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Author(s): Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems

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The Weakness of Well-Ordered Societies

Gypsies in Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and India, 1400–1914*

Leo Lucassen & Wim Willems

The history of people labeled as Gypsies, *tsiganes*, *cigan*, *kipti*, *bohemians*, or *Zigeuner* (hence: Gypsies) has not attracted much serious attention. Moreover, those who have devoted their research time and energy to this topic have focused on the antagonistic nature of the relationship between Gypsies and non-Gypsies (or *Gadze*). This has produced a historiography in which Gypsies are portrayed as victims of racism (see, for example, Mac Laughlin, 1999) or as criminals who more or less caused the repression themselves by their antisocial behavior (e.g., Schama, 1991: 595). As a result we know a lot about the Gypsy hunts in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century western Europe, the genocide in the twentieth century (Zimmermann, 1996; Willems, 1997; Tebbutt, 1998; Lewy, 2000), or the enslavement of Gypsies in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia until the 1860's, but surprisingly little about their day-to-day interaction with the rest of society (Lucassen, 1993).

This dominating approach is not only top down, it also fails to differentiate according to time and place so that the impression is conveyed that the "fate" of the Gypsies was universal and only marginally influenced by specific historical context. This generalization is often justified by assuming that human society is by nature sedentary and will always conflict with itinerant and nomadic groups (Fricke, 1996). Gypsies as the ultimate "other," to use postmodern

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vocabulary, are often portrayed as a closed ethnic group that has successfully resisted assimilation and cultural change. The core elements are to be found in their itinerant way of life and the ensuing cultural norms and traditional occupations, which would set them clearly apart from the rest of society.

There are, however, two major problems with this approach. First, the term Gypsy has been used to label such different and diverse groups that it is difficult to uphold the idea that we are talking about a people with a distinct culture;¹ and from research on itinerant occupations we know that Gypsies were much more socially and economically integrated in western European society than is often assumed. In this article we will therefore first give a (bottom up) impression of accommodation at the day-to-day level by going into the functionality of Gypsy occupations, putting these in the larger framework of migratory behavior and ambulant professions. The emphasis in this section will be on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, because most research has been done on this period. Secondly, by using long term developments in state formation and social relations in western Europe as a background we then attempt to explain the repressive atmosphere which confronted Gypsies from the fifteenth century onwards. Finally, we compare the conditions under which the negative attitude of western European authorities could emerge with the treatment of Gypsies in other state configurations, such as the Ottoman Empire and precolonial India.

ACCOMMODATION THROUGH ECONOMIC FUNCTIONALITY

Itinerant professionals like showpeople, musicians, jugglers, bear leaders, coppersmiths, and peddlers have existed for ages and performed a wide range of functions, which had in common the disseminating of goods and services that mostly could not be offered, or not at such a low price, by the sedentary professional class (Gmelch, 1986; Rao, 1986; Cottaar et al., 1995). Roughly we can distinguish between two categories: those men and women who traveled alone (or in small groups); and people wandering with their families. The

¹ Lucassen et al. (1998). This is even admitted by scholars who adhere to an ethnological approach to Gypsies (Fraser, 1992).

latter have been categorized in most countries from the Middle Ages onwards by various authorities as “Gypsies,” “Zigeuner,” “Romanichals,” “travelers,” “Landfahrer,” and other names. While the functionality of ambulant professions performed by people in the first category has been acknowledged by most historians (Lucassen, 1987; Schubert, 1995; Fontaine, 1996; Oberpenning, 1996; and the literature mentioned in Lucassen, 1996), this is not the case for “Gypsies.” They may have been active in the same kind of business. The idea that Gypsies used itinerant trades only to hide their parasitic and criminal behavior is widespread and has obstructed structural comparisons of the social and economic history of both categories. That they have more in common than is generally assumed can be illustrated by focusing on the economic function of groups that have been lumped together as Gypsies or under similar labels.

First, it is important to state that Gypsy occupations did not differ essentially from economic activities by sedentary people. One of the most confusing concepts used in this respect is nomadism. This idea refers to societies of hunters and gatherers, or herdsmen, and is often used as proof of the Gypsies’ traditional and specific culture. Gypsies, however, differ as much from pastoral nomads—wandering in a certain area with their herds—as other members of western European societies. The three main characteristics associated with the “Gypsy economy,” are: the family as work unit (in which all members contribute to the family income), an itinerant life style, and self-employment. These are far from specific for Gypsies. The interesting thing is, however, that these are often explained in primordial ethnic and cultural terms: group cohesion, nomadism, and dissoluteness. To substantiate our claims we will give a *tour d’horizon* along the different Gypsy specializations and their function within society.

Trading, Hawking, and Peddling

Trading was perhaps the most important economic niche for Gypsies, and within this category hawking, or going from house to house selling products, seems to have been the principal activity. Gypsies did not have a monopoly on hawking; on the contrary, many people tried to earn a living in this way. In Europe most of them came from specifically delineated areas and localities, which served as a base of operations (Lucassen, 1987: 88–90). Furthermore, in the nineteenth century members of the working class undertook itiner-

ant activities, among other things, in order to supplement their low wages. For these “penny capitalists” retailing continued to be popular for a long time (Benson, 1983). The low costs made street-selling or hawking attractive to the ambitious and destitute alike and provided a possible escape route for the ambitious working man. In only a few instances are “Gypsies” mentioned in this respect. The “Gypsy-awareness” of authorities increased after the middle of the century when more people started traveling in families and took their own housing with them. This transition was stimulated by the wider use of caravans after 1870. A caravan made traveling with one’s family not only easier and more comfortable, but also more visible. In most countries many of these travelers were quickly stigmatized as Gypsies by the authorities.

The demand for products sold by hawkers and street-sellers was not restricted to the preindustrial period. Not only did itinerant groups adjust to economic changes by finding new niches, modernization was far from a linear process. Initially, the development of retail selling establishments lagged behind population growth, the purchasing power of the masses, and urbanization. Therefore many people depended on hawkers and street-sellers (Mayall, 1988: 49). Even where various stores were within reach people often preferred to purchase goods from hawkers, many of whom were women. There were three reasons for this preference. First, most hawkers had a regular circle of customers and were therefore trusted. Secondly, they offered cheaper goods. Thirdly, they did not show the contempt that many workers faced in middle-class stores (Klein, 1898: 371). Not only the demand, but also the supply stimulated itinerant trade. Wholesale businesses in particular used hawkers for the distribution of their wares. The development of modern transport systems, for example, railways, enabled peddlers to have goods sent to places in their work area from where they started hawking. For some time hawking and industrialization went hand-in-hand. Hawking therefore performed a retailing function among the rapidly growing urban population. Itinerant traders were not an anomaly, but a buffer and a stimulus to the mass consumption of consumer goods in the industrial era.

