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NOMADIC AND  
SEDENTARY CITIZENS.  
THE CULTURE OF ROMA AND  
THE WORLD OF EDUCATION

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THE ROMA: STRANGERS OR FRIENDS AMONG US?  
THE ROMA AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION\*

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*Introduction*

The new political situation in Europe displays a growing hostility toward Jews, immigrants and asylum seekers, Roma/Gypsies, and other minorities. Stereotypes are being dragged out and internal boundaries erected against foreigners. Both Western and Eastern Europe have witnessed episodes of ethnic conflict and 'ethnic cleansing.' Deteriorating economic conditions and weakening social cohesion arouse a fear of the future, and 'fundamentalist' religious groups exploit this fear to preach their 'truth', which often includes an intolerance of others. Extreme rightist, even neo-Fascist, parties and movements propagate nationalism, violence, and intolerance, and they have won electoral successes. Minorities and people who 'look different' are made into scapegoats. The media sometimes contribute to these tendencies by making headline stories out of common prejudices.

This is happening even while the level of education is rising to its highest level. Perhaps intolerance is a result not of ignorance but rather of the loss of such values as pluralism, democracy, and human rights. Indeed, all over Europe these values seem to have taken second place to knowledge and technical skills. In East Europe, furthermore, they were long stifled by totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless, education must play a major role in combating the ideologies and practices that constitute ethnic and racial discrimination.

*The case of the Roma/Gypsies*

The Gypsies, also known as *Roma*, or *Sinti*, or by many other names throughout Europe, originated in northern India whence they spread to other parts of Asia and to the Balkans, to Western Europe, and to America. From the time of their arrival in Western Europe in the fourteenth century, Roma/Gypsies have been seen as 'intruders'. Local communities reacted to their presence with mistrust, fear, and rejection. Even though their numbers were small, peasants, princes, and the Church took measures against them. This rejection, localised at first, rapidly became a state affair with the passing of royal edicts condemning and banishing the Roma/Gypsies on pain of corporal punishment.

All states tried to get rid of them. In the Holy Roman Empire in the fifteenth century and later, the Roma were denounced as traitors to Christendom, spies in the pay of the Turks, and carriers of the plague; they were accused of witchcraft and child abduction, and they could be killed with impunity. In France in 1510, Louis XII banished them altogether; violation of

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this edict was to be punished by hanging. In 1721, Charles VI of the Holy Roman Empire ordered the extermination of adult male Roma, and women and children were to have an ear cut off. In Switzerland and the Netherlands, 'hunts' were organised in which the Roma were pursued as if they were animals.

The first recorded account of the Gypsies/Roma in Italy was by Brother Hyeronimus, who chronicled their appearance in Forlì in 1422. Somewhat later, a Gypsy/Roma king by the name of Duke Andrea settled in Bologna with a band of about two hundred people. By the sixteenth century they had reached Rome and then Milan, where the first edicts against them were issued. They were declared a public menace and were believed to be, like other beggars, carriers of the plague. Among the penalties were three applications of the *tratto di corda* (which involved raising the victim by his hands, tied behind his back, so that the entire weight of the body hung from the wrists). Mantua, the Republic of Venice, and the Duchy of Tuscany enacted ordinances against the Roma later in the sixteenth century. In Italy between 1506 and 1785, nearly 150 anti-Roma bans were published.

But the most grisly campaign against the Roma was undertaken by the Nazis, who it is estimated, killed about half a million of them. I have a personal connection to this part of the story. I was born to Jewish parents in Transylvania, Romania. Like my parents, I grew up on 'Gypsy street', where our neighbours were Romanians, Hungarians, Jews, and Roma, though we were altogether indifferent to their ethnic identity. My parents, however, had been swept up in the Holocaust, and my mother has vivid memories of Auschwitz. The Jewish section of the camp was adjacent to the section where the Roma were imprisoned. She remembers the screams on the night of August 2-3, 1944, when the entire population of Roma prisoners – children, parents, and grandparents – was exterminated. That is a horror I hope will never be repeated – though what has happened in the last few years in the former Yugoslavia suggests that it is not impossible.

