

GYPSIES AND THE PROBLEM OF ACCULTURATION

Our age is trying in many ways to deal with the problem of the survival of ethnic minorities. Being confronted with a centralized political power which destroys cultural differences, many of these minorities have become conscious of their originality (which is often hidden away in folklore) and are in search of a new balance with the dominant culture. They try to achieve this new balance by bringing their basic characteristics up to date or even deliberately entering a phase of counter acculturation and adopting an attitude of political liberation much like that of the formerly colonized peoples.

Amongst those minorities whose culture is in the process of disappearing, the Gypsies present a truly unusual case. After having seen half a million of them exterminated in the Nazi concentration camps, the Gypsies now feel, more than ever, that their culture is radically threatened, for they have entered a new acculturation phase: that of straightforward assimilation by urbanized and industrialized western culture. The drama of this assimilation, in the vast majority of the cases, is that it is in no way controlled or planned, thus resulting in anarchic change and culminating in the deepseated proletarianization, if not "ho-

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boization," of this people whose original culture contains values that our modern world is losing.

Of course, due to the threat of losing a valuable cultural heritage, many rescue operations have been undertaken. But very often they are clumsy being based on an unconfessed ethnocentrism. The result can easily be positive on a social basis, that is, in terms of their standard of living; yet, on the other hand, it can also be quite negative where cultural originality is concerned. Today the problem of the survival of the Gypsy culture must be dealt with urgently. If this problem is to be solved in a positive way, permitting this people to live with dignity in the modern world and still preserve their essential cultural traits, one must be conscious of the various problems at hand and carefully avoid two different types of mistakes. The first of the mistakes consists in directly assimilating Gypsy culture to the modern world. Even were this assimilation to be effected without any particular traumas, it would, in fact, mean nothing other than the slow death of Gypsy culture. The second mistake to be avoided is the attempt at preserving the Gypsy way of life in an anachronistic and folkloristic sense, thereby causing it to lose contact with reality. In fact, as will be shown in this paper, the originality of the Gypsies cannot be discussed except in terms of a process of acculturation, of exchanges and contacts with the surrounding world.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the problem of such a controlled and positive acculturation. However, since such a project is quite meaningless if it does not take into account the previous types of acculturation particular to Gypsy society, it is necessary that we first review its main characteristics. In fact, the relative historical success of this acculturation, even if at present precarious, could give us some valuable ideas for the future.

TRADITIONAL GYPSY CULTURE

To begin with, it must be said that there is a sociological factor which dominates this particular problem. Despite appearances, the Gypsy world has been neither closed in itself nor totally isolated; rather, *it has always been in a process of acculturation*,

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that is to say, it has always been interacting and in reciprocal contact with non-Gypsy societies. One could even say that the Gypsy world was culturally structured by a process which stimulated adjustments, conflicts and syncretism. This process of acculturation may be found principally in the type of nomadism which gives the Gypsies their essential character.

When one speaks of the Gypsy way of life, one immediately thinks of the nomadic life they lead. Yet it is important to understand the reasons for this nomadism which persists despite all opposition in countries where sedentary living has always been the rule. It is from this exterior aspect of their life that we can try to understand the interior of Gypsy culture.

First of all, it must be realized that this nomadic way of life has always been of vital importance to the Gypsies. In fact, after long voyages through the Middle East and Central Europe, interspersed with long periods of settlement, they came to Europe at the beginning of modern times (XVth-XVIth centuries). They came in a very particular manner indeed, as invaders and in small numbers who must perforce be friendly as in no way were they able to conquer territory on which to settle.¹ It was out of the question for them to find vacant territory in a world that was essentially rural. Furthermore, their ethnic differences, their language and their moral code made them intruders and undesirables. Of all the invasions that had swept over Europe and had influenced its peoples, that of the Gypsies was the last and it arrived too late in a world that no longer had any place for them.

The result was that these peaceful invaders adopted, or rather continued, a special type of nomadism which they had exercised successfully until then, and which we have called "parasitic nomadism"² (the adjective must not be understood in a pejorative sense). In fact, most nomadic peoples live principally on their own resources and, in general, hunt or raise animals on land which is more or less recognized to be theirs. Furthermore, the economic and commercial relations which they might

¹ Concerning Gypsy history see F. de Vaux de Foletier, *Mille ans d'histoire des Tsiganes*, Paris, Fayard, 1971. See also *Les Tsiganes dans l'Ancienne France*, Paris, Connaissance du Monde, 1961.

² F. Cozannet, *Mythes et Coutumes religieuses des Tsiganes*, Paris, Payot, 1973.

have with the sedentary populations are based on the mutual recognition of an allocation of land or rights for hunting or raising animals within a determined territory. This kind of relationship could not be established with the Gypsies, because, as they did not have any land that was recognized as being theirs or which had been given to them, they were not able to engage in real animal raising, though one must except a few cases. Therefore, they had to establish a very particular type of relationship with the sedentary populations they found on their route. And it is just this kind of episodic economic relationship which made for the originality of the traditional process of acculturation undergone by the Gypsies. In short, in order to survive they had to create a particular kind of production and exchange relationship with the European peasantry.