Accusations that hawkers were workshy, sold only products of inferior quality, and deceived the simple country folk were mainly made by shopkeepers who feared competition. These allegations were often false or exaggerated. Most hawkers also operated in

larger towns, where people could compare the quality of their goods with those offered by shops. Moreover, in the smaller villages they returned regularly so that they could not afford to cheat (Demetz, 1987: 54). Only with the emergence of large department stores around 1900 did the function of urban hawkers gradually diminish. In the countryside modernization sometimes took much longer, so that hawkers, among them Gypsies, were able to earn a living for a long time.

Gypsies not only traded from door to door, but also on streets or at fairs. Fairs were known as centers for horse trading, and this activity, together with kettle-mending and the making of music, are regarded as typical Gypsy occupations. The role of Gypsies is illustrated by the history of Gypsy horse-dealers in the Netherlands. The first families immigrated around 1900, coming from Scandinavia. Although this was only a small group (at most some 500 people), they quickly managed to get a firm grip on the expanding trade in cobs, small but tough horses which were indispensable for commerce and transportation until the Second World War. At horse fairs Gypsy men were very much at home. During the First World War they almost managed to monopolize this trade, purchasing horses from farmers and selling them at fairs (Lucassen, 1990: 144). The operational area of the horse dealers covered the Netherlands, Belgium, and the northern part of France. This meant that they had to cross national borders frequently. Invariably, authorities interpreted these movements as an invasion of their country by hordes of Gypsies. In fact, it concerned only relatively small groups (30 people) whose business required constant travel. Apart from the recurring difficulties at the borders, Gypsies also had to face other kinds of opposition. This had to do with the well-known stereotype of the ever-cheating Gypsy, especially where horses are concerned. Gypsies were often accused of transforming old and worn-out horses into elegant ones by clipping, singeing, and beautifying. There are, however, powerful arguments against the impression that Gypsy horse dealers cheated. To begin with, it does not explain why customers continued to deal with them. Trading relationships rest on trust and respect, not intolerance and abuse. Of course "trickery" formed part of horse trading (and trading in general), but it was not peculiar to Gypsies, nor can it have been a general phenomenon. Nevertheless this stereotype incriminated Gypsies. Despite the restrictive and even repressive policies pursued in many countries, making it more and more

difficult for Gypsies to practice their occupations, most managed to earn a living until the Second World War. In the Netherlands and Germany, they were known for owning expensive caravans and substantial amounts of cash (Hehemann, 1987: 203–05; 364–65).

Itinerant Crafts

A second important economic niche for itinerant groups was crafts, especially repair work. Most craftsmen traveled in a relatively small area because there was ample demand for their services. In such areas, however, they traveled constantly. Gypsies became known for mending kettles and chairs and for sharpening knives. Many crafts were constantly adapted to changing circumstances and demand. This can be illustrated by the history of Gypsy copper- and tinsmiths, known in the literature as the *Kaldarash* (Lucassen, 1990: 64–67; Fraser, 1992: 226–35). Coming from Hungary, at least according to their passports, the first groups appeared in western Europe around 1860 and were immediately labeled as Gypsies. Gypsy coppersmiths were well organized in companies of some 40 people (men, women, and children). Before coming to a certain country, they sent a few men ahead to explore the possibilities and make arrangements for camping places and residence permits. When the authorities objected, they used the services of their respective embassies and consulates, which in some cases pleaded their case with the authorities. According to the clients of the *Kalderash*, and local authorities as well, their skills were impressive, and despite regular price-fixing problems, they were asked back year after year by the same customers. Sometimes even authorities whose task it was to remove Gypsies from the country, i.e., the gendarmerie, were impressed by their skill and wealth.

More detailed descriptions of the professional activity of this group were offered by members of the English Gypsy Lore Society (founded in 1888). Eric Otto Winstedt's accurate and detailed accounts of these Hungarian Coppersmiths, as they called themselves, were based on a visit they made to Great Britain and France during the years 1911–13. One remarkable aspect of these craftsmen was their economic flexibility. As demand from private consumers fell off, they concentrated on the industrial sector. The quality of their work was so high that clients put up with traditional bickering about price. In contrast to indigenous coppersmiths, these Hungarians

mastered a technique that industrial clients highly valued (Winstedt, 1913: 287–88). Some Scottish and Irish tinkers also specialized in this craft (Simson, 1865: 354–55). As well as selling new ones, Irish tinkers repaired broken kettles with solder. Here again, a relationship of mutual dependence developed between Gypsies and their clients. Irish farmers before the Second World War depended on Gypsies to repair the earthenware coolers that kept their milk from decay. Several of the same families of tinkers would also undertake specialist repairs of broken china, earthenware, or glass (Gmelch & Langan, 1975: 28).

Wandering Entertainers

A third important economic sector for Gypsies and other itinerant people was entertainment. Wandering musicians, animal-performers, acrobats, showmen, owners of freak shows, and the like have always played a role in European history (Burke, 1978: 94–96; Schubert, 1995: 226 ff.). Although they were often treated with suspicion, their activities have always been valued too highly for them to vanish. Not only did they bring distraction, they also introduced all kinds of novelties. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century, the telescope, cameras, and cinema were introduced and made popular by itinerant entrepreneurs (Benson, 1983: 68). Other entrepreneurs brought in strange animals, such as bears, camels, and lions. Many of them were not labeled as Gypsies because they did not travel in family groups. Entertainers included Italian child musicians and organ-grinders, French bear-leaders from the Pyrenees, and German traveling orchestras (Zucchi, 1992; Lucassen, 1990: 367–75; Gabaccia, 2000: 62–64). We will focus on bear-leaders, musicians, and fortune-tellers.

At the same time that coppersmiths from Hungary moved west, small family groups of bear-leaders from Bosnia (at that time part of the Ottoman empire) appeared. They were not labeled as Gypsies as quickly or as generally as were the *Kalderash*, but in most countries they were stigmatized. Like the *Kalderash* they traveled great distances and did not restrict themselves to Europe. In the 1880's many emigrated to the United States. Many who left the continent took with them considerable sums of money and purchased houses in England and the United States (Lucassen, 1990).