From outright rejection of the Roma/Gypsies prior to the middle of the 20th century, and culminating with the destruction of large numbers of Roma/Gypsies during the Holocaust, there was a clear shift in attitudes during the communist era. During the Communist era in Eastern Europe, there was a marked change in the conditions of the Roma. The new regimes proclaimed a belief in lifting the downtrodden, and they made explicit provisions for the existence of different nationalities and national minorities. However, these policies were designed to further ideological goals rather than to remedy social injustice, and the Communist countries varied in their willingness to extend these provisions to the Roma. Most of them demanded their integration into the rest of society – e.g., by requiring them to receive as much schooling as was compulsory, and to work at conventional jobs.

After the collapse of Communism, the Roma/Gypsies' situation in Eastern Europe changed again, and drastically. With the advent of market economies, less-qualified workers, including many of the Roma, lost their jobs. At the same time, the social safety net was greatly weakened. Schooling was no longer obligatory, although in some countries incentives were offered to parents to continue sending their young children to school rather than sending them to earn a living.

### *Stereotypes*

In everyday speech and popular songs, the images of the Roma continue to be overwhelmingly negative – e.g., 'to lie like a Gypsy', or 'to be as dirty as a Gypsy'. Names and even verbs derived from the word 'Gypsy', all go hand in hand in reinforcing these stereotypes. (For their part, the Roma have stereotypes of the non-Roma, the *gadze*. For example, the *gadze* are considered to be 'polluted' because they live with animals such as dogs and cats in the house, and traditional Roma will not eat in the house of a *gadze* or eat off a *gadze's* dishes.)

For centuries there was little attempt to find out who the Roma were or to learn about their culture. Indeed, they were often thought to have no linguistic, cultural or ethnic roots. They were considered to be a 'social problem' requiring 'rehabilitation' and 'integration' into 'normal' society. The fact that there were doctors, lawyers, professors, and other educated people among the Roma was overlooked.

It is extremely important to stop and consider these stereotypes and their implications, but it is not easy to do so. The view from one's own culture is coloured by that culture, seeing all differences in absolute terms, failing to distinguish between the real diversity of one cultural milieu and another, and imaginary differences inspired by stereotypes and misconceptions.

Today, it is estimated, there are seven to eight million Roma living in Europe; the largest group is in Romania. The circumstances of their existence are very difficult. Life expectancy is short; the birth rate is high; many traditional skills such as blacksmithing and basketweaving, are no longer in demand. In some countries, as many as 90 percent of the adult males are unemployed. About three-quarters of the adult population is illiterate, and the proportion is even higher in some countries. The educational systems ignore the needs of Roma children; insufficient account is taken of their language, and rejection and segregation in the classroom are common. Many Roma parents do not register their children for school, and of those who are registered, many do not attend.

There are various obstacles to the education of Roma children. It is not easy to provide schooling for children from nomadic families, although in the last decade experiments have been attempted with 'distance learning' and other methods of educating nomadic children. These efforts have had the encouragement of the Council of Europe and the European Community. The Roma themselves have been divided on the question of education: while some want schools where their children would be taught in the Romani language, others fear that schooling in Romani would perpetuate the Roma's marginal status in the larger society.

A related problem is that, to many Roma, sending children to school is perceived as disruptive to their family and group solidarity – a form of acculturation that is not always welcome. This wariness is reinforced by the treatment that Roma children may be subjected to in school, where, in addition to the scorn for their language, they may be bullied by the other children and teachers may regard them as stupid, mischievous, and unfit to receive the same kind of education that others are receiving. Often, they are placed in classes for retarded children. Because of the economic hardships from which their families suffer, Roma children are apt to be poorly dressed and undernourished. These conditions would seem to virtually guarantee failure at school. Many Roma children do not complete even elementary school, and very few indeed enter into vocational training or higher education. School attendance even seems to have decreased in recent years, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The proportion of illiteracy is extremely high: according to a survey carried out by the European Community from 1985 to 1988, the illiteracy among adult Roma in the EEC countries varied from 50 to 100% in places.

These circumstances are exacerbated by the effects of the media. Roma culture is essentially oral rather than written, and so television has had an extraordinary effect on it. For many young Roma, it may be a major source of information and inspiration, leading them to reject the influence of their elders. Traditional teachings may be replaced by the values of the consumer society, causing an identity crisis and a profound sense of rootlessness.

This sombre picture, however, should not mask the efforts that are being made to remedy the situation. The Council of Europe has organised courses for teachers in the schooling of Romani children, and primers in the Romani language have appeared in several countries. Other steps are being taken at the national level. The Hungarian Minorities Act of 1994 provided for funds to be devoted to education and the media in minority languages. In the Czech Republic and in Romania, training courses for the teachers of Romani children have been initiated, and preparatory classes for Romani children have been established in nursery,

primary, and special schools.

