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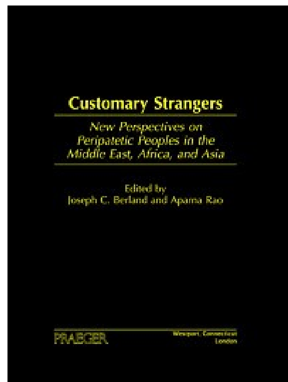

Customary Strangers

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Customary Strangers

New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia

Edited by

Joseph C.Berland and Aparna Rao

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Unveiling the Stranger: A New Look at Peripatetic Peoples

Joseph C.Berland and Aparna Rao

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two centuries social scientists have been concerned with the nature of relations between groups of people, and have offered concepts intended to help us understand and analyze the mediation of such relations. The roles and status of "cultural brokers" (Geertz 1959/1960) and go-betweens in political, economic, and social interactions and transactions have been the focus of many ethnographic studies. These accounts have shown how specific individuals, or specific professional groups, help communicate and/or negotiate between disparate and sometimes even mutually hostile sets of people, their institutions, and regions. Hallpike (1972:323) has gone as far as to assert that "the best mediators are outsiders." While in certain contexts such mediators are situated at the socioeconomic periphery, in others they occupy very strategic and crucial positions. In either case, they are considered by those on whose behalf they negotiate to be sympathetic toward them and yet neutral toward all. In other words, there appears to be an implicit, if not always explicit relationship of simultaneous nearness and remoteness between the mediator and those among whom he intercedes.

The chapters in this volume discuss similar relations of closeness and distance, objectivity and involvement, by drawing on the seminal work of German sociologist Georg Simmel. Unlike previous studies, these chapters deal not just with individuals or particular professional groups, such as traders or politicians, but with peripatetic peoples—whole communities, whose direct economic resources consist of their clients and whose lifestyle is often based on brokerage. Nearly a century ago, Simmel (1858–1918),

in his 1908 essay "The Stranger," anticipated much of the work that has since followed on such apparently ambiguous, yet positive relationships of mediation. Following independent leads by Sway (1981, 1988) and Berland (1986, 1992), our primary aim is to explore the usefulness of Georg Simmel's (1950; see also Levine 1971) elaborate paradigm of "The Stranger" as a conceptual tool for broadening our understanding about the positions of peripatetic peoples. This involves not only a broader exploration of their niche and the nature of their various and flexible subsistence strategies, but how the content and processes of transactions between peripatetic specialists and client communities determine their position and inform mutual perceptions and expectations of the other. By likening peripatetic peoples to Simmel's "Stranger," our purpose is not to redefine either construct. Instead we hope our notion of *customary strangers* will shed additional light on how the temporal, social, and economic content of their various transactions contributes to disparate levels of knowledge and experience, and how these habits and processes of interaction shape their situations, identities, and relationships both within and between communities.

PERIPATETIC PEOPLES AND THEIR NICHE: A BRIEF REVIEW

Since the first International Symposium on Peripatetic Peoples in 1985, three collections of papers dealing with the cross-cultural manifestations of these resilient, flexible, and widely dispersed communities of traders and suppliers of specialized goods and services have appeared—Berland and Salo (1986), Rao (1987a), and Piasere (1995). But all these collections were fairly general in their approach toward these communities. The genesis of this volume, with its very specific focus, can be traced to discussions among participants following special sessions on peripatetic adaptations as an adjunct to the 1995 annual meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society in Leiden, The Netherlands, and subsequent encouragement and input from like-minded scholars attending the 14th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1998. Since the mid-1980s, studies of peripatetic peoples have come of age as anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and others have become increasingly interested in these often pervasive communities of artisans, traders, and entertainers, who constitute some of the most widely dispersed yet perdurable populations in the world. It is possible that in South Asia, many of the itinerant merchants from the early phase of the Indus civilization who traded products with Mesopotamia and the Arab world were among peripatetic peoples. The typological unity of southern Indian objects of the Iron Age may indicate the existence of itinerant smiths, and The Tamil *Tolkappiyam,* perhaps the oldest extant South Asian literary work (ca. 5th-6th century B.C.) mentions various types of peddlers, itinerant minstrels, dancers, and dramatists. Peripatetic performers and enter-

tainers are described in detail in many early Indian texts, such as the *Mahabharata* (for more details see Casimir and Rao 2003). Excavations have brought to light Etruscan artefacts depicting bear leaders. Ancient Greece also knew such communities and Socrates is said to have enjoyed performances by peripatetic jugglers, actors, and other entertainers. With the expansion of Hellenism, a plethora of such communities appeared (Schneider 1969: II/181).

Few studies have examined the management of specific resources among peripatetic communities—Olesen's (1987, 2000) and Rao's (1982) work in Afghanistan, Piasere's (1985, 1986, 1987) study of the Roma, and to a certain extent Escher and Meyer's (1999) study in Syria are notable exceptions. But the very fact that for centuries peripatetics have, by definition, practiced commodity economies that have functioned even within largely noncommoditized frameworks throws up theoretically interesting issues, enabling the investigation of many paradigms that have been handed down unquestioningly in anthropology and history.

Given the pervasiveness and historical perdurability of peripatetic peoples, they may be profitably considered as persistent cultural systems within plural societies. Like Simmel's "Stranger," for Spicer (1971, 1980) and Castile (1981) "the enduring peoples of the world" are defined as a social type, delimited by several common characteristics and a shared set of values and traditions, including a strong sense of genealogical, historical, and/or mythological origins, endogamy, separate language or argot that simultaneously reinforce their sense of themselves and distinguish them as different from others. For Spicer (1980), however, the most important trait of enduring peoples is a "continuity of common identity based on…common understandings concerning the meaning of a set of symbols" (Spicer 1980:347). Spicer suggests that "continuity of a people consists in the growth and development of a picture of themselves, which arises out of their unique historical experience" (cited in Castile 1981:xvii). As "oppositional processes" (Spicer 1971:797) or "boundary maintenance mechanisms" like the characteristics of Simmel's "Stranger," such symbols and their meaning, in the experience of a people "define a collective identity separate from that of surrounding peoples" (Spicer 1980:356). Along these same lines, Barth (1969) suggested earlier that these conditions, their "ways of being," is precisely why ethnic groups form. Following Barth, the best descriptions of these groups must be in terms of the actors' own ascriptions, because they imply responsibilities to certain interactional norms—in other words, they see themselves as "playing the same game" (Barth 1969:15). Certainly, the persistence of peripatetic peoples, the nature of their internal and external identity, resides in the synergies of transactions, interactions, and oppositional processes characteristic of their protean niche.

