

Sergey Gabbasov



BANYAN LEAVES

Gypsies and Travellers

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Аннотация

This book is dedicated to the gypsy-like groups of India, gypsies of North Africa and Middle East and Irish Travellers (and connection with Irish stick fighting).

Содержание

Banyan Leaves – The Route From Maharajas to Pharaohs	5
INTRODUCTION	5
IN THE LAND OF RAJAS (GYPSY-LIKE GROUPS OF RAJASTHAN)	12
GADIA LOHAR	12
BHOPA	16
LANGA – MANGANİYAR	18
BY THE RIVER OF JORDAN	19
IN THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS	22
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

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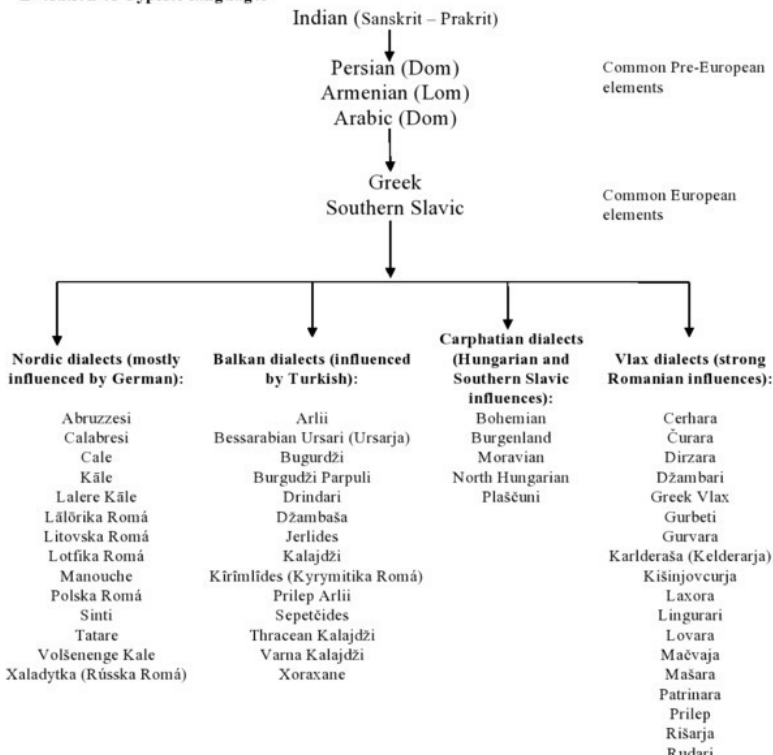
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Banyan Leaves – The Route From Maharajas to Pharaohs

INTRODUCTION

Evolution of Gypsies languages



Gypsies are the people originated from Central and North regions of Indian subcontinent. The word “*Gypsy*” is an exonym, like “*tsigane*”, “*gitano*” and many other names connected with Greek “*athinganos*” (“untouchable”), which based on “*athinganoi*” – the name of a Christian sect with whom gypsies were associated. The English term “*Gypsy*” originates from the Middle English “*Gypcian*”, short form of “*Egipcien*”, which ascend from Greek “*Aigyptioi*” meaning “Egyptian”. This name was given because of the common belief that gypsies are from Egypt. Self-designation varies but “*Roma*” is the most common.

Who were the ancestors of the Gypsies? Genetics proved that modern gypsies are descendants of the comparatively small and homogeneous group which has emigrated or been captured from South Asia (North-West India and North Pakistan) (Martínez-Cruz et al. 2016; Gresham et al. 2001; Kalaydjieva et al. 2001). Linguistic analyzes of self-designation and language make a theory that “*Roma*” originate from “*Domba*” (“*Dom*”) people (Matras 1995).

It is almost impossible to say who the “*Domba*” were at the period when the ancestors of the “*Roma*” left India, but now this is a widespread ethnic group scattered across India and Nepal. The term “*Domba*” may be connected with the analogs in Indian Hindu and Buddhist literature for a segregated and enslaved population. It can also be associated with “*damara*” (Sanskrit term for the “drum”).