Gypsies are well-known as musicians and performers, for example, acrobats, comedians, showmen, magicians, and puppeteers. In contrast to coppersmithing, men did not monopolize these occupations. Women are regularly found in historical sources as independent professionals (Benson, 1983: 65). After the turn of the century we can discern an occupational specialization. In the nineteenth century many Gypsy performers combined music with other showmanlike activities, such as trading and crafts. In the twentieth century they began to concentrate on music. This shift may have been caused by increasing professionalism within the world of showmen. From the end of the nineteenth century we see in all countries the emergence of more capital-intensive attractions, such as carousels, merry-go-rounds, and cake-walks. At the same time policies toward small street performers became more repressive. Since they lived in caravans, these people were marginalized as Gypsies. This combination of economic and socio-political developments caused the more successful operators, who also lived in caravans, to organize themselves into professional organizations and avoid being stigmatized as Gypsies (Acton, 1974: 116–23; Cottaar, 1996: 172–73). Some Gypsy-musicians settled in cities, when the demand for their work was so great that they could give up traveling altogether.

In a survey of occupations within the entertainment field, fortune-telling is probably the most “Gypsylike” of all, having been associated with Gypsies since the end of the Middle Ages (Fraser, 1992: 46–48). In eighteenth-century French encyclopedias, it was even part of the definition of *bohémiens*. This is not to say, however, that Gypsies monopolized this activity. Others (sedentary and itinerant people alike) also engaged in fortune-telling, often combined with magic and sorcery (Burke, 1978: 106–07). Although many Gypsy women have earned money as fortune-tellers up to the present day, little is known about it except that there was a regular demand from all classes in society and it was often combined with hawking or entertainment. Many of these women not only operated in holiday resorts, but also in the countryside, where they offered all kinds of “emotional services.” Some gave advice in the case of theft and bewitching, but most talked with their clients about the highs and lows in life, such as marriages, travels, especially emigration, how to avoid conscription, accidents, or death. Although many fortune-tellers lived at a fixed place waiting for people to visit them, a good number traveled and combined fortune-telling with peddling.

As with all professions, itinerant or not, abuse was possible and occurred now and then. Some fortune-tellers used their skills to cheat their clients, for example, in cases of illness or bad luck, such as sick cattle, by suggesting that a spell was put on the unlucky farmer. To lift the spell, they would advise their clients to gather up all their valuables and bury them. After a set period of time the client was to dig these up again, after which the situation would be normal again. It needs little imagination to realize that in such cases the fortune-teller was ahead of the superstitious client.

Seasonal Labor

Except for some Gypsies (as the coppersmiths and bear-leaders) most combined all kinds of crafts and services in order to react to seasonal changes in supply and demand. History offers numerous examples of this economic flexibility. In nineteenth-century England, as we have seen, many Gypsies settled down during the winter months and made various products (clothes-pegs, skewers, flowers, etc.) (Baïracli-Levy, 1953: 133). At the beginning of spring they began to travel and sell their manufactured wares, as well as to offer all kinds of services; during the summer they worked as seasonal laborers, and during the autumn they visited fairs and resumed trade.

Seasonal labor in agriculture was one of the few occupations that did involve wage-labor. In England agricultural employment was found chiefly in the south and the east. Seasonal workers, including Gypsy families, went from farm to farm following the ripening of the crops: haymaking, turnip-hoeing, pea-picking, wheat-fagging, and strawberry-picking. The cycle was completed with the picking of hops (Cuttriss, 1915: 68). How many Gypsies were part of the seasonal work force in England is not clear. According to a government report of 1907, between a quarter and a third of those picking peas in England were Gypsies. For hops-picking this number seems to have been much lower and here they were only a small minority; the bulk of the workers were Irish. Hiring Gypsies, especially women, to pick fruit could be advantageous for farmers because they brought their own accommodation with them. The same report states that Gypsies had a standard of living and level of health far above that of the ordinary seasonal laborer (Mayall, 1988: 63–64). In Germany and France Gypsies are also reported as “hoppers.” In some Bavarian communities at the beginning of the twentieth century in the

months of August and September an “international army” of hops-pickers visited the area. Among them were many people with carts and caravans, generally labeled as Gypsies. They arrived some weeks early, not only to assure themselves of a spot to put their caravans, but also to make the baskets that were needed for the harvest (Lucassen, 1996: 179). In other cases, for example the potato harvest, farmers depended on Gypsy basket-weavers. They even saved twigs so that the Gypsies would have enough material for the baskets needed and therefore not lose time.

This overview of the economic domain may be somewhat impressionistic; it shows that Gypsies cannot simply be portrayed as workshy criminals, nor as a people with an unchangeable nomadic character. Moreover, it makes clear that the interaction between Gypsies and others was much more varied than is often assumed. If this is so, however, the question remains: why have Gypsies been repressed for so long?

PERIODIZING AND FRAMING STIGMATIZATION AND PERSECUTION

The standard history of Gypsies in western Europe reads as follows (Fraser, 1992: 1): Gypsies left their homeland of India around the year 1000 and slowly migrated westward through Persia and Armenia to reach Byzantium and Greece in the eleventh century. They stayed for some time in the Balkans and then moved to western Europe around 1400. Here they wandered from town to town proclaiming themselves to be pilgrims from Egypt (hence “Egyptians” from which the word “Gypsies” is derived). At first they were welcomed and given alms, but soon the attitude changed and the Egyptians were more and more regarded as beggars, parasites, and outright criminals. Their antisocial nomadic behavior led increasingly to clashes with the authorities and from 1500 onwards a negative spiral of criminalization and repression was set in motion, resulting during the first half of the eighteenth century in Gypsy hunts and attempts to exterminate this group.

Although the stereotype of parasites and criminals has since the 1970’s gradually been replaced by the image of nomadic, anarchistic victims of sedentary modernization, Gypsies continued to be repressed, and had a discordant relationship with sedentary society. A

different perspective on this predominantly ethno-cultural explanatory framework (for a recent example see Fricke, 1996) was offered by the work of social historians such as Davis (1975), Hufton (1974), Beier (1985), Geremek (1991), Danker (2001), and Schubert (1995), to name a few, who implicitly or explicitly integrated the Gypsy tale in the changing attitude towards poverty, vagrancy, and banditism.