As we shall see, in the case of Simmel's (in Levine 1971) characterization of "The Stranger," long before Berland (1979, 1982, 1986) proposed the

notion of a distinct *peripatetic's niche* as an operational tool for summarizing and conceptualizing *mutable demands for goods and/or services that other communities consider inaccessible, or cannot, or will not, support on a permanent basis,* others had specifically noted the viability of this situation. For example, Barth (1963:92) suggests the essence of the peripatetic's niche in his summary of the relationship among the nomadic Ghorbati and their services to the pastoral Basseri in South Persia "the [Ghorbati] derive their usefulness [to client communities] as an alternate source of supply of the utensils and equipment…where bazaars are far away, or for other reasons inaccessible." Also, in her ethnographically rich accounts of subsistence activities among Travellers or Gypsies in England, Okely (1983:50–57 *passim*) notes that they

> have found and retained a special niche within the wider economy, exploiting a multiplicity of occupations at one time and over time…their occupations can be generalized as "the occasional supply of goods, services and labour where demand and supply are irregular in time and place"…it is precisely because the Gypsies' work categories are not found in the larger system that they are able to occupy them.

In a similar vein, Salo (1979, 1982), drawing on both the historical record and long-term field research among Western Gypsy and Traveller groups, introduced the notion of a *socioeconomic niche* emphasizing the social rather than natural resource base as the primary loci for their subsistence activities. These and comparable conceptualizations of the *peripatetic's niche* are manifestations of Simmel's early use of the trader as a prototype for his "Stranger" construct, "because a trader is required only for goods produced outside the group…there *must* be a stranger; there is no opportunity for anyone else at it" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:144 *passim*). People who exploit such situations are prone to social categorization as "gypsies," "itinerants," "wanderers," and equally obscure and often derisive labels by clients, officials, and scholars alike. Noting that these classificatory tags often carry romantic, or more likely, negative semantic connotations, Berland (1979, 1982, 1983) proposed the categorical construct *peripatetic peoples.* Intended as more semantically neutral, *peripatetic* is also a better "descriptor" because it specifies reasoned, planned, or deliberate patterns of mobility as aspects of their adaptive strategies. Other related and equally constructive concepts have been explored, notably *service nomads* (Hayden 1979; Nemeth 1986); *commercial nomads* (Acton 1985); *non-food-produdng nomads* (Rao 1982); *symbiotic nomads* (Misra 1982); or more generally, and to distinguish them from pastoral nomadism and nomadic hunting and foraging adaptations, "the motley others" (Ingold 1986) and Rao's (1987a) "the other nomads." While the validity and reliability of these and future classificatory efforts are ultimately subject to

refinement and revision, the study of these peoples and their permutations has come of age, while new interrogatives and perspectives continue to evolve. For example, Dilley (1986) has suggested further research into the "phenomenology of peripatetics," by which he means

> two aspects of investigation: first, that in each instance the phenomenon of "peripatetics" is the result of a particular set of circumstances related to the social, cultural, and economic conditions prevailing in a given concept, and which is specific to that particular construct; and, second, that the experience and perception of the itinerant and the settled community should inform are analyses and conceptions of the phenomenon.

In the present volume, Mariella Villasante Cervello systemically explores mutual perceptions between the peripatetic *m'allemîn* (artisans) and *iggawin* (bards, musicians, and poets) and their clients, the *Bidân* nobles in Mauritania. Where many investigators note the perceptions and attitudes of peripatetic peoples about the membership of diverse customer communities, in their chapters here Villasante Cervello and Aparna Rao are among the few to analyze client community beliefs and attitudes about the nomadic artisans and entertainers who supply them with specialized goods and services. In a different vein, Baxter (1986), Barth (1987), Piasere (1986), as well as Dilley (1986) have suggested a shift away from simply identifying and defining peripatetic peoples toward a better understanding about the prerequisite conditions for the emergence and substantiability of those situations that support these "powerless minority groups of 'strangers'" (Barth 1987:IX).

As well, Michael Bollig explores the likely intermediate or transitory position of peripatetic activities, as groups from one set of adaptive strategies shift to others: for example, as some groups—predominantly hunter-gatherers and foragers—choose or are forced to abandon their traditional subsistence strategies and adopt new means of surviving. Also in this volume, these processes and some of their consequences are nicely captured in Michael De Jongh's chapter discussing the plight of the Karretjie of South Africa. In their manifestations as providers of specialized goods and services that client communities cannot, or otherwise will not support locally, these "interim masters of imperfect markets" (Nemeth 1986) are essentially astute, resourceful, and flexible middlemen traders. The nature and perdurability of their niche, their diverse transactions and associate interactions with a multaeity of customer situations, may be profitably explored as forms of Simmel's (1950) "Stranger."

STRANGERS AND PERIPATETICS AS SOCIAL TYPES

Over the past century, several research traditions have been influenced by Georg Simmel's (1950) classic and oft-cited essay on "The Stranger."

Like his paper in the same year on "The Poor," Simmel's "Stranger" is offered as a *social type* or *sociological form:* "the world consists of innumerable contents which are given determinate identity, structure, and meaning through the imposition of forms which man has created in the cause of his experience…particular positions in an intersectional structure." As a relatively recent translator and interpreter of his work, Levine (1971:lxiv-lxv) reminds us that Simmel's "social types" or forms, to paraphrase Levine, must be understood as including not only the characteristics of "The Stranger," but the processes of "strangeness" as well.

Perhaps the most familiar and productive tap into Simmel's sociology in general, and the role of social distance in his characterization of "The Stranger" in particular, grew out of Park and Burgess (1921) and their collaborators in "marginality theory" and Park's (1924, 1928) subsequent formulation of the "marginal man" (see also Stonequist 1937). As McLemore (1970) and Levine (1971) have emphasized, later elaboration of Park's use of Simmel's ideas about "The Stranger" in studies of marginality, social distance, and isolation focus on social relationships, not on social processes. Where these efforts tend to equate the "marginal man" and "The Stranger," others such as Wood (1934), Schuetz (1944), and Meyer (1951) are inclined to recast the position of the stranger into that of the newcomer or immigrant, and conditions related to their reception and ultimate incorporation or rejection by the group. Certainly, parts of Simmel's characterization of "The Stranger" profitably influenced these two traditions, especially his emphasis on their position as a "form of union based on interaction," of "closeness and remoteness," "repulsion and distance," a position in the group that involves "both being outside it and confronting it" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143–144 *passim*). However, by emphasizing the relationships *of the* stranger, these studies tend to overlook the fact that, for Simmel, "The Stranger" *is a* relationship—a positive manifestation of a specific form of interactions.