Nowadays “*Dom*” can be found in Himachal Pradesh (former hunter-gatherers indigenous groups), Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal where they are agricultural workers, basket weavers and small scale agriculturalists. They speak Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages and show very few connections with modern or ancient “*Roma*” people except low social level. Very few groups of modern “*Dom*” have any elements of semi-sedentary lifestyle, but some former hunter-gatherers groups of honey-hunters in Nepal and Himachal Pradesh. I’ve been in villages in Nepal (Far West and Chitwan regions) and Himachal Pradesh (Dharamsala region) inhabited by different ethnic groups (“*Tharu*” and “*Magar*” in Chitwan, “*Kangri*” in India) but in “*Dom*” cast division. In all regions they were small-scale agriculturalists, with spear-fishing of “*Tharu*” and honey-hunting of “*Kangri*”.

There are several nomadic gypsy-like groups in modern Europe who have no connections with “*Roma*” (“*Yenish*”) or absorbed a few amount of “*Roma*” in recent times (“*Pavee*”, “*an lucht siúil*” in Irish, or “Irish Travelers” in English). Some of not well-received names of Travelers is “*Pikey*”. It is a slang word, used in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales to refer to Irish or Scottish “*Travelers*” and gypsies. In a pejorative sense it means “a lower-class person”, perhaps “coarse” or “disreputable”. In this case it is very important to say some words about modern nomadic gypsy-like groups of Rajasthan.

Actually, they are not pure “nomadic”, because “nomadism”

based upon livestock's pasture and non-sedentary lifestyle of nomads is strongly non-random and systematically necessitated. Rajasthani gypsy-like groups can wander very randomly, they have no nature or animal caused "seasons" of movements, so they are "wandering", "non-" or "semi-sedentary groups" (or "groups with flexible sedentarism").

Trying to find any connections and relationships between modern semi-sedentary groups and castes of Rajasthan with the gypsies is completely mistakable. What should we based on? Languages and self-designations are different. Occupations and lifestyles? But how can we compare "*Roma*" with the modern non-sedentary peoples and groups like "*Sansi*" or "*Banjara*" (both are wandering traders)? Other gypsy-like groups of Rajasthan demonstrate higher percent of sedentarism (like castes of professional singers and musicians "*Langa*" / "*Manganiyar*") and change their place of living very seldom (for example occasionally to some religious festivals or fairs like Pushkar camel fair). Non-sedentary wandering blacksmiths "*Gadia Lohar*" ("*gadi*" means "cart", and "*lohar*" is a "blacksmith") may consist of different ethnic groups.

Gypsies of Middle East call themselves "*Dom*" and their language is "*Domari*". Recent researches suggest that the differences between "*Domari*" and "*Romani*" are significant enough to treat them as two separate languages. The "*Dom*" and the "*Roma*" are therefore likely to be descendants of two different migration waves from the Indian subcontinent,

separated by several centuries.

As we've known from publications of Nazarov (Назаров 1980) and Oranski (Оранский 1983), there were many waves of arriving of gypsies and gypsy-like groups in Central Asia, and now there are (or were in recent past time) "*Mughati tubzhon*" ("local gypsies"), "*Hindusthoni Mughat*" ("Indian gypsies"), "*Agha*" (gypsies from Kashgar), "*Mazang*" and "*Kavol*" (probably from "city of Kabul", wandering cosmetics and haberdashery traders), "*Parya*" (sedentary small-scale agriculturalists and workers), and "*Tavoktarosh*" / "*Sogutarosh*" / "*Kosatarosh*" (semi-sedentary wooden bowls makers). The last group names reflect the main occupation of the community, making of wooden kitchen utensils: "*tavok*" (different types of plates); "*sogu*" (storage containers); "*kosa*" (bowls). In the past, they led a semi-nomadic way of life; in winter they lived in villages and in the warm season arranged their camps along rivers with lots of trees, which were used for producing the utensils sold afterwards in nearby villages.