Changing Attitudes Towards the Poor in Early Modern Europe

According to Geremek, who wrote a number of influential studies on the changing attitude in Europe towards the poor in general and vagrants in particular, the stigmatization of traveling groups has its origin in the fourteenth century. Vagrancy was increasingly seen as negative and soon regarded as a crime in itself (Geremek, 1980: 71; Woolf, 1986: 17–18).² This negative stereotyping culminated at the beginning of the sixteenth century in such popular books as *Das Narrenschiff* (1494), the *Liber Vagatorum* (about 1510), and publications on the secret language of rogues (Geremek, 1991: 53). In these works people without a fixed abode were depicted as professional thieves, robbers, and cheats. The spreading of this image, which strongly influenced public opinion and was supported by church and state alike, coincided with a serious labor shortage. As a consequence of the plagues that almost halved Europe's working force, wages rose rapidly and led to a brief "golden age" for workers. For many it could be profitable to leave their masters and attempt to get another job with a higher wage. Employers, together with authorities, tried to prevent this by enlisting as many workers as possible. One of the measures to bind labor to capital and fix wages was the Statute of Laborers issued in England in 1351. A similar act was passed two years later in France (Steinfeld, 1991: 36). The result of these structural ideological and economic changes was the emergence of a repressive policy towards people looked upon as vagrants and an attempt to control labor migration. When, during the "long sixteenth century" the labor shortage disappeared due to population growth, the stigmatization of labor migration waned. The expanding economies needed seasonal labor and peddling middlemen, and

² According to Schubert the stigmatization became only effective after 1500 when itinerant groups and Gypsies lost their social and economic functionality and the state increased its claims to guarantee a "well-ordered society" (1995: 359–61).

repressing them would not have been wise from an economic point of view. Moreover many, like the wandering craftsmen, (*Gesellen* in German), servants, and seasonal laborers were part of a more or less institutionalized system with formal controls and often indentured contracts. This did not end the stigmatization of Gypsies, however, because their highly visible, traveling way of life underlined their status as “masterless” men, which made them a threat to a well-ordered society.

Equally important in explaining the ongoing stigmatization of Gypsies, however, were the fundamental changes in the organization of the poor relief (Jütte, 1994: 100–02). Urban authorities took over the coordination of poor relief from various private and religious bodies. This not only led to a more rational and bureaucratic distribution of alms, but also to the exclusion of alien beggars, whose stay in cities was formally forbidden from the sixteenth century onwards. This does not imply that their entrance could be stopped. It was difficult to distinguish Gypsies from indigenous beggars. Also many tolerated their stay and thus frustrated the official policy. Nevertheless, the attempts of the cities (and later also villages) to restrict poor relief to their own people made life more difficult for those who could not prove that they belonged in a certain place. This stimulated a kind of local aliens policy *avant la lettre*. One aim of the reorganization of the poor relief was to better regulate and control labor reserves. As the demand for labor fluctuated, it was important for employers to offer relief during bad times (Van Leeuwen, 1994). In Germany the main pillar of the exclusion policy of alien (alleged) poor was the *Heimat*-principle. Every city or village was given the right to send aliens back to the place where they were supposed to have some sort of citizenship, usually the place of their birth. In many cases traveling people could not assert their rights and thus a class of wandering and illegal (to use the modern term) people was created.

Soon after the reorganization of the poor relief, the acts and regulations aimed at repressing these vagrants proliferated, and the category of vagrant was much more broadly defined and equated with criminals. Implementing anti-vagrant legislation from the seventeenth century onwards proved to be quite difficult in practice. Not only because most states were weak and had to rely on local authorities and the cooperation of their citizens, but also because the distinction between the “good” and the “bad” was less simple than the

acts assumed. Moreover, the repressive policy was seriously weakened by the fact that many “bad” migrants performed a variety of services, such as the catching of mice and rats, mending of kettles, playing music, and peddling, which many people, including local authorities, valued.

Notwithstanding these mediating influences, in the course of the seventeenth century the number of edicts against vagrants became more numerous and the sanctions more and more extreme. Gypsies, often explicitly included in these decrees, were increasingly regarded as the most dangerous subgroup and became the symbol for the unwanted itinerant. Their way of living, traveling with their families, seemed to indicate a permanent wandering. Being seen as aliens they could not easily be sent back to their places of birth, so that legislation simply forbade their stay in the country and aimed at expelling them. Although these “Egyptians” were pictured in ethnic terms (having a dark complexion, wearing a distinct costume), the edicts made clear that it was foremost their way of life that formed the core of the accusation, very similar to the accusations leveled against vagrants. In the course of the seventeenth century, a small percentage of Gypsies and other itinerants, including Jews, became engaged in organized crime (Egmond, 1993: 96). This process does not fully explain, however, the increasing repression of vagrants in general as organized criminals (Slack, 1987). Moreover, criminalization does not explain the huge variants in the persecution in western Europe. The best way to make this clear is to take a closer look at the persecution of Gypsies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Geographical Variations in Persecution Within Western Europe

In the course of the sixteenth century throughout western Europe the life style of Gypsies and vagrants was increasingly criminalized. The edicts forbade Gypsies to stay in the country and threatened them with torture and death. From the 1680’s onwards even their mere presence was defined as a crime that could result in the death penalty. The enforcing of these acts—all issued by the central authorities—was quite a different story. If we look at the map of western Europe, it becomes clear that the “gypsy-hunts,” which made it possible to kill Gypsies without any reason or trial, took place in a rather restricted area.

In Germany, the center of the hunts lay in the southern area stretching from the Palatine (immediately west of the French Lor-

raine where hunts were also organized) through Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria to Thüringen and Saxony (Lucassen, 1996: 56). The traditional explanation for this geographical concentration points at the political fragmentation into many tiny states and separate juridical entities and further at the inaccessible hilly terrain, which would make it an attractive area for bandits, vagrants, and Gypsies. Although plausible, these arguments do not convince. First, vagrancy and banditism were general phenomena and not restricted to certain areas. Secondly, and more important, are the insights that can be derived from the body of literature on the recruitment of the poor for the galleys and the army in general. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the demand for soldiers and rowers at the galleys could not be met. This was not only the result of war making by Louis XIV between 1672 and 1714, but also because of an absolute and relative increase of men under arms in Europe (Tilly, 1990: 79). The increased demand for soldiers put a stress on recruitment, and the responsible agents therefore turned to the poor and vagrant classes. Redlich has shown that after 1675 a number of German states forced people whom they considered as unwanted to enlist. States such as Prussia, Brandenburg, and Saxony ordered their districts to supply them with recruits, to be gathered by hunting vagrants (Redlich, 1964/65: 173–74).

The number of regulations in Germany ordering local authorities to ban and round up vagrants and Gypsies reached an all time high around 1700. At the same time we see another situation in the South. Here there was not a great demand for soldiers, but for rowers at the galleys of Venice, Genoa, and Marseilles. Galleys already formed an alternative to the death penalty during the sixteenth century. In the middle of this century, however, it became difficult for these states to find enough volunteers and, just as the Ottoman navy, they therefore turned to slaves who were captured during raids in the Balkans. A small number of these rowers were bought from prisons in northern states, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden (Schubert, 1983: 292; Bog, 1975: 1001). Again we see a remarkable correspondence between the demand for slaves and the raids on vagrants: in both cases concentrated in the second half of the seventeenth century, ending quite abruptly, due to a change in the naval technique, around 1730 (Zysberg, 1987).

