SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STATE COLLEGE

NOMAD GYPSIES IN LOS ANGELES:

PATTERNS OF LIVELIHOOD

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Geography

by

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Gypsy culture-bearers have lived in the United States for centuries. During this time they have characteristically been anti-social (that is, anti-non-Gypsy) and have notoriously practiced trickery and deceit on members of non-Gypsy society. One result of this behavior is that non-Gypsies, when they have so desired, have not been able to accumulate much accurate knowledge about the Gypsies and their activities in the United States.

Most raw data concerning Gypsies and their socio-economic habits in the United States have been collected by a handful of public agencies (e.g. welfare, police, etc.), some private corporations (e.g. telephone companies, credit agencies, etc.) and a very few Gypsiologists. Much of this data has not been made available for public use and, largely for this reason, Gypsy lore in the United States remains quite unscientific and uncoordinated. The result is that the concept of a total Gypsy culture, as it exists in its somewhat variegated form in the contemporary United States, has escaped the knowledge of most non-Gypsies.

It is fortunate for this research paper that a variety of individuals in both public and private bureaucracies in
the Los Angeles area have been captivated enough by local Gypsy lore to contribute the lessons of some of their own practical experience. Without their generous assistance and unequivocal best wishes this study would have been impossible.

My deepest appreciation goes to my Gypsy friends whose warmth and hospitality have turned my research project into a most meaningful experience. Special thanks, also, to my associates at San Fernando Valley State College who have always offered their optimism in return for my enthusiasm.
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ABSTRACT

NOMAD GYPSIES IN LOS ANGELES:
PATTERNS OF LIVELIHOOD

by

David James Nemeth Jr.

Master of Arts in Geography

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Members of a distinctive Gypsy culture are found in many parts of the contemporary world. Although their common Gypsy origin has been traced back over a thousand years to India, enough differences have evolved among Gypsies during their world-wide migrations to enable some scholars to identify Gypsy sub-culture.

Nomad Gypsies have been distinguished among all Gypsies now living in the United States. Further distinctions have been made between different kinds of Nomads. Macvaya culture-bearers are Nomad fortune-telling specialists. They have been able to organize themselves and other Gypsies into complex socio-economic unions in many American cities.

The appearance of these unions has coincided with the increasing impracticability of many traditional Nomad patterns of livelihood in the progressively urbanized and
mechanized United States. It is possible that Nomad chiefdoms have evolved in American cities from decentralized nomadic bands that once roamed in rural America. Explicit territorial behavior is a phenomenon that can be associated with the growth of the urban Nomad chiefdom. The study indicates that the City of Los Angeles has been the territory of a Nomad chiefdom.

In Los Angeles a local economic union was operational for over thirty years, until 1964. Its eventual destruction was a calculated effort by policemen seeking to enforce an anti-fortune-telling ordinance in the City. This ordinance attempts to protect from Gypsy fraud the superstitious aged, minority and low income persons that make up the fortune-teller's market. Notwithstanding police pressures, Nomad fortune-tellers continue to operate in the City indicating that fortune-telling, as an occupational trait-complex, is an integral part of the Macvaya Nomad culture system.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brown's Nomads

Nomad Gypsy culture in the United States was first identified by Irving Brown.* In several books and articles published during the 1920's and 1930's Brown formulated the essence of Nomad culture and attempted to distinguish it from the modes of life practiced by other kinds of Gypsies in the United States. Brown (1929:145) described the wandering Nomads as an especially picturesque people. Their culture, he reported, was particularly reminiscent of that East Indian culture practiced by the ancestors of all Gypsies. He concluded that Nomad Gypsy culture was secure in the United States where social conditions apparently favored its continuity.

1.1.1 Urban Nomads

Brown did not predict the ultimate impact that rapid socio-economic evolution in the United States would have on

*Irving Henry Brown (1888-1940), American Gypsiologist, was Professor of Romance Languages at Columbia University from 1925 until 1937. His books about Gypsies include Nights and Days on the Gypsy Trail (1922), Gypsy Fires in America (1924), Deep Song (1929), and Romany Road (1932).
the Nomads. Their culture emerged from World War II with changes, having experienced the stresses of both a manufacturing revolution and the Great Depression since its arrival to the United States. The most profound change was the re-orientation of the Nomad culture area from the American countryside to the American city. Nomad Gypsies had learned to become city dwellers facing urban problems. Their culture became enriched in the process of solving these problems. The term "Urban Nomad" has recently been introduced to Gypsiological literature by Rena Gropper (1967:1051) in order to designate the continuity of Nomad culture in its more contemporary setting.