In the past there was also a very small group of wandering monkey-trainers in Fergana valley – "*Balyuj*" (distinguish themselves quite clearly from the "true Baloch" or Baluch, some of whom had migrated from Baluchistan to Central Asia) (Marushiakova & Popov 2016).

The designation "*Mazang*" (translated as dark, dark-faced) often leads to confusion, because the "*Parya*" and the "*Jughi*" ("*Mughat*"), living in Hissar valley, call each other

by this same name (Оранский 1971), which makes it necessary to distinguish clearly between these two communities and the “real” Mazang. The same problem arises when the Parya and the Kavol call each other “*Chachgarak*” / “*Shashgorak*” (Marushiakova & Popov 2016; Оранский 1977).

Very interesting group of semi-sedentary “*Chistoni*” (probably from the Sistan region in Iran and Afghanistan), who were robbers (“*xalq-i kisabur*”) and killers (“*mardum-i kalabur*”), that makes a distant parallel with a “*Thuggee*” of India. The “*Kavol*” and “*Chistoni*” had been semi-nomadic, with winter settlements and longer or shorter travels during the warm season. The “*Kavol*” made a living by peddling small wares and cosmetics and producing and selling homemade jewelry. The *Chistoni*’s livelihood depended on various occupations, including begging and basket-making (Marushiakova & Popov 2016; ХАКИМОВ 2010).

“*Dom*” people now can be found also in Azerbaijan (where they have the exonym “*Karachi*”), in neighboring Armenia their name changed to “*Lom*” (with the Armenian exonym “*Bosha*”), who spread to South Georgia also. “*Dom*” and “*Lom*” are mostly basket-weavers, musicians and fortune-tellers, in big cities begging is widespread. Their migration route didn’t go further north (though there are some theories of arriving of gypsies to Crimea peninsula from West Caucasus through the Kerch strait (Торопов 2004), but in 20th century two groups of “*Roma*” came from Russia to Abkhazia and then to Georgia.

They were Muslim Crimean gypsies (“*Krimi*”, “*Krimurja*”, descendants of Romanian bear-trainers “*Ursar*” gypsies) and Orthodox “*Vlax*” (“*Vlaxurja*”), who were (and somewhere still are) blacksmiths, fortune-tellers and traders. Two great routes of gypsies’ migrations met after a big circle.

In many countries “*Dom*” have different external names, which became their endonyms. One of them is “*Nawar*”, which is well-known because of their “*ghawazee*” traveling dancers groups in Egypt. Most of “*Nawar*” in Middle East were musicians, fortune-tellers, sorcerers and animal-trainers with a low social status in the society. Now there is a strong tendency of losing traditional occupations and marginalization. “*Nawar*” is an Arabic “umbrella” -term to non-*Dom* who share a wandering lifestyle and the same social status – Kurds, Turkmen, and Bedouin.

IN THE LAND OF RAJAS (GYPSY- LIKE GROUPS OF RAJASTHAN)

GADIA LOHAR

Gadia Lohar is a group of wandering (“*lohar*” means “blacksmith” and “*gadia*” means “cart” and this is the brightness identificational sign which marks them as a non-sedentary group) blacksmiths who move between villages and towns in search of job from Rajasthan to as far as Karnataka. According to their own oral tradition, the ancestors of Gadia Lohar were settled artisans till the Mughals defeated their ruler, Maharana Pratap of Chittorgarh. When their legend ruler Rana Pratap of Chittorgarh was defeated by the Mughals, Gadia Lohar followed him and vowed not to return till it was recaptured by the Rajputs. Their various synonyms are “*Lohpitt*”, “*Chittoriya Lohar*”, “*Bhubalia*”, “*Belani*”, “*Ghisadi*”, “*Dhumkuria*” and “*Kunwar Khati*”. Probably, they were Rajputs, but fell in the Hindu social scale because of their wanderings, intermarriage with other castes, their practice of remarriage of widows and divorced women (which most wanderers have to do, having an adverse male-female ratio), their trade, which at times includes the castrating of bulls, poverty and illiteracy.