The "objectivity" of Simmel's "Stranger" has also figured importantly in discussions about the qualities sought in social scientists as observers and interpreters of others' activities. In his perceptive overview of the role of "Insiders" and "Outsiders" in the sociology of knowledge, Merton (1972:32–33 *passim*) notes that Simmel, "in a fashion oddly reminiscent of the anything-but-subtle Baconian doctrine…develops the thesis that the stranger, not caught up in commitments to the group, can more readily acquire the strategic role of the relatively objective enquirer." Merton goes on to remind us that

> Simmel departs from the simple Baconian conception, the "objectivity of the stranger" does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement. It is the Stranger who finds what is familiar to the group significantly unfamiliar and so is

> prompted to raise questions for inquiry less apt to be raised at all by Insiders. (Merton 1972:33)

He cites early efforts to extrapolate Simmel's "objectivity" and the "stranger value" of outsiders in contributions by Oeser (1939), Nadel (1939), Paul (1953), and Nash (1963). This aspect of "The Stranger"—the role of peripatetic peoples as messengers and confidants to client communities—is explored in the contributions of Frank Meyer (Syria), Bernhard Streck (Sudan), and Villasante Cervello (Mauritania). Although not explicitly referenced, Simmel's thinking figures into Spradley and McCurdy's (1972) expansion on the concept of "stranger value," and is implicitly embedded in the substance and sentiment of Powdermaker's (1966) autobiography of her sojourn in ethnography entitled *Stranger and Friend*. Interestingly, in his basic volumes exploring the methods and processes of fieldwork involved in ethnography entitled *The Professional Stranger,* Agar (1980, 1996) does not discuss and critique the "objectivity" of Simmel's "Stranger" nor its subsequent elaboration in the sociology of knowledge. In both editions of *The Professional Stranger,* Agar footnotes Simmel, but simply as one of several "occasional references to essays dealing with 'The Stranger'" (Agar 1996:64). As McLemore (1970) observed more than thirty years ago, among those interested in the "marginal man," the "new-comer," the "alienated," the "immigrant," or the relative objectivity of "outsiders" and "insiders," many aspects of Simmel's "Stranger" have informed and transformed perspectives in many research traditions. For others, Simmel's essay is simply, almost automatically, noted whenever the word *stranger* is used (see, for example, Lofland 1985; Lipman 1997). In the absence of substantive or theoretical elaborations such citations are likely intended as a kind of dutiful recognition of Simmel's contribution to those properties of "The Stranger" currently at hand. While many investigators have creatively and successfully harvested discrete traits from the *Gestalt* of Simmel's "Stranger," few have attempted to discern and extrapolate all the characteristics that inform the author's prescription of "The Stranger" as a social form.

Universally, and in terms of our broad objectives in this volume of collected chapters dealing with peripatetic peoples, a notable exception to the particularism of previous efforts to adopt "The Stranger," Sway (1981, 1988) has attempted to incorporate the totality of Simmel's model with Blalock's (1967) and Bonacich's (1973) *middleman minority theory* in order to explain the position and perception of "Gypsy" populations throughout the world. In her analysis of Simmel's (1950:402–408) essay on "The Stranger," Sway (1981) discerned

> eleven distinguishing characteristics: (1) strangeness of origins; (2) "no owner of soil"; (3) potential wanderer; (4) objectivity; (5) freedom from habit, piety, and

> precedent; (6) the confessional; (7) traders and middlemen; (8) inner enemies; (9) dangerous possibilities; (10) fixed tax; and (11) nearness and remoteness "…in order to…explain this group's [Gypsies'] *predicament* [emphasis added] in various European countries and the United States."

Here, like her predecessors in "marginality theory," Sway overlooks Simmel's insistence "that *the state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation* [emphasis added]…a specific form of interaction… [based on] the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143–144 *passim*). With exception to her "negative" versus Simmel's "positive" position of "The Stranger," our inventory of the salient attributes of their position—while presented in different sequence, basically tallies with those catalogued by Sway (1981). The situations of the diverse peoples in this volume share many of the features of Simmel's "Stranger." As traders involved in provisioning the demands or desires for goods and services otherwise unattainable or too costly for client communities, their position(s) are created by "specific forms of interaction" by these situations. Although they are often perceived and treated as "despicable others," the very nature of the peripatetics' niche demands that, like the "inner enemies of Sirus," they are simultaneously "outside," yet "confronting" the milieu of client opportunities *"near and far at the same time"* (Simmel, in Levine 1971, *passim;* emphasis added). As we shall see in the flexibility of their uses of strategic mobility *and* sedentarization, endogamy *and* exogamy, fission and fusion, the nature of their positions may not easily lend themselves to binary analyses. On the other hand, the long-term ethnographic record of their everyday lives suggests a more complex and sophisticated understanding of peripatetic peoples and their positions as *customary strangers* in a Simmelian sense.

CUSTOMARY STRANGERS: A NEW TWIST ON AN OLD MODEL FOR AN ANCIENT ADAPTATION

Georg Simmel also anticipated many of the characteristics of the peripatetic's niche and the peoples that exploit it:

> The stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow—the potential wanderer, so to speak who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a certain spatial circle—within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries—but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it. (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143)

For Simmel, "*the state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation*…a specific form of interaction" based on "the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship": but patterned in such a way that "the distance within this relation indicates that one who is remote is near…an element whose membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143–144 *passim;* emphasis added). As a form, or type, of relationship based on interaction, Simmel likens the "Stranger" to the trader:

> As long as production for one's own needs is the general rule, or products are exchanged within a relatively small circle, there is no need for a middleman within the group. A trader is required only for goods produced outside the group. The trader *must* be a stranger; there is no opportunity for anyone else to make a living at it. (*ibid.:* 144 *passim*)

He goes on to note that the stranger *cum* trader may even settle down, but "only if he can live by trade as a middleman." And here he divines the resilience of the peripatetic's niche and partially explains the flexibility, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurial acumen of peripatetics as providers of specialized goods and services:

> For trade alone makes possible unlimited combinations and through it intelligence is constantly extended and applied in new areas, something that is much harder for the primary producer with his more limited mobility and his dependence on a circle of customers that can be expanded only very slowly. Trade can always absorb more men than can primary production. It is therefore the most suitable activity for the stranger, who intrudes as a supernumerary, so to speak, into a group in which all the economic positions are already occupied. (*ibid.:* 144 *passim*)

By engaging in, or being perceived by others as exclusively involved in intermediary activities, the "Stranger" is likely understood as "no owner of land"—land not only in the physical sense, but also metaphorically as a vital substance that is fixed, if not in space, then at least in an ideal position within the social environment" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:144–145 *passim*). Discerned as "landless middlemen" the "Stranger" is attributed "the specific character of mobility…[that] occasions that synthesis of nearness and remoteness which constitutes the formal position of the stranger…[who]…comes incidentally into contact with every single element but is not bound up organically, through established ties of kinship, locality, or occupation, with any single one" *(ibid.)*. Along these same lines, Simmel stresses the importance of the foreign or ambiguous provenance of the "Stranger":

> For a stranger to the country, the city, the race, and so-on, what is stressed is again nothing individual, but alien origin, a quality which he has, or could have, in

> common with many other strangers. For this reason strangers are not really perceived as individuals, but as strangers of a certain type. Their remoteness is no less general than their nearness. (Simmel, in Levine 1971:148)

