

**Katsumori Ichikawa, *Jipusi no Kita Michi*, Tokyo, Hakusui-sha, 2003, 231pp.**

Katsumori Ichikawa was one of the ordinary Japanese who had little knowledge about Armenia before he visited there to meet Armenian gypsies. After the trip, he published a book entitled *Jipusi No Kita Michi* (The Routes of the Gypsies), reporting on the Armenian and Indian gypsies, which introduced an unknown world to Japanese readers.

The author is neither an Armenologist nor a scholar who engages in research on the gypsies, but a producer and director of music and images such as *World Ethnic Music* or *Japanese History and Entertainment*. As he explains in the preface, Ichikawa has had a deep interest in the street performances of Asian countries, and in the course of observing travelling performers, he started to wonder how entertainment relates to travelling. Ichikawa visited India in the summer of 2001 and met a group of people who are possibly the ancestors of the gypsies. As a result of this trip, Ichikawa started to trace the routes through which gypsies travelled and to pay attention to Armenia because he is convinced, as some scholars maintain, that gypsies spread to Europe via Armenia. The lack of sufficient references brought him to Armenia to tackle various questions.

The book is divided into two chapters. The first chapter focuses on his trip to Armenia in 2003, and the second chapter reports on his visit to India in 2001. The first chapter begins from the moment the author arrives at the airport of Zvartnots, and mainly notes interviews with Armenian gypsies. The author goes to Kanaker, a suburb of Yerevan, the district of Saritagh, and villages in Jeraber and the city of Gyumri, and meets with *boshas*, settled gypsies, who are engaged in making baskets. The author explains to readers the contemptuous and negative attitude which gypsies have endured historically. Consequently, with the advice of a local interpreter, the author avoids asking direct questions to them and begins interviews by saying that the purpose of his visit is to see a village famous for basket making. Indeed, although the author's approach is less likely to cause emotional reactions, some *boshas* with whom he meets deny the existence of Armenian gypsies. However, most gypsies whom he interviews kindly answered his questions. He even meets gypsies who call themselves Lom (Romani) and take pride in being Lom.

Along with the interviews, Ichikawa presents the gypsies' history of travelling and a brief history of Armenia from ancient to present times, including the Genocide of 1915 and the Karabagh conflict. The author also points out the social and economic problems which Armenia currently faces. For instance, when he observes a partly paved road which was completed with the financial assistance of the Diaspora Armenians, he understands a dichotomy among the Armenians. On the one hand, the success of Armenian Americans, the wealth of Armenians who

have returned from the United States and the music in jazz clubs reflect positive images, and on the other hand relics of the Soviet times remain awkward for them, and Armenians still struggle with the remnants of the Soviet ghost (pp.55-56).

Ichikawa concludes the first chapter with a review of the gypsies' travelling routes from Armenia to Europe, summarizing general information on Russian, East European, German and South European gypsies respectively.

The second part of the book covers his trip to India in 2001, which chronologically goes before the first chapter. While Armenian gypsies are settled, a group of gypsies whom he met in the Thar Desert is still travelling and giving street performances for a living.

As the author points out, gypsies are people who have never endeavoured to record their historical past. Accordingly, there are no equivalent words for "to write" and "to read" in their language, and this fact has made it difficult for scholars to trace their history in detail. Considering this fact, Ichikawa's first-hand experience provides valuable information as he reports on how Armenian gypsies live in Armenia today. Furthermore, by introducing the life of unsettled gypsies in India, the author outlines the origin of the gypsies.

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