

Peripatetic Peoples

The Other Nomads. Peripatetic Minorities in Cross-Cultural Perspective. APARNA RAO, Ed. Böhlau, Cologne, 1987. xiv, 391 pp., illus. DM 96.

The anthropological literature on nomads is focused almost exclusively on pastoralists. The "other nomads," peripatetic peoples who are not pastoralists, are the subject of the present work. Such peripatetics, sometimes called "service nomads," are defined as non-food-producing, endogamous, itinerant peoples who subsist primarily through the sale of goods and the provision of services. They form a small part of many societies the world over. Found at the economic and social margins of society in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, they are often labeled "Gypsies." In the United States they entertain at carnivals and engage in such occupations as fortune-telling, asphalt-ing driveways, and trafficking in used cars. Peripatetics the world over discover periodic and ephemeral resources, quickly expand to exploit them, and then disperse to search for new resources (Gmelch and Gmelch, p. 135, on Travellers in Britain, and Kaminski, p. 323, on Polish Gypsies, drawing from the work of Lauwagie). Utilizing strategies of spatial mobility, dispersal, extreme minority numbers, specialized individual skills, transportable material resources, knowledge of diverse ecocultural systems, and stigmatization, these people exploit the "peripatetic niche—a demand for specialized services/goods which sedentary communities cannot, or are unwilling to support on a fulltime basis" (Berland, p. 248, on the Kanjar of Pakistan). Some further examples of these occupations are horse-trading, copper-smithing, woodworking, begging, and musical entertaining.

The "other nomads" of this volume differ from such peripatetics as migrant wage laborers and many academics by the nature of their cultures and societies. Although a part of the complex societies to which they provide goods and services, as minorities these groups constitute their own separate sub-societies. They distinguish themselves as unique peoples and utilize such ethnic markers as endogamy, kinship connections, language, religion, and notions of ritual purity to set themselves off from others and to provide themselves some protection. Members of the societies with whom they relate

consider these peripatetics outcasts and pariahs and discriminate against, even persecute, them. By their own economic and social strategies, by the exclusionary practices of the host societies, and by the images that they create and that are created by others, these people are not integrated members of the wider societies in which they live and travel.

Some peripatetics have maintained a degree of cultural, social, and linguistic integrity for generations. Many scholars believe that Gypsies derive from people of Indo-European origin who lived in northern India millennia ago and then dispersed. Linguistic evidence supports this view. Other peripatetics are the result of more recent historical processes. In some areas of the world, peripatetics are those people who have abandoned (out of economic necessity or political pressure) their livelihoods as hunter-gatherers, nomadic pastoralists, peasant agriculturalists, or craftspeople and have found new livelihoods at the margins of society. Only one of the volume's authors, Kaminski, deals in depth with such historical processes. The other authors, possibly because of the lack of concrete evidence, have left them aside.

The Other Nomads contains 13 ethnographic case studies of peripatetics in various parts of the world, including Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The volume also contains a preface by Fredrik Barth, a useful introduction by the editor, and several general chapters. It draws attention to people who have often been given little coverage elsewhere, and it effectively establishes and explains the features that they hold in common.

A theoretical contribution of the collection relates to the nature of marginalized, small-scale societies and their relationships with complex society. How do such societies create and maintain distinctiveness through time, under often difficult and discriminatory circumstances? The authors discuss, often in detail, various dimensions of the economic, political, social, and ritual lives of their respective groups of peripatetics as these dimensions pertain to both the distinctiveness of the groups themselves and the exclusionary patterns they face from their host societies.

Most of the authors comment on contemporary circumstances and pose questions

about the ability of peripatetic groups to maintain themselves in rapidly changing times. Current economic and political pressures restrict the access of these groups to the niches they have exploited in the past. In particular, modern nation-states everywhere attempt to control the inhabitants of their territories. In many areas, peripatetics, who have difficulty escaping state power, hold no formal, legal status. In Europe particularly, but also in such areas as the Middle East, peripatetics move, often clandestinely and without travel documents, across state borders. Also in Europe and other areas, peripatetics are not permitted to maintain their mobility and flexible residential patterns. Government officials, desiring to settle these people, are increasingly unwilling to allow them to set up camps or other temporary residences in their chosen locations. On the economic level, the handmade goods of peripatetics compete with inexpensive industrial counterparts, and their services, too, are often rendered unnecessary. Handmade tools and containers, for example, are replaced by plastic wares. Changes in communications and the mass media threaten the peripatetics' livelihoods. Mechanized transportation, new roads, and the growth of towns lessen the need for the goods and services of peripatetics. Entertainments provided by peripatetics have their modern counterparts in television and movies. Berland notes that the process of Islamization in Pakistan has meant that the entertainments peripatetics offered in the past, such as public singing and dancing, are being restricted (p. 262). Though some of the authors are pessimistic about the ability of peripatetic groups to survive in the future, other authors note the resiliency demonstrated in the past adaptations of these groups and are optimistic that they will discover new niches and strategies in the future.

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Problems of Subsistence

Coping with Uncertainty in Food Supply. I. DE GARINE and G. A. HARRISON, Eds. Clarendon (Oxford University Press), New York, 1988. xiv, 483 pp., illus. \$98. From a conference, Bad Homburg, F.R.G., Dec. 1982.

There is no single human way to cope with the production and distribution of food when it is scarce. To approach the point of least variability among humans, to compare human strategies with animal mod-