1.2 Problem and methodology

This paper is concerned with the description and analysis of Nomad Gypsy socio-economic activities within a contemporary American city, Los Angeles. One popular procedure in an investigation of this sort is, after having introduced a topic culture, to identify the common habitats of its culture-bearers, define a specific culture area for investigative purposes, and discuss the history and ecology of the culture area. William Dagodag (1967) has followed this approach.

Sometimes elements in the culture landscape, more tangible evidence of a distinctive land tenure, command a
great deal of exposition. European geographers, in particular, have given much attention to the analyses of individual settlement features. Similarly, Philip Garofalo (1968) has systematically discussed one type of rural house type.

Urban Nomads lack an imposingly distinctive culture landscape. This is to say that the visible attributes of Nomad culture in Los Angeles are meager enough to dissuade the researcher from relying heavily on his visual perception in the field. Interviewing emerges as a more valuable research technique. Thus, in spite of the dearth of a Nomad Gypsy cultural landscape, the existence of Nomad socio-economic activities in Los Angeles is open to discussion. In this case the researcher applies the stress of his spatial perspective on Nomad functional forms in addition to Nomad landscape forms. Nomad ecology becomes a major focus of attention.

Brown (1929, et cetera), Gropper (1967) and other Gypsiologists have already indicated that the Gypsies have been, and are, solving their continual problems of group survival in the United States by organizing, and participating in, socio-economic interactions with other members of the community. Gypsiologists have often described characteristic Gypsy socio-economic behavior throughout the
world. It is possible to become familiar with these common on-going processes of interaction that are associated with the Gypsy everywhere and to discover him locally through his traditional behavior.

This investigation will progress through secondary source materials, largely library collections, to primary source materials, particularly interviews. The goal of the preliminary stages of the research plan is to find out what the activities of Nomad Gypsies in Los Angeles might be like. What socio-economic behavior might one expect to characterize contemporary Nomad Gypsies in Los Angeles? One way to answer this question is to discover how Nomads have functioned during the course of their past migrations. Behavior such as fortune-telling, for instance, is typically Gypsy and has been observed in Nomad culture-bearers throughout the United States.

The next stage of the research plan is to discover what the activities of Nomad Gypsies in Los Angeles are like. This is possible particularly through field work among the Nomads.

The distribution of Gypsies is mapped from data provided by local newspaper reports and police records. This distribution is discussed in terms of the site and situation of Los Angeles, the people who reside in that City,
and the economic relationships in which they are involved. A brief local history of Nomad residency in the City is compiled. Finally, conclusions are formulated.
CHAPTER II
GYPSY CULTURE

2.1 A Working definition

Members of different cultures are often distinguished from one another by their characteristic physiological and psycho-social traits. A working definition of a Gypsy has been suggested by Rena Cotten (1955:119):

A Gypsy is a member of a culture group which (1) regards nomadism as the accepted mode of life; (2) follows one or more of the following occupations: fortune-telling, music and other entertainments, animal-handling, metal work, begging and hawking, poaching and doctoring (medical and/or magical); and (3) usually speaks the Romani language.

This definition applies particularly to European Gypsies in the twentieth century. It can also serve to distinguish the majority of Gypsy culture-bearers from non-Gypsies, both now and in the recent past.

2.2 Gypsy origin and migration

Nomad Gypsies have been designated as members of a Gypsy sub-culture (Brown, 1929:155) which reportedly evolved largely as a result of a singular migratory experience. Migration is a phenomenon that dominates the culture history of all Gypsies. It is very important in order
to understand Gypsy behavior patterns and their variations throughout the world to first become aware of Gypsy migrations.

Every effort to investigate the heritage of the contemporary Nomad Gypsies in the United States has revealed something of the extraordinary dimensions of Gypsy culture history. Probably no modern country in the world can claim to have eluded Gypsy migrants since their dispersion from their Asian homeland. Gypsies have no written history of their migrations. Contemporary Gypsies in America are, however, cognizant of a European heritage and are romantically inclined, like the majority of non-Gypsies, to trace Gypsy descent to some remote "Egyptian" dynasty. The truth about Gypsy origins ordinarily astounds Gypsies and non-Gypsies alike.

