

THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE movements of peoples are determined by two main factors, which may be briefly described as the driving force and the control; or, in other words, the cause of a migration is due to one set of circumstances and its direction to another.

When reduced to its simplest terms a migration is caused by an expulsion and an attraction, the former nearly always resulting from dearth of food or from over-population, which practically comes to the same thing. Sooner or later, a time comes when the increase of the population of a country exceeds its normal food-supply. Among hunting communities the game may be so reduced by over-hunting or by disease that it cannot support even a stationary or decreasing population. The chief danger to be feared by pastoral peoples is lack of water; a succession of small droughts can make pasturing unprofitable, but when a whole

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

country definitely becomes more arid, migrations on a large scale are inevitable. Evidence has now accumulated which proves that various regions of the earth have undergone slow climatic changes, and that a given area at one period of time may be more or less wooded, while at another, owing to a drier climate, steppes arise, or even desert conditions may supervene. Changes of this nature occurred in parts of Europe during the ages when Palæolithic men hunted reindeer and chased bison and wild horses; and the desiccation of central Asia has had a profound effect upon human history in Europe as well as in Asia. Agriculturists are affected in the same way; but to a certain extent, by means of irrigation in some cases, and by more intensive cultivation in others, the soil may be made to support an increased population; nevertheless, a limit is soon reached, unless the resources are supplemented by trade.

It is probable that a migration induced by an attraction is rare as compared with that produced by an expulsion, for as a rule people are loth to leave their fatherland, and it usually requires the double set of circumstances to uproot them.

The simplest cases of migration by attraction are those of a people living on poor steppes or plateaus adjoining cultivated land or rich valleys. Agricultural peoples are, as a rule, averse to and ill-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

3

prepared for war, and the more prosperous their circumstances, the more they are likely to be enervated by their very civilisation. They are thus liable at all times to be attacked by neighbouring brigands, who in some cases retire to their barren homes with their booty, but in others remain among the conquered people, and, assimilating with them, in due course become more civilised, and in their turn are subject to invasions from their barbarian kinsmen of the borders. Thus is set up an automatic social mechanism which at the same time civilises the barbarians and energises those who have become softened by easy circumstances. To take but two examples: the walled towns of Ancient Greece in the centre of valleys opening out to the sea point to a danger from the brigands of the mountains, and possibly also from pirates from the sea; and the inhabitants of the rich plains of Assam from time immemorial have been subject to raids and settlements by the hill tribes. When people become agglomerated in towns, especially where they have gained notoriety for their riches, the temptation for looting becomes very strong, but as a rule such enterprises do not lead to a permanent migration.

Hunger and loot are not the only impulses towards migration. The restless disposition of the "winners of the west" of North America was not due to an inability to maintain an existence in the Eastern

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

States, nor to an expectation of speedy riches. A craving for land—for more and more land—is only a partial explanation; sentiment, and a reaction against even the slightest of social restraints, had a great deal to do with it. Gold rushes are different, as wealth may thus be speedily gained by rapid exploitation.

Freedom from social, political or religious bondage has resulted in migrations of various kinds, like the exodus of the Hebrew bondmen from Egypt, the voyage of the *Mayflower*, or the trekking of the Boers. Religious enthusiasm may stimulate race expansion and lead to shiftings of population, as is seen in the histories of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. The partnerships of the crescent and the sword, of the cross and the gold of El Dorado, have been based upon a double enthusiasm.

The movements of peoples which are sufficiently dramatic for the ordinary historian to record, are often of less importance than the quiet, steady drift of a population from one area into another, as, for example, in the emigration from Europe to America in modern times. Movements of this kind may result in a noticeable or even a fatal depletion of a country, and the parent country may long remain desolate, or may be filled up in course of time by an alien people, as in the case of eastern Germany and the Slavs (p. 47). Although immigrant peoples may

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

5

bring a culture and language permanently affecting the conquered peoples, yet the aboriginal population, if allowed to survive in sufficient numbers, will eventually impair the racial purity of the newcomers, and there is a tendency for the indigenous racial type to reassert itself and become predominant once more.

The control of a migration is due mainly to geographical conditions. Movements of men, like those of fluids, take the line of least resistance, flowing, as it were, in channels or open areas bounded by barriers. The latter are of variable resistance; thus, if an open area or a valley is densely populated it may offer a greater resistance than a geographical barrier, and the tide of migration would then flow over or along the barrier. Barriers are thus relative, and only in rare cases are they insurmountable.

