

Session title: MOBILITY AND MIGRATION IN HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETIES: FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE GLOBAL SCALE

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Time: Friday afternoon

Room:

Session abstract:

Mobility is a pivotal instrument for human survival. Mobility, defined here, as movement of people, things, and ideas, is a central concern to the understanding of human societies across the globe. The concept includes different geographic and temporal scales, from individuals' random movements to intercontinental migrations. Most patterns in the archaeological record one way or another result from mobility, yet the understanding of the relationship between the static archaeological records and the dynamic prehistoric societies is a classical archaeological 'enigma' and continues to challenge our skills.

The idea is to discuss a multi-scalar time-space framework that may integrate aspects of hunter-gatherer mobility and migration at different scales: 1) the individual (artefact), 2) household (dwelling), 3) regional (annual settlement cycle) and 4) world-system (trade/exchange network).

Papers deal with archaeological, as well as ethno-archaeological cases from all over the world and also historical and ethnographic cases that illustrate aspects of hunter-gatherer mobility and migration.

Topics (among others) we would like presenters to address are:

- How do we recognize mobility in the archaeological record and how do we distinguish between movement of people and movements of artefacts?
- Which motivations and drivers act when hunter-gatherers leave well-known landscapes and migrate to new land?
- Why do archaeological explanations for mobility change when operating at different scales? How do we read exchange networks in the archaeological records?
- Are exchange systems adaptive strategies or cultural and ideological markers?
- What is the role of mobility/migration in maintaining (or dissolving) hunter-gatherer societies?
- What does different transportation technologies mean to migrations and mobility patterns?

Paper abstracts:

THE EARLY PIONEER SETTLEMENT OF NORTHERN FENNOSCANDIA

Hans Peter Blankholm, Institute of Archaeology, University of Tromsø, Norway

After the last glaciation humans reached the coast of the northern Top of the World at around 9500 BP. The predominant view has been that the colonization occurred along the coast from the south. However, new paleoenvironmental reconstructions have raised the possibility for other routes either from the Kola peninsula, through Finland from the Gulf of Bothnia, or through Swedish Norrland across the Caledonian Mountains. Concurrently archaeologists have generally attributed the swift northward movement either to hunters following shifting migrations of reindeer herds or to people exploiting marine resources.

This paper raises and discusses a number of important related issues and questions: Did they all necessarily come from the same place or “culture”? What motivated people to move into the Arctic and, just as important, to stay? Where, when, and why did the marine component (resources and navigation) come in? How did people relate to new resources, raw-materials, and highly marked seasonality, including the Arctic dark season? How did they communicate and exchange goods?

EARLY POSTGLACIAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND EFFECTS ON HUMAN PRESENCE IN THE LANDSCAPE: CASE STUDIES FROM EASTERN FINNMARK, NORWAY

Jan Ingolf Kleppe, Institute of Archaeology, University of Tromsø, Norway

As the northernmost and easternmost part of Norway, not only does Eastern Finnmark represent one of the most extreme areas of expansion during the Northwest European mesolithic, it is also an area where the effects of climate change – both rapid and longterm – are clearly visible in the landscape and geological record. Through three case studies based on field surveys and excavations this paper will present a summary of ongoing research on early postglacial human settlement of and presence in Eastern Finnmark, looking at human/material culture/landscape interaction in an unstable and changing environment.

THE FIRST TRAVELLERS TO THE EASTERN SHORE OF THE BALTIC BASIN

Ilga Zagorska, Riga, Latvia

At the end of the Late Glacial (DR III) the territory of the east Baltic was already free of the ice sheet, and the physical landscape (relief, vegetation, fauna) had been formed. This time also bears the traces of the earliest peopling of this unknown area.

The bones of the main hunting game – reindeer – and the dates obtained of them are generally consistent with the course of deglaciation in the area. The archaeological evidence (flint artifacts, antler and bone harpoons) of human presence appeared a little later. The finds are connected with the river valleys of the major rivers, characterizing the seasonal movements of the first travellers along the banks of the rivers to the coast of the Baltic Ice Lake in the north. This occupation evidence – sites and stray finds – indicates the routes followed by the reindeer and the people from summer to winter pastures and back again. This movement took place during the Younger Dryas and onwards.

In the second part of Preboreal, in the Mesolithic period, when lake basins developed into centres of intensive settlement, the reindeer hunters changed to the more stable way of life and another subsistence strategy.

HUNTER-GATHERER MIGRATIONS, CONSOLIDATIONS AND DISAPPEARANCES IN NORTHEAST GREENLAND

Mikkel Sørensen, Sila - The National Museum of Denmark, Denmark

Not less than four migrations into northeast Greenland, and subsequent colonisations or consolidations, have happened by different hunter-gatherer societies. These are: The Independence I (2500-1900 BC), Saqqaq (2500-800 BC), Greenlandic Dorset (800-0 BC) and the Thule Culture (1200-1800 BC).