### *Intercultural education*

One approach to education where there are substantial numbers of Roma children is intercultural education, which is based on the premise that recognising the validity of ways of life other than one's own is not sufficient in itself; there must also be a genuine desire to learn from the differences (although attention must be paid to shared experiences and feelings as well). Thus, the goals of intercultural education are: 1) promotion of intercultural and international understanding; 2) recognition of and respect for cultural differences; 3) exploration of issues of human rights and citizenship; 4) provision of equal opportunities for all; and 5) development of strategies for using the skills and knowledge that children bring to school.

Methods that have been used successfully in racially and ethnically mixed classrooms in the United States and that can be applied in Italy include group work and 'windows and mirrors'.

### *Group work*

Group work is an important strategy in intercultural education because it is apparently the only way to provide opportunities to communicate and co-operate in heterogeneous groups. On the other hand, the teacher should be alert that all students have equal opportunities to participate in the group work.

(An example of group work: in one example of this strategy, a class is divided into groups of about four students each. Each group receives a different set of written instructions and a set of resource cards that contain information needed to solve a problem. Over the course of the unit, each group receives each assignment. At the end of the unit, students write individual reports).

The outcomes expected from group work are: 1) co-operation among students of different cultural backgrounds; 2) familiarisation of students with different points of view – a widening of perspectives; 3) increased awareness of the similarities and differences among individuals from different backgrounds; 4) development of such practical skills as listening, negotiating, and working with others; 5) development of attitudes of respect and tolerance for persons of different backgrounds; 6) improvement of language skills, because of the need to communicate when trying to solve the problem; and 7) a sense of satisfaction and success.

However, in order for group work to succeed, teachers must have the knowledge and skills needed to organise it. They must be able to make connections between the group-work tasks and current social issues, to understand the dynamics of groups, and to motivate and challenge the students. In addition, teachers' evaluations of the students' work are crucial, because students attach great weight to them, and the evaluations will affect students' expectations of themselves, their level of activity, and their degree of influence on others.

### *'Windows and mirrors'*

In multicultural education, the strategy of 'windows and mirrors' has been used quite successfully in the United States. What is it, and why is it important?

In this strategy, students are encouraged, on the one hand, to view themselves and their culture as through a window, to see whether they are female or male, white or black, young or old, Romani or gadze; and on the other, to discover how they are viewed in the eyes of others (the 'mirror'). The goal is to bring these two kinds of perceptions into harmony with each other.

The strategy employs a variety of techniques. 1) Teachers insist upon honesty in the description of cultures; negative as well as positive aspects must be presented. 2) Parents and young adults are brought into the classroom activities as much as possible – e.g., to discuss their customs or family history, to perform their music, or to teach a dance. This is especially important with the Roma, who have strong family bonds; parental participation is one of the most effective means of encouraging Roma children to attend school. 3) Language differences are made explicit. Gadze children may learn a few Romani expressions, such as how to say 'good morning'. 4) School libraries are supplied with books that describe other cultures, and pupils are encouraged to read them and to discuss them in class. 5) Pupils are asked to complete the sentence, 'Children like me...', followed by a discussion of the various completions. 6) To build pupils' self-confidence, they are given small tasks to do, such as helping the teacher prepare materials or working for a few hours in the school office (with appropriate rewards). Again, this kind of measure is especially important for Roma children, because it helps them to feel that they are part of the school 'society'.

#### *Other possibilities*

In Romania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, other steps have been taken with the specific aim of reducing the tensions between their Roma and non-Roma populations.

Among them are: 1) The development of pre-school programs for very young children. In some cases, the mothers are included in the programs. 2) The development of vocational-training and adult-education programs, to enable the Roma to acquire the skills needed for participation in professional life. 3) The introduction of intercultural counsellors in teacher-training programs, and making an awareness of Roma culture a part of the programs. Teachers are encouraged to think of children as children – not as 'Gypsies' or 'foreigners' or 'members of minority groups' – and to assure that all children in their classrooms have equal opportunities for participation. 4) Encouragement to teachers to open their classrooms to colleagues who want to learn about the strategies of intercultural education. 5) Establishment of forums in which the Roma, through their organisations, can discuss the education of their children. Efforts such as these obviously require the support of school administrators and local and national authorities as well as the co-operation of Romani organisations. These organisations have become more effective in dealing with the diversity among their own members. Historically, the Roma have avoided publicity, preferring to remain inconspicuous, particularly when they are faced with the choice between outright rejection and total assimilation. Today, however, some Roma/Gypsies are seeking a way to have a say in their own destiny, to retain the right to be different while overcoming the prejudice against them in the countries in which they live. It will not be an easy road.