When we combine the modes of recruitment in the north and the south of Germany, the “outlaw-corridor” in the middle becomes

interesting and the traditional explanation is extended with a whole new dimension. The hypothesis is the following: due to the demand for soldiers and rowers, the increasing rounding up of “unwanted elements” in Germany led to their concentration in the Palatine-Saxony corridor, which was too far from the Prussian-Brandenburg recruitment area as well as from the Mediterranean. (In the latter case the transport costs were higher than the price per slave.) The states in the corridor were therefore confronted with a double problem: they could not get rid of vagrants and moreover faced an immigration of those who wanted to evade enlistment in other areas of Germany. In some cases these hunted groups combined forces and by their criminal actions these bandits threatened the lives and goods of the inhabitants. In response, the authorities issued regulations that became more severe each year and ended in draconian measures outlawing Gypsies and other vagrants. As a result, in a number of cases, people were killed without a trial. For the corridor some 100 are documented (Lucassen, 2000).

The policy towards vagrants and Gypsies in France also seems to fit in the military-recruitment hypothesis. The repressive policy in France became more severe around the middle of the seventeenth century, but most important was the royal decree of 1682 against the “bohemians.” This stated that all Gypsies and vagrants had to be rounded up and sent to the galleys. For the enactment of this decree the central government in this age of “brokerage,” as Tilly called it, had to rely on intermediary groups, such as the nobility. Many of them, however, were not inclined to help. Some of them even protected the “bohemians” because most Gypsies were not criminal and fulfilled services the nobility valued, especially dancing (by women) and the making of music (Vaux de Foletier, 1961: 152–60). This lack of cooperation on the local level may have been one of the reasons why only five years later the central government decided to establish the first fully centralized police force in western Europe, the *maréchaussée*, whose most important task was to execute the policy towards vagrants and Gypsies. In the last decade of the seventeenth century the *maréchaussée* mainly arrested people they considered vagrants and Gypsies. In contrast to Germany, in the eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic this policy did not lead to “gypsy-hunts” (except in Lorraine in 1723). Notwithstanding local and regional autonomy, France as a whole was much more centralized than the German lands. This explains why the state, symbolized by the *maréchaussée* force, was able to round up vagrants in the entire country and,

with the possible exception of the newly created region Alsace-Lorraine in the periphery—which was only integrated into the French state from about 1780 onwards—outlawing and killing did not take place. What happened to Gypsies after they were captured is not entirely clear. Although France sent more than a thousand persons to its galleys in the period 1680–1715, few of them were categorized as *bohème* (Gypsy). The number of rounded up Gypsies, together with other vagrants, grew rapidly, however, between 1716 and 1748 (Zysberg, 1987: 65–67).

The Dutch Republic, finally, resembles Germany to a certain extent. Here we also have a region consisting of the eastern provinces, Gelderland and Overijssel, where so-called gypsy-hunts were organized in the first decades of the eighteenth century. According to Egmond this process should be interpreted as a reaction of local, and later regional, authorities to growing criminality of certain organized groups of Gypsies and people who had joined them, including former mercenaries. Furthermore, she argues that many of them came recently from France and from German states. The persecution may by no means have been as massive and all encompassing as some believe—not least because of limited coercive means. This marks an important break with the former period because authorities in such different states as France, the German principalities, and the eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic proved capable of organizing such a general repression. Further, this repression reinforced the existing stigma, because Gypsies and criminality were more firmly connected than ever before. This break in policy dovetails with the change of state formation in western Europe from brokerage to nationalization. The growing power of the state was embodied in the emergence of police apparatus and effective criminal procedures. The prosecution of crime was gradually taken over by state institutions and the rights of privileged groups (guilds, nobility, etc.) were curtailed (Gatrell, 1990: 243–44).

How did the gradual change to direct rule together with a growing coercive power of the state influence the general attitude towards vagrants and people considered as poor migrants in general during the long eighteenth century? To start with, we see a remarkable difference between Great Britain and the other states. In the British Isles the policy can be circumscribed as a system of control. The central state may not have been as strong as in France or in absolutist principalities as in Germany, however, Great Britain was the only state that was capable of implementing acts and regulations on

the local level. For us the settlement act (1662) and the old poor law (1601–1834) are of particular interest. According to Snell the poor law created “miniature welfare states” and thus helped to reduce vagrancy and slow down migration by a system of relatively generous relief and mobilizing the local poor for temporary labor (Snell, 1985: 107).

In France and Germany the state resorted to repression instead of control, notwithstanding efforts to create a system of workhouses, which stand in the shadow of the systematic English approach, prisons and *dépôts* (Petit et al., 1991: 75–76; Perrot et al., 1980: 9–56). The best example of the repression model can be found in France with the establishment of the *maréchaussée*. In the eighteenth century this force was expanded and became the foremost state instrument in the offensive against the mobile poor. It has been argued that due to their specialization on vagrants and the success in repressing banditism, people living in the countryside began putting trust in the *maréchaussée* during the last decades of the eighteenth century and their conception of the state gradually changed. The purely parasitic image, especially embodied by the French state, gave way to a certain extent to the state as protector of property and guardian of peace (Schwartz, 1988: 250–51; Adams, 1990: 119). The *maréchaussée* was not only concerned with crime but with all kinds of disorderly behavior and (in their eyes) suspect forms of migration. Although many local officials recognized the usefulness of migrant labor, this did not adjust the view of the *maréchaussée* (Schwartz, 1988: 153).

In the period of the greatest repression in France, the *maréchaussée* aimed first at vagrants and Gypsies, but in some cases they also arrested peddlers and seasonal laborers (Gutton, 1973: 180–81; Norberg, 1985: 223–24). As in England and Germany the term vagrant was interpreted widely and included all persons suspected of crimes and misdemeanors when there was insufficient evidence to secure conviction by trial (Schwartz, 1988: 169; Finzsch, 1990: 2, 23; Woolf, 1986: 28). This policy seems to have been quite effective, at least in France, and contributed to safety in the countryside. However, by indiscriminately lumping together bandits with all kind of migrant people, the mobile poor in general and traveling groups in particular were stigmatized. This stigma was reinforced by the growing gulf between the sedentary population and so-called vagrants. In other continental states the enforcing of this repression was mainly the responsibility of local and regional authorities, whose means

were limited, but not insignificant.³ Only gradually the central state entered the scene and took over. Notwithstanding general absolutist rhetoric, the attempts of western European states to monopolize the use of violence and establish a state police force were embryonic and only gained impetus at the end of the eighteenth century. This situation would continue until after the Napoleonic wars when German states and the Netherlands adopted the French gendarmerie system (Nitschke, 1990: 183).