They observe caste endogamy but clan exogamy.

They have their own dialect called "*Farasi*", which is a mixture of Marwari, Malwi and Gujarati languages along with some words of their own creation.

Gadia Lohar have very organized movements: after reaching a central place they scatter, each cart going separately to one or more villages, searching for job (making and mostly repairing any metal utensils). Later, at a predetermined place and day, they will assemble again and the caravan of carts will then move on.

The full caravan consists not only from relatives but from people from different families and even ethnic groups. Gadia Lohar, as a part of "*Lohar*" caste, is much more a professional unity than an ethnic group. While wandering in many regions they've created their own language (argot) from different languages and absorbed individuals from surrounding populations with the same social status.

The tent is installed by attaching the canvas by one of its sides to the side of the carriage and to the ground by another. Nowadays many types of tents are used depending on period of staying in the camping place, and modern materials are widely used also. The place under the cart is used for living and keeping chattels: few cook clay pots, simple wood-rope beds, forging instruments. Even a baby-cradle can be suspended between the drawbars of the carriage.

"Lohar" is a term for a blacksmith. You can meet "Lohar" in Tamilnadu or in West Bengalia. In Rajasthan there is

a degree of specialization: “*Gadia Lohar*” are forging experts, “*Nagauri Lohar*” are best known for reveting and metal beating and “*Multani Lohar*” specialize in making dies and tools; the “*Siyahmaliya*” are specialists in black iron work and the “*Kachboyiha*” work in unpurified iron. It is noteworthy that the term “*Multan*” (related to the city in Pakistan) is still used sometimes by some “*Mughat*” to name themselves.

Forging process based on the heating of the workpiece by the mining and further processing with a hammer in places indicated by the blacksmith. In near past time they used a pare of hand forged blowers made from goat skin and wooden hull, but now they use manufactured forge blowers with an inner rotor fan rotating by one hand. Working on goat-skin blowers was only a women job (as hammer-beating still today). Due to Gadia Lohars’ explains it is so because heavy-beating need no special skills and knowledge which have blacksmiths who points the places on the workpiece to beat at.

Gadia Lohar consider their anvil holy and say that it was given to them by Lord Shiva when they wandered away from the fort of Chittorgarh. They worship their forging instruments when first made and give them a ceremonial wash. As they are constantly on the move and not always within easy access of their temples and shrines, they find it convenient to carry portable idols of their deities – a small cupboard at the front of their carts with little statuettes. By religion they are Hindus and worship Vishwakarma, Durga, Sheetla Mata and Bhaironji. They also

venerate certain local deities, saints and deified ancestors.

Their caravans of bullock-carts contain all belongings, victuals, cooking vessels and implements. They make articles needed in the rural areas: agricultural implements, ploughshares, tin lamps, buckets, pots and pans, axe-heads, scythes, knives. Now their carts can be seen in industrial towns, a few also trade in bullocks.

After marriage, a son sets up a separate bullock-cart. They have a group council, "*panchayat*", which deals with internal group issues: social disputes, customary etiquette and group policy.

BHOPA

Since ancient times in India there has been a tradition of itinerant performers narrating stories with the aid of painted scrolls. Such scroll named “*phada*” and those who tell stories behind the “*phada*” called “*Bhopa*”.

Bhopa assert that they please the gods by wandering from village to village and singing religious hymns. They immerse their “*phada*” in the holy Pushkar lake (those who live in that area and have such an opportunity).