It is for this reason that we may attribute to the Gypsies a variety of formulae of economic relationships which reveal their capacity to innovate and adapt without losing their identity. It is obvious that they could have leased their labor to local potentates (as some groups actually did do); but in this case they would inevitably have become a sedentary people, and would, as a result, slowly have been assimilated. Their natural pride was too strong for this. In fact, for several centuries, ever since leaving India, they had pursued an independent and wandering life, a life of freedom whose advantages they realized too well not to feel in some way superior to the sedentary populations attached to their lands. They thus opted for a form of economic exchange that would allow them to preserve their independence and still permit them to live.

This exchange was based on a production that was negotiable in the rural world of the time. This explains the multiplicity of traditional Gypsy professions: the coating of kitchen ware, basket-making, tin and copper working, harness-making, the fabrication of small objects for household use, retail selling from door to door ("chine"), horse-dealing, bear-taming, the practice of popular medicine and veterinary medicine, orchestras for playing music at village weddings, fortune telling, etc. Each Gypsy group usually specialized in one of these arts.

These activities were advantageous to the peasant consumer, as he did not have to move in order to benefit from these

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services. As a consequence, the rural population could easily accept this nomadic way of life that rubbed elbows with it. The peasants accepted these exchanges all the more readily because the Gypsies were able to play on certain feelings such as commiseration and pity. A principal motive for their acceptance, surely, was a strong curiosity mixed with fear for the strange life led by the Gypsies. In fact, the Gypsies found that it was well worth their while to cultivate such an image in the rural populations by attributing themselves fabulous origins and supernatural powers (casting or removing a spell, fortune-telling, healing with magical rites) which could only impress their credulous audience. Thus, one can say that this was a parasitic type of nomadism, characterized by reciprocal exchanges and advantages. One must not, therefore, think of these two cultures, that of the Gypsies and that of the traditional Western world, as being completely separated and isolated from each other. On the contrary, there was a continual interaction between them, in that the Gypsy culture structured itself dynamically in function of the economic needs of the peasant culture which they were free to create or stimulate.

Such a parasitic nomadism inevitably brought about a grave consequence which was instrumental in the formation of Gypsy groups, and which deeply marked their culture. In order to practice the economic exchanges which they needed for their survival, they had to cover a rather large and uniform territory. Faced with an uncertain future in which the morrow was fraught with dangers, the Gypsies needed to have assured customers used to their periodic passage which, however, must not be so frequent as to become tiring. This form of nomadic life could only be localized, *contained within a given territory*, in a kind of "hunting preserve" for each Gypsy group which had to be respected by the other Gypsy groups. It was precisely this localization that permitted the nationalization of most of the gypsies, as of the last century (excepting some groups of great nomads which are truly international).

These conditions forced all new groups of Gypsies arriving in a country to search out a territory which was not yet occupied, in which to practice their nomadic life. This geographic distribution became a strange characteristic of the Gypsy world.

Unlike most ethnic minorities in foreign countries, Gypsy groups, composed of few families, *spread out as much as possible*, as if they were forced to do so by a continually expanding centrifugal force whose goal was to reach a minimum density in any given territory. Even today one finds Gypsies everywhere in the world, despite the fact that they move in small groups. There are Gypsies in all of Europe, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, from Canada all the way to the southern tip of South America, and from the Urals to Siberia.

This "planetarization" of the Gypsy world is one of their most typical characteristics dictated by their particular nomadism. Most other ethnic minorities settled in groups and took on the characteristics of the surrounding culture to a greater or lesser extent. They nevertheless maintained their identity within the framework of their family by retaining the language and customs of their distant fatherland, even if it had lost its independence (the Armenians are a case in point). The case of the Gypsies is very different. They do not know anything of their origins, which were not uncovered until modern science, in particular linguistics, established that they had come from India. *Their only native country is the road*, and even the territory in which they carry out their circumscribed nomadism is not theirs, but belongs to the "gadgés," the non-Gypsies. The Gypsies are always ready to leave an area and try their luck somewhere else.

One can thus understand why Gypsy culture has been able to survive with such originality up to the present day. It had its roots in some fundamental values which were preserved by nomadism. Gypsy culture, rather than being attached to land or to an idea of a nation, concentrates essentially on loyalty and respect towards tradition. The characteristic trait of the true Gypsy is that *he fiercely upholds tradition*. The relaxation of this respect for tradition may go so far as to cause antagonism; in fact, certain Gypsies do not recognize groups which have abandoned the customs that characterized them. One may therefore say that it is behavior that makes the Gypsy, behavior being *a specific and rigorous ethic*.

Faced with such a particular and aleatory way of life, and with such a geographic distribution in which each group could

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only count on itself, and where the risk of being contaminated by external influences was very great, the only way for a group to survive was to make the fundamental ethical imperative be a cohesion of the group around the only stable social reality: *lineage*. This conditioned both the rules of marriage and alliances (such as, for example, those of god-parents), and gave the individual his social existence. To this day a Gypsy does not exist, in the eyes of other Gypsies, except in terms of his lineage which endows him with respectability, recognition and prestige; failing this, he becomes an object of contempt in proportion to the kind of memory his predecessors left behind.