By the same tokens, Simmel notes that "The Stranger" is commonly subjected to a fixed "head tax" rather than assessment calibrated to the vicissitudes of his individual wealth through time. Using the position of European Jews during the Middles Ages to illustrate the "head tax" imposed on "The Stranger," Simmel observed:

> Whereas the tax paid by Christian citizens varied according to their wealth at any given time. For every single Jew the tax was fixed once and for all… because the Jew had his position as a Jew, not as the bearer of certain contents. With respect to taxes every other citizen was regarded as possessor of a certain amount of wealth, and his tax could follow the fluctuations of his fortune. But the Jew as taxpayer was first of all a Jew and thus his fiscal position contained an invariable…and all strangers pay exactly the same head tax. (Simmel, in Levine 1971:149 *passim*)

We have very few first-hand ethnographic accounts of relations between peripatetics and diverse taxing authorities, but we do know that the Ottoman Empire imposed a special "head tax" on Gypsies and other peripatetics (e.g., Pott 1849:321). Sway (1981), Lucassen (1993), and Lucassen, Cottaar, and Willems (1998), in their rich historical analyses of peripatetic peoples ("Gypsies") in Europe and the United States, also indicate the pervasiveness of Simmel's notion of the special "head tax" on "strangers." These include contributions to nobility or other local, regional, and state authorities in order to gain access to client opportunities. Such taxes were often official assessments such as license or camping fees. Others may have taken the form of bribes in cash or personal services such as sexual favors.

For Simmel, the "potential" for mobility is an important factor contributing to the interrelated characteristics of greater "objectivity" and "freedom" of the "Stranger" relative to the membership of host communities:

> Because he is not bound by roots to the particular constituents and partisan dispositions of the group, he confronts all of these with a distinctly "objective" attitude, an attitude that does not signify mere detachment and nonparticipation, but is a distinct structure composed of remoteness and nearness, indifference and involvement. …He is the freer man, practically and theoretically; he examines conditions with less prejudice; he assesses them against standards that are more general and more objective; and his actions are not confined by custom, piety, or precedent. (*ibid.:* 145–146 *passim*)

While the qualities of nearness and remoteness, landlessness and rootlessness, powerlessness, mobility, objectivity, freedom, flexibility, and re-

sourcefulness may positively enable the position of the stranger, these same characteristics may also engender negative, detrimental, even dangerous consequences in their relationships with client communities.

Both these possibilities are embedded in the essentially asymmetrical relations of power that exist everywhere between peripatetics and their host communities. Indeed, most documented information on the history of peripatetics attests to this asymmetry—archival materials consist entirely of the dominant discourse. The discourses of host societies, which tend to be manifested in police records in the West, and in colonial records in the rest of the world, dealt with peripatetics almost exclusively in "criminal" contexts. The notion of the "professional criminal" and of entire, impoverished communities idling away their days and living off crime gained popularity in 18th- and 19th-century Europe, and by the 19th century, nomadism in Europe came to be equated with vagrancy. This in turn was associated conceptually with poverty, and the criminalization of the poor led to the idea of "the dangerous classes" (Monkkonen 1975; see also Yang 1985a). Nomadism, or rather "wandering," also came to be associated with "Wanderlust," which itself was increasingly being explained as genetically based and hence "incorrigible" (Gould 1998). Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe (Liégeois 1987; Lucassen et al. 1998:136ff.) were major victims of such European social theory. Transferred to their South Asian colonies by the British, who regarded nomads as uncontrollable and hence potentially criminal, these theories combined with concepts of Imperial government (Casimir and Rao 2003), and assumed an orientalist avatar in the form of the *Criminal Tribes Act*. Commenting on peripatetics in northern India, a colonial document states:

> when a man tells you he is a *Buddhuk,* or a *Kunjur,* or a *Sunoria*…he tells you …that he is an offender against the law; has been so from the beginning, and will be so to the end; that reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste, I may almost say his religion to commit crime. (Cssner 1870, in Yang 1985b:113)

Peripatetic lifestyles were assumed to consist of "wandering," without positive goals or definite destinations. In his famous *Report on the Census of the Panjab,* Ibbetson (1882:307) writes: "the wandering and criminal tribes…and…the gipsy tribes…are so much akin that it is impossible to draw any definite line of demarcation."

Incorporated into the body of colonial "knowledge," such "facts" were imbibed by the political elite of many post-colonial states, who continue to consider peripatetic peoples as a "law and order problem." Thus, for example, while abolishing the *Criminal Tribes Act* in 1952, the Indian government (Rao and Casimir 2003) promulgated another law, the *Habitual Offenders Act*. Purportedly applicable to any individual, it is actually applied principally to members of one of the 127 communities (ca. 60 million

nomadic or semi-nomadic individuals, very many of whom are peripatetics) listed in *The Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry Committee* (1949–1950) and since "denotified." In practice, this act gives the police arbitrary powers to even kill members of these communities.

However, even the British did not automatically categorize all peripatetics as "criminal." Labeling and categorizing are always symbols of agency, and hence intimately connected with ideology; in the context of states, they are acts of policy. Recognizing the usefulness of peripatetic trading communities, who were practically the only viable channel for the sale of taxed goods in the interior regions of South Asia, the colonial administration first declared that such groups were "exceedingly useful members of society" (Radhakrishna 1989:272). Shortly thereafter, when roads and railways were built in these regions, the same communities were declared to be "amongst the most criminal sections of society" (p. 273). In the 19th century, imperial and colonial policies toward peripatetics varied considerably, depending on the specific ideology of the state. Thus, for example, while the Ottomans did not persecute "Gypsies," the Hapsburgs did. Barany (2001) argues that though both empires were legitimated by religion, the Hapsburgs laid much greater emphasis on ethnic and cultural identity as a distinguishing characteristic than did the Ottomans, who did not attempt to achieve cultural homogeneity. Peripatetic and semi-sedentary Tchingane ("Gypsies") were recognized by the Ottomans as just another community *(millet),* and in Constantinople they were considered a guild, with an officially recognized headman (Pott 1849:321).

Hence, any discussion of peripatetic peoples and their interactions with their host societies must also keep in mind the specific historical conditions within which varying relations of power produce social types and cultural systems. Conceptualizing socioeconomic relations as historical processes, Emanuel Marx describes the transition from a positive to a negative relationship between trader-peripatetics and their hosts (see also Susan Rasmussen's chapter in this volume for a similarly dynamic perspective). Similar transitions have been noted by others (e.g., Malhotra and Bose 1963:75; Rao and Casimir 2003) for South Asia. Yet, as Hayden (1999:131) noted in his perceptive study of peripatetic Nandiwalla in India, "That [they] are generally disliked does not, however, mean that they are totally friendless…they…often have established ties of…even friendship with particular villagers…. The acceptability of individual nomads varied with the respondents." Such positive individualized relationships with "Strangers"—symbols of "testimonials given to individuals of no fixed abode" (Baermann Steiner 1999:II/131)—are in many societies accompanied by an equally strong rejection of the group to which these individuals belong. Clearly then, attitudes toward peripatetic peoples are often ambivalent, even contradictory. Both Rasmussen and Villasante Cervello elaborate on these conditions in their discussions in this volume of the role of

peripatetics as ritual actors and intermediaries, respectively. Also, in her chapter Rao discusses how such attitudes can be both positive and negative, depending on the actual context. She further shows how each group internalizes the negative attitudes of the host society and projects these on other peripatetic communities. Myths among peripatetic peoples analyzed here by Michael Casimir testify to such internalization. As mechanisms used to deal with their status as "Strangers," they even amplify their variance by claiming that their ancestors were culprits and sinners, thus using them as well as projecting themselves as scapegoats.

