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*The Archaeology of Mobility: Old World and New World Nomadism*, edited by Hans Barnard & Willeke Wendrich, 2008. Los Angeles (CA): The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA; ISBN 978-1-931745-50-5 hardback £55 & US\$89.95; ISBN 978-1-931745-49-9 paperback £35 & US\$55; xi+603 pp., 134 figs., 25 tables

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This volume combines the papers given at two meetings held in 2004, the second being a workshop session that took place at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA. It is the Fourth Cotsen Advanced Seminar to be published and, like its predecessors, deliberately combines papers from scholars working in both the Old and New Worlds to stimulate and facilitate inter-disciplinary discussion and interaction (p. 2). The result is a very diverse, wide-ranging collection of articles focused on mobility or intermittent/seasonal occupation of sites from hunting and foraging Palaeo-Eskimo settlements in the Arctic by S. Brooke Milne and those of Early Pleistocene camelid herders in the Andes by D. Browman to contemporary experimental and ethno-archaeological accounts of nomads in Egypt and Sudan. The volume concludes with a not entirely compelling, albeit stimulating, computer simulation agent-based model (ABM) by L. Kuznar and R. Sedlmeyer that attempts to predict the conditions under which nomads periodically settle down and become agriculturalists or city dwellers.

Some articles present and illustrate primary archaeological data, while others reconstruct different technologies of mobile peoples, describing in detail their contemporary ways of life and adaptations to modernity. The quality of these very diverse contributions is almost uniformly

excellent. Most studies describe and analyse their materials in a generally convincing, often sophisticated and, at times, stimulating and provocative fashion (for example, G. Buccellati's text-based interpretation of the Amorites as nomadized peasants whose adaptation to the Syrian steppe led to the formation of their tribe). The volume as a whole is well illustrated and handsomely produced.

The book begins with a general overview of the archaeology of mobility, by the two co-editors W. Wendrich and H. Barnard who thoughtfully review and redefine concepts and definitions of hunter-gatherers and pastoral nomads. The co-editors first raise many of the issues that are somewhat repetitively addressed by later contributors, such as the archaeological visibility/invisibility of ephemeral camp sites or the need to correct the overdrawn, almost stereotypic dichotomy between 'the steppe/desert and the sown' or between mobile and settled ways of life. Many contributors present evidence of intermittently occupied archaeological sites and thus implicitly, if not explicitly, minimize this problem of visibility; a few, however (e.g. A. Smith for the Khoekhoen in South Africa: pp. 266–9) more soberly view the often scanty or faint material evidence as a real, even insuperable, difficulty to overcome without the help of historical or ethnographic sources.

Nearly everyone agrees that the contrast between settled and mobile ways of life has been grossly exaggerated, particularly by literate urban scholars dismissive of 'uncivilized' animal herders; a corollary of this caricature is to consider the nomadic way of life as timeless or unchanging, the nomads of today resembling precisely the herders described in Genesis. S. Rosen's illuminating discussion of a series of technological changes in 'desert pastoral nomadism' over the *longue durée* effectively demolishes this misconception and raises the additional question of the universal validity of ethnographic analogies (a problem also cogently addressed by R. Bernbeck (pp. 46–9) and S.M. Burstein (pp. 250–52)):

In the adoption of some version of archaeo-anthropological uniformitarianism for the explanation of the past, that past social and cultural processes are all recognizable in the present, we ignore the possibility, indeed the probability, of the existence of ancient circumstances for which there is no modern parallel or of modern circumstances with no ancient parallel. ... The ultimate result of this emphasis on ethnography and textual history for our comprehension of pastoral nomadism seems to be its perception as somehow fossilized ... [yet] It has evolved no less than its village and urban contemporaries. There is a richness of texture to that history that cannot be reproduced through reference to the ethnographic present, in all its variability. (Rosen pp. 117–19)

After the introduction, the contributions are divided into two roughly equal parts: Part I – The Past at Present (Chapters 2–14); and Part II – The Present and the Future (Chapters 15–25). The reasons for this division are a bit unclear: Part I is supposed to represent an 'overview of the state of a research on a certain area, people, or period', while Part II 'emphasizes ethnoarchaeology or experimental archaeology

and provides outlines or suggestions for further research' (p. 3). It may have made more sense to divide those studies describing mobile hunter-gatherers from those referring to pastoral nomads and/or to group them first according to culture area. Certainly, this collection does not pretend to provide a global or representative coverage of mobile peoples.