The respect for tradition and lineage gave the Gypsies their only social organ with a political nature: the "Krise."³ This organ is a kind of tribunal or council of the wise which judges disputes according to tradition. The two main causes of contestation and litigation are work and women. Insofar as work is concerned it usually is a question of *respecting territory* which is already being exploited by other Gypsies, or of respecting the distribution of a type of production on the same territory. In the case of women, it must be said that they play a decisive role in the Gypsy world, inasmuch as they guarantee the continuation of a lineage or the creation of a lineage. It is through women that kinship links are established. Their importance shows up in the very strict sexual rules, in particular in the many *impurity taboos*, and in the importance attached to the virginity of a woman who is to be married. Thus these norms have a political role which maintains the cohesion of the group through the concept of lineage and through the concept of an economic role which safeguards the sexual dichotomy by dividing up tasks and economic activities. In this domain any transgression is severely punished as the unity of the group is at stake. The concern for the continuity of tradition leads Gypsies to maintain a quite strong form of endogamy; in fact, there are Gypsies living in America who do not hesitate to come back to

³ Concerning this whole aspect of Gypsy culture in general and more specifically the problem of his survival see J.P. Liegeois, *Mutation Tsiganes, la révolution bohémienne*, Brussels, Edition Complexe; Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1976. By the same author see *Les Tsiganes*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1971.

Europe to buy a Gypsy girl, who is member of a group which is known to be either honorable or related to them, so as to found a good lineage.

Another important element of Gypsy culture is religion, or, more precisely, *Gypsy religiosity*, which is also closely linked to nomadic life as well as the economic relationships this form of life fosters. In the present study we will not discuss this problem in detail, nor will we discuss the interpretation that could be made of its function as a superstructure. Let it suffice that religion plays an important role in Gypsy life.

The fact that Gypsies usually adopted the religion of the country in which they found themselves practicing their limited form of nomadism (Islam or the various Christian religions), is one aspect of this people's religiosity which should be mentioned from the very outset. The adoption of the local religion was often essential for survival. In fact, when they arrived in the Christianized West (or in the Moslem regions of the Balkans), where being a pagan meant total disgrace, the Gypsies found that it was in their interest to *adopt the religion practiced in the area* all the more so as baptism was the only kind of identity at that time. One must never forget that at the root of Gypsy existence there is a profound sense of insecurity. Their peculiar way of life, their strangeness, the magical powers attributed to them, the very mystery of their origin made them subject to *untold harassment and persecution* over the centuries. Being chased from one place to another without any possibility whatsoever for economic exchange made them realize that to belong to the religion of the particular country in which they found themselves would be a fundamental guarantee for them. Only in this manner could they gain the minimum of credibility needed to establish relationships with the sedentary populations, and this because it would confer them with a kind of social label. And yet, despite all this, we know how tenacious Western racism was towards Gypsies and how it culminated in Hitler's genocidal acts. From this point of view the fate of the Gypsies is similar to that of the Jews. Today still, racism manifests itself daily in police problems and administrative checks (until recently Gypsies in France were obliged to submit regularly to an anthropometrical check), not

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to speak of the problems of camping sites which were often forbidden to nomads.

This official religious affiliation was an essential element of the traditional acculturation of the Gypsies, being grafted onto *an indigenous religious base* made up of very different beliefs. Such beliefs, which are of an animist type, place the Gypsies in a kind of permanent communion with an invisible world peopled by various types of spirits, both good and bad, and by mysterious forces of nature which are susceptible to being intercepted by magical rites. Acculturation has led in this case to a kind of *symbiosis of Christian beliefs with this animist base* by means of the multiple re-interpretations of one element by the other. The exorcism rites of baptism and funerals, in particular, provide curious examples of such an acculturation process of reinterpretation.⁴

Furthermore, Gypsies found it worthwhile to claim the gift of mysterious powers as this inspired respect and fear in a credulous rural population in which one could still find ancient beliefs and pagan superstitions unsuccessfully repressed by the Christian religion. It was the ability to cast a spell, predict the future, or practice a healing rite on a farm animal that gave the Gypsies the kind of prestige that permitted them to enter the rural world and made it easier for them to entertain economic relations with this world.

In this way, the collective representation of "bohemians," Romanies and Gypsies evolved in popular imagery and literature, provoking mistrust but never inimical feelings. This kind of representation marked the psychology of the Gypsies themselves by means of a kind of feedback in which they were forced to maintain this image inasmuch as it reinforced their social role. This is a good example of acculturation within a well defined social framework—the traditional rural world—in which the Gypsy was a characteristic element though he might be known under different names. It is, furthermore, an example of acculturation which is remarkably well suited for an analysis of social structures. Was it the economic requirements of parasitic nomadism (the relationship between the production for-

⁴ The reader will find the details in my volume cited above, pp. 98, 112 and 202 to 211.

ces) which were at the base of this particular evolution of religious ideas, which, in this case, would simply be superstructures according to Marxist interpretation? Or, rather, was it not the existence of the original animism and of a Gypsy religious feeling which facilitated and made worthwhile such an economic choice according to Weber's interpretation?