The painted scrolls of Rajasthan, the “*phada*”, are more on heroic cavaliers and tales of chivalry and valour rather than on purely religious themes. They are done on cloth 4 to 6 feet in width and 10 to 20 feet in length, the smaller ones being called “*phadki*”. The most popular themes for the “*phada*” have been the heroic lives of Pabuji, Dev Narayan, Gogaji, Prithviraj Chaugan and Tejaji.

The hero occupies the central place in the “*phada*”, surrounded by his generals, nobles and other characters. The illustrations are not arranged in any sequence, pictures of bits of the story being scattered all over the “*phada*”, which makes for a very dynamic performance, with the story-teller and his assistant darting, to the strains of music, song and narration, from one corner to another. Often, there are representations of gods and incidents from the epics on the border of the “*phada*” and

stories about them are interwoven with the legend. The storytellers are Bhopa (“*Nayak*”) and once they start performing, the story has to be told completely; it is inauspicious to leave it unfinished.

Often the Bhopa is assisted by his wife, usually veiled, who, with an oil lamp, lights up the “*phada*” to highlight only that part of the picture which is under narration, at times singing with the Bhopa at important points where emphasis is called for. The main narration does by the Bhopa in song and verse, while at the same time dancing and playing a string instrument, a “*ravanhatta*” or “*jantara*”, perhaps with an additional musician on “*daffa*” (small frame drum). Very seldom a female impersonator can swirl and dance to the music and narration – Bhopa women do not normally dance themselves.

LANGA – MANGANIYAR

“*Manganiyar*” (“one who begs”) and “*Langa*” (“song giver”) are two close-related communities of Muslim minstrels of Rajasthan. They have very strong sedentary with quarters like the “*Kalakar*” in Jaisalmer and wander very seldom – to big fairs (like Pushkar camel fair) and religious festivals (like Kumbh Mela).

Despite their conversion to Islam, “*Manganiyar*” (not “*Langa*”) have retained certain Hindu practices. In Jaisalmer they did service for Rajput kings, entertaining them before and after battles. These Muslim retainers stayed with their Hindu ruler when he died and would accompany the cortege for cremation and keep vigil till the ceremonies and mourning period were over.

While “*Bhopa*” is a group targeting to rural areas with villagers, “*Manganiyar*” and “*Langa*” entertain town’s areas (former Raja’s areas) and have much deeper educational process and very rich repertoire of songs and instrumental compositions. They have high skills of improvisation and performing in big ensembles.

Being both Muslim, “*Manganiyar*” and “*Langa*” have “patrons” from different religions – “*Langa*” from Islam community and *Manganiyar* from Hindu society. The *Manganiyar* would be careful to string their “*sarangi*” with steel while the *Langa* would use gut strings freely.

BY THE RIVER OF JORDAN

“*Dom*” is a self-determination name (endonym) of a widespread groups of gypsies in the Middle East and North Africa. “*Gypsy*” is the term of English language and in the Arab world the “*Nawar*” is one of the most widely used designations. But “*Nawar*” is applied not only to the gypsies, but to other nomadic and non-sedentary groups. It has a negative connotation of unworthy, low-born and uncivilized person and insulting meaning of a worthless of gypsies for Arabs.

In 669 AD, 710 AD and 720 AD “*Zott*” gypsies (not a self-designation name, but an exonym very close-related with “*Jatt*”) were sent by the Arab rulers from Persia to the city of Antioch on the Mediterranean coast (Kenrick 1993). When Antioch was captured by the Greeks in 855 AD, some “*Zott*” were sent to Greece and some have migrated to Crete and then returned to Lebanon and Israel. Their history of traces in the Middle East was the result of multiple migrations. And their migration toward North Africa began probably during the last quarter of the first millennium (ibid.).

Traditional tent of “*Dom*” of Jordan has a tubular metal frame without central posts. It is very wide inside, about eight by five meters. Inner space differs from tents of Bedouin, there is no any special “*womens’ section*”. Bedding is folding to keep them off the ground. Food cooking is placed outside of the tent. There can

be a TV, ran off a car battery, inside the tent, and a gas-stove for cooking outside of it.

