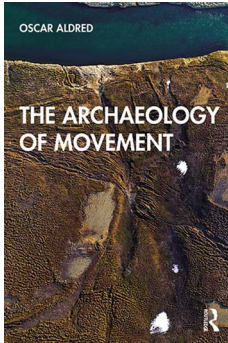


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OSCAR ALDRED. 2021. *The archaeology of movement*. London: Routledge; 978-0-36719-535-9 hardback £96.



I am writing this review just as the UK is emerging from a long period of collective immobility. At the beginning of 2020 most of the world went into ‘lockdown’ as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. National and international travel slowed to an almost complete halt, roads quietened, streets emptied and the skies cleared of vapour trails. We were never truly immobile during this time, of course, and for me, small routine mobilities, such as walking the dog as part of my once-daily prescribed walk, became hugely important. There may well be further lockdowns and restrictions, but right now the promise of once again being able to move a little more freely makes a book on the archaeology of movement seem appropriate reading.

This slim book by Oscar Aldred, one of the foremost thinkers on archaeology and movement, asks two fundamental questions: ‘*why should archaeology study movement?*’ and ‘*how should archaeology study movement?*’ These are questions that have received surprisingly little scrutiny in archaeology and, as a result, as Aldred points out, movement is under-theorised and under-developed, and past mobility is often taken for granted. This book aims to set this straight and “offer positive and useful ways for archaeology to think about movement” (p. 1).

The volume is divided into five chapters and begins by assessing the way mobility has been treated in archaeology, arguing that the topic has been, on the whole, mistreated. The author briefly identifies a number of broad approaches to movement in archaeology, representing a selection of previous and current thinking on the subject. These include migration, which has been central to archaeology since its early days, particularly in explaining large-scale cultural change, as well as trade and exchange. Aldred highlights that in these conceptions, movement tends to be homogenised and the details glossed over, and often a straight line is drawn between a point of origin and a destination, without discussing the variables in between. Within this discussion are things such as phenomenology and the moving body, as well as those approaches inspired by the New Mobilities Paradigm—an approach that has had a significant impact on other disciplines within the social sciences, but less so within archaeology. This provides a useful summary of existing ways of understanding movement in archaeology, and it is clear that archaeology does not have a good interpretive framework for understanding past movement in a complex way. People become, in the words of Ruth Tringham, “faceless blobs” (quoted on pp. 29 & 80).

Aldred moves this discussion on by looking at ways in which archaeologists can foreground movement. This part is divided into ‘Thinking’ and ‘Doing’; and under the former, a

number of current theoretical approaches are discussed—from materiality to embodiment to assemblage. “What the archaeology of movement requires,” writes Aldred, “is much more mobile *thinking*” (p. 36). But we then need to “move beyond *thinking* about movement and get to the *doing*” (p. 62). In answer to this, Aldred discusses three potential methods: network analysis to look at the mobility that flows along lines that connect places; operational chains, which can be used to understand underlying processes attached to movement practices; and rhythm analysis to investigate the complex interactions of cyclical and linear rhythms.

What follows are two detailed case studies that put some of the aforementioned discussion into practice. The first uses common sheep grazing and transhumance in Iceland. It identifies three interpretive scales—the broad level of the movement of sheep and people, including rounding up, gathering and sorting; the second scale looks at the destinations of this practice; and the third level is associated with the objects left at the sorting fold—from brass buttons to pottery. This case study neatly highlights the multiple scales of mobility, as well as the spatialities and temporalities that operated across multiple sites. The next case study uses the excavation of an extensive Iron Age and Roman settlement in Cambridgeshire. Here, trackways are shown to emerge, become formalised as other structures develop around them and then go out of use. Both of these detailed, carefully considered case studies show how by foregrounding mobility, other interpretations, or at least other angles, can develop.

The final chapter summarises the aforementioned and highlights what makes the way movement is framed in archaeology distinct from other disciplines; its temporalising process, for example, or the way that the process of archaeology is itself mobilising, which, Aldred argues, separates it from the other social sciences and the broader mobilities turn. The book concludes with a series of brief themes—co-presence, observation, in-betweenness, interdependence and, finally, repetition, rhythm and speed.

This is an important book in the continued effort to encourage better discussions about movement and mobility in archaeology. It offers a useful summary of previous and current studies of past mobilities, provides a series of useful theoretical frameworks and, importantly, suggests ways forward. In that latter sense, it joins the recent book by Martin Bell (2020) in pointing to practical ways of recording and understanding mobility in the archaeological record and incorporating movement-related thinking within our interpretations. This book is much more theory-laden than Bell’s, however; it is more of a theoretical treatise inspired by the ‘mobility turn’ and recent philosophical developments in archaeology than a practical toolkit. For me, this infuses the book with a level of abstractness that has the effect of removing some of the messy humanness of past movements—the rosy cheeks and aching legs, the wind and the rain and the mud. Furthermore, it could have included more on, for example, the way mobility is social, cultural, political and meaningful; how it is freedom, constraint, rebellion and performance. Nevertheless, it is a welcome call for an archaeology of movement, without which, as Aldred states, “archaeology will remain impoverished, and limited in its scope and what it can say about the past” (p. 105).

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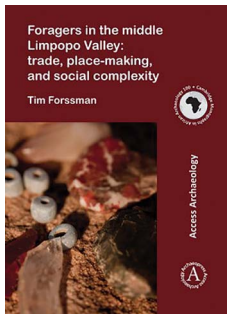
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TIM FORSSMAN. 2020. *Foragers in the middle Limpopo Valley: trade, place-making, and social complexity.* Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-686-8 eBook Open Access.



With his book *Foragers in the middle Limpopo Valley: trade, place-making, and social complexity* South African archaeologist Tim Forssman takes us on a journey back in time across a region that is critical in southern Africa for understanding the complex mechanisms behind the evolution of past human societies. The middle Limpopo Valley extends into South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, and is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty and plentiful wildlife, including herds of elephants that attracted Iron Age communities and European hunters alike. Located at the confluence of the Limpopo, the Shashe and the Motloutse Rivers, this region

hosts several rockshelters that preserve the traces of the last foragers to have lived in the area. They are the main protagonists of this book. One must acknowledge that the archaeological record associated with these foragers is not spectacular. What makes the region remarkable, however, is the fact that not only is it one of the few places in the world where foragers interacted for several centuries with farmers, but it is also where foragers shared a territory with farming communities at a time when they were organising themselves into one of the first African, state-level societies at Mapungubwe.

The author proposes a preliminary synthesis of the nature of interactions between foragers and farmers in the middle Limpopo Valley, with, as the subtitle suggests, a particular emphasis on trade, place-making and social complexity. He examines the period preceding the appearance of the first farmers in the area beginning around 1200 BC, until the decline of Mapungubwe's influence at AD 1300. He builds his reasoning on his own experience as a field archaeologist and lithic analyst who has spent the last decade working in the region, as well as on existing information from the recent literature. The author considers data from nine rockshelters of different dimensions and possibly distinct uses by foragers: Balerno Main, Tshisiku, Balerno Shelters 2 and 3, Little Muck, Dzombo, Mafunyane, João and Euphorbia.

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