Estimation of the Time since Death

Current Research and Future Trends

Estimation of the Time Since Death is a current comprehensive work on the methods and research advances into the time since death and human decomposition. This work provides practitioners a starting point for research and practice to assist with the identification and analysis of human remains. It contains a collection of the latest scientific research, various estimation methods, and includes case studies, to highlight methodological application to real cases.

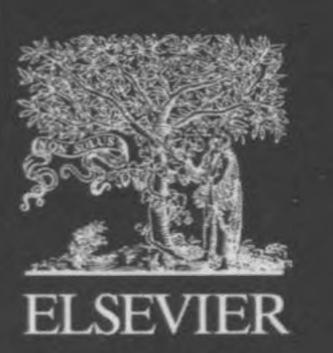
This reference first provides an introduction, including the early post-mortem period, biochemical methods, and the value of entomology in estimating the time since death, along with other factors affecting the decomposition process. Further coverage explores importance of microbial communities in estimating time since death. Separate chapters on aquatic environments, carbon 14 dating and amino acid racemization, and total body scoring will round out the reference. A concluding chapter summarizes research and outlines the direction it should follow.

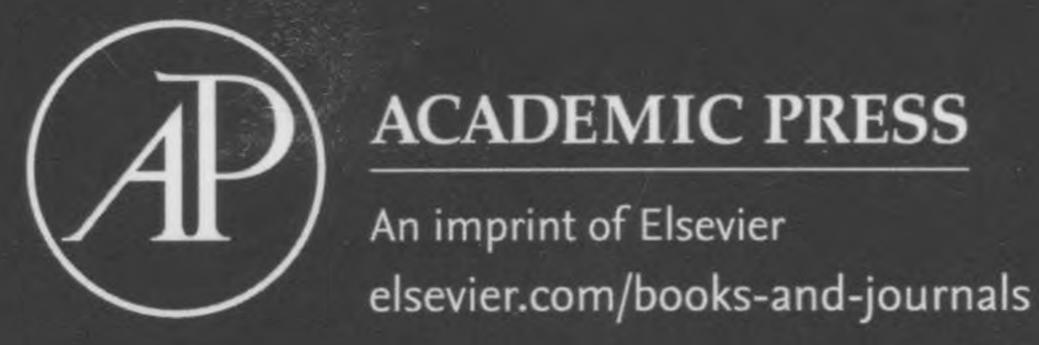
- Chapters are written by practicing pathologists, physical anthropologists and scientists in related fields and also include their latest research on the topics. This book is a one of a kind resource for researchers and academics in determining the time since death in decomposing human remains.
- The first comprehensive reference bringing together all aspects of knowledge relating to the estimation of the post-mortem interval in decomposed human bodies
- Contains real case studies to underscore key estimation concepts
- Demonstrates the changing role of technology and advances in the estimation of time since death

ABOUT THE EDITORS:

Jarvis Hayman is a retired surgeon who studied archaeology, completing a Master's degree at the Australian National University in Canberra with a thesis on the archaeology of the Scottish Highland Clearances. He then combined his medical and archaeological knowledge to complete a PhD on the estimation of the time since death in decomposed human bodies in Australian conditions. His research areas of interest are: historical archaeology and forensic archaeology/anthropology. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University and the co-author of Human Body Decomposition.

Marc Oxenham is a Professor in Bioarchaeology at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. His expertise in human skeletal biology has been recognized nationally through invitations to consult on a range of forensic cases for the Australian Federal Police, Australian Government Solicitor, The Australian Defense Forces (in particular Unrecovered War Casualties-Army) as well as the New South Wales Police Force. His main research has concentrated on exploring aspects of human palaeopathology and behavior by way of analyses of human skeletal and dental material. He has held teaching and research positions at Colorado College, USA, and the ANU. He was president of the Australasian Society of Human Biology (2012-14), an Australian Future Fellow (2013-17), elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2011 and elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2016.







Contents

Contributors About the editors		xi xiii
1.	Approaches to time since death estimation Jarvis Hayman and Marc Oxenham References	8
2.	Estimation of the time since death in the early postmortem period (24–48 hours) Roger W. Byard	
	Introduction Algor mortis Livor mortis Rigor mortis Autolysis and putrefaction Other postmortem changes Adipocere Mummification Skeletonization Other parameters Evaluation of gastric contents Assessment of muscle excitability Assessment of iris reactivity Evaluation of cerebral changes Measurement of vitreous humor analyte concentrations Miscellaneous Artefacts Preservation by freezing Animal predation	11 12 13 17 17 20 20 21 21 21 21 22 22 22 22 23 23 23 23
	Conclusions References	24 24

	Biochemical methods of estimating time since death	
	Lena M. Dubois and Katelynn A. Perrault	
	Introduction	29
	Electrolytes and elemental analysis	30
	Lipids and related compounds	33
	Proteins and related compounds	35
	Nucleic acids and related compounds	39
	Volatile organic compounds	43
	Completeness of data for biochemical markers	47
	Conclusion	48
	List of acronyms and abbreviations	50
	References	50
4.	The application of insects to the estimation of the time since death	
	James F. Wallman and Melanie S. Archer	
	Introduction	57
	Which insects and other invertebrates are used forensically?	58
	The timing of insect arrival at a dead body	59
	Estimating the time since death using insects	60
	Insect development	60
	Insect succession	61
	Factors limiting the minPMI estimate	62
	Insect identification	62
	Geographic region and seasonality	63
	Weather and retrospective temperature analysis	63
	Nocturnal oviposition	64
	Thermogenesis	64
	Drugs	66
	Developmental substrate	66
	Maggot infestation prior to death	66
	Manner of death	67
	Collecting methods	67
	Specimen selection	68
	Specimen preservation	68
	Contamination	69
	Collecting rigour	69
	Summary of collecting steps	70
	General standards among forensic entomology practitioners	70
	Case studies	71
	Case 1	71
1	Case 2	73
	Case 3	73
	Conclusions	74
	References	74