*State Formation in an Age of Industrialism
and Urbanization, 1815–1914*

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, internal migration in western Europe increased (Moch, 1992: 76 and 102 ff.; Hochstadt, 1999). Due to the ongoing commercialization of the agricultural sector and the intermittent character of industrialization, jobs became less secure, leading to a growing mobility. In agriculture, year-long contracts were replaced by irregular demand, and in industry much work such as construction was still seasonal. Factory work was often temporary as well. This unstable feature of labor markets caused many laborers to move constantly from one place to another. In view of the traditional ideas on migration and mobility it is not surprising that this situation led to growing concerns on the part of the authorities. Migration may have been the rule, as it had been in preindustrial Europe. However, the fear of a great mass of rootless and wandering paupers was widespread.

Apart from political disturbances, the fear of the mobile poor, especially those who were labeled as vagrants, seems to have been one of the major reasons for professionalizing the police in western Europe as well as in the Ottoman Empire (Ergut, 2002). This was especially the case in Great Britain. In the discussion on the profes-

³ It is debated to what extent the state was able to exert more than symbolic power, as has been argued by many historians (partly in reaction to Foucault's interpretation of state control) (e.g., Higgs, 2001). According to Härter (1999) social control and the repression of vagrants was much more efficient in Germany than is generally assumed, especially because control was not only exerted top down, but also bottom up, by subjects who wanted a well-ordered and safe society. Moreover, many people would be inclined to bring outsiders to justice and protect members of their local community, which might explain the high number of vagrants who were convicted in early modern Europe (Rublack, 1997: 355).

sionalization of the police in 1840–50, crime was mainly associated with migrants and repression of vagrancy was stressed (Emsley, 1991: 49). According to Steedman (1984: 57) the County and Borrow Police Act (1856) was directly linked to the wish to repress vagrancy. The legal framework was the Vagrancy Act of 1824, characterized as “the most pernicious piece of legislation against Gypsies and travelers in the nineteenth century” (Mayall, 1988: 147; Jones, 1982: 207). The definition of vagrant had become so wide and the discretionary power of the police so inclusive that all obnoxious behavior could be labeled as vagrancy. In practice, however, it was aimed against migrants. In France the professionalization of the police was not only linked to vagrancy, but began with the insecure political situation and the fear of revolution and disturbances of the public order (Forstenzer, 1981: 109). After 1850, however, criminality became a dominant theme. As in Great Britain, the causes were primarily sought among the poor: unskilled, unemployed paupers and vagabonds, whose personal defects were thought to cause their criminal behavior. The vagabond was depicted as the prototype of the criminal, because of his alleged refusal to work and to accumulate possessions.

In Germany the situation, at least before unification, was more complicated and differed from state to state. In general, however, the police acted in a proactive way. This is especially well-illustrated by the emergence of detailed collective search warrants (*Actenmässige Nachrichten*) at the end of the eighteenth century. These contained dozens, hundreds, sometimes even thousands of descriptions of people who were wanted or suspected of criminal acts, including vagrancy (Lucassen, 1996; Fahrmeier, 2000: 67). Comprehensive information was given on numerous people who were labeled according to various stigmatized categories (Jew, Gypsy, vagrant). After the Napoleonic wars these warrants, private initiatives of higher administrative civil servants, were replaced by official police journals that appeared on a regular basis. In these journals most attention was paid to the *gemeinschädliche Umhertreiber* (harmful tramps). Although most of these men did not commit serious crimes, the police tried to establish constant supervision and control, by spreading detailed information about them among the local police forces. As Lüdtkke observed, the tenor of executive police conduct was directly influenced by the increase in population and migratory movements (Lüdtkke, 1989: 82).

Waning of Gypsy Stigmatization After c. 1750

The stigmatization of Gypsies did not keep pace with that of vagrants. After the end of the Gypsy hunts around 1750, the interest in this category waned for about a century. In some countries, like the Netherlands, authorities seemed to assume that Gypsies had vanished. In other countries they received significantly less attention than before. Civil authorities did attempt to civilize certain family groups of Gypsies, mostly by trying to make them sedentary, as examples in Württemberg, Austria-Hungary, and Prussia show (Willems, 1997: 141–45; Fricke, 1991; Danckwort, 1995). It is not quite clear how this decrease in the stigmatization of Gypsies can be explained. It may have been partly caused by the general disappearance of banditism, with which Gypsies were often associated, but for a more satisfying explanation we have to look for structural causes. The first is, paradoxically, the emergence of the nation-state and the transition from indirect to direct rule. Although one might expect that this would stimulate stigmatization of irregular groups like Gypsies, it took quite some time before the national state became powerful enough to take over a number of vital functions that thus far had been exercised at the local level, especially by cities, such as policing and poor relief.⁴ In the case of alien control, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards the central state (especially in Germany and Great Britain) gradually tried to monitor the migration of alien labor migrants by demanding some sort of national identification which guaranteed that the state of origin would take back the bearer in case of poverty (Lucassen, 2001; Feldman, 1999).

With this process of centralization came a renewed stigmatization of Gypsies. If we want to understand how and why, the German case is instructive. Good sources are the already mentioned police journals. Although vagrants in general remained the most important target, from the 1830's onwards the labeling of certain families as "Gypsies" (*Zigeuner*) gained ground (Lucassen, 1996). This was trig-

⁴ An interesting case is Great Britain. As Feldman has shown, the British state was not interested in aliens, who were looked after by their own communities, but very much in the (massive) immigration of Irish workers, who were treated as internal migrants and who were frequently expelled to Ireland, because of the locally-based poor relief system (1999).

gered by several factors: failure of attempts to make Gypsies sedentary in Germany, a more ethno-cultural image of Gypsies, stimulated by the dissemination of a new scholarly paradigm that linked Gypsies to India (Willems, 1997), and the problems the police ran into when trying to document individual identity. The use of fake names and aliases was deemed highly suspect (see also Singha, 2000: 155).

First, during the 1860's, Gypsy became a "master" category again. This led to renewed stigmatization of Gypsies. Although it is tempting to link this to the simultaneous migration of coppersmiths from Hungary or bear-leaders from Bosnia, more important factors are the changing role of the central state and the ethnic character of German citizenship. With German unification under Bismarck in 1870 the nation-building process received a strong impulse. One consequence was that those who were considered alien to the German national body, such as Poles, and also Gypsies from eastern Europe, were seen as a threat.