2.2.1 India to Greece

The word "Gypsy" is misleading because it connotes Gypsy origins in Egypt. Actually, what English speaking persons call "Gypsies" are known by different names wherever this human group has been recognized as a distinctive culture. The Spanish, for instance, call their Gypsies "Gitanos"; the Germans, "Zigeuner", etc. Gypsyologists are now in full agreement that Gypsies were in India before they entered Egypt. The word "Gypsy" will, however, be
adequate to identify this total culture group inclusive of its many variations throughout the world.

The French Gypsiologist Jean-Paul Clebert (1963:22) has suggested that the Aryan invasion into India (1500 B.C.) might have displaced a race of pre-Aryan persons with very dark skin and crisp hair who, previous to that time, had led a semi-nomadic life based on hunting and harvesting. Forced to occupy less desirable habitats, certain of these persons, members of pre-Gypsy tribes, may have become nomads. As nomads they would have learned a variety of occupations cursed by the Laws of Manu (codified 500 B.C.) yet suitable to an itinerant's existence. Under the Indian caste system this way of life probably led to a systematization of assortive mating among the members of these tribes. Eventually their breeding population became restricted.

The preceding remarks are speculative; documentation of pre-Gypsy culture life in India is sparse and usually suspect. For this reason Gypsiologists have come to rely on the genetic classification of Romani, the language of the Gypsies, for insights into the early spatial history of the Gypsy peoples. The scientific classification of Romani, based on its descent, was the primary contribution of A. F. Pott. His general conclusions, as reported by
Sampson (1923), further established the claim that all the diverse Romani dialects, in spite of the foreign influences to which they had been subjected during the Gypsy migrations, were of the same origin—India. Turner (1926) and Woolner (1928) concurred that the ancestors of contemporary Gypsies throughout the world began to migrate from the southeast to the northwest of India during the third century A.D., and that by the time they reached Persia (circa 1000 A.D.) the Gypsies had become a single race speaking a single language.

These emigrants, a nomadic people of low caste, may have answered to the Sanskrit word "doma".* They were probably an oppressed people, forced into a migration that eventually took them far beyond the frontiers of India (see Figure 1). They emerged from India with their dark pigmentation, their Eastern language, their uncommon occupations, and other of their distinctive physiological and psycho-social characteristics.

*Sampson (1923:158) reported that doma indicates a man of low caste who gains his livelihood by singing and dancing. Both Sampson and Brown (1928) have attempted to relate the contemporary Dom, a culture of India, to the world Gypsy population by comparing similarities in their languages and behavior patterns.
The general trend of Gypsy migrations through Eurasia from India. — "Very roughly, the year A.D. 1000 seems to place in time the beginning of an exodus which continues to this very day".* Some "official" dates announcing the arrival of the Gypsies include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.D.</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>855</td>
<td>Byzantine Greece?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>Mt. Athos, Byzantine Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1260 or</td>
<td>1399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1322</td>
<td>Bohemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1346</td>
<td>Crete; Corfu; Wallachia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348</td>
<td>Corfu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1378</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by 1400S</td>
<td>&quot;throughout the Balken provinces&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1414</td>
<td>Basle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1417</td>
<td>Transylvania; Hamburg; Leipzig;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Switzerland; Frankfurt; Moldavia;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Elbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1418</td>
<td>Bavaria; Saxony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1419</td>
<td>France; Sistern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1420</td>
<td>Flanders; Bologna; Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1422</td>
<td>Bologna; Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1427</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1438 to</td>
<td>1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1438S</td>
<td>&quot;mass infiltration of Europe&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1447</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1492 or</td>
<td>1505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500 to</td>
<td>1515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia; Poland; Sweden</td>
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*This passage and most of the following datings, upon which the map is based, can be found included in Clebert (1963) and are here unmarked or marked "c". Sampson's (1923) datings are marked "s".
After a brief sojourn in Persia these doma, or Gypsies, divided into at least two groups. All groups developed distinctive characteristics of speech according to their disparate destinations. On this basis Sampson (1923) distinguished Palestinian, Syrian, Egyptian, Helebi and Karachi Gypsies from European and Armenian Gypsies. Subsequently, Pobozniak (1964:13) spoke of Asian Gypsies and Gropper (1967:1051) alluded to "western" Gypsies.

The spatial differentiation of members of the Gypsy culture began to take on significance soon after their departure from their Indian homeland. Gypsy culture soon could be found from the south coast of the Black Sea, and into Armenia, to the north coast of the Persian Gulf. The "western" Gypsies moved into, and in a few cases beyond, the regions of Greece. In doing so they began to cope with the first of many strange and hostile environments.