5.	TSD estimation in the advanced stages of decomposition	
	Eline M.J. Schotsmans, Wim Van de Voorde and Shari L. Forbes	
	Introduction	81
	Factors influencing cadaver decomposition	82
	Environmental variables	82
	The depositional environment	83
	Human behaviour	84
	The subject	85
	Delayed decay rates and soft tissue preservation	86
	Dry environments	87
	Cold environments	88
	Adipocere formation	88
	Bog environments	89
	Differential decomposition	89
	PMI estimation	92
	Postmortem interval estimation	93
	Postburial interval estimation	95
	Advanced expertise in PMI estimation	96
	Experiments and retrospective studies	96
	Case study	97
	Conclusions	101
	Acknowledgements	101
	References	101
6.	The importance of microbial communities in the estimation of the time since death	
	David O. Carter	
	Introduction	109
	What is a microbial community?	111
	Microbial community structure and function	111
	Antemortem microbial communities differ from postmortem	
	microbial communities	114
	Postmortem microbial communities shift repeatedly	
	during decomposition	116
	Postmortem microbial communities are a component of a	
	complex postmortem food web	117
	Microbial activity and function also shift during decomposition	118
	Postmortem microbial succession continues through the	
	extended postmortem period	121
	Microbial communities and bone	122
	Decomposing remains affect many microorganisms of	
	untapped forensic potential	123

	Estimating time since death — microbial communities are	105
	predictable	125
	Postmortem microbial communities can represent a minimum	
	or maximum TSD	125
	Postmortem microbial succession can represent a range of TSD Microbial communities can affect other methods for	126
	estimating TSD	128
	Decomposition fluids and volatile organic compounds	129
	Microbe — insect interactions	130
		131
	Microbe – scavenger interactions Strengths and weaknesses of using microbial communities to	
	estimate TSD	132
	Conclusions	133
	Acknowledgements	134
	References	134
7.	The postmortem interval and skeletal remains	
	Alyce Cameron and Marc Oxenham	
	Introduction	141
	UV fluorescence	1/1
		141
	Luminol and chemiluminescence	143
	Citrate content	145
	DNA degradation	146
	Vibrational spectroscopy	147
	Microscopic methods	152
	Weathering	153
	Other methods	157
	Conclusions	158
	References	159
8.	Estimation of the TSD in an aquatic environment	
	Felicity Gilbert and Marc Oxenham	
	Introduction	165
	The process of decomposition in aquatic environments	166
	Autolysis	166
	Putrefaction	168
	Skeletonisation/disarticulation Skeletonisation/disarticulation	169
	Preservation	170
	Variables unique to an aquatic environment	171
	Flotation/fluvial transportation	171
	Body coverings	174
	Water chemistry	174
1	Scavenging	174
	Temperature	176
	Research into aquatic decomposition and determining TSD	177
	Conclusions	185
	References	185

9.	Radiocarbon and amino acid racemization (AAR) and the time since death	
	Stewart J. Fallon and Colin V. Murray-Wallace	
	Introduction	191
	Traditional radiocarbon production	191
	Determining an age from a radiocarbon measurement	193
	"Bomb" production	194
	Rapid carbon turnover (year of death)	195
	Blood	196
	Nails and hair	197
	Puparia	197
	Slow carbon turnover	197
	"No" carbon turnover (year of birth)	199
	Teeth	199
	Eye lens crystallines and petrous bone	200
	Amino acid racemization	201
	The racemization reaction in natural systems	202
	Amino acid racemization and the time since death	204
	Parameters that influence racemization in natural systems	207
	Post-mortem (diagenetic) temperature history Fossil genus and matrix	208
	Moisture regime	210
	Hydrolysis state of peptide residues	210
	Clay mineral catalysis and pH	211
	Amino acid racemization kinetics	211
	Applications of amino acid racemization in studies of the time since death	214
	Time equivalence and relative ages of biological remains	214
	Numeric ages	215
	Identification of time-averaged and reworked materials and	
	mixed-aged populations	217
	Palaeotemperatures and exhumation	219
	Estimating the time since death over the past 500 years	219
	Conclusions	220
	Acknowledgements	220
	References	220
10.	The development of grading systems to determine human decomposition: Total Body Scoring of decomposed human bodies in indoor settings	
	Jarvis Hayman and Marc Oxenham	
	Introduction	229
	The evolution of grading systems to determine decomposition	
	in human bodies Procent research into human Total Rody Scoring systems	230
	Present research into human Total Body Scoring systems The problem of accurate temperature recording	236
	Inter-observer reliability of body scoring systems	242
	THE COUNTY OF THE PROPERTY OF	4 1 /4

x Contents

	which total body scoring system gives the best results:	242
	Is a universal formula for estimating the TSD possible?	244
	Conclusion	247
	References	248
11.	The future of taphonomic research	
	Giovanna M. Vidoli, Melanie M. Beasley, Lee Meadows Jantz, Joanne Bennett Devlin and Dawnie Wolfe Steadman	
	Introduction	251
	Time since death	251
	PMI in skeletonised remains	252
	TBS approaches and the PMI	252
	Microscopic and biochemical approaches to the PMI	253
	Stable isotopes and the PMI	254
	Variation in decomposition	255
	Unanswered questions	258
	Conclusions	259
	References	259

Index