We must mention one last trait of Gypsy culture which is of some importance to our subject. A *profound fatalism* made it possible for this nomadic people to continue their perpetual wandering with indifference, and prevented them from being crushed by anxiety about a future that was almost always uncertain, or by situations that were quite precarious and aleatory. When one understands what such a wandering existence can mean, an existence without any guarantees depending on relations with a suspicious and often downright hostile world, then one may appreciate that this type of life was only possible with the help of a kind of trust in destiny which was rooted in a fierce loyalty to ancestral customs and traditions. Such fatalism, for example, appears in the refusal to give a child a real education (a child is considered to be a little king of the family), as Gypsies think that abilities are innate and that they will develop by themselves through observation and orally transmitted traditions.

All these traits show us that Gypsy culture has a profound originality, a great capacity for adaptation, and the ability to enter into a process of acculturation in contact with other cultures. Gypsy culture is the result of permanent, though limited, contacts of a very particular kind with traditional rural society so that it represents a stage of acculturation which has reached a certain equilibrium between these two societies. Can the Gypsies' ability to adapt, clearly shown in relation to the traditional rural society which was so different from their own, also function in the new situation which has been created by the disappearance of that world and its replacement by modern industrial society? This is the problem that we must now consider.

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TOWARDS A NEW ACCULTURATION

One can readily appreciate the magnitude of the problem with which the Gypsy world of today finds itself confronted. Having always lived in the relatively stable state of acculturation described above, and not in a kind of pseudo-isolation, it is clear that the present situation represents *a radical break with the past*. Such a break brings with it a deep instability insofar as the partner with whom the Gypsy lived in a state of symbiosis has practically disappeared. The coming of the industrial world has caused important changes in those areas once dominated by the rural society. Not only has the industrial society diminished the rural world quantitatively (it now consists of 10 to 15% of the active population); it has also caused what is left of the rural world to undergo radical changes. In short, industrialization has reached the farmhouse. Improvement in the standard of living, schooling for all, and the penetration of mass media have changed rural needs and made customs uniform, all this resulting in the rupture of the weak economic and cultural links that tied the Gypsies to the rural world and which explained their limited parasitic nomadism. All the little jobs by which the Gypsies lived off of their peasant clients have lost their function and have been eliminated by modern commerce and by the proximity of towns equipped with all the necessary facilities. Above all, the Gypsies have lost their aura of mystery and occult power due to the penetration into the country of schooling. Their image has collapsed and their nomadic life, even if they wanted to continue it, would be quite futile. In other words, recent changes in the rural world have definitely made impossible the traditional acculturation pattern which allowed the Gypsy to live in that world as best he could. But, most important, it is not that the Gypsy is faced with a rural society which no longer needs him; rather, he is faced with a world he has never understood and with which his culture never came to terms: *a world of urban concentration and of industrial work*.

The terms of the problem are in no way ambiguous. The Gypsies find themselves exposed without any known remedy to an industrialized and urbanized world with which they must

establish some kind of relationship in order to survive. Since their arrival in Europe, they have lived in a kind of process of acculturation which has permitted them to exist; but we do not know whether they will be able to find another type of process without becoming subject to straightforward assimilation, which would mean the end of their culture. Some think that this is a problem hardly worth considering as Gypsy culture was shaped too much by the preceding acculturation phase for it to be able to withstand the impact of the modern world. For those who entertain such an opinion the essential problem is that this disappearance not be accompanied by a generalized proletarianization of the Gypsies.

Yet the problem is not quite so simple, for, besides evoking great human interest, it also raises the more general question of *the possibility of pluralism* in the way the cultural model of modern day Western society is lived. It is from this point of view that the case of the Gypsy culture becomes part of a greater problem, that of the survival of regional cultures or ethnical minorities living in a larger context. In face of the danger presented by a centralization so vast that it results in a cultural levelling, many people today are searching for a better quality of life and demand the right to be different, as well as to revive various particularist and autonomist movements.

It may be of some interest to mention a few of *the tentative solutions* in countries where there are, relatively speaking, more Gypsies who have entered an acculturation phase which is further developed than is the case in France.

THE SITUATION OF GYPSIES IN FRANCE

It is perhaps important first to mention the legal and administrative situation of the Gypsies in France, as it is indicative of the difficulties raised by the new acculturation.

The French government does not usually classify Gypsies as countryless people. If they can supply the required birth conditions and the family status, Gypsies are considered French citizens with all the obligations which this status entails (obligatory schooling, taxation, military service, etc.). On the other

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hand, the patriotic feelings of many Gypsies led them to enter the Resistance movement during the last World War, and many of them died in concentration camps.

Nevertheless, this general legislation has not brought about a real acculturation. Proof of this was the necessity to draw up some rules concerning or affecting the traditional life of the Gypsies. In fact, until recently the camp sites of nomads, people without a "fixed domicile," were severely regulated by racist laws (Law of July, 1912) which forced all Gypsies to have a nomad's pass and a penal record, like common delinquents, to facilitate police checks. This record had to be presented whenever called for under penalty of being classified vagabonds. It was not until recently that this law was replaced by another law concerning nomadism that became effective in January 1969 and modified in 1970 by a set of decrees which softened the controls so as to favor ambulant work. This law, praiseworthy in its intentions, has been criticized for creating some very concrete problems for the Gypsies (the "Baro Lil", or anthropometric booklet, *carnet anthropometrique*, has been replaced by a pass which, if not presented, renders Gypsies liable to punitive sanctions. The pass is delivered in function of "regular resources" when many ambulant activities cannot be measured in these terms or even in those of "normal living conditions"). These conditions favor those who are already acculturated and threaten to increase the poverty, by means of a system of sanctions, of the many who still work for a fee (artists, for example), and who do not have a steady income. Some associations such as the C.N.I.N. (Comité National d'Action et d'Information Sociales pour les Gens de Voyage et les Personnes d'origine nomade) as well as religious associations such as "Nôtre Dame des Gitans" have pointed out these weaknesses and have contributed to adapt these laws on nomadism to the concrete living conditions of the Gypsies.