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Andrzej Mirga

THE POWER OF IMPOSED IDENTITY\*

The prominent Polish historian, educator and erudite of Enlightenment – Tadeusz Czacki, in his first essay enumerating the different 'classes' of people living in Poland, mentioned the Roma, labelling them as 'infamous vagabonds' (1845, p. 4). Elsewhere he wrote: 'They are of Indian nationality. [...] laziness is a common habit, which is why we discern more vice than virtue in their deeds' (1835, p. 59). Although he didn't question this notion, he did make observations regarding the social effects of the perpetuation of such beliefs, namely 'government prejudices' which brought 'various severities' upon them. This sort of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' taking the form of 'cruel punishment, not for any offences, but for being born a hated race' is that which drives Gypsies to crime, thus upholding previously commonly held anti-Gypsy prejudices (1835, p. 72-73).

Czacki was therefore right to reproach governments in which 'nobody for over three and a half centuries undertook, by means of improving their mores, to curb their inclination towards crime, which coupled with idleness, turned into an unavoidable habit' (1835, p. 59). Even here Czacki remains a child of his epoch, accepting without any doubt the axiom about Gypsy 'inclination towards crime'.

Czacki, like many of his descendants, was unable to rid himself of images and beliefs about the Roma people which were deeply rooted in the collective conscience of his culture. Not until contemporary times, have studies revealed the rules and laws which govern the lives of the Roma, the existence of which Czacki so much doubted.

The notion of, 'infamous vagabonds', whose basic feature is laziness leading to crime as an 'unavoidable habit' constitutes the basic content of stereotypes held by non-Gypsy societies about the Gypsies. We can find similar images and beliefs in iconography and writings dating from the XV and XVI centuries everywhere in Europe. They are ever-present in folklore and in anti-Gypsy legislation.

Any inter-ethnic interaction can be viewed in terms of three factors: a) the power structure, b) mutual perception, and c) the political aims. Among these, the power factor plays a primary role. Those who have the power are able to impose their own definition of the situation, and it then becomes the privilege of dominant groups to define the roles and lay down the rules governing interactions.

The real source of power has always been associated with the State. Since their first appearance in Europe, the Roma people were the subject of measures imposed by the State. Being strangers everywhere, leading nomadic lives, conducting marginal professions and

(\*) November 5, 1995, at Princeton, NJ (USA).

services, and having no territorial base of their own, they were soon associated with existing lowcasts, such as beggars, vagabonds, and other parasites. They became stigmatised with an imposed identity as 'useless', 'unwanted' and 'dangerous'. 'Gypsy' way of life in time became, synonymous with 'a-social' and 'criminal' behaviour.

From the perspective of the State, the Roma were defined as a counter-culture, whose very existence, openly rejects, and contests the norms and values of society. Once perceived as deviant it becomes a subject of constant prejudice and discrimination. The notion of Roma 'counter-cultural' explains well the continuous policies of the different States to eradicate 'gypsyism', through numerous attempts to assimilate or simply to annihilate them. Stereotypes and prejudices were used as a pretext and justification for restrictive measures against them. Sometimes, discrimination against the Roma people by the State was organised in a systematic way, including the most tragic instance: the attempt of fascism to mass exterminate the Roma during World War II.

A special test case of imposed identity is represented by the history of the Roma in Romania. Since their arrival in the 11th Century into Tara Romaneasca (Wallachia), Romani groups were treated as foreigners and as such were denied any rights to own land. As a result, they entered a relation of personal dependency, which in time evolved into a form of enslavement. Thus, the term *tigani* attained the social and legal meaning of *robi* – slave. The centuries of slavery, which lasted into the middle of the XIX century, created a new social stratum – *tigani robi* (Gheorghe: 1994), which essentially stripped them of their Roma ethnicity.