Historical processes and social systems also manifest themselves in degrees of economic, political, and social homogenization, the best example perhaps being the concept of the nation-state. Increased homogeneity obviously leads to greater consensus regarding norms and values, and this can be detrimental to peripatetic peoples, who function typically within what Oscar Lewis (1986:167) referred to as "rural cosmopolitanism." The less homogenous a society, the greater the chance that the stranger will be at least willy-nilly integrated as one among many "minorities." Today, increasing globalization is bringing with it on the one hand ethnic diversity, but also cultural homogenization. However, even cultural pluralism does not entail relativism, let alone equality, as the South Asian caste system demonstrates. Here, as Dumont (1966) suggested, strangers were and are integrated either as rulers or as untouchables—and sometimes as both. Does such structural integration take place in all host societies? Is it easier in some than in others? The chapters here which deal with Islamic contexts touch upon a few of these issues (also see Meillassoux 1973; Amanolahi and Norbeck 1975:9ff.).

Whatever the degree of homogenization and integration, it is conceivable that everywhere and at all times, "we actually need the concept of strange," and that "Strangers…are enough like us and only enough unlike us, to be heuristically useful" (Napier 1992:140). This interplay of distance and nearness, this "degeneration of a difference" (Simmel 1955), can assume monstrous forms, as Stanley Tambiah (1998) shows, drawing on Simmel for his subtle and thoughtful analysis of the horrendous violence witnessed in Yugoslavia. This brings us to the position of peripatetics within their host societies in times of extreme crisis.

While by and large peripatetics have been ambivalently and fuzzily integrated in nebulous forms into the the cognitive maps and social relations of host societies, internal tensions, conflicts, and problems within the latter may exaggerate the diverse but essential qualities of the "Stranger" into a state of "insurmountable strangeness." Then "skepticism regarding the intrinsic value of the relationship" increases and devolves toward what Durkheim (1951) characterized as "normative disorganization" or *anomie,* and Merton (1938) and Merton and Barber (1963) conceptualized as "sociological ambivalence." In both cases, the position of the "Stranger" is seen

as inconsonant with normative expectations to such a degree that “the connecting forces have lost their specific, centripetal character” (Simmel, in Levine 1971:147). When the politics of difference takes over, the position of “The Stranger” may simply be reduced to the objectified “Other,” becoming readily amenable to transformations into convenient scapegoats; targets of hostility, xenophobic fears, animosities, racism, and even genocide. The familiar, yet customary “Stranger” becomes an undesirable, even threatening, outsider, and may even lose his shared identity as a human being. When violent conflicts tear apart host societies, peripatetics are often caught at the frontiers and suffer the most. The contemporary situation of numerous peripatetic communities bears this out—in Kosovo, Roma and Ashkali were caught between the warring parties, disowned and massacred by both Serbs and Albanians. In Jerusalem the Dom find themselves hostage between the lines dividing Israelis from Arabs, Jews from Muslims; and in Colombia, Roma, who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, are subjected to extortion, terror, and torture as much by government troops as by the rebel armies and the militia of the drug mafia.

PERIPATETIC PEOPLES: MAJOR TRADEMARKS

Peripatetics do not constitute a monolithic block, any more than say, peasants or pastoralists do. Not only are there differences at any given moment between communities, individual families, and regions, but variations also exist within one single community over time. By considering them all as a single, static block, we contribute to their marginal status as objects and victims. By not discussing change, we also romanticize them, denying agency, flexibility, and resourcefulness, and thus also participating in the Orientalist enterprise. And yet, for analytical purposes we need definitions and ideal categories carved out of the reality of fuzzy sets, and for this we require prototypes, which “establish both stability and volatility in a network of meanings” (MacLaury 1991:68), furnishing both concrete points of reference and ranges of flexibility.

As editors of their respective volumes focusing on peripatetic peoples in cross-cultural perspective, Berland and Salo (1986) and Rao (1987a) discerned several interrelated denominators among these diverse and ubiquitous populations, including their widely and commonly reported low, often despised, status; ambiguity; and separateness vis-à-vis the membership of client communities (also discussed in this volume by Shirin Akiner, Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, Meyer, Rao, Rasmussen, and Villasante Cervello); their linguistic facility and/or possession of “secret,” languages or argot (see Akiner’s and Rao’s chapters); and propensity for endogamy (see Akiner’s and Villasante Cervello’s contributions). On the other hand, reexamination of the old, and a shifting emphasis in the new ethnographic record, indicate other social, cultural, and cognition activities (see, for example, Frembgen’s

discussion) that, as matters of degrees of emphasis, help define and explain the worldwide resiliency of peripatetic peoples, notably: their *flexibility, resourcefulness,* and *facility* at utilizing a repertoire of *strategic patterns of spatial mobility*. Certainly, it appears that these capacities are essential ingredients for exploiting the protean nature of their niche.

LOW SOCIAL STATUS

From the days of the ancient Greeks until today, peripatetic peoples seem to have a low social status everywhere, and one major reason is that their lifestyles apparently contrast with and are seen as defying the norms and values of their host communities. This is often the case despite the fact that, like Simmel's (1950) "Stranger"-cum-middleman trader, the subsistence activities of peripatetic peoples are normally a direct response to the needs and desires of client communities. Were their lifestyles, norms, and values coterminous with those of their host populations, there would *ipso facto* be no peripatetics' niche to exploit. Meyer, Rao, Rasmussen, and Villasante Cervello (this volume) analyze the complexity, conditions and perceptions of the low social status of peripatetic communities in the contexts of such norms and values and discuss their powerlessness in the social and political schema of diverse client communities. The three main characteristics of this lifestyle that contribute to their low status, while simultaneously also partially being the result of this status, are that they are "no owners of soil," their "alien" or "ambiguous origins," and the "despicable" nature of their subsistence activities.