Obligatory schooling (Law of 1966) calls for a minimum of sedentary life and thus collides with the nomadic structure of Gypsy culture and, if poorly applied, helps to destroy it. By stopping benefits and "Allocations Familiales," the Law of 1966 penalizes Gypsy children who do not go to school regularly. The schooling of nomads is necessary in order for them to face

the increasing difficulties of the modern world, but the schooling has created more problems than it has resolved. In fact, school has resulted in being the place where different worlds and different psychologies confront each other: one, nomadic and, the other, sedentary. Many generous and intelligent pedagogic initiatives have been undertaken, and will still have to be undertaken, in order to solve the problems that have been caused by this confrontation (for example, the creation of special classes and itinerant classes near organized camping sites). This shows the need for a coherent and planned policy of acculturation. Such a policy would also be favorably received by many Gypsies who actually want schooling and professional training on condition that it respect their cultural values and their way of life, and not oblige them to become sedentary against their will.

Since one of the main professions of the Gypsies is door-to-door selling ("chine") the new law of 1972 which regulates such sales concerns them directly and gives them some problems (their illiteracy makes it hard for them to fill out the sales contracts and the week required for the acceptance or refusal of wares poses some problems since they have no fixed domicile). In this case, as well, the associations⁵ that protect Gypsies from laws that are at times ill suited to their real conditions have often made the laws evolve in favor of "traveling people."

To conclude with the legal and administrative situation of the Gypsies in France, it must be said that a real civic spirit and a will to fulfill the obligations of French citizenship is manifested by the Gypsies. However, as we shall see further on, the problem must be considered in its entirety and, above all, in collaboration with the Gypsies, so that they may both remain themselves and still be entirely French.

⁵ The principal legislative, administrative and judiciary texts applicable in France to travelling people and populations of nomadic origin are mentioned, analyzed or reproduced in *Etudes Tsiganes* (Bulletin de l'Association des études tsiganes, 5, rue de Las-Cases, Paris), Nos. 1 and 2, 1973.

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THE SITUATION OF SPANISH GYPSIES

It is perhaps here opportune to discuss the *Spanish Gypsies*. We have made various studies of the solutions tried to save their culture which, because its traditions have lost much of their meaning, is on the way to becoming marginal.

In point of fact, the Spanish Gypsies present us with a model of acculturation that has had more success than in many other places, hence the interest for their search for a new equilibrium. From their arrival in Spain, the Gypsies found favorable conditions which facilitated the interpenetration of the two cultures and benefited both partners. This was not the case in other areas. Because of its past, Spain was open to such enriching contacts. Prior to the arrival of the Gypsies, Spain had lived through the same acculturation process with the Jews, and, of course, with the Arabs. This does not evidently mean that this process was without its conflicts, for in fact there were many. The most typical example is that of the *Andalusian Gypsies*, whose acculturation was carried out in favorable conditions, inasmuch as they encountered more friendliness than enmity (which was not the rule everywhere) and due to the relative homogeneity of the small Andalusian people and the Gypsies. The result was a living synthesis and the birth of new cultural traits which passed definitively into Spanish culture. *Flamenco* is the most significant example of these new cultural traits, for it is an original creation comprising various elements as well as being a sort of mutation produced by a successful acculturation which has survived modern disruptions and touristic exploitation.

On the other side of the coin we have modern industrialized *Catalonia*, Barcelona above all, where, in the last few years, several attempts have been made to put the Gypsies in a non-traumatizing relationship with urban and industrial society. This search for a new acculturation has taken on several forms. In some cases, usually official ones, there has been an attempt at outright assimilation which in effect means the disappearance of Gypsy culture in deference to the dominant modern model which comprises the values of the "calé" (non-Gypsy) world. This may be illustrated by the example provided by the "Gitanets."

In fact the "Gitanets" are an example of spontaneous assimilation. They are a Gypsy minority which settled in Catalonia and in particular in certain quarters of Barcelona such as Sans, Plaza Espagna, Calle de la Cera, Gracia and Hostafranchs. They rapidly became experts in the door-to-door selling ("chine") of cloths produced by the looms of nearby towns such as Tarrasa and Sabadell. At the beginning of the century they had gained a certain degree of comfort and began to live in lower middle class housing. They now have hardly any connections with their nomadic counterparts which explains why they intermarry within their group and no longer speak "calò" (the Spanish Gypsy language) but have adopted Catalan which they speak with a slight "calloro" accent. Their children go to the "payos" (non-Gypsy) schools and if they do not devote themselves to "chine" they take up, often with success, "payos" jobs such as bank employee, tradesman, etc. As one can see this is an example of spontaneous assimilation.

The Polygone de La Mina, created by the city of Barcelona, is much further along the path of assimilation. It is an example of planned acculturation.