The population of “*Dom*” in Jordan is about 35,000 people. There are at least five tribes: the “*tamarreh*” is the largest, “*ka’akov*”, “*ga’agreh*”, “*balahayeh*” and “*nawasfeh*”. Two other segments of the Gypsy population are discernable in these four groups: the Palestinian Dom and a conglomeration of numerous other smaller families (primarily from Iraq and Syria), most of whom are still nomadic. These groups claim that they had been blacksmiths and drivers in Iraq, shoeing camels and horses among other tasks (Phillips 2000), they often rented or bought houses until the Gulf War. Some families are settled and some are scattering throughout the country and even to Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In Mafrqa area there are other two tribes of mixed origin. One of them is “*sawatha*”. Phillips researched one of it’s clans – “*jennayd*” (he was told that this clan consisted of approximately 100 families), whose ancestors have come from Palestine through Iraq about 100 years ago. Phillips also informs us that the other tribe – “*hamashlir*” – is known for dancing (ibid.).

“*Domari*” is the native language of “*Dom*” people, and it dates back to the Indian heritage. It’s synonym in Arabic is “*Nawari*”. “*Dom*” are multilingual people. It is common to find “*Dom*” who speaks two or three languages. But their literacy level is very low and very few people can read or write. Some Dom think that their language and heritage are main reasons that stand behind called

“*Nawar*”, and this is why they try to get rid of them (Moawwad 1999).

Being by negative attitude of surrounding peoples, “*Dom*” prefer to identify themselves with other peoples: settled *Nawar* want to be known as Arabs and nomadic – as other nomadic pastoralists of the region. In Jordan they claim to be known as Turkmen.

There is a strong problem with a school education – extremely few “*Dom*” families are sending children to school and none of the local authorities had organized the provision of a camp-teacher to visit the camp and educate the children (Ryder 2001). “*Dom*” children learn early in life to hide their identity. They walk into nearby residential areas to catch the school bus in order to avoid being identified and ridiculed (Williams 2003).

Blacksmithing, dancing and playing music for hire are not requested in Jordan, so now “*Dom*” live by selling products such as clothing and housing utensils and begging. They usually do trading and begging on the streets which is illegal under Jordanian law (Ryder 2001).

IN THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS

The “*Dom*” of Egypt with their lifestyle, physical characteristics and dress fit very well into the Egyptian communities. Many of the facial features of the “*Dom*” are very similar to the Egyptian’s. “*Dom*” women traditionally recognized by their colorful dress, long earrings and tattooed faces. The male “*Dom*”, wearing the conventional “*galabeya*” are dressed in the same way as the local Egyptian men. The face of the “*Dom*” is typically darker and thinner than the Egyptian face, the features are sharper.

“*Halebi*” are often described as the gifted fortune-tellers, “*Ghawazi*” as the dancers and entertainers, free and impetuous, “*Ghagar*” as the beggars, cunning and resourceful, and “*Hanagra*” as the dishonest thieves.

The “*Dom*” are still involved in metalwork by way of fabricating metal products, cleaning and repairing brass utensils, fixing of old stoves and making keys. Walking through the back streets of “*Khana Khalili*”, a popular tourist area in Cairo, one is able to view the production of numerous ornamental metal objects produced by the “*Dom*”.

Metal workers in the rural area are known as blacksmiths, with some distinction being encompassed by the differentiation. They, like European Gypsies, are involved in making agricultural implements and horse-ware and even saddles. Smithing is seen as

a family occupation, with husbands and wives working together (like “*Gadia Lohar*” do), but tinkering involves only the men, whose wives are not involved in the trade but engaged in other occupations.

