



Book Reviews

MOVING ON IN NEOLITHIC STUDIES: UNDERSTANDING MOBILE LIVES BY JIM LEARY AND THOMAS KADOR (eds)

Oxford, Oxbow Books. Neolithic Studies Group Seminar Paper 14. 2016. 186pp+xii, 27 B&W figs, 6 tables, pb, ISBN 978-1-78570-176-4, £38.00

Mobility has become a significant field of interest in Neolithic studies. The trend began with the destabilisation of the image of settled farming communities in the late 1980s, with a theoretical shift that, amongst other things, stressed a slow transition to farming and continuities of practice across the Mesolithic–Neolithic boundary. Additional interest has been stimulated by the impact of stable isotope analyses. They have offered direct evidence of medium- and in some instances long-distance human and animal movement during the period (e.g. Viner *et al.* 2010). Now aDNA studies are beginning to indicate population incursions of some scale at the start and end of the Neolithic (e.g. Olalde *et al.* 2018). Added to this cocktail has been the general environment of interest in mobilities within the social sciences (e.g. Ingold 2004).

Moving on in Neolithic Studies rides upon this research momentum. It contains a collection of 10 papers originating from a meeting of the Neolithic Studies Group held in 2012. This volume is the 14th of a series emanating from those meetings, and replicates a now well-tried formula. Papers engage with a diversity of themes and subject material – artefactual, monumental, terrestrial, riparian and maritime – crafted around regional and case studies, or worked as thematic essays. Geographically, the majority focus on Britain and the Republic of Ireland, with just one paper engaging with an aspect of the continental European record.

A lively and wide-ranging introductory chapter by Leary and Kador sets a broad remit for mobility studies. While understanding patterns of human mobility (relating to e.g. transhumance or shifting cultivation) remains central, they stress the importance of an holistic approach that draws together all forms and practices of movement, at varied scales, and includes, too, information, materials, artefacts and animals. This delineates an archaeology of rhythms, entanglements, performances, ‘flows of people and things’, very much in tune with current interest in performative, relational and ontological approaches.

At risk of crude characterisation, yet following the structure of the volume, the contributions can be divided into explorations of the theme of mobility through: social processes and projects; matters monumental; water-worlds; and materials and artefacts. Bickle writes of the diversity

and differing scales of human mobility within the *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK). She highlights the need to resist the temptation of reductive and neatly bounded models, and especially those linked to dietary strategies. There is good detail here; and through reference to a growing body of stable isotope analysis, she draws attention to the diversity of pattern within what is sometimes glossed as a unitary cultural and economic entity, and how mobility was framed by aspects of social life including gender, marriage and residency patterns, life-course, and so forth. There is a nice structure to the scalar approach adopted here, moving from the spread of the LBK, in-lifetime movement, everyday mobility, and the movement of artefacts and materials.

Drawing upon the work of the Feeding Stonehenge and Stonehenge Riverside Project, Chan *et al.* take the opportunity to think through the mobilities involved within an inter-linked project: in this case the building of Durrington Walls and stage 2 of Stonehenge. Stonehenge is a monument whose very elements (bluestone and sarsen) speak of mobility. In large part this is an exercise in mapping logistics – a kind of Neolithic quantity surveying – providing estimates for the amounts of flint, stone, clay, wood, animals, plant materials, and so forth involved. A useful summary of the isotopic analyses of the domestic animals from Durrington is also provided, which serves a proxy for later Neolithic human mobility and connectivity. The chapter provides striking figures, and forces consideration again of different scales in operation, and the character and robustness (if not always stability) of the social networks that facilitated the making of great monuments.

Moore and Loveday provide chapters that continue a monument-focused theme, albeit quite different in scope and intention. Moore explores movement to and within the passage tombs of the Carrowkeel-Keshcorran complex, Co. Sligo. Landscape and tomb architecture are worked together to illustrate a choreography of nested spaces. Movement necessitated transition and the crossing of multiple boundaries and thresholds, which, as Moore points out, are strongly emphasised in the architecture of passage tombs. In a rich argument, he discusses the cognitive consequences of boundary crossing, especially in relation to memory, the significance of journeying, the evocative qualities of topography, and encounters and negotiations with other-than-human agencies through these movements.