The origin. Ever since industrialization began in Catalonia, Barcelona has been surrounded by about ten slums. The most important of these, Somorostro, which is no longer in existence, once had a total of 40,000 inhabitants. This abnormal development of poverty was due to the amount of unskilled labor required by the building trade and the increased amount of activity in the port of Barcelona. These immigrants, many coming from Andalusia, improvised housing on abandoned land along the sea front (Somorostro, Campo de la Bota) and in mountainous areas (Carmelo, San Pablo, Montjuich) etc. Nomadic Gypsies who had been able to circulate quite freely up to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 were required to stop their wandering and become sedentary. They also added to the poorly housed population of these slums.

In the beginning there were private and religious organizations to help these poverty stricken people. Later on it was the city of Barcelona which created a special office to control and help the wandering people who built their abodes with

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wooden boards and tarred felt in the urbanized and central parts of the town (La Perona, for example).

After several unsuccessful attempts, the Ministry of Housing undertook a large project in 1971 which was to eliminate the slums. The outcome of this project was the construction of the Polygone de la Mina which was completed in 1973-74. This housing project includes a total of 2,152 apartments which are equipped with all the modern comforts.

For the first time, Gypsies are becoming owners thanks to hire-purchase contracts. In this way the Spanish government forces them to take jobs that ensure them a regular salary.

Population. At the present time there are 10,916 inhabitants in the various slums, of which 2,028 are Gypsies (Romanies, or Gypsies called "Hungarians," are very scarce).

Professions. The men are, in part, ambulant vendors at fairs and markets, where they sell cloth, shirts, sheets, etc. Others practice fraudulent "chine," hawking cheap jewelry such as watches, rings, etc.

Finally, there are vendors of old iron, unskilled workers on construction sites, dockers signed up at the port, or street cleaners (there are whole families that are responsible for cleaning the roads of La Mina, being paid by the city of Barcelona) cabinet makers (this profession is being adopted by an increasing amount of Gypsies thanks to training received in professional schools) and, finally, plasterers (rather rare).

The women refuse to work under the orders of a "payo," but they will accept, if there is no other alternative, to clean offices under the orders of a "paya" (non-Gypsy woman).

The jobs that they prefer are the traditional occupations of selling ribbons, flowers, garlic, etc. on the streets.

Begging, although productive, is tending to disappear.

Since 80% of the Gypsies are still illiterate they find it difficult to enter the working world and escape proletarianization. The younger generation knows more or less how to read but has some difficulties in writing.

Family Life. Gypsies who have rebuilt their old family or tribal life (extended family) by buying all the apartments on a floor, have a much more balanced life than those who live in isolation or separated from their relatives.

In general, despite the new advantages of apartment living, the Gypsies regret having left their shacks, the open air, the freedom and the fire which is the very heart of the Gypsy family. This nostalgia is at times so strong that some Gypsy families of La Mina disdain their modern kitchens and eat their meals cooked over fires in the fields surrounding the Polygone.

On the whole, there is a spirit of competition for the most beautiful, best furnished, and most comfortable apartment. It is for this reason that the following percentages of Gypsy families possess the following items:

— Television	99%
— Radio	80%
— Record players	10%
— Washing machines	50%
— Refrigerators	40%

All of these articles are bought on credit.

However, family life is disturbed by these commodities. The women suffer from isolation and the men meet more and more often at cafés. There is an undeniable decline in family feeling. *Social facilities at the Polygone de La Mina.* There are 7 day-care centers, 122 commercial enterprises, 2 old-age centers, 1 popular library, 2 sports grounds (for soccer and basketball), 1 recreation centre, 1 parish ensemble, 1 dispensary, 2 professional schools and 1 bank. There are also play areas and a well-stocked covered market. The young thus enter consumer society through these facilities to the detriment of traditions which are showing signs of crumbling.

Symptom of the abandon of traditional culture. There is already a 20% decrease in the birth rate of the Gypsies. Some of them are acquainted with contraception, others actually make use of it.

Sometimes young girls refuse being checked by the "juntadora," the woman who checks their virginity, the cornerstone of a Gypsy marriage. One notices more and more often the loss of respect for paternal authority with the result of endangering the cohesion of the social group.

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Betrothed couples. Fiancés choose each other in up to 60% of the cases without taking into account their father's choice, thereby neglecting tradition.

Even more serious is the fact that there have been some cases of men abandoning their families. This would seem to indicate that the council of elders, the "Kris," no longer functions.

We are here confronted by what is perhaps an extreme case of planned acculturation with both negative and positive aspects. It will be necessary to be vigilant in the future and follow the evolution of these Gypsy families over a period of many years. It certainly is too early, as of yet, to pass a concluding judgement on this experiment.

The Gypsies who now live in the apartments of La Mina are the same that used to live in the slums of Somorostro. In the slums they maintained, on the one hand, some forms of Gypsy identity with adjustments in terms of the world of the city which remained an external entity for them, whereas, on the other hand, it is true to say that they lived in deplorable poverty and misery without prospects of change. The city of Barcelona has set up a whole series of institutions such as schools, working centers, day-care centers, co-operatives, etc., which facilitate assimilation. The cultural evolution thus operates in depth with the aim of changing the mentality so as to create the homogenization of the cultures in question. This is a typical example of planned acculturation.