Northeast Greenland is a high Arctic region, characterized by a low primary production, few species, a low precipitation and long winters with extensive ice covering of the seascapes. The geography of the region, as a narrow coastal landscape/seascape between the Greenland Ice sheet and the Greenland Sea, leaves merely room for a north-south mobility through the region and give thereby excellent opportunities for studies of the hunter-gatherer migrations and their mobility.

Common for the hunter-gatherer societies in northeast Greenland are that they all disappeared from the region after having a stable, in some cases residential, use of the region, at least some hundred years each.

In the paper the nature of the four large-scale migrations will be described, discussed and compared in relation to the different theoretical models for human migration.

Moreover the question of migration and disappearance, of the four cultures, will be discussed in relation to changes in the Holocene Arctic climate and the high Arctic environment. It is concluded that ice sea free conditions north of Greenland during the summer, is a climatic related precaution for the Thule Culture, and maybe also for the Independence I and the Greenlandic Dorset, who all are arriving directly from Canada and the western Arctic. On the other hand none of the disappearances of the hunter-gatherer societies in Northeast Greenland can be explained by changes in the Holocene climate.

AT THE EDGE: HUNTER-GATHERER MOBILITY AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN HIGH ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTS

Bjarne Grønnow, Sila – The National Museum of Denmark, Denmark

In the High Arctic, marine game, like seals, walrus and whales, is concentrated at a few 'hot spots' determined by sea ice conditions. Knowledge on the location of these often distant openings in the sea ice, where game is momentarily concentrated, is of vital importance for the societies, and thus mobility is a key to life on a regional as well as a local scale. Decisions on how to move around, how to get access to resources through partnerships, and how to cache and share food and materials, could mean life or death to a human society in the High Arctic. Recent studies of the Thule Culture of North East Greenland illustrate some of these issues.

The 'window' for settlement in North East Greenland opened up during mid 15th century, where the people of the Thule Culture – the Inuit - migrated into the region, which became quite densely populated. However, four hundred years later - by the beginning of the 19th century – the Thule people of the region disappeared. The British Captain Clavering encountered a small group of natives in 1823 on the island now bearing his name, but that was the first and last time that Europeans met natives in North East Greenland.

The paper presents new information provided by the GeoArk-project on the Thule Culture settlement patterns throughout these four hundred years. Environmental and cultural factors that influenced the colonisation and depopulation processes are discussed, and the evidence from High Arctic is put into perspective in relation to general hunter-gatherer studies.

MARRYING THE ENEMY: MOBILITY ACROSS SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN NEOLITHIC NORWAY

Knut Andreas Bergsvik, University of Bergen, Norway

The hunter-fishers of early Neolithic western Norway were sedentary within relatively small districts along the coast. Between these districts, there appears to have been long-term, stable social boundaries, some of which had roots in the preceding Mesolithic period.

At the same time, several lithic raw materials with known sources were distributed across the boundaries, and these raw materials were treated in strikingly similar fashions throughout the region. The paper tries to develop a theory of mobility from the study of Stone Age lithic technology, based on insights from the chaîne opératoire approach. The most important questions deal with the way lithic raw materials and artefacts spread across such boundaries and how the technological knowledge was transferred. It is argued that task group mobility and mobility related to marriage relations were important factors in for the long-distance spread of things as well as technologies.

TERRITORIALITY OF MOBILE HUNTER-GATHERERS

Ulla, Odgaard, Sila – The national Museum of Denmark, Denmark

How can you defend your hunting grounds when you are not there (all the time)? This paper will discuss aspects of mobility patterns and territorial systems of hunter-

gatherers. A case study from the Thule culture in Western Greenland, where historical sources complement the archaeological sources, show how the settlement patterns in a region of summer hunting, maintain the “social boundary defence” territorial organization in a “two-generations system”. Due to contact with other groups and access to trade/exchange, the mobility pattern, type of dwellings and the size of the social units at one point change significantly, and cause a total reorganization of the territorial pattern.

MAKING YOUR CACHE WORK FOR YOU: HUNTER-GATHERER STORAGE AND MOBILITY PRACTICES

Penny Cunningham, University of Exeter, UK

Determining mobility by hunter-gatherers in European prehistory is a difficult and relies heavily on the movement of artefacts. However, this paper proposes that we can explore mobility through the storage practices of hunter-gatherers. Generally, when we think of storage in prehistory we tend to think about the large-scale storage of grain in pits, silos or granaries, during the later prehistoric periods. As large-scale storage is thought to restrict mobility, discussions on storage practiced by hunter-gatherers are rather limited. Yet ethnographic evidence demonstrates that hunter-gatherers, both mobile and semi-sedentary, store highly seasonal food resources and we find that storage is not restricted to just large-scale and long-term storage.

By considering the role that portable storage and caches (small-scale storage) plays in more recent hunter-gatherers mobility strategies and the evidence of such practices in the archaeological record, this paper demonstrates how we can begin to understand the important, and one could say vital role, that storage may have played in the mobility patterns of prehistoric hunter-gatherers during the Mesolithic.

