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Enfants des montagnes du monde

Edited by Bernard Debarbieux. Nyon, Switzerland: Glénat Suisse, 2008. 160 pp. € 39.00. ISBN 978-2-7234-6587-8.

This is a pictorial journey capturing the lives of children who live in the world's mountain regions. These pictures endorse the idea that the term "children of the mountains" evokes and encapsulates a multitude of images ranging from a young Buddha to a tea gatherer in the Himalayas, a goatherd in the Atlas mountains, a shepherd in the high grounds of Ethiopia, a budding champion skier in the Alps, a young cowboy of the American West, and a small miner in South America. All are very different, yet they are united by a common feature that is a permanent influence in their lives—the mountain.

Apart from the constant presence of the mountain, these children represent a diverse group: they speak different languages; some are rich while others are very poor; and most live at least on the periphery of contemporary society, others living an existence still untouched by "modern civilization." The photos capture this diversity and tell these children's stories, their everyday lives unfolding through the photographs. How they play, work, live, and, indeed, survive is played out sensitively. The pictures are emotive and can raise a smile and even sometimes a tear. The accompanying French narrative provides a third-dimension effect, informing the reader with a contextual, in-depth background. However, even the reader who has no knowledge of French will find that the photography captures successfully the mood of the camera lens' subject and reflects the varied tapestry of what is life for the mountain children around the world.

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