An open country is most liable to early occupation, as the labour of felling trees with stone implements is very great; even with iron axes there is considerable difficulty in clearing a forest, a difficulty which becomes enormously increased in tropical jungles. For the same reason an open country is subject to frequent invasions. River valleys, for various reasons, early supported relatively large populations, but the rivers themselves, as a rule, afforded an easy means for ingress to seafaring invaders. Steppes present great difficulties to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

agriculturists, unless they are supplied with mechanical means for breaking up the soil and reaping the harvest ; on the other hand, steppes form the natural home for pastoral peoples, who by their mobility are usually able to keep off intruders. When a hunting population occupies an open country or a steppe, it is ultimately replaced by a pastoral people, especially if the invaders be also tillers of the soil, for the more they are prone to agriculture the more complete is their usurpation of the land. A pastoral or semi-pastoral people, however, can only migrate along a country which affords sufficient pasturage and watering for their flocks ; mountains, forests, deserts, swamps, and the sea form obstacles which are practically insuperable for such peoples. In Africa, at all events, a further barrier towards migration may be found in the tsetse fly, ticks, and other insect pests, which afford intermediate hosts for the parasites of various kinds of cattle diseases.

Mountain chains are obvious barriers which deflect all movements on a large scale, but usually they can be pierced across the passes by the strenuous efforts of armed bands. Even the Romans did not attack the Germans till they had secured their position in Gaul and could find an easy entrance into central Europe. On the other hand the slopes or plateaus of a mountain chain may serve as a bridge when the surrounding country is difficult to traverse.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

7

The movements of peoples may not result entirely from causes which appear to be immediate, but are traceable in some instances to a remote event having at first sight no connection with them. Even an artificial barrier, as Ujfalvy suggests, may have far-reaching effects: "The building of the great wall of China was an event fraught with the greatest consequences, and one may say without exaggeration, that it contributed powerfully to the premature downfall of the Roman Empire" (1, 24).

Another type of artificial barrier is produced by the dominance of neighbouring countries by a powerful empire, which prevents the encroachment of barbarian peoples into countries thus protected. Examples of this are seen in the great empires of the East, the Egyptian dominance of Syria, and the Roman Empire. When the central government became weak, the way was again open for invasion.

The possession of more deadly weapons, improved implements for daily needs, or better means of transport, such as horses or camels, vehicles, or seaworthy vessels, has given their owners a decisive superiority on coming in contact with worse equipped peoples. These advantages have been potent factors in producing changes of population.

Not only is it necessary fully to comprehend existing climatic conditions and geographical features in order to understand human migrations,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

but it is equally necessary to reconstruct the conditions of different periods since the appearance of man. This is essentially the work of geologists, geographers, and meteorologists. The data are very scanty, and until more have been accumulated and the conditions reconstructed, ethnologists will be unable to elucidate the early history of man.

Our knowledge of the movements of peoples in various parts of the world during the historic period, that is, since the time when man learnt to write his records, is meagre, even in regard to civilised areas; elsewhere, and for prehistoric periods, recourse must be had to tradition and archaeological evidence. Both these sources of information have to be utilised with extreme caution, but where they agree a fair degree of probability if not of certainty can be attained.

The evidences for migrations are to be sought mainly in the physical characters of peoples, their artifacts, customs, folk-tales, and language.

The physical characters of an isolated people are usually fairly obvious, though their accurate description is difficult, and becomes still more so when racial mixture has taken place. The effects of hybridisation are as yet very imperfectly understood, as are the effects of change of environment; the disentanglement of racial elements in a mixed people, therefore, requires the greatest care.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

9

Artifacts, that is objects made by man, are often brought forward as evidence of racial movements, but their occurrence may be due merely to borrowing. Archæology bears the same relation to technology that palæontology does to zoology, and the objects with which it deals are fossils in the true sense of the term. The evidence of either must be treated in a similar manner. For example, ethnologists learn how to recognise the artifacts of a given people and the differences between them and similar objects made by other peoples; frequently characteristics of material, form, technique, or decoration, are so marked that many objects can be definitely assigned to a particular group of people or to a limited area. In process of time form, technique, and decoration may become modified, and then it is necessary to determine whether this indicates that definite evolution has taken place *in situ*, or whether influences have come in from elsewhere. If the latter can be proved, the question arises whether the change is due to the immigration of another people into the district, that is a "racial drift"; or whether the innovations are the result of the imitation of objects that have arrived by means of loot or trade, that is a "cultural drift," for there can be little doubt that import trade if considerable and protracted will exert a marked influence on native

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-60586-2 - The Wanderings of People

Edited by A. C. Haddon

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 THE WANDERINGS OF PEOPLES

manufactures. The introduction and methods of utilisation of domestic animals and plants may be considered as analogous to the foregoing. For instance, the introduction of the horse into America was due to a racial drift, but its employment by the Plains Indians and by the Indians of the Pampas of South America was a cultural drift.

The same argument applies to a certain extent to customs, and religious ideas and ceremonies. In the latter cases there is probably always some personal influence, but the results may be disproportionate to the numbers; in these instances the racial drift may be inappreciable, or may not affect the local population in the least, while the cultural drift may be quite noticeable.

There has been great discussion concerning the evidential value of folk-tales with regard to cultural drift and racial drift. There is no doubt that they can be passed on from one people to another, but owing to the essential uniformity of human thought the same simple motives can originate independently. When complex tales occur, however, in different countries, then there is a *prima facie* case for borrowing. Further, folk-tales, especially those dealing with mythology, often reflect earlier conditions in a different geographical environment.

It is astonishing with what ease a people can