In opposition to this kind of solution is the refusal of some Gypsy groups to be integrated. There follows the classical process of counter acculturation of which Campo de la Bota is an example. Menaced by disappearance, the Gypsies have re-established their ancestral way of life to resist better the pressures of modern cultural models. The same phenomenon has taken place in Perona, a slum of Barcelona.

It must on the other hand be admitted that these examples are extreme. The most frequent phase is one which is well known in many acculturation processes; it is the search for a new balance in a situation of *transitional culture*. As we have often seen, because of the structural interdependence between the various domains of social life, it is often enough for the

Gypsies to adopt one single cultural trait proper to modern Spanish life for it to bring along with it the rest in a sort of chain reaction. This is the case, for example, with the influences of a professional activity on Gypsy women. The promiscuity that such an activity entails and the working hours that must be maintained can, little by little, change the place that woman has traditionally held in Gypsy culture. The same is true for the schooling of young Gypsies which stirs up many conflicts and problems between the generations. These conflicts are the result of the double education which these children receive: one from the school, the other from the Gypsy group. There is also the problem of the Gypsy language whose survival guarantees the Gypsy oral culture, especially when the latter must compete with the Spanish language. This same competition also occasions a rupture in the dialogue between young and old which is even further accentuated by the influence that mass media has on the young. It is thus that even in the very heart of a Gypsy family contradictory information concerning tradition and its interpretation enters becoming in turn the source of various conflicts. All these are characteristics of cultures in transition.

We have seen, then, that the Spanish example teaches us that both anarchic acculturation (proletarianization) and planned acculturation (assimilation) must be avoided inasmuch as both lead to the death of Gypsy culture. One can summarize the main lessons to be learned from these experiences by saying the following:

a) In giving the Gypsies all of their external needs, one must carefully avoid making them into objects of charity. The acculturation process, if it is to be positive, must, first of all, be taken in hand and *controlled by the Gypsies themselves*. One must limit oneself to helping them help themselves in accordance to a formula that has become quite banal in development strategy. With regard to this, we have had the opportunity to see the excellent work that is being done in the *Gypsy Secretariats* which exist in all of the larger Spanish towns. These organisms function with the help of both Gypsies and "gadgés" and show that the goal to be reached is equally

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important to both communities. The goal is, of course, to be able to live together and still respect each other's differences.

There is, then, a *coming to consciousness* that must be favored in the Gypsy world. It is the realization of the necessity for adaptation and for being inventive in order to find a way of life that is still authentically Gypsy, while remodelling a restructured existence in function of modern life. In short, the problem is to enable the Gypsies to control their own acculturation and to determine what is to be saved of the old culture as well as what can be accepted from the external model that will, nevertheless, not be detrimental to the fundamental values of the group.

This evolution can be initiated on two main levels. It can begin with the *child* at the time of his schooling but this would presuppose the existence of Gypsy schools, or, at least, of Gypsy classes which would not be cut off from non-Gypsy schools. The same could also hold true for the centers for professional training. However, such a coming to consciousness must *stem from the Gypsy leaders*, so that changes can occur from the inside. These may be, as well, favored by the psychological emulation which is a part of Gypsy pride, and which would be a powerful stimulant for an acculturation process controlled by the Gypsies themselves. One can never insist enough on the fact that the goal to be achieved is that of a collective coming to consciousness of the need to change, which in turn could be incorporated into Gypsy institutions. In Spain we were able to witness the progress of this collective realization on the part of the Gypsies who fiercely want to preserve their most fundamental traditions while continuing to adapt to modern Spanish culture.

Within this framework one must mention two obstacles to such an enterprise. In the first place, there is a *general indifference* amongst the autochthonous populations insofar as the Gypsy problem is concerned. This indifference comes either from their not seeing where the interest lies, or from the fact that they have been unconsciously influenced by a generic type of racism. If one is conscious of the fact that a real acculturation is the result of the coupling of two interacting cultures, then it is essential that the autochthonous populations be willing

partners in the process of acculturation. This happens when these populations create a *welcoming attitude* which is both understanding and friendly towards the Gypsies who come into contact with them.

In the realm of psychopathology other difficulties are encountered which often have dramatic effects. We are speaking of the *traumas* that are engendered over the years in many Gypsies who have undergone an anarchic acculturation which was in fact no more than a disintegration without any benefits in return. Because of the progress made by psychoanalysis, we now know more about the pathology of those men living on the fringes of society. In fact, in this competitive transition phase between two conflicting cultures we have seen many Gypsies show signs of identity crises, which manifest themselves by a loss of "joie de vivre," insecurity, self-depreciation, etc. In such a situation the Gypsies are torn between two codes of conduct one of which, the modern environment, they have poorly assimilated especially when it imposes roles that are considered (often incorrectly, it is true) to be contradictory or deviant with respect to Gypsy society. What in other cases would be nothing more than a kind of double standard (maintaining traditions within the family network while adopting the external cultural model for professional activities), here becomes a veritable pathological de-structuring of the personality. But one would have to, at this point, write an entire chapter on ethnopsychiatry which would be outside the scope of this paper.

b) There is a second lesson which is of some importance to us. We are speaking of the necessity of approaching the whole problem of the new acculturation globally, inside the existing social framework.⁶ The acculturation contact must be between two global societies and not between one which crushes the other, in order that Gypsy society make the necessary changes in all realms (the family, free time, work, etc.) and aim for the preservation of an original life style which affects all of these realms rather than effecting a kind of separation by which certain domains would follow the ancestral tradition while the

⁶ Concerning this whole theoretical aspect see R. Bastide, *Problèmes de l'entrecroisement des civilisations et de leurs oeuvres*, in G. Gurvitch, *Traité de Sociologie*, II, Paris, 1963.