Secondly, we point to changes in the poor relief system in the 1860's. The responsibility for the wandering poor was shifted from the municipality of origin (the so-called *Heimat* principle) to the municipality of settlement (often the growing cities). This change brought about a negative attitude at the local level towards those newcomers who were considered (rightly or wrongly) as potential poor. Itinerant groups who traveled in families, and often in caravans, were highly visible and became one of the first objects of repressive policy at the municipal level. This development has been documented in detail for the Netherlands by Annemarie Cottaar (1996), who also demonstrated that this marked the beginning of the emergence of indigenous Dutch caravan dwellers as a separate ethnic group.

Thirdly, after unification, the central state under Bismarck became much more active in the social and economic domain. One consequence was that itinerant groups within the Reich, those without a fixed abode, were increasingly treated with suspicion and repression.

This tendency was reinforced by the specialization within police forces in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Lucassen, 1997: 39–40). In the wake of the general bureaucratization that accompanied state formation in western Europe, special branches were established for the surveillance of "social problems" such as prostitutes, aliens, vagrants, and in some countries, Gypsies. Around 1900 the

two main objectives of the policy towards traveling groups were sedentarism and regular work, and—in the case of foreigners—expulsion. As a result the demarcation line between nationals and foreigners on the one hand and normal and antisocial citizens at the other was more clearly drawn.

In summarizing the state's attitude towards Gypsies in western Europe, we conclude that its system of rule was unable to deal with highly mobile groups that could not be fixed administratively. From a political and ideological point of view these groups were regarded as a threat to a well-ordered society; from a socioeconomic point of view they did not fit in the poor relief systems. In order to deepen our understanding of these two shortcomings, we will make two comparisons with systems of rule under which Gypsies were treated with more tolerance, the Ottoman Empire and precolonial India.

DIFFERING APPROACHES AND THE IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REGIMES: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND PRECOLONIAL INDIA

Zoltan Barany argues that the treatment of Gypsies under Habsburg and Ottoman rule was quite different from that in western Europe (2001). Although both states were multiethnic empires, the Ottoman Empire through its millet system offered a better social environment for a relatively harmonious and enduring ethnic coexistence (Barany, 2001; Fraser, 1992: 173–78).⁵ To explain the divergent developments in western Europe and the Ottoman Empire, let us examine three more or less independent variables: the nature of state formation, the organization of social life, and the position of Gypsies in society. Many scholars have noted the distinct path of state formation of the Ottoman Empire. Many have stressed the weakness of the central state in monopolizing violence and monitoring its population, which is commonly seen as the cause of the illness of the “sick man of Europe.” Karen Barkey has criticized this inter-

⁵ It should be noted, though, that historical research on Gypsies under Ottoman rule is rare, at least as far as we can judge from publications in western European languages. A good summary can be found in Fraser (1992). Furthermore we consulted Marushiakova and Popov (1997) who used Turkish, Serbian, and Bulgarian sources and literature.

pretation and argued that at least for the seventeenth century, this alleged weakness in fact was a strength because the central state neutralized its potential enemies (peasants and local elites) by a process of negotiation and incorporation (Barkey, 1994: 230–35; Inalcik, 1980: 285). A consequence of this Ottoman “route to state centralism” was that phenomena which western European states saw as threatening, such as vagrancy and banditism, could very well be incorporated and even used to consolidate the power of the central state. Vagrancy resulting in banditism among landless peasants, especially in Anatolia, became a widespread phenomenon in the second half of the sixteenth century (Inalcik, 1980: 285). Although these groups caused a lot of misery in the countryside, the Ottoman state, very differently from France or the German states, used these groups on a regular basis as additional soldiers and to fight local power holders, who at times when they were without a job hired these men as well. Thus these armed vagrants became permanent mercenaries who rotated through society and depended one way or another on the central state.

The distinct feature of Ottoman society was the millet system, which ordered social life according to religion, differently from western Europe. Instead of local civic communities within a common judicial system, Ottoman villages and cities were organized into *millet*s with religion as the ordering principle. An individual or a group belonged to a millet according to religious affiliation: Muslims, various sorts of Christians, or Jews. These *millet*s created their own schools, hospitals, and other organizations for functions. Gypsies were the only category that was constituted on an ethnic basis. Within these *millet*s guilds played a central role in administering among other things, poor relief. These guilds were much more all-embracing than their Western variant. In principle all occupations, including the “immoral” professions such as entertainer, were organized into guilds whose functions spread over all aspects of social and institutional life. Moreover, they were molded from above to ensure for the central state the collection of taxes and the administration of its subjects (Baer, 1970; Eldem et al., 1999: 161–62).

Due to the continuous migration into towns in the Early Modern period, individuals put pressure upon the guilds to be included (Inalcik & Quataert, 1994: 697), but—as far as we know—this did not lead to stigmatization of itinerant groups or poor migrants as in western Europe. In the case of Gypsies this is explained, and here we

touch upon the third factor, by the fact that many of them were sedentary and, moreover, organized in their own millet and living in their own city district (Shaw & Shaw, 1977: 240; Karpas, 1985: 20–21; Eldem et al., 1999: 79). Not much is known of the social position of Gypsies, but recent research has discovered their presence in the Balkans, especially in Bulgaria. A Gypsy presence in Bulgaria probably predated the invasion of the Ottoman army in the second half of the fourteenth century. In addition, many Gypsies entered the Balkans as part of the Ottoman army (servants and craftsmen) and then settled there, both in sedentary and nomadic forms, starting in Bulgarian lands (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997: 18–27). In the archives of the central government and local administration they are called *chingene*, *chingane*, *chigan*, or *kibti*. Although a growing number became Muslims (especially from the seventeenth century onwards), they had to pay head tax (*haradz*) regardless of their faith. Only the blacksmiths in service of the army, who lived in fortresses, were exempted. The latter had a special status and belonged to a special Gypsy *sandzhak*, a nonterritorial administrative unit.

Most Gypsies settled and only a minority consisted of wandering groups. Both were distributed over different special tax units (*dzhe-maats*). Some of them gave up traditional itinerant occupations and turned to farming. Most however, practiced a great variety of itinerant trades, especially blacksmiths and musicians, but also tinkers, goldsmiths, shoers, sieve-makers, tailors, and servants. Next to the fundamental division of the population between faithful (Muslim) and *raya* (mostly Christian). Gypsies were given a special ambiguous status. Contrary to the general practice, they seem to have been categorized according to their ethnic roots and idiosyncratic religious practices. Their position seems to have been less problematic here than in the Habsburg Empire and western Europe. This is confirmed by the large-scale migration into Ottoman lands by runaway gypsy slaves from the neighboring vassal principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia throughout the Early Modern Period. The relatively favorable position of the Gypsies under Ottoman rule may partly be explained by the fact that many of them were sedentary, but also those who continued a nomadic way of life seem to have been left in peace and were not regarded as a threat to a well-ordered society.