Six studies deal with intermittently occupied sites of terminal hunter-gatherers/incipient herders to larger nomadic tribal confederations from Syria, Iran, Turkey and the southern Levant. These include A. Betts's informative discussion of late Pre-pottery Neolithic 'hunter-forager-herders' in northern Arabia; R. Bernbeck's interpretation of the tiny Halaf-related hamlet of Fistikli-Höyük as a cached site utilized periodically by a larger multi-sited community; A. Alizadeh's unconvincing and anachronistic analogy between Chalcolithic remains in southwestern Iran and those of much later and larger tribal confederations, such as the Qashqaai and Bakhtiyaari; G. Buccellati's highly original analysis of the origin and social structure of the Amorites; J.J. Szuchman's discussion of the sedentarization of the later Arameans; and S. Rosen's review of a sequence of technological changes transforming desert nomadic societies over millennia in the Negev and southern Levant.

Seven contributions cover nomadic societies in Egypt and Sudan from pharaonic times to the present. These include S.M. Burstein's sensible critique of classical accounts ('ancient ethnographies') of the Troglodytes and Blemmyes in the Eastern Desert of Lower Nubia; S.T. Smith's rejection of static or essentialized conceptions of ethnicity and demonstration of archaeologically identifiable ethnic remains of Nubians and Egyptians at the sites of Askut and Tombos in Sudanese Nubia and at the trading centre of Berenike on the Red Sea coast; the meticulously documented attempt of H. Barnard to reconstruct the operational sequence (*chaîne opératoire*) of Eastern Desert Ware, which was supposedly produced by pastoral nomads; two somewhat contradictory studies of nomadic architecture: A. A-Magid documents the continuous construction of skin, hair, and mat tents among the Hadendowa in northeast Sudan and B.A. Saidel provides a historically contextualized analysis of the classic Bedouin tent and how it has changed with the introduction of commodities, such as coffee and tobacco, in relatively recent times. Saidel totally rejects any historical connection between the Iron Age I pillar houses of the southern Levant and the later Bedouin black tents. A. Roe's ethnographically informed study of Libyan pastoralists' exploitation of oases in the Egyptian Desert sensibly questions the visibility of the archaeological record. W. Wendrich presents a sensitive, multi-layered and richly illustrated ethno-archaeological study of the material culture of the contemporary Ababda desert nomads in southeastern Egypt.

Four articles present archaeological evidence for nomads from the Eurasian steppes. These include a report on the excavations of two nomadic encampments in Kalymykia by N. Shishlina, E.I. Gak and A.V. Borisov; the study of three rock-art complexes in western Mongolia by E. Jacobsen-Tepfer; and the complementary reports of

archaeological investigations in southeastern Kazakhstan by C. Chang, who has studied mobility and sedentism among Iron Age 'agropastoralists' in the Talgar region since the early 1990s, and M. Frachetti's landscape archaeological analysis of variability among pastoral nomads, including the excavations of a settlement, Begash, that surprisingly was occupied throughout most of the Bronze Age.

Other papers include a study of the constraints on the mobility of Late Woodland hunters and incipient agriculturalists in the Upper Great Lakes region by M.B. Holman and W.A. Lovis. Their reconstruction is convincing but heavily based on environmental considerations and on early historical accounts of ethnically recorded groups, such as the Ottawa and Chippewa. J.W. Eerkens persuasively explains the nearly universal inverse correlation between the presence of ceramics and mobility and shows how the Paiute, Shoshone, and Mojave Desert people of the Western Great Basin resolved these inherent incompatibilities and began to produce and use pottery – at least on a limited scale. Finally, R.L. Cribb discusses the adverse impacts of high-density fixed housing projects on contemporary Australian aboriginal peoples who traditionally lived in less dense, more mobile and open settlements.

Clearly, the 'archaeology of mobility' takes different forms among differently organized and structured societies. The empirically rich and methodologically and theoretically sophisticated studies collected here unequivocally demonstrate the possibility of excavating intermittently occupied settlements and of reconstructing the social structure of peoples who periodically and predictably moved over a culturally perceived landscape. But they also clearly reveal that the discovery, excavation and reconstruction of mobile settlements are difficult tasks, heavily dependent upon often undocumented or uncertain assumptions, such as limited and traditional adaptations to static, marginal environments. Even more vexing is what S. Burstein (p. 252) nicely terms 'the problem of the ethnographic present', the tendency to regard 'the most authoritative ethnography of a people ... as universally valid', creating 'an impression of changelessness as characterizing the history of peoples living in nonstate societies'. This volume shows that these problems can be addressed, if not always convincingly be overcome.

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