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other would be converted to be a dominant external model. This is certainly a most delicate operation and only the Gypsies can bring it about.

In fact one must not forget that because of the structural interdependence between the various domains of social life it is often enough for an ethnic minority to adopt a trait from the dominant culture to provoke a *chain reaction* which changes all the rest. We have seen this above all in the change of profession made by some Gypsies who were no longer able to do the work that had once depended on a nomadic way of life which now has lost its meaning. These Gypsies have been forced to enter the industrial productive circuit in order not to become marginal people and sink even lower. It would therefore be worthwhile to orient young Gypsies towards artisanal work in apprenticeship centers since in this kind of profession they could develop to a more satisfactory degree the qualities they inherit from their culture such as imagination, freedom in expression, etc. Here again it is not a question of professional sectors which would be specifically reserved for Gypsies so that they might, in some way, continue their past. On the contrary, what is necessary is that they be able to express their Gypsy soul in modern professional activities. Of course the collector of old iron or the second-hand dealer driving an old car in search of merchandise may still find for himself some of the charm of nomadic life. Can one say the same for the Flamenco singers and dancers who perform in cabarets for tourists? It would certainly be a false solution to restrict the Gypsies to activities which, while reminding them of their past, would soon become nothing more than folklore which is the opposite of a real living culture.

We know that inter-cultural contacts are realized only globally and that if a positive result is to be had one must always keep in mind the internal dynamics that are part of all cultural evolution and which tend to penetrate all of the sectors of social life. In the past, during the traditional acculturation phase, parasitic nomadism reduced these contacts to a minimum but today this is no longer possible. One cannot close the Gypsies into a *cultural ghetto*. The inevitable acceptance of sedentary living, modern housing, learning to read and write,

going to obligatory school, and the permanent influence of the mass media makes it impossible for the Gypsies to avoid contacts with the modern world. In order that this contact not be destructive new conditions must be created while Gypsy cultural heritage is still alive.

c) It is at this point that our question becomes clear: *how does one define this heritage*, this group of Gypsy values? Here only a few suggestions can be made. Since this heritage is to be found less in the realm of social life, in a kind of socio-cultural "reservation," but rather in a general spirit and life style that must be preserved in all the activities of modern life, it is obvious that the answer is not a simple one. Only experience can show us, in the case of such an acculturation process, what will be able to survive as a *culturally productive force* able to live in symbiosis with the new elements. The most important thing is to preserve the basic Gypsy personality and prevent its disappearance in the second or third generation. It is only those concerned and their leaders above all, who, rather than deciding what is to be retained from their Gypsy past, must decide how to actuate and live modern life while remaining Gypsies. In other words they must decide how to live modern life a little differently. Of course there will often be incompatibilities between Gypsy values (as distinct from activities) and modern culture which privileges money, profit and permissivity. Here is where one encounters what is called an "acculturation limit" whose delimitation is often difficult to establish but which is essential for acculturation to be successful. By successful we mean that its outcome is not the disappearance of one culture because it has been crushed out of existence by the other.

One thus understands the importance of creating Gypsy cultural centers and establishing the ensemble of values on which Gypsy interest must be concentrated. This is so as not to isolate them but rather to enable them to *remain themselves in contact with modern society*. Their principal centers of interest gravitate around family values (because the family is the best place for the transmission of a culture), respect for one's elders which goes from the important cult of the dead (to be

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reinterpreted, if necessary, in a less superstitious context) to the respect that is due to one's father, the prestige of faithfulness, the important role of woman (taking care that demythifying the impurity tabus too quickly does not produce an opposite effect from the one desired), the feelings of familial and tribal honor, respect of Gypsy ethics (especially as regards community solidarity), and, above all, maturing the Gypsies' natural religious feelings.

This program may seem ambitious but it is certain that if one gives the Gypsies the possibility to start on the path of cultural development they have the necessary vitality and ability to adapt. Their native culture has a sufficiently powerful internal dynamism that augurs well for the future. But, as in all cases of cultural development, the most delicate phase is the "take-off" which guarantees the future. It is at this stage that a culture, especially that of a small minority, must be helped in an understanding and disinterested manner from the outside. This help must be provided by the dominant culture so that the two may live in symbiosis with each other.

If this path to a new acculturation is made possible by our industrialized society, if the latter accepts the Gypsies' contribution as a form of legitimate and complementary difference despite the small demographic dimensions of their culture, then this new type of acculturation would be able to make an original contribution towards the blossoming of a new type of society for which many of our contemporaries wish. Such a society would be more heedful of nature, more respectful of links to the past and even more careful in maintaining certain values that the Gypsies always possessed: a love for festivities and the expression of joy, as well as a taste for freedom that has always been for the benefit of the whole group. One can only hope that this contribution will not come too late.