Asian Gypsies did not face the same problems as the "western" Gypsies (Pobozniak, 1964:13). They shared many cultural traits with the natives in their new habitats and subsequently were not looked upon by them as foreign and unwelcome elements. The Asian Gypsies were not obligated to defend their traditions and allowed the local languages to influence them strongly. Meanwhile the Gypsies in European communities lived on peripheries treated by
administrative authorities in a hostile way as a social burden. The Gypsies in Europe were forced to adopt the life standard of the natives. They were prohibited to live in their traditional way and to use their own language. Under such conditions "western" Gypsies felt like outsiders and they reacted by holding tightly to their traditions and their language.

Asian Gypsies that never migrated westward into Greece avoided the persecution that was eventually experienced by the "western" Gypsies. This persecution reached a terrible climax in the twentieth century when Adolph Hitler developed his "final solution" to the "race problem" in the world. Possibly 400,000 Gypsies in occupied Europe perished as a result of Hitler's calculated genocides (Clebert, 1963:xvi).

2.2.2 The Rom in Europe

Many "western" Gypsies today call themselves the Rom. Their ancestors may have acquired this name for themselves in Asia Minor, or in Greece, where they accumulated in number from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The lexicon of the Romani spoken by the Rom was greatly enriched by their long sojourn in Greece, sometimes referred to as their European homeland.
A major emigration of the Rom from Greece into Europe occurred in the fifteenth century. Reportedly, dark people dealing in the affairs of the supernatural, at first cautiously, then later in force, came migrating through Western Europe. This emigration may have been conditioned by Gypsy overpopulation in Greece. Such overpopulation probably resulted from the advancement of the armies of Tamerlane (circa 1400). Later, the Gypsies' fear of Turkish depredations might have triggered their sudden invasion of Europe.

Many of the Rom that left Greece eventually wandered into Rumania where they became relatively immobilized. Some of these were enslaved. Others were heavily taxed and their movements were closely supervised. Pobozniak (1964:18) has called Rumania the second European homeland of the Rom, after Greece.

Those Rom that entered Central and Western Europe arrived in large bands guided by their chiefs. They often assumed the clever guise of Christian penitents from Egypt, avowed to wander for the sins that their ancestors supposedly committed against God. This deceit was often accompanied by real and forged documents supporting the claims of the Rom and beseeching for them the right to mete out their own justice among their own kind.
Rom occupational preferences were not as easy to explain away as their nomadic behavior. Stealing, begging, and the practicing of occult arts were only a few of the economic pursuits that soon made them unwelcome in Europe. Eventually the accessible areas of suitable habitat for the Rom in Europe were fixed by official edict. Driven from pillar to post and incarcerated, Rom culture-bearers were faced with the possibility of extinction. Poboźniak (1964:17) has described how, throughout Europe, the Rom attempted to manipulate their living habits in an effort to appease the natives.* In their attempts to maintain a specialized mode of life under adverse circumstances the Rom made several socio-economic adjustments that came to have spatial significance.

The Rom in Western Europe were hardest pressed to change their traditional nomadic life style. To protect themselves from mass extermination they divided their large groups into small bands that were easier to feed and less conspicuous. They also came to avoid cities and encamp in villages.

*Only rarely have Gypsiologists found record of the Rom exerting force of arms against non-Gypsies. T. P. Vukamovic (1969:77) has described the part taken by Gypsies in a peasant rebellion in Serbia in 1807.
The activities of the Rom in Eastern Europe were also circumscribed by the non-Gypsies, yet much of the Rom culture there was ultimately left unmodified. These Eastern European Rom attempted to placate the hostility of their non-Gypsy neighbors by stressing their own capacity to perform more constructive occupations. They were also careful to avoid undertaking any kinds of craft that might prove to be competitive with their non-Gypsy neighbors.

Gradually many of the Rom in Europe became isolated from one another. Rom culture everywhere grew to vary as its culture-bearers attempted to learn how best to adapt themselves to the dictates of their local circumstances.

2.2.3 The Eastern European Rom

The Nomad culture in the United States that was described by Brown (1929, et cetera) was deeply rooted in the Eastern European Rom culture of the fifteenth century. Apparently Brown's Nomads were Rom culture-bearers that eventually emerged in the contemporary United States with a history of five centuries of culture contact with non-Gypsies in Europe that left their own culture relatively intact.