At the present time, the official mode of designation of Romani people is more politically correct. They are defined as a people 'leading a nomadic life, with no fixed employment and with no fixed abode' (in England); or 'people of nomadic origin' (France), or of 'frequently changing residence' (Liegeois, Gheorghe: 1995, p. 12). All such designations are new terms for old and discriminatory identifications of a vagabond Gypsy. As a rule, such imposed identities constructed as an attempt to assimilate or integrate Roma, tend to blur all cultural characteristics in order to reveal a 'social problem'. These images inspire, channel, and justify discriminatory measures undertaken by the State against the Roma allowing a State to side-step the question of granting the Roma ethnic/national minority rights.

The relations of the Roma people with society were always more complex and ambiguous. On the one side, the Roma were viewed as strangers to be rejected; on the other, they were needed for the services they offered in trades such as blacksmithing, fortune-telling or dance and music. They were even admired for their skills. Sometimes, the local populations were even eager to defend their Roma against State measures.

Nevertheless, the Roma were also easy targets as scapegoats in periods of transition and overall crisis situations. Thus, the images of Roma imprinted in the culture of a given society tend to be various. They form a 'reservoir into which anyone can dip at will and find something to back up their arguments' (Liegeois, Gheorghe: 1995, p. 12).

#### *Romanipen – the identity of Romani people*

*Romanipen* is a term borrowed from the Romani language and may be generally used in reference to groups which call themselves 'Roma'. It means – gypsyhood or being a real Gypsy. Some authors use this term as meaning a 'whole system and set of rules' or 'the moral or legal code'. Sometimes, Roma themselves refer to this term as 'true Roma' (*chacho Rom*).

The *Romanipen* is connected with the sphere of the Roma's self-consciousness, it is the way in which they categorise themselves, it is therefore a self-definition. It constitutes an ultimate point of reference for interaction with others. Every Roma group identifying itself as such, may define it by attributing cultural characteristics which it considers essential. However, the function of *romanipen* remains the same, it allows the identification of others and to define their 'position'.



The differentiation between Roma/Gypsies and non-Gypsies/*Gadjo* is a basic ethnic distinction. *Gadjo* are strangers, outside the world of the Roma. The *Gadjo* world is an area on which cultural stereotypes are projected. The Romani language has an additional expression for that external world – *gadji*.

This separating into members and non-members, tells us nothing about the character, the nature, or the cultural features which underline this division. Thus, we have to look towards the ethnic identity boundary of the Roma.

Matt Salo, an American anthropologist, lists several diacritic features or 'symbols of incorporation and exclusion' essential in determining the ethnic identity of the Roma (1979, pp. 82-83). The first one, is that of being born in a Roma family. This is the most natural and important one, since the extended family represents the basic social structure of the Romani community, often the only real one. The second one, is that of 'adherence to Romani laws of ceremonial purity and respect'. This feature is a key symbol in understanding the character of the Roma-*Gadjo* boundary. We will take a more in-depth look at it later. The next one is language, as a very visible symbol of the division between the Roma and the *Gadjo* world. It must be added here, that some Roma groups, due to the coercive policies aimed at their assimilation, lost the Romani language; however, they are still identified as such and are recognised by non-Roma as Roma. The fourth one, refers to an acceptance of traditional roles and rules related to age, gender, kinship, partnership and customs; this is where social control takes place. The fifth one, refers to signs and signals which express the Roma identity. They can be changeable, different from group to group, yet for the Roma, easily identifiable as 'Gypsy'.

Let us now return to the question of purity and respect. Descriptions of ritual pollution or defilement and cultural taboo connected with that code and its structure and social functions, can be found in many works on the Roma. Hypotheses explaining the 'rational genesis' of 'irrational dogmatic rules' were presented by Sutherland and Okely. For both authors, the human body, as it is perceived and categorised by the Roma themselves, is the key to definitions, justifications and interpretations of pollution.

According to Sutherland, the Roma divide the human body into two opposing spheres: from the waist up – *wuzho*/pure, and from the waist down – *marime*/impure (1975, p. 264). Okely introduces a different dichotomy, that of 'inner-outer body', where 'outer body' (or skin) with its discarded scales, accumulated dirt, by-products of hair and waste, such as faeces, are potentially polluting if recycled through the 'inner body'. By contrast, anything taken into the 'inner body' via the mouth must be 'ritually clean' (1983, p. 80). In both cases, pollution can be clearly defined as a social (public) act of transgressing the boundary between the above distinguished spheres. The code of pollution and taboo played a major regulating role in the everyday life of Roma people.