- The lack of ownership of "soil": In many societies, those lacking "historical" reference for their identity, especially in terms of documented land rights, are considered "Strangers." Simultaneously, the fact that they possess orally transmitted, customary rights makes them "inferior." They are typified as "people who might come from anywhere and whose ancestors and descent nobody can tell" (Tiemann 1970:492, 494). It is conceivable that in the past, when land was less scarce in most parts of the world, ownership was less important than regular access, and that the concept of tenure applied not just to soil, but equally to other resources—as it still does among a variety of nomadic societies (Casimir 1992). Cynthia Chou (this volume) shows how complex Orang Suku Laut systems of territoriality are, how strong their emotional attachment to specific sites is, and how they have managed their tenure through fishing traditions and a variety of kinship and other networks. Since, however, they are perceived by the larger sedentary society as "Strangers," and since the state does not recognize tenurial rights that are de-linked from the "soil," the rights of this peripatetic community are also ignored and violated. In his chapter, Frank Meyer also discusses the spectrum of Nawar "ownership of soil" and its consequences for different families. Today, with a growing tendency worldwide to conceive of citizens' rights in

terms of the “sons of the soil,” peripatetic peoples are confronted with increasing discrimination.

- The “alien” or “ambiguous origins” mentioned above are dealt with in some detail in many of the chapters in this volume (by Akiner, Casimir, Rao, Streck, and Villasante Cervello). While Rao describes how each community known as “Jat” in Afghanistan is supposed to be of “foreign” origin, Villasante Cervello mentions that the *m’allemîn* are said to be the “products of the spoils of war”—that is, of unknown parentage, or rather, of unions that were not legally recognized as alliances. In its turn, this reputation often pairs with that of moral laxity (Berland 2000; Rao 1986), especially in areas where women are ideally expected to be economically inactive and even invisible in public. This brings us to a much neglected issue—that of gender relations and the status of women in these communities. In recent years, with the rise of religious bigotry in the Middle East and South Asia, many peripatetic communities have been targeted by Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists, and violent attempts have been made to change their normative behavior.
- The subsistence activities performed by many, if not most peripatetic communities are considered as “dirty,” “polluting,” and even “despicable,” and the chapters by Bollig, Frembgen, Marx, Meyer, Rao, Rasmussen, Streck, and Villasante Cervello all discuss these characterizations at some length. Very many, if not all, these activities are essential for the sustainability of their respective host societies, and yet the norms and values of the latter often prevent their own members from practicing these occupations. The peripatetics’ niche is in large part a response to this dilemma among the membership of more dominant, largely sedentary communities that comprise their primary resource base.

Members of peripatetic communities are fully aware of their low status in the wider sociopolitical context, but do they really accept this status and if so, how do they cope with it? Answers to both questions must remain tentative. As “Strangers,” it would seem that their internalization of the norms and values of their host societies, especially when these are very heterogenous, is only partial, and that hence, they remain relatively impervious to this valuation—provided, of course, that discrimination and persecution do not exceed certain limits. After all, strangers consider those who consider them as strangers equally as strangers (cf. Becker 1963). Among peripatetics this is exemplified by constructs such as the “Gypsy’s” Gajo/Gorgio, the “Tay Khel” of the Ghorbat (see Rao, this volume), and so on. Even so, it appears that their appraisal of their low status has led many such communities to consciously or subconsciously evolve specific strategies that make use of certain elements of this status as a kind of resource. The following are the principal elements that are used in this manner, while also contributing to and deriving from their low status. All these elements attest to their lack of power at the material and political levels, and to their manipulation of discrimination and prejudice against them as weapons of subalterns.

- Though peripatetics may share some of the values and belief systems of the communities in their regions of migration, their lifestyles and especially ritual practices may differ from the norm. Hence many peripatetic communities have a reputation of being more irreverential toward normative religion. For example, in mid-19th century Ottoman Turkey the peripatetic Tchingane were considered neither fully Muslim nor completely Christian, but were commonly said to have only “half a religion” (Pott 1849:321) and hence had to pay a special tax *(kharaj)*. This ascribed irreverence pairs well with the general moral laxity ascribed to them. Simultaneously, however, they are also attributed special powers in the realm of the supernatural, notably the occult. Their performative repertoire often includes “magical” and healing skills, while the practice by many of possession rituals enhances the fear and mystery associated with, for example, the “evil eye” and “black magic.” The chapters by Bollig, Rasmussen, and Villasante Cervello elaborate on this theme and discuss how peripatetics build on this fear and mystery. Peripatetics thus stretch the limits of strangeness to act as go-betweens, not only between various human communities, but also between the natural and supernatural worlds, notably in regions influenced by Islam (see Frembgen, Rao, Rasmussen, Villasante Cervello, this volume). Indeed, heterodox mystic brotherhoods often had much in common with peripatetic peoples. This apparent contradiction of materially despised peoples being ascribed extraordinary, nonmaterial powers stems from the inherent contradiction in most societies between social and economic necessity and political authority and order. It is a common theme in many folk traditions in Europe and Asia, whereby miracles are always performed by the lowest and humblest, by the economically most wretched and most powerless, who thereby prove their intrinsic spiritual power over the transient glory of the worldly powerful.
- Another consequence of their low status is often manifested in the origin myths of numerous peripatetic communities, analyzed in this volume by Michael Casimir, and also referred to by Shirin Akiner. These myths are used to explain their current situation and low status as the direct outcome of an ethical transgression by an ancestor who was then cursed. These may be attempts to garner the sympathy and at least temporary tolerance among the membership of client communities. In times of extreme duress they may also be narrated in order to explain their situation and to comfort themselves.
- One of the hallmarks of their “strangeness” is their facility at communicating, best represented by their linguistic flexibility and resourcefulness. Peripatetic groups often move between host populations speaking different languages. To cope with these regional, often seasonal variations, they tend to be multilingual, and resort to code-switching as and when necessary. However, they often have their own distinct languages or argots (see Meyer, Rao, Streck, this volume), which are unfamiliar or unintelligible to their host societies. The latter serve as markers to strengthen socioeconomic cohesion in contexts of extreme marginality. While such linguistic tools amplify their “strangeness,” they also serve as protective mechanisms in diverse economic and political settings, where peripatetic peo-a ples are materially dependent on the resources of potentially hostile customer populations.

STRATEGIC PATTERNS OF SPATIAL MOBILITY

Peripatetic peoples use both spatial mobility and more static strategies in order to enhance their well-being and survival. While choices about relative tenure in a location are facts of their everyday lives, neither are considered as ends in themselves, but as means to many goals. As Berland and Salo (1986:3–4) suggested in their volume on peripatetic peoples,

> for most populations [of peripatetic peoples] relative levels of mobility and/or sedentarisation are not viewed as polarities—as either desirable or undesirable conditions. Rather, states of being relatively mobile or static are perceived as strategies to be used as circumstances warrant. In most cases, elements within a population—such as families or small alliance groups—will call on a broad range of strategies …depending on specific conditions.