Loveday's chapter is substantial, and takes quite a different stance. His starting point is the range of potential explanations for the siting of cursus monuments. Ultimately, it is an essay in political (pre)history that draws upon considerable archaeological detail related to Middle Neolithic monuments, economies and ecologies, artefacts, funerary practices and monument building, and widespread ethnographic analogy, too. For Loveday, the creation of the largest cursus monuments speaks of the presence of social stratification and controlling hierarchies, and shared widespread cult practice: power and direction, not emulation. Context is provided by

the apparent shift to pastoral economies at the start of the Middle Neolithic. Mobility is implied here, in 'festival pilgrimage', and the control of major routeways and movement of people and materials. This paper deserves wide readership, and should spark debate. Ultimately, much of the validity of the interpretation may hinge on the dating of massive cursus monuments, which remains poor.

Three chapters deal with movement and water. Haughey stresses the importance of rivers, in practical, political and cosmological terms. Wide-ranging and instructive, her paper draws heavily on ethnographic example, interspersed with detail of Mesolithic and Neolithic riverine engagement.

Rogers tackles coastal mobility, here being primarily concerned with sea-borne movement along coastlines rather than across seas. Both this and the following chapter by Gannon pick up earlier strands of research (by Crawford and Case, for example), in thinking through the practicalities of navigation and seafaring during the period, which has tended to be downplayed. Again, with reference to ethnographic instance, the ritualization of sea travel is one element Rogers highlights. Her work nicely delineates the potential scale and longevity of coastal movement up the North Sea, from Yorkshire to Scotland, and down to the Thames. Gannon takes us to the western seaways and the Hebridean Neolithic, whose very presence (even in remote St Kilda) is testament to the maritime capabilities of Neolithic communities. There is good detail on the region's Neolithic, taking in monuments, settlement (including sites of great potential on Canna) and material culture. Here we are given a glimpse of mobility at different scales within highly dynamic environments on the edge of the Neolithic world.

The final contributions deal with materials and artefacts, both through the lens of landscape. In a thought-provoking chapter that is a call-to-arms for further, imaginative research, Last reviews the legacy of work on ploughzone lithics and mobility which formed a key domain of Neolithic studies from the 1970s to mid-1990s. He suggests a retreat since then in sustained critical engagement with lithic scatters 'reflects a lack of confidence in the significance of ploughzone sites' and our capacity to understand what they represent, despite their being a hugely significant part of the record. A PPG16 legacy has been the relegation of fieldwalking to an evaluation methodology, rather than a research tool. Last stresses the potential of ploughzone lithics to write different histories of occupation, and so mobilities, taskscapes and meshworks of practices and materials. He's right; we should take notice!

In the final chapter Bond considers mobility and the movements of stone (flint and other geologies such as Old Red Sandstone) within the Mendip region. The pivotal position of the Mendips between Wessex and the South-West is drawn out. His extensive research on the

region's lithic scatters, which is summarised in part here, pulls out some interesting patterns, notably the apparent drop-off in settlement activity here after the Early Neolithic.

Overall, this is a useful assemblage of papers. Like many of the Neolithic Studies Group volumes its heterogeneity reflects the varied readings of a 'call for papers' theme by seminar participants. It is encouraging to see engagement with different scales and kinds of evidence. The volume could have taken a very different shape and been dominated by the results of isotopic studies, for example. The path for future work is to maintain interpretive awareness, but to work with the growing body of scientific data that can offer hard evidence of specific mobilities. Perhaps there was potential here to offer through the editorial opening chapter something of an agenda for future work? Do we need to think more about the mobilities emergent through living with animals, and marriage, to take two strands that must have been central in Neolithic minds? With better chronologies can we further historicise mobilities, and think about how changing kinds of movement came to mark peoples' identity? Let's keep *Moving on*.

References

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Joshua Pollard

University of Southampton

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