Tennessee River Valley, and northern Uganda, contributors demonstrate that massacres are a process—a nonrandom pattern of events that precede the acts of violence and continue long afterward. They also show that massacres have varying aims and are driven by culture-specific forces and logic, ranging from small events to cases of genocide. Many of these studies examine bones found in mass graves, while others focus on victims whose bodies have never been buried. Notably, they also expand widely held definitions of massacres to include structural violence, featuring the radical argument that the large-scale death of undocumented migrants in Arizona’s Sonoran Desert should be viewed as an extended massacre.

This is the first volume to focus exclusively on massacres as a unique form of violence. Its interdisciplinary approach illuminates similarities in human behavior across time and space, provides methods for identifying killings as massacres, and helps today’s societies learn from patterns of the past.

**CHERYL P. ANDERSON**, lecturer of biological anthropology at Boise State University, is coeditor of *Bioarchaeological and Forensic Perspectives on Violence: How Violent Death Is Interpreted from Skeletal Remains*. **DEBRA L. MARTIN**, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is coeditor of *The Bioarchaeology of Violence*.

A volume in the series *Bioarchaeological Interpretations of the Human Past: Local, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, edited by Clark Spencer Larsen

*Front, top:* Three young adult males with evidence of sharp and blunt force trauma at CA-SCL-478 (500 BC–AD 420), courtesy of Randy Wiberg of Holman and Associates, Inc.; *bottom:* photograph of perimortem penetrating cranial wounds of individuals from the Circular Platform, Structure 5, Ent 47 (adolescent possible male, left lateral view parietal bone.)

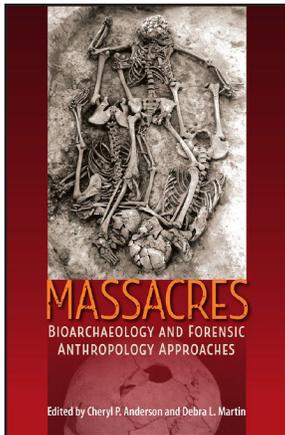
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## Massacres: Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Approaches

Cheryl P. Anderson and Debra L. Martin, editors. 2018. [University of Florida Press](https://www.uflpress.ufl.edu/). vii+207 pp., 33 figures, 7 tables, references, index. \$95.00 (Cloth).

*Reviewed by Christiane Baigent, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.*

This volume from Cheryl P. Anderson and Debra L. Martin seeks to place incidents of large-scale violence into broader cultural context through the application of social theory to osseous data. Rather than understand large-scale violence as a series of spatially and temporally discrete critical events, this volume seeks to elucidate the continuum of sociopolitical events that facilitate ‘othering’ (defined generally as a group made socially distinct and targeted by structures of oppression), and permit the alteration of the formal and informal social sanctions that gradually make large-scale violence socially permissible. By recognizing large-scale violence as the outcome of a series of dynamic, polyvalent, social interactions dimension is restored, and along with it an appreciation for the complexities of human behavior. These complexities include the construction of cultural time and memory, creation of the collective, definition of the demographic ‘other,’ processes of legitimizing or undermining historic memory, and the sociocultural mechanisms through which the dead retain agency.

Bioarchaeology and forensic anthropology constitute a cyclical analytical and methodological feedback system that is uniquely suited to contend with violence. Bioarchaeology provides time depth, cross-cultural perspective, and models for broad spatial analysis while forensic anthropology provides knowledge of modern cultural and political context and access to historic data that inform the modern investigation of massacres. This volume leverages this feedback system, and a concerted effort is made to integrate bioarcheological, forensic anthropological, and cultural anthropological theory and method to transcend descriptive models of violence and create meaningful sociopolitical profiles of mass fatality events.

The format of this volume is homogenized by the formulaic provision of information—each chapter presents theoretical background, site context, historical context, materials and methods, results, and interpretation in sociocultural context. The formulaic model should not be mistaken for the flattening or homogenization of analytical or methodological approach. Authors are given the latitude to argue unique definitions for ‘massacre,’ formulate and present diverse data sets based on these definitions, and derive meaning from diverse theoretical backgrounds. Rather than yield analytical or methodological constraint, this homogeneity improves readability, serves to highlight the definitions, analytical, and methodological approaches that deviate from the norm, and facilitates meaningful comparison between chapters within the volume. However, a lack of diversity in the theoretical approaches applied is noteworthy. With the exception of the application of political economy theory provided in

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Chapter 11, and gender theory in Chapter 4, authors draw heavily from structural violence theory. This is not ultimately to the detriment of the volume, but readers seeking heavy theoretical application or theoretical diversity may be disappointed.