The fact these *ghezende* also were “legible,” to paraphrase James Scott (1998), through the system of flexible administrative units (*dzhemaat*), may have played a role, in addition to the pillarization

embodied by the different *millets*. Finally it is important to realize that itinerant Gypsies were by no means the only nomadic group. Much more numerous were nomadic pastoral tribes, such as the Yörüks and the Turcoman tribes. Although they posed administrative problems to the authorities, they constituted an integral part of the sedentary society and fulfilled certain functions without which the society would not have been able to survive. The Ottoman state realized this and gave each clan a *yurt* (summer and winter pasturelands with fixed limits) well-circumscribed in the imperial registers (Inalcik & Quataert 1994: 37).

These preliminary conclusions from the Ottoman case (which need further substantiation) strengthen our idea that the diverging treatment of Gypsies in southeast and western Europe is not only explained by differences in the approach to ethnic and other minorities, as has been put forward by Barany, but has also to do with the fact that Gypsies could be “caught” by the state in an administrative sense and as members of a well-circumscribed unit did not pose a threat to the general principles of the poor relief system (Leeuwen, 1994). In addition, it is possible that the fear in western Europe of “masterless men,” was less pronounced in the Ottoman Empire because the state tried to solve the shortage of manpower by raiding the nonoccupied part of the Balkans and other foreign territories for slaves, thereby keeping the population under their rule out of range of slave traders (Toledano, 1982).

Another interesting case is India before and during colonial rule. Precolonial India, especially under (Muslim) Mughal rule, has long been depicted as an anarchy of personal despotisms, which formed the base of an anticapitalist “Asiatic Mode of Production” (Landes, 1998). More recent work has criticized this view by pointing out the dynamic and class-centered aspects of Indian society, such as commercialization in the eighteenth century (Bayly, 1988; Goody, 1996). There is less dispute over the nature of the “fiscal-military state.” Most historians agree that this state, through many intermediaries, like warlords, Hindu kings, and regional potentates, was mainly interested in extracting taxes from the village communities through their headmen (Anderson, 1974: 489; Bayly, 1988: 26–27). Neither the central state nor the local potentates seem to have been motivated to repress mobility or to create a “well-ordered society” in a western European sense. This may have been partly due to the pioneer character of Indian society. As the English historian Bayly stated:

Indian society in the eighteenth century was typical of other frontier societies in that the internal extent of the state's influence and of the arable economy with its more hierarchical landed society was constant in flux. Migration was followed by counter-migration, especially across the great empty lands of the Deccan. Settled society and its values were not irrevocably divided from the frontier; they were in a state of mutual dependence (1988: 31).

As a large part of India before colonial rule was occupied by unsettled, seminomadic people, their position in society at large was quite different from that in western Europe. Furthermore it is relevant to note that—in contrast to the classical static image—labor was scarce and migration a necessary and accepted phenomenon.

Finally, as far as we know, no comparable poor relief system existed at the local level, so migration and itinerancy were regarded as less problematic than they were in contemporary western Europe. As a consequence rulers seemed to allow itinerant groups, such as pilgrims, pastoral nomads, peddlers, musicians, and others to travel without any form of control, independent of any political authority (Singha, 2000: 152–57). This situation appalled British colonial rulers when they tried to settle the population for taxation and policing purposes in the nineteenth century. They saw themselves confronted with an “illegible” population, both in an economic and in a social sense. The social sense manifested itself in the impotence of the colonial rulers to categorize the indigenous population in a hierarchical way and to distinguish between honest and dishonest subjects. British colonial rulers therefore deemed it of utmost importance to establish a firm system of personal identification embedded in distinct (castelike) collectives. Moreover, with their European conception of vagrancy they were astonished by the tolerance that the Indian society displayed towards “vagrant” communities, such as the *Badhaks* or the *Maghiya Doms*. A second reason to make the population legible and to monitor geographical mobility was the need to mobilize labor for public works, plantations, and mining enclaves. The most important legal framework to combat undesirable mobility and to establish personal identity was the Criminal Tribes Act. Issued in 1871, this act was stimulated by the European vagrancy acts. A similar development took place during the Ottoman Tanzimat era (1839–76) and the following rule of Abdülhamid (1876–1909) when

centralization after the French model replaced the earlier decentralized model. As in India, western European concepts of vagrancy were introduced and enshrined in explicit antivagrancy laws (Ergut, 2002).

CONCLUSION

In this article we have examined the way various itinerant groups who traveled with their families, labeled as Gypsies, have been treated in western Europe from the fifteenth century onwards. Notwithstanding considerable differences between regions and time periods, we think that a number of general conclusions can be drawn. First, we have argued that it is essential to study day-to-day interaction at the local level and avoid a one-sided top down repression history. By concentrating on the social and economic functions of Gypsies in various regions and looking at their relation with both local authorities and ordinary people, it follows that in spite of the general repression of vagrancy and Gypsy groups, in many cases itinerant groups, because of the services they offered, were more integrated in society than is often assumed. Moreover, we argued that the legal rhetoric of extreme repression was only effective in certain periods and in certain regions, whereas the extent to which Gypsies were accepted and given the possibility to lead their itinerant lives, depended on the group and the specific local context. During the hops-picking season in Great Britain and Germany, well into the twentieth century, for example, Gypsies were left in peace. At other times, these same groups may have been repressed as peddlers or musicians.

Secondly, two important factors stimulated the stigmatization of Gypsies. The first is closely linked with the path of state formation. With the emergence of dynastic states in Early Modern Europe, rulers left less room for subjects who remained out of its reach. Vagrants and itinerant groups, Gypsies in particular, were increasingly seen as a threat to society, which was in essence considered as sedentary. In this sense we agree with the German historian Schubert that the end of the Middle Ages around 1500 marked the beginning of a much more problematic relationship between the state and Gypsies. Equally important, and closely linked to the concept of a well-ordered society, is the functioning of the poor relief. The restructuring of this system in the same period led to the stigmatiza-

tion of those who did not have a fixed abode and who as a consequence were not integrated in these locally-based arrangements.⁶

The structural inability or weakness of the well-ordered European societies to deal with Gypsies was finally accentuated by comparisons with the Ottoman Empire and precolonial India. Both cases highlight the two key variables for our understanding of the antagonistic relationship between Gypsies and the state. On the one hand, states desired to bring subjects under direct control and to make population-groups legible. On the other hand, poor relief systems had a double-faced nature, which by laying down the rules for inclusion based on a sedentary model irreversibly excluded and stigmatized highly mobile groups.

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⁶ This theme also needs to be researched more thoroughly. It would especially be interesting to compare the position of Gypsies and other itinerants in different types of poor relief system, for example those in England, France, and Germany.

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