This has been illustrated in Robertson's (1998) recent account of the traditionally peripatetic Jogi Nath Kalbelia (snake handlers and charmers) in the Jaipur area of Rajasthan, India. These traders in specialized knowledge and skills see themselves as having simply added sedentarization as a strategy to help them supplement their income-producing opportunities such as contract labor, agriculture, and construction work. Among this community spatial mobility or more static adaptations are perceived as risk-spreading strategies that enhance community survival. Robertson goes on to note that some Jogi Nath Kalbelia have built mud houses, and some have acquired small amounts of agricultural land. However, like a symbol of their desire to remain flexible, each family pitches its tent beside its alternate homes—ready to move on at a moment's notice.

Tenure in an area may be perceived as a multifaceted tool or flexible stratagem not only for economic survival, but as a means for maintaining both group as well as individual solidarity and well-being through space and time. Certainly, mobility helps ensure access to new locations, resources, and client/customer opportunities. By the same token, mobility is an important means of avoiding or escaping external threats, such as political regimes, or others who desire to alter or destroy their lifestyles. It is also a means by which these often widely dispersed communities ensure old alliances and secure new ones. As well, movement as part of patterns of fission and fusion are a common way of resolving tensions and disputes—both within and among groups (see Berland, this volume). For some, movement itself and/or a new location are believed to have tonic effects on physical and social well-being. Others may simply move out of curiosity about a new place, or desire to either affiliate with or avoid others. Thus, like Simmel's "Stranger," as middlemen traders, peripatetic peoples rely on their resourcefulness and flexibility to maintain "the freedom of *coming* and *going*" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143; emphases added).

Given their primary resource base (customer opportunities), their freedom of movement would, however, be difficult to sustain, were their migrations to involve large numbers of unrelated individuals or families. Consequently, their camps are normally small and often comprised of closely related households, and these often temporary groups usually travel together. Endogamy further strengthens group solidarity and is connected to both their low, often despised social status and their perpetuation of, and adherence to, a strong sense of their own cultural heritage, traditions, values, and beliefs. However, keeping in mind the resourcefulness of these peoples, each community may have precepts for modifying its own rules, should either internal or external situations demand. Marriage rules everywhere are intimately related to concepts of strangeness and norms of acceptance. It is, then, pertinent to ask whether the norms of endogamy and exogamy between these "Strangers" and their host populations have undergone change in recent times. For example, Casciarri (1997) notes that in the Sudan the genealogy of the nomadic pastoral Ahamda shows marriages between Ahamda men and peripatetic Halab women some four to five generations ago (i.e., in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see Streck, this volume, who does not refer to this, however). Today, such alliances are unthinkable for the Ahamda, though Halab families of smiths still continue to follow these and other pastoralists of the region during their migrations and work for them regularly in return for payment in cash and pastoral products. Similarly, among the Shaiqyia of northern Sudan the Halab now occupy a position that is even lower than that of the slaves (As-Shahi 1972:97), and marital relations are inconceivable. One could perhaps argue that formerly, although the Halab had a low status, alliances across such widely disparate status groups were accepted by the powerful and used by the powerless to improve their position. At present we still lack data to do more than hypothesize on such matters. Yet, it does appear that though peripatetic peoples everywhere have little power and low socioeconomic status, they have, for purposes of survival, developed, achieved, and in many areas continue to employ what have come to be known in the study of colonial history in the last twenty years as "subaltern strategies." At the heart of these strategies lies their capacity for flexibility and resourcefulness.

FLEXIBILITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS

Worldwide, the ethnological record indicates that flexibility and resourcefulness are the most common and vital characteristics attributable to the cognitive, structural, and organizational features of spatially mobile communities, notably peripatetic peoples—in part what Gmelch (1986:314) summarized as an "agility of mind," and what Salo (1977:49) summarizes as "the exercise of [their] wits" (see also Okely 1983; Rao 1987b).

For Berland and Salo (1986:3), "the most striking feature of their social organization and individual activities is flexibility and sensitivity to the elements comprising the social and ecocultural environments of those communities among which they maintain themselves." They are resourceful in being "especially attuned to the changes in social and economic circumstances as well as a broad spectrum of other factors that may influence patterns of human needs and desires in each region, community and even specific households they exploit." Their awareness of the importance of flexibility and resourcefulness at both the individual and group levels is nicely captured by the frequent boast among Traveller Gypsies in the British Isles: "You could put me down anywhere in this world and I could earn my living…you could even put me in a desert" (Okely 1983:56). In his comparative chapter on peripatetics and foragers in Africa, Bollig (this volume) illustrates that "the hallmark of their economy and social organization is the flexibility which allows them to adapt to their clients' changing needs." So important are flexibility and resourcefulness to the adaptive strategies of peripatetic peoples, that Berland (1992, 1998, 2003) has proposed that these cultural values might best be understood as resources in themselves—as a kind of social and cognitive *commoditas*. In his chapter in this volume, Joseph C.Berland relates how a group of peripatetic entertainers in Pakistan explain how persistent rounds of internal bickering and conflict, fission and fusion, are understood as vital sources of flexibility and resourcefulness necessary for their lifestyle. Also in this volume, Streck, drawing on his work among the Halab, illustrates how these mobile smiths have adapted new skills, services, and patterns of mobility to meet changes in the larger economy of the Sudan. Another striking example of such flexibility is provided by Bulgarian Roma traders, who use the new international boundaries in eastern Europe and the Balkans as resources, to run a profitable trade in a variety of goods (Konstantinov 2000).

This undoubtedly great flexibility does not, however, necessarily mean that all peripatetic communities are successful in adapting to change. Indeed, today with rapidly transforming economic structures the world over, it is imperative to clarify what we mean by successful adaptation. While the physical survival of members of peripatetic communities is not by and large at stake anymore than is that of other communities, the sustainability of their *niche*—and hence their entire lifestyle—is in many parts of the world under severe threat. Cynthia Chou (this volume) explores how the lack of social and economic flexibility is becoming increasingly detrimental to the survival of the Orang Suku Laut, spatially mobile communities of fishermen in the Riau Archipelago of Indonesia. In his contribution Emanuel Marx also comments on the possibility of the peripatetic al-'Arish traders disappearing altogether under the pressures of modernization. Indeed, in many parts of the world globalization and the accelerating development of economic infrastructures are drastically transforming the three basic el-