The “*Dom*” of Egypt are often involved in the sphere of entertainment. Following the “*moulids*” (religious festivals) around the country, the “*Dom*” of Egypt are frequently found working the swings, running the aiming games, performing tricks and many other forms. Some of the “*Dom*” are more reliant on tourism for their livelihood – many of the camel and horse drivers around the Giza pyramids are “*Dom*”, while “*Dom*” children can be found selling trinkets down near the Sphinx. “*Dom*” dancers can be found in many hotels along the Pyramid street in Giza. In the rural areas of Egypt the “*Ghawazi*” still perform. The “*Dom*” women perform fortune telling through palm reading and speaking with seashells. Some “*Dom*” musicians declare that most of “*rababah*” players are “*Halab*” (“*Haleb*”, “*Halebi*”).

Increasingly disappearing tradition of “*Dom*” epic poets is rarely seen now during entertaining audiences at weddings and local coffee-houses. Derogatorily called “*Ghagar*” by non-“*Dom*” villagers, they prefer to call themselves “*Haleb*” (“*Halebi*”). Prior to the invasion of technology, these “*Dom*” men were frequently hired to recite the traditional poems of Arab heroes and to play the “*rababah*” during the celebration. With clever usage of the Arabic language, the poet would perform late into the night, delighting the imagination of his

audience with tales of battles won and heroes triumphing.

In context of Cairo they are entertainers, peddlers of haberdashery in the major markets and increasingly beggars. The factor of tourism has resulted in a powerful motivation for many “*Ghagar*” musicians and dancers drawing them to Cairo and concentrating them in particular areas of the older city. The “*Ghagar*” musicians, singers and dancers are differentiated socially from both other “*Ghagar*” and “*Khashar*”. They train animals, not always monkeys, to perform tricks. Gypsy entertainers are the acrobats and jugglers, many of whom are “*Nawar*” (who perform in poorer areas of the city and in the tourist zones) rather than “*Ghagar*”.

The “*Ghagar*” (“*Ghajar*”) community of Egypt are primarily metal-workers. They have been nomadic, but now are almost entirely sedentary, plying their traditional trades in villages close to their own in the “*Sett Guiranha*” district. The “*Ghagar*”, “*Nawar*” and “*Halebi*” “*Dom*” occupy the same position as Gypsy communities in Europe.

The “*Ghagar*” communities of Southern Egypt have seen increasing migration to Cairo in relatively large numbers, drawn by the economic opportunities offered, especially as metal workers, dancers and fortune-tellers, and these can find accommodation in small apartments in outlying districts of Cairo. The major area of settlement for the “*Dom*” (“*Ghagar*”, “*Halebi*” and some “*Nawar*”) is on the south-eastern extremity of the city in the old cemeteries among the tombs. One other

area inhabited by the Ghagar is in the old quarter of the city, in the streets running down from the centre. Here, aluminum ducting, rotisseries, railings and stoves are made and repaired by “*Ghagar*”. This concrete local groups is known as “tinkers” both by non-*Ghagar* (“*Khashar*”) and “*Ghagar*” themselves.

In the process of modernization many older structures have been demolished and countless communities have been moved. In this manner many of the “*Dom*” have been dispersed throughout the city of Cairo. Canal areas once dotted with Gypsy tents and huts now have been cleared and allocated for agricultural use. Large “*Dom*” communities have now disappeared, being replaced by smaller communities that are more integrated within the Egyptian society. Streets once brimming with “*Dom*” blacksmiths and tinkers have slowly disappeared as the need for their serviced has diminished. Once inhabitants of specific areas of Cairo, the “*Dom*” can now be found throughout most parts of the city.

Primarily found living in communities of unfinished brick and mud brick buildings in the poorer areas, the “*Dom*” quietly maintain a sense of community. In some areas their neighborhoods are interspersed with the homes of the homes of the many poor farmers while in other neighborhoods they are in majority. A vast necropolis in Cairo, popularly known as “the City of the Dead”, is home to a large “*Dom*”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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