

MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ, COURTNEY NIMURA, PHILIPP W. STOCKHAMMER, RACHEL CARTWRIGHT (Eds.), *Rethinking Migrations in Late Prehistoric Eurasia*. Proceedings of the British Academy 254. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2023. 336 pages, 67 colour images, 10 plates, hardcover, ISBN 9780197267356.

Rethinking Migrations in Late Prehistoric Eurasia is one of last year's additions to the growing body of edited volumes dedicated to the study of human migration and mobility in the past. This topic, for various reasons rather marginal in the past decades,¹ has gained increasing attention ever since the advances in biomolecular sciences yielded methodologies applicable to archaeological research. What Kristian Kristiansen² calls 'the third scientific revolution' in archaeology has allowed new questions to be answered and new perspectives to be explored. The natural sciences have opened up many new possibilities, but the results thus acquired are not useful without thoughtful interpretation through an archaeological – or humanistic – lens. This call for interdisciplinarity forms a common thread throughout the publication. The volume, stemming from a conference on migrations in the metal ages in Edinburgh in 2019, consists of introductory and concluding chapters by the editors and thirteen essays. Human mobility from c. 3000 BCE is explored through a number of methods and approaches, spanning from analyses of isotopes and ancient DNA (aDNA), through material culture studies, to archaeometallurgy, and to spatial analyses and algorithm-based maps. Authored by archaeologists and anthropologists and aimed at an audience with the same focus, even the technical descriptions of the aDNA studies, and isotope analyses of both human and animal samples are presented in a manner comprehensible to those with a basic understanding of the methods. Deeper knowledge of the Yamnaya, Bell Beaker and Corded Ware cultures are, on the other hand, expected. Temperate Europe is the focal point, but the Asian steppe is also included as a starting point of migration events, with one essay (Chapter 6) dedicated to the Andronovo Culture of central Asia. The scope of individual chapters is varied – while some are more theoretical and offer broader perspectives (chapters 1, 2, 15), others are more deeply immersed within their specialization and consequently are a rather challenging read (chapters 3, 4). Chapter 9 detours to the animal kingdom, namely to the great apes, to illustrate social

relations and modes of cohabitation, and Chapter 11 creates a theoretical model of human migrations based on historical examples, and then discusses its application in a prehistorical context. This diversity offers the reader a chance to learn not only about the presented projects, valuable to scholars, but also about the range of possible approaches, which may be appreciated by students.

As Maja Gori and Aydin Abar note in their essay 'Comparing Apples and Oranges? Confronting Social Science and Natural Science Approaches to Migration in Archaeology' (Chapter 2), the rise in popularity of the topic in archaeology thanks to bioarchaeology's great leaps forward is far from unproblematic. The authors reflect on the tensions between these two fields, their methodologies, discourses and interpretative frames. The development and paradigm shifts are often expressed with the use of the prefix 're-', as is also the case with the title of the very volume in question. So, what exactly is rethought about the migrations in late prehistoric Eurasia here? Advances in the natural sciences gave archaeology powerful tools to explore the movement of people, animals, and even ideas. Although the book is primarily concerned with the first of these three, the ideas materialized in the clothes, pottery, tools and weapons – in other words, the material culture – are inevitably part of the discussion. Their spread has for decades been used as a proxy for the movement of people; it was assumed that the typology of objects can be likened to the identity of the people: who else would spread the material culture if not the bearers of that culture? This concept, aptly summarized as 'pots are people', was, however, gradually abandoned in light of theoretical advances in the late 20th century, to become completely untenable in the face of the biomolecular studies. Cases are presented where individuals of non-local origin were found in a context that did not differ in terms of the material culture, in the funerary rite, or in any other manner from the locals. And conversely, individuals that from the archaeological perspective might be considered foreign, turned out to be locals, born and raised in that place. It should also be kept in mind that successful integration in the sense of material culture does not necessarily equal social integration – one can wear the same clothes and use the same tools as the others, but still feel unwelcome and be perceived as a foreigner by the others.