Some other Rom in Europe evolved into a group that Gypsiologists often distinguish from the Nomad. Yoors
Cotten (1955:25) has called them Sedentaries. Sedentary Gypsies, or Sinte, are not particularly numerous in the United States. Some features that may distinguish Sedentary culture from Nomad culture include its sedentary nature, its matrilineal system of descent, and the occurrence of prostitution among its female members (Cotten, 1955:25). Supposedly, Sedentary Gypsy women only rarely tell fortunes.*

It appears that whatever cultural differences presently exist among the European Rom are expressions of culture contact. Nomad culture may reflect a prolonged resistance to such assimilation. It is possible that the occupational versatility that protected the Eastern Rom from more severe persecutions also served to guarantee their cultural continuity throughout their European experience. Occupational versatility enabled the Rom in Eastern Europe to control much of their interaction with non-Gypsies. They were rarely driven to economic dependency on specific non-

*Cotten's description of Sedentary culture may over-generalize. In an interview with Walter Starkie (2/9/70), Visiting Professor of Folklore at University of California, Los Angeles, and President of the Gypsy Lore Society, Professor Starkie spoke of many Sinte fortune-tellers he had personally encountered. Lee (1967:93) described the Sinte in the Southeastern United States as "mainly nomadic".
Gypsies in specific localities. Pobozniak (1964:19) has suggested that the Gypsy that must depend upon only one occupation (e.g. the Hungarian Gypsy musician) becomes assimilated far more easily than a Gypsy with a more versatile trade.

A cursory glance at the world Gypsy population in the early nineteenth century reveals that a large and increasingly restless percentage of it was being restrained in Eastern Europe. The abolition of slavery in Rumania (circa 1855) coincided with a Gypsy tide that began to sweep westward across the European continent. There may have been some pent-up nomadic urge that was released by the emancipation of the Gypsies in Eastern Europe. It is more likely that the opportunities for economic and social enrichment that existed beyond Rumanian borders were quickly recognized by the emancipated Rom chiefs whose subjects, having retained their traditional techniques of mobility, had only to extend their horizons.

2.3 Some Nomad immigrants in the United States

In distinguishing among the Eastern European Rom, two of their groups are of particular interest because their migrations eventually took them to the United States where they came to represent a significant portion of its total
Gypsy immigrants. One of these groups, the Kalderas, today includes a large and varied membership. The other group, the Macvaya, is smaller and more exclusive. Brown (1929, et cetera) included both the Macvaya and the Kalderas in his descriptions of Nomad culture-bearers.

The emigration of the Kalderas from Rumania probably took them through Moldavia and parts of Russia before they entered Western Europe. Many Kalderas Nomads embarked for the Americas during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. These emigrants were never adequately reported by immigration officials in the United States. Gypsiologists such as E. O. Winstedt (1915) have provided a meager record of their emigration to the United States.

Little is known of the Macvaya Nomads prior to their entry into the United States. They were among the first of the Nomad immigrants to arrive (Brown, 1936:172). Their European origin appears to have been in a Serbian (Yugoslavian) region called Mačva located approximately forty miles southwest of Belgrade*. The ancestors of the Macvaya may have lived in Rumania for some time before eventually arriving into Serbia at some date prior to the emancipation of the Rumanian Gypsy slaves.

If the ancestors of the Macvaya were in Rumania they might have, at some earlier time, lived as "Gypsies of the

* On a fertile plain between the rivers Drina and Save.
Crown" who, unlike the Gypsy slaves in the area, were relatively free to roam as taxpayers. It seems logical that in a land overrun with Gypsies practicing a variety of trades, including many that non-Gypsies might hesitate to undertake (e.g. executioner), the authorities would opt to make taxpayers out of many instead of enslaving them all. T. R. Gjorgevic (1929:9) has described certain "Gypsies of the Crown" called Lajes Gypsies. Lajes males are reported to have been poor workers. This might have prompted their eventual migrations into Serbia as it was probably better to exist as expatriates than ex-taxpayers facing servitude. Lajes women went from house to house expounding dreams and telling fortunes. Lajes chiefs were called the buljubasas. These chiefs exercised a considerable degree of power and authority over the other members of their culture. The buljubasas punished, received tribute, and were the official representatives of their people to the local non-Gypsy authorities.

