

Review of: Hamilakis, Y. (ed.) (2018). *The New Nomadic Age: Archaeologies of forced and undocumented migration*. Sheffield: Equinox. Paperback and eBook, 268 pages, 89 illustrations. ISBN 9781781797112

Silje Eojenth Bentsen

Moving is a keyword for this timely collection of papers: The authors focus on people and their things moving through landscapes and material culture as symbols of movement and barriers. Some of the papers also emphasize a need to move the discourse of forced migration. The foreword (by Yannis Hamilakis), for example, points out that the Global North has a “reception crisis” rather than a “migration crisis”. Furthermore, the papers in this book contribute to move the scope of archaeology by documenting how archaeological methodology is highly favourable to the study of ongoing processes in addition to past phenomena. Lastly, these papers are also moving in a different sense; it is emotional to read about migrant deaths, a child drawing floating bodies, orange lifejackets spread along the shore, and people searching for a permanent situation. *The New Nomadic Age* provides detailed and diverse perspectives on moving in all these senses of the word and is a highly recommended read.

This book consists of 16 chapters that were originally published in 2016 as part of a forum in *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* and three chapters/comments written especially for this edition. Each chapter describes different aspects of human mobility across borders as a response to various environmental, political, social or other factors. The geographical range of the book covers Australia, the Indian subcontinent, the Mediterranean, the Finno-Russian border, and the border between Mexico and the USA. A wide range of approaches are also represented, e.g., photographic essays, spatial mapping, interviews with migrants and more traditional archaeological analyses of dwellings and the material culture of migrants. The diversity of the issues covered in the book is strengthened by including authors from different academic backgrounds to build a multidisciplinary framework for studying forced and (hitherto) undocumented migration.

There are ethical issues of studying contemporary migrants. Focusing on single objects or a collection of personal items could, as pointed out by SEITSONEN ET AL. (chapter 11), contribute to trivializing refugee issues and divert attention from larger-scale matters. However, these ethical issues

must be addressed and weighed against the need to document evidence that might soon disappear. SEITSONEN ET AL., for example, provides insight on a group who faced the dangers of the cold Arctic environment to enter the Schengen area in 2015-2016 before Russian authorities effectively closed this route. The basis for the study is abandoned vehicles and personal belongings left in the vehicles, which were later removed and auctioned off as part of a touristic performance! The discussion in chapter 11 on ethics and the problems of “dark tourism” provides food for thought and further reflection.

Another cluster of ethical issues concerns the voice of the immigrants and their perspectives. Identification of individuals and their families can lead to severe consequences yet are vital to the understanding and documentation of migrant issues. Migrant voices are represented as collaborators in this book, such as in chapter 16 (THOMOPOULOS ET AL.). Censorship, the issues no one discusses, and lack of resources are among the topics raised in the chapter, which tries to build a platform for migrants to become active narrators of their own stories.

THOMOPOULOS ET AL. points to art and its role in storytelling. ARBELAEZ and MULHOLLAND (chapter 10) also examine art and how drawing gives people a voice and a chance to process their experiences. Most of the included drawings depict “the drama of the interrupted journey” and stories of violence, death and trauma, although chapter 10 also contains a positive representation of dreams for the future. The chapter is an important reminder of the migrants’ experiences and how they need a range of media to process and convey their stories.

Reflections on colonialism constitutes a natural part of *The New Nomadic Age*. The introductory chapter (HAMILAKIS) discusses how definitions of *migrants* are made and used in the Western discourse and, additionally, points to the attention given to specific borders. The book does include areas and perspectives not often mentioned in Western media reports on forced migration. One example is chapter 7, where PISTRICK and BACHMEIER document empty migrant rooms and houses in Krasta, Albania, through text and photography. These rooms and houses with locked doors are manifestations of the stories of their now migrated owners, and PISTRICK and BACHMEIER skilfully document the many layers of symbolism and the voices of those who stayed. Furthermore, Palestinian camps in Jordan, material culture, and the perception of heritage among people forced to spend years in camps are topics in chapter 2 (BUTLER and AL-NAMMARI). Symbolic communication and dress

as a symbol of heritage are among the interesting topics covered in the chapter, where the need to excavate long-term camps and more diverse representation of migrants are also discussed.

Camps in the Global South should, however, be given more attention in future collections following up on *The New Nomadic Age*. Reports and documentation from border crossings and cities within the Global South will provide a more comprehensive picture of forced and undocumented migration. The long route that migrants might have had to travel to the Global North and how African countries and border crossings have handled forced migration through the last decades are among examples of topics that would improve and expand the issues raised in this collection of papers.

Comprehensive reviews of the historical roots of migration and border crossings would, furthermore, provide additional insight into how colonialism contributes to the current understanding of borders and forced migrations. The need for more historical background to the situation is commented by VAN VALKENBURGH (chapter 19), and future collections of studies on forced migration should allow separate chapters or sections on historical reviews.

Forced and undocumented migration is the most important aspect of this book, but it also highlights many general methodological issues in archaeology. Chapter 13 (BREENE), for example, questions the representability of objects in museum collections through the British Museum and their display of the Lampedusa Cross. This cross was made by artist Francesco Tuccio in 2015 from wood from a migrant vessel with the intention of displaying it in the museum as a representation of contemporary migration and resulting deaths. Breene provides a comprehensive discussion of who selects heritage for display, as well as which objects are selected, for what purposes objects are selected, and to what degree objects on display reflect the intended situation.

Other methodological questions concern post-depositional processes and how these affect the archaeological record. Chapter 4 (SOTO), to name but one illustration, describes how migrants leave graffiti and how their marks are sometimes washed away or faded after few years, affecting the possibility to recognise and document these routes. Similarly, migrants can leave very limited material traces because they carry few objects and are wary of being caught if anything is left behind. This leaves limited possibilities to find many of the routes used and abandoned routes might be im-

possible to trace, which are important to keep in mind when trying to map prehistoric migrations.

The New Nomadic Age contains several examples of how material culture can be controlling and appear as barriers that migrants must work around (or under). Chapter 3 (Stuart et al.), for example, shows how mapping technology provided by ESRI and US border control strategies leads to changes in routes and to migrants choosing more dangerous paths with higher risk of death. This reality and how the actions (or lack thereof) by people in the Global North affect people and communities in need, such as those described in chapter 3, makes the book an important, albeit difficult read. This collection of papers is well put together and demonstrate a range of issues concerning forced migration. The book illustrates how archaeology is of use to ongoing processes and is recommended both to archaeologists and people in other sectors.

Silje Evjenth Bentsen

SFF Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE)

Department of Archaeology, History,

Cultural Studies and Religion

University of Bergen

P.O. Box 7805

5020 Bergen

Norway

Silje.bentsen@uib.no

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6394-4437>