

ences and a large number of well-selected illustrations of uniformly high quality, which will do much to help the student's understanding of the subject. The omission of magnifications from some illustrations is a minor deduction from their value.

A thoroughly good book, eminently suitable as an introduction to past vegetation.

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Comets and Minor Planets

La Poussière Cosmique. Les milieux interplanétaire, interstellaire, et intergalactique (*Évolution des Sciences*, No. 19). A. Dauvillier. Masson, Paris, 1961. 212 pp. Illus.

This French book on "cosmic dust" is essentially an account of the author's theories about the intergalactic, interstellar, and especially interplanetary media. After a 19-page introduction, and out of 177 pages of text proper, no less than 144 pages are devoted to the minor bodies of the solar system, with well over half on comets; much of the rest is devoted to meteors, meteorites, and asteroids. Few of the modern data on the gas are discussed. Nevertheless, this section includes the more interesting part of the book, in that it exposes the fallacies in some of the currently fashionable theories and describes at length the arguments for the author's own thesis, namely, that cosmic dust, micrometeorites, meteorites, cometary nuclei, microsattellites (of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), and asteroids are all vestiges and products of the breakup of the terrestrial planet postulated by Olbers to account for the minor planets—and possibly of a lost satellite of Neptune. The references are curiously loaded with obscure popular or semi-popular papers of old authors (mainly 19th-century French), while modern references are sketchy. For instance, other theories of the origin of comets are either ignored (Oort's is not even mentioned), or given short shrift (Littleton's is dismissed in one paragraph); Whipple fares better: two paragraphs, one of which gives priority for the icy conglomerate model to G. A. Hirn in a book published in Paris in 1889! A more serious defect is the evidence of excessive haste and care-

lessness in putting together the author's reading notes into a book. For example, the statement on page 78, which is used to describe the polarimetric observations of the nucleus of a comet, "the polarisation . . . decreased with phase angle," is obscure because the range of phase angle is not stated. Furthermore, there are occasional plain errors of fact: the motion of Phobos, the inner satellite of Mars, is shown and described, on pages 47 and 48, as retrograde; the motion is direct.

The two brief chapters on interstellar gas and dust are extremely poor and sketchy; the last chapter (nine pages on intergalactic matter) is even worse and shows that the author is here way out of his field. The author (or the editors of the series) should have had the good sense to recognize it and to limit the discussion to the solar system.

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South Sea Island Immigrants

Peasants in the Pacific. A study of Fiji Indian rural society. Adrian C. Mayer. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961. 201 pp. Illus. \$6.

The British Crown Colony of Fiji has been called "The Little India of the Pacific," because agricultural labor brought there, as to other British Colonies during this and the last century, and their descendants, now 170,000 strong, outnumber native Fijians and all other peoples residing in these South Sea Islands. No longer bound by indenture and despite government regulations which virtually exclude them from acquiring freehold farm lands of their own, most Fiji Indians have preferred to stay in these islands rather than return to India. In so remaining, they have become a peasantry dominated by the economics of sugar production and also the largest overseas Indian community to be found anywhere.

During 1950 and 1951 Mayer studied three settlements, which represented about one percent of the population, located in each of the rural areas where Fiji Indians are concentrated. In his presentation of this research, he gives a concise review of the historical and cultural factors that have influenced some of the settlement and so-

cial patterns and a brief and excellent analysis of the major activities upon which this rural economy rests, as well as of the relations of these to certain aspects of the social structure. Variations and changes in caste, kinship, and the ritual life are described and related to the different localities of origin in India and to the effects of emigration and adaptation to a new social and economic order. Most interesting here is the effect that reliance on a single productive economy—growing sugar cane—has had upon that bulwark of Indian social and economic organization, caste, for in India caste is as much a system of economic interdependence between occupationally specialized groups as it is a matter of social rank and religious life. Greatest emphasis, however, is placed on the local political scene and its various organizational contexts, and on factionalism, leadership, and some aspects of social control. The manner in which these cut across the diversities of caste, linguistic affiliation, and religion brought from India is of utmost importance, for in these political activities are to be found the interests and values around which this new and emergent version of Indian society has become integrated in a multiethnic setting that includes Fijians, Europeans, and Chinese. The scope of this analysis is purposely restricted to rural settlements, but in an attempt to relate these to Fijian society at large, the author has, in a concluding chapter, summarized some of the attitudes and stereotypes Fiji Indians have toward each other, toward Fijians and Europeans, and toward their Indian homeland. As the subtitle indicates, the urban residents of the Fiji Indian community, whose importance and power derive from their participation in trade, finance, and Colony politics, are hardly discussed, yet their relation to the rural population is made abundantly clear.

Peasant communities, which form but a part of a large, heterogeneous, and complex society, are anything but easy to describe analytically, for they lack the unity and clearly defined social structures which relatively autonomous primitive societies possess and which social anthropologists have become skilled in handling. In this case the difficulties are amplified by the fact that Fiji Indians themselves come from diverse regional and social backgrounds, and many of these differences are perpetuated in the new setting.