ements of the peripatetic niche—labor, customers and services/goods. This transformation is, in its turn, being impacted by major political, socioeconomic, and environmental changes. The delineation and policing of new international borders and their legal impermeability split communities and turned those who tried to continue to ply their trades along old migration routes into “smugglers.” Totalitarian states, such as the Soviet Union (see Akiner, this volume) and Iran (personal observations, 2002) sedentarized peripatetic peoples, or banned their occupations. With the spread of the visual media, many traditional peripatetic occupations as entertainers and performers are inevitably declining. Mechanization of agriculture and the availability of cheap industrial products have also affected the demand for a variety of goods and services. All these processes are rendering a variety of peripatetic skills and activities outright redundant. The current environmental crisis throughout the world has also affected a variety of peripatetic peoples intensely. First, certain crucial raw materials—such as different species of grasses, reeds, rushes, leaves, bamboo, and wood—used by many peripatetics to manufacture baskets, winnows, screens, cradles, toys, and so on—are becoming very scarce, or disappearing altogether, due to massive deforestation and extensive curtailing of a variety of open lands for habitation, agriculture, industry, military use, and development of infrastructure. Deforestation is also taking its toll on wildlife, which is impacting those communities who professionally trap, snare, and sell birds and animals or perform with them as entertainers. Measures taken both internationally and in many states to protect these often highly endangered species are gradually affecting the lifestyles of numerous peripatetic communities. This process is illustrated for South Asia in an August 1999 news item from *The Economic Times of India* concerning a peripatetic bear leader having his animal confiscated by the police in response to an animal rights activist’s behest to the government, forest department, and other state officials (for details see Rao 2001/2002). Many such communities are settling in urban slums and abandoning their peripatetic lifestyles; many are ultimately drawn into vast pools of menial wage laborers and certain poverty (for South Asia, see Rao 2001/2002). Yet, thanks to their resourcefulness, numerous groups among peripatetic peoples are simply switching over to selling new products and services more in demand and/or cheaper, while abandoning older ones. In India, plastic instead of glass trinkets, metal ware instead of clay pots, repair of bicycles and trucks instead of tinkering old pots and pans are only some examples of such market-oriented adaptability. This sort of market acumen is nicely encapsulated in Silverman’s (1986) work among Bulgarian Roma and Streck’s chapter on the Halab of Sudan in this volume. Among peripatetics in the entertainment sphere, such professional adaptability is occasionally enabled by the existence of a tourist industry, as at the World Heritage site in Marrakesh (Morocco) and in socalled heritage hotels in India which give employment to some peripatetic

families who perform for tourists. But only a few families have access to such opportunities, that, in turn, demand sedentarization.

Yet, the willingness and capability of individuals, families, and entire groups of peripatetic peoples to perceive, create, adapt old, and adopt new subsistence strategies in rapidly changing circumstances would be impossible without flexibility in cognitive processes as much as in their patterns of social structure and organization. Cognitively, they are especially attuned to conditions and changes in the social and economic circumstances of current and potential client communities. Additionally, they are alert to a broad spectrum of other factors that may influence patterns of human needs and desires in various regions, communities, and even specific households they exploit, what Berland termed as an "it all depends" mode of psychological functioning. It is often their astute observations, advanced knowledge, and accurate predictions about ecological, political, economic, and other conditions among and within various situations that motivate particular patterns of mobility and activate the choice of particular goods and/ or services that are incorporated into the diverse repertoires that define their positions as middlemen traders. Thus, those peripatetic peoples who are successful in sustaining their traditional lifestyles, do so by changing the nature of the goods and/or services they offer. But not all may have such opportunities and have no choice but to sedentarize, abandon their life-styles, and ultimately lose their identification as peripatetic peoples.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Students of social sciences have for long remained impervious to a major economic and cultural adaptation—namely the peripatetic lifestyle—although this adaptation has been an integral part of a larger socioeconomic and cultural network, which they might have been studying. This lack of interest derives perhaps from the fact that their integration is ambiguous. As "peddlers of the strange," to borrow a phrase from Geertz (1984), peripatetics are situated at the fringes of their host societies and many students of the social, ecological, and behavioral sciences still continue to overlook the roles of peripatetic peoples. Today we have a modest, but growing, body of cross-cultural comparative research on the nature of peripatetic peoples. We are beginning to understand the synergies that create the relationship between them and other, nonperipatetic peoples, yet we still know very little about the place of peripatetic peoples in the everyday lives and diverse cognitive maps of their client communities. In this volume, the chapters by Villasante Cervello, Rasmussen, and Marx will, it is hoped, stimulate and become guidelines for those interested in annual, or longer term socioeconomic situations and processes that involve peripatetic specialists within and across diverse social settings. Certainly, we are becoming increasingly aware that a part of the structural relationships generated by

the adaptive prerequisites of the peripatetic's niche involves the largely powerless position of peripatetic peoples and their estrangement from the rights and protections afforded the membership of client communities. Broadly speaking, we suggest that the tenebrous and often nebulous perceptions of peripatetic peoples on the part of both their clientele in host settings and those who investigate their structural positions as part of larger social systems may be enhanced, when viewed in terms of Simmel's (1950) early paradigm of "The Stranger."

Reaching back almost a century we have tried to tap Georg Simmel's (in Levine 1971) original paradigm of "The Stranger," to better understand not only the nature of peripatetic peoples, but their structural relationships with client communities. Where traditional accounts of these peoples tend to be couched in terms of their perceived status as "outsiders," or as examples of Park's (1924) "marginal man," we liken the standing of peripatetic peoples to Simmel's "Stranger," a position within larger social systems created by "a form of union based on interaction," of "closeness and remoteness…repulsion and distance," a position vis-à-vis host communities, that involves "both being outside it and confronting it" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143–144 *passim*). Like the situation of Simmel's "Stranger" as middlemen traders, the peripatetic's niche and the peoples who exploit it are a response to existing demands and desires for goods and services not available within a group. As well, the structural relationship of the customary stranger and his client is in part created and sustained by "the fact that he [the Stranger] does not belong in it [client communities] initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be indigenous to it" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:143). Because these peoples are often perceived as "landless middlemen" seldom "bound up organically, through established ties of kinship, locality, or occupation with any single one" and are, or are perceived as being of foreign of ambiguous provenance, peripatetic peoples, like Simmel's "Stranger," "are not really perceived as individuals, but as strangers of a certain type" (Simmel, in Levine 1971:148). Within host communities and among those who study their membership, peripatetic peoples are often perceived as a "type," often conceptualized by thick, muddled, and often negatively charged constructs such as "Gypsies," "outsiders," or "marginal others," and their linguistic permutations and semantic overtness throughout the world. Given the actual, or potential, mobility of their communities, their perceived alien or ambiguous provenance, socioeconomic flexibility and resourcefulness, and lack of roots embedded in local real estate, it is easy to imagine the circumstances of their tenebrous position and low status. These same characteristics of peripatetic peoples—their social and structural relationships—may also account for the Mertonian and Durkheimian senses of equivocality and/or anomie on the cognitive registers of client communities, that govern perceptions of and interactions with the structural positions of customary strangers. We can

only hope and encourage scholars and laymen alike to shift their models of peripatetic peoples away from analyses of the relationship of peripatetic peoples toward Simmel's innovative model, suggesting that the position of the "Stranger" is a structural relationship—"a positive manifestation of a specific form of interactions." In short, we would argue that peripatetic peoples, as prototypes of Simmel's "Stranger," are simultaneously outsiders and insiders, but more important, they are, like entrepreneurs everywhere, middlemen traders par excellence.

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