The human body as viewed by the Roma, was also a metaphor for the social world. According to it, the Roma were associated with purity whereas the *Gadjo* were associated with impurity. Thus, transgressing the Roma – *Gadjo* boundary is by definition an act of pollution. Among some groups of Roma, mixed marriages were treated as polluting and the couple was temporarily excluded from their community.

The above model of ethnic boundary, a very rigid one, exists only among some groups of Romani people. There are other, less rigid ones however, still based on purity and pollution codes. Two examples recorded by Ficowski among *Polska* Roma (Polish Gypsies), can be used to illustrate this.

Ficowski states that: 'if delivery takes place at home and help for the (Gypsy) woman in labour is needed, a *mami* (midwife) or just any *gadji* (non-Gypsy woman) who would agree to deliver the child, should be called. One must not shake hands with and eat in the company of a midwife or any other woman helping in child-birth (the same refers to a doctor)' (1983, p. 120). The other example is a ban. 'Only old Gypsies and girls are allowed in any case to

get in touch with a delivering woman' (1983, p. 120).

Let us interpret these quotations starting with the second one. Delivery is treated by the Roma as an act of pollution and a delivering woman is considered impure. Thus, she can be aided by a woman of similar status (a so called 'polluted', or one who can pollute: one who can give birth to a child, and who can menstruate). Old women, as well as girls have the status of ritually pure, because the former have already lost, and the latter have not yet acquired the ability to pollute. The above remarks imply that ritually pure women cannot contact the polluted or polluting ones under the threat of self-pollution (a law of infection is observed here). The first quotation refers to a situation in which a midwife, gadji, or a doctor delivers a child. The following statement is an interpretation of this situation: Defiling (or polluting), postpartum women are in contact with the defiled (midwife, gadji, doctor), and thus this status of impurity is confirmed; and ritually pure Roma cannot get in touch with such people under the threat of self-defilement. There are some additional categories of people with whom the Roma should not shake hands or eat in their company, such as: a dog catcher and a butcher who slaughters horses or sells horse meat.

The third model of Roma ethnic boundary, restricts pollution codes to the world of the Roma. Let us quote Salo. He states that 'Gadje, who are ignorant of these pollution concepts, are generally considered dirty', and 'normally Gadje cannot defile Roma. You can eat even if a Gadji has sat on it [...] Since Gadje are outside Roma society, they are beyond the reach of Roma' (1977, p. 125). Thus, although the non-Gypsy world is categorised as being defiled, it does not, however, have the ability to defile Roma. There are Roma groups among which the category of ritual defilement or pollution does not function at all and is not relevant in determining the character of Roma – Gadjo ethnic boundary.

#### *Ethnic mobilisation of Romani people – a search for new identity*

The collective identity can be viewed as developing through the following phases: communal, minority, ethnic and national. The development of identity building depends on variables such as: political power, reciprocity of exchange, technical development, inter group competition for scarce resources, etc.

The communal phase of group identity is appropriate for tribal, traditional groups; for them, identity is something which is taken for granted.

The minority identity phase is defined in terms of political subordination and structural inequality. As it relates to a dominant group there is a lack of reciprocity, the minority is exploited. Their identity is defined and imposed from the outside and their roles are those of a pariah group, middlemen on the fringes of society. They occupy an inferior status in society and are the subject of assimilation policies. The only way to escape the humiliating stigma is to cross over to the mainstream. However, in societies where social mobility is based on ascription and not on achievement, the possibility of crossing over is limited. The dominant group can prevent this process by defending the existing status quo. The only way of changing the minority status and face the stigma, at least for those who are well acculturated but not assimilated, is to organise themselves, and through collective action achieve the desired goal: that of redefining their identity and status in society.

These are the conditions for entering a new phase – that of collective ethnic identity. The collective actions are aimed at pressuring the system into allocating resources for the benefit of its members. The symbolic feature of that phase is the rejection of an imposed identity and the struggle for recognition of their self-defined identity.

At present, the Roma are at the stage of greater ethnic and political awareness. There is a growing number of Roma organisations and associations; they reject the stigmatic denomination imposed upon them and demand the recognition of their own groups named either Roma, or Sinti, Manush, Cale, etc. The Roma struggle for political recognition at the na-

tional and at the international level. The Roma are faced with many options for re-definition of their status and identity. To mention only a few: Roma leaders manifest claims for: ethnic minority status, national minority status, linguistic group, European minority, transnational minority, non-territorial minority, etc. The Roma are faced with new challenges regarding concepts of self-determination for the first time in their history in Europe.

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