The volume is arranged as a loosely chronological march across time and geographic space. The first theme (Chapters 2–7) presents incidents of violence in the past. Data are largely derived from North American Paleoindian sites, with a notable detour to South America in Chapter 4 where J. Marla Toyne explores violence among the Chachapoya of Peru through the lens of gender theory and describes processes of targeted othering. Again, regional homogeneity does not equate to analytical homogeneity. These chapters yield new models for identifying, defining, and analyzing mass graves based on context rather than body count, analytically redefining space to assess broader regional landscapes of violence, and present data-mining as a modern approach to contend with issues of access to skeletal assemblages. Reanalysis of major sites such as Sacred Ridge by Anna J. Osterholtz and Crow Creek by P. Willey effectively call into question the early interpretations that shaped modern perceptions of social organization and violence in the past and demonstrate the evolution of bioarchaeological theory and method.

The second theme (Chapters 8–11) explores mass fatality events in modern context from the 1970s to present. This theme effectively demonstrates the unique set of challenges associated with working within populations existing contemporaneously with mass killing events, and the effect this has on social memory, intersectionality between the living and the dead, and modern relationships between community members and the body politic. An important byproduct of the second theme is the demonstration of culture specific variation in post-massacre reparation. Julie M. Fleischman, Sonnara Prak, Vuthy Voecun, and Sophearavy Ros (Chapter 8) detail efforts made within the local scientific community to recover, document, and preserve skeletal remains following the massacres perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. In this incidence the local community has elected to display human remains as a tangible testament to the regime's crimes. Conversely, Tricia Redeker Hepner, Dawnie Wolfe Steadman, and Julia R. Hanebrink (Chapter 9) demonstrate the complications that arise from multidirectional, multifocal violence inflicted by government institutions and resistance regimes. They present the aftermath of conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the National Resistance Army (NRA), the government of Uganda, and the general population consumed in the crossfire, and subsequent issues of 'responsibility,' acknowledgement, the creation of social memory and public discourse, divergence in recollection, and the legitimization of history. This case serves as a powerful demonstration of how nuanced social mechanisms serve to perpetuate terror within a community following a massacre when the dead maintain a liminal position. In the closing chapters, Cate E. Bird (Chapter 10) and Krista E. Latham, Alyson O'Daniel, and Justin Maiers (Chapter 11) effectively argue that policy created to physically direct South American migrant border crossers into the harsh environments that result in death constitutes a chilling form of indirect massacre. The closing chapters demonstrate the power of synthesizing theory, bioarchaeology, and forensic

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anthropology for creating a holistic picture of mass fatality events and the potential for these crises to assume forms that diverge from the expected singular 'critical event.'

Bioarchaeologists have long been fascinated with massacre and early investigation into the demographic composition of mass fatality sites yielded patterns of violence in the past that we continue to draw on today. Forensic anthropologists hold a proportionate interest and, throughout the late twentieth century, demonstrated the probative power of the application of anthropological methods to the investigation of modern mass fatality events. Work performed by anthropologists in international regions experiencing violence, such as Uganda, Bosnia, Iraq, and former Yugoslavia directly contributed to the prosecution of perpetrators in international tribunal and legitimized the plight of the oppressed in global media. As practitioners trained in holism and relativism, anthropologists are uniquely suited to contend with issues of human deviance in its most egregious forms. In North America's current sociopolitical climate, we are reminded that our unique training is critical in application.

The presentation of theory in an easily digestible format makes this an excellent introductory volume for both students and professionals seeking to integrate theory into bioarchaeological or forensic anthropological investigation. This volume truly leads by example and would be an effective teaching tool in a relevant undergraduate or graduate level course. Further, this volume effectively synthesizes the collective power of the discipline and will constitute a worthwhile addition to the library of any practitioner concerned with violence, the application of theory to construct holistic patterns of behavior, and collective social deviance.