1 See ANTHONY 1990.

2 KRISTIANSEN 2014.

Kristiansen's Chapter 5 offers a thorough overview of the different motivations and social roles of the travellers, and the related social institutions. Through a combination of isotope analyses, material culture typology and archaeometallurgy he identifies and discusses those travelling in the framework of guest-friendship, primogeniture, fosterage, trade or war. However, it was not only the men who travelled. Exogamy and the mobility of women in general is debated in multiple essays, and it is striking to see the different conclusions at which the authors have arrived. Carola Metzner-Nebelsick in Chapter 10 considers the bride's migration a one-time and final event, which contrasts with documented cases where women migrated over notable distances repeatedly.³ Katharina Rebay-Salisbury in Chapter 9 brings up the possibility of return movements, e.g. for assistance with a birth, whether by the mother-to-be or her female relatives acting as midwives and caretakers, and there are multiple other possible frameworks for women's mobility not necessarily related to marriage (or more broadly a change in cohabitation) and motherhood.⁴ These, sometimes contradictory, conclusions do not disprove interpretations based on conventional archaeology. As many authors agree, biomolecular methods bring a fresh perspective and new data, but archaeological analysis must follow. Careful examination and interpretation can then lead to remarkable conclusions. A prime example is the findings presented by Philipp W. Stockhammer and Ken Massy (Chapter 8) based on previous work by them and their colleagues.⁵ They discuss the fact that at the Early Bronze Age Lech Valley farmsteads, non-local women from afar (unlike those from not-so-distant localities) did not have any detectable offspring which contrasts with the general assumption that women left their homes primarily to bear children in the locality of their partner. The authors propose several possible explanations, leaning towards the conclusion that they may have been professional wet nurses and ambassadors of their distant cultures. This scenario may seem a little far-fetched considering how little evidence the authors present (although it is further elaborated by Stockhammer⁶), but whether we accept it or not, it still remains one of several possible explanations, showing that the mobility of women may have been much more complex than previously thought.

The particularly engaging last essay by the editorial team, 'Relating Past and Present Human Mobility', brings up several important points. Human behaviour cannot be

fully comprehended through the natural sciences and their outcomes alone. The study of aDNA can reveal who was related to whom and by extension, how the community was organized, but it does not tell us anything about mutual feelings and the sense of belonging. Thanks to the isotope analyses, we may know where a certain individual was born, what they consumed, how far or even how many times they moved back and forth. But why did they move in the first place? And why did they stop where they did? Did they like it there? Was, and if so how was their movement organized or institutionalized? How did they perceive their own identity? Did it change after the movement? Many of these questions are addressed in the previous contributions. Concepts such as exogamy (chapters 5, 7–10, 12), fosterage (chapters 5, 8, 12) and transhumance (chapters 5, 6, 9, 14) are discussed repeatedly. The editors continue to debate various push and pull factors for both small-scale and large-scale mobility, also considering approaches not included in the volume, such as the archaeologies of the senses.⁷ Furthermore, as suggested by the title of the chapter, they strive to stress how the studies of past and present migrations are intertwined, and how cooperation between archaeology and modern social sciences can be beneficial to both: in sharing concepts, as well as in understanding and interpreting human behaviour. The significance of detours or counterintuitively longer routes in contrast to least-cost pathways may serve as a case in point. In Chapter 12, Veronica Cicolani and Lorenzo Zamboni work with mathematical models to create an algorithm finding the easiest pathways between Alpine strategic points such as settlements, trading hubs or metal production sites. But as Courtney Nimura et al. warn in Chapter 15, other, less direct routes may be preferred for reasons ranging from personal experience, through different perception of the landscape, to the control by social or political institutions related to the migration event. This is as true today as it was in the Bronze and Iron Ages, again accenting the significance of learning about present-day migrations in order to better understand the past ones – and vice versa.

Rethinking Migrations provides the reader with a solid selection of concepts, methodological approaches, projects, and results. It is a book by research archaeologists for research archaeologists, but even though the focal point is Bronze and Iron Age Eurasia, it does not adhere strictly to the geo-temporal delimitation. On the contrary, the emphasized applicability to other contexts, including present-day migrations, makes it all the more interesting a read.

³ E.g. FREI et al. 2015.

⁴ See e.g. BROWN 2014. – STOCKHAMMER 2023.

⁵ KNIPPER et al. 2017. – MITTNIK et al. 2019.

⁶ STOCKHAMMER 2023.

⁷ HAMILAKIS 2011.

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