FORGET MOBILITY, LET’S TALK ABOUT MOVEMENT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM IRISH EARLY PREHISTORY

Thomas Kador, UCD School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, Ireland

Discussions of hunter-gatherer mobility have long been dominated by models of cyclical movements between different territories, camp types and resource bases. While from a long term, large scale perspective these models might be ‘true’ both ethnography and archaeology have shown that on the ground movement can be much more varied, random and unpredictable. In relation to the study of early prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities this means that we cannot simply assume that they moved in the ways we expect them to, based on our often self fulfilling models. Consequently, if we really want to get closer at how people moved in the past we must pay close attention to what the evidence actually tell us. This brings with it two key challenges which I will aim to address with this paper. Firstly, how can we utilise archaeological evidence from early prehistoric northwest Europe to further our understanding of people’s movements? And secondly, how can we

discuss this evidence on its own merits away from the well entrenched mobility models that have been largely left unchallenged for the past three decades?

FORAGER LANDSCAPE DYNAMICS: ASSESSING THE BEHAVIOURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SPATIO-TEMPORAL PATTERNS IN THE MESOLITHIC RECORD OF THE NETHERLANDS

Hans Peeters, National Service for Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Built Heritage, The Netherlands

The archaeological record of Mesolithic foragers in the Netherlands consists of many thousands of 'sites' (mainly flint scatters). Structural features consist almost exclusively of pit hearths, which can occur in large concentrations (up to 500 on a single 'site') in the northern part of the Netherlands. Definite dwelling structures are extremely rare, however, which could suggest high mobility of forager groups. On the basis of ^{14}C evidence and spatial patterning at multiple scales, this paper addresses several aspects of landscape use and mobility from various perspectives. The dating evidence suggests chronological continuities and discontinuities at local ('site'), regional and supra-regional levels. These continuities and discontinuities have been interpreted by several scholars in terms of demographic shifts related to the extension of dense (Atlantic) forests as a result of Holocene climate change, pushing foraging groups to 'open' coastal and riverine landscape zones. Combined with sea level rise and subsequent 'loss' of land, it has also been suggested that demographic pressure triggered decreasing mobility. However, from a multi-scalar perspective, it is argued that relationships between people and particular places in the landscape were very pertinent in terms of providing structure and meaning to the foragers' landscape. In approaching the evidence (also outside the Netherlands) at the scale of forager landscapes, it will be suggested that certain phenomena (e.g. 'permanent' dwelling structures) can be interpreted as expressions of long-term relationships between people-places-landscapes, rather than reflecting decreased mobility, notwithstanding spatio-temporal shifts of landscape use.

HUNTER-GATHERER MOBILITY IN RESPONSE TO EXTREME GEOPHYSICAL EVENTS: THE LAACHER SEE CASE STUDY

Felix Riede, University College London, UK

At the very end of the Pleistocene, northern Europe was occupied by hunter-gatherers partaking in a material culture – the Late Magdalenian or *Federmesser* groups – that was remarkably homogeneous over vast area. Mobility, it is argued, was the key to maintaining these extensive networks and there is considerable evidence in support of this. While the long-distance exchanges and travels undertaken by these people were no doubt framed in rich culturally specific terms, these networks also served as a safety net against the extraordinarily rapid climatic fluctuations of the terminal Pleistocene. This function of mobility as a tool for survival is thrown into relief as the Laacher See volcano, located in present-day

western Germany, erupted catastrophically at around 13,000 years ago. In this paper I will examine the consequences of this eruption and explore the causal mechanisms that stimulated contemporaneous forager groups to change both the 'where' and 'how' of their mobility patterns in the succeeding periods.

IVORY AND IRON – THE LOCAL IN THE GLOBAL AND THE GLOBAL IN THE LOCAL

Martin Appelt, Sila – The National Museum of Denmark, Denmark

With a view from a small group of 12th and 13th centuries Late Dorset dwelling-structures in Thule the paper will explore a series of complex and possibly connected events that affect the decisions and actions of various individuals in the Thule area, while “simultaneously” influencing other individuals actions in Alaska, Europe and the Middle East.

The Thule area holds the only source to meteoric iron in the Eastern Arctic. The iron was exchanged deep into the Canadian Arctic, and may well have been one of the “pull-effects” leading groups of Inuit to migrate from Alaska into the eastern Arctic. The Thule area also holds one of Greenland’s large populations of walrus. Walrus was not only important to the Late Dorset groups inhabiting the area, but also to the Norse farmers of Southwest Greenland. Historical sources suggest that walrus-ivory was the most important commodity in ensuring the Greenlandic Norse connection to Europe; as a trade commodity, and as a means to pay tithe to the Roman Church and taxes to the Norwegian king. From Norway the walrus-tusk was traded into the larger European system. Furthermore there are reasons to believe that some of the “White Sea” ivory found in the Middle East and India may actually have been walrus-tusk from the Thule area.

The story to be told is seemingly driven by a series of decisions actions and effects that appear abnormal and chaotic in relation to both the locally constituted behavioural patterns, and beyond the local. In order to understand the story one has to try to operate simultaneously on almost all levels from the local to the global.