Many of the social, economic and political characteristics of the Lajes Gypsies in nineteenth century Rumania may also be recognized, below, as being similar to elements of contemporary Macvaya Gypsy culture in Los Angeles.

The Macvaya Nomads in the United States differ from other Gypsies by having their own linguistic peculiarities,
a relatively high social status, and a characteristic economic behavior. In Los Angeles, for instance, Macvaya tribesmen speak a form of Romani that indicates their particular origins in Serbia. Ronald Lee (1967:13) has suggested that the Macvaya were becoming assimilated while in Serbia. Since their emigration they, quite possibly, have relearned much of the Rom culture, including its language, from contact with other groups of Eastern European Rom.

Social position among Nomad Gypsies in the United States appears to be based on a combination of heritage, propriety, economic behavior, wealth and power. Those Nomad groups that keep the Gypsy traditions and prosper appear to command the most respect from other Nomad groups. Brown (1929:156) noted the high social position of the Macvaya among Nomads, a position that they apparently retain to this day. In an interview with Joseph Mitchell (1955:60) New York policeman Donald Campion referred to the Macvaya as "big-car" Gypsies, indicating their predilection for driving expensive automobiles, particularly Cadillacs and Lincolns. G. B. Ougevolk (1935:122) and Brown (1929:156) have both described the Macvaya as "cleaner" than other Gypsies, no doubt in reference to their hygiene.
The Macvaya practice a characteristic economic activity in the United States. They organize exclusive franchises for their occupational specialty, fortune-telling. At different times during the past 40 years various cities have been centers for fortune-telling activities organized by and for Macvaya culture-bearers. Popular cities among the Macvaya are usually those whose physical, political and economic climates are most favorable. Miami, Florida, and Los Angeles have most recently been Macvaya strongholds.

A less conclusive, yet valuable, index to a distinctive Macvaya culture system is found in their repetitive usage of certain Anglicized family (familia) names. Common Macvaya family names used in cities on the Pacific Coast include: Adams, Merino, Lee, Uwanawich, Mitchell, Marks, Stevens, Davedo, Williams, Guy, and others, as well as variations on these names.

More covert behavior patterns practiced by the Macvaya are less accessible to the non-Gypsy investigator yet they may provide still more conclusive evidence that the Macvaya culture-bearer differs from other Gypsies. Common household taboos, for instance, provide numerous examples of a distinctive culture that is shared by the
In sum, the Macvaya may be considered to be a particular people with their own purposeful designs for urban living.

To be more specific, the principle business of the Macvaya in the United States is fortune-telling through the application of occult arts. Predicting the future is the work of Macvaya women. Macvaya women practice divination, incantation, magical formulae, and other histrionics in return for a fee charged to their non-Gypsy clientele.

Some observers (e.g. Campion, in Mitchell, 1955:22) have concluded that Nomad Gypsy men, who often appear to be "out with the boys", are shiftless. This opinion overlooks two obligations incumbent upon the men: First, as Cotten (1955:25) has pointed out, Macvaya cultural continuity largely depends upon male cohesiveness and the isolation of the males from direct socio-economic interaction with the non-Gypsy in the community; Second, fortune-telling is a highly competitive business needful of good management.

Gypsiologist Dan Boles (1956:103) has described the man's responsibility to provide the women in his family with a

*The strictness with which these taboos are observed may vary from family to family. Macvaya men generally do not shave on Fridays. Their women avoid passing in front of the altar, which is usually placed high on the wall to allow them more freedom of movement.
suitable place for their work. Macvaya men, therefore, are responsible for the cohesion of their society and the stability of its economic system. The means by which these goals are achieved often appear strange and unwarranted to the non-Gypsy observer.

The prospect of legitimate Nomad craftsmanship has never been good in the United States at any time since Nomad immigration; Gypsies have characteristically defrauded non-Gypsies everywhere despite their ability to perform good work. The Depression and manufacturing revolution, however, were particularly damaging to the skills of itinerant Nomad metal workers.* The hardships that these Nomads suffered during and after the Depression serve to emphasize the profitability and dependability of fortune-telling and other frauds as Gypsy occupations in America. The competitions for diminishing metal working markets and overserviced but lucrative fortune-telling markets during and after the Depression were accompanied by the degeneration of all traditional Nomad crafts in the United States. As usual, the non-Gypsy clientele suffered the most and rightfully demanded some protection.

*Victor Weybright (1945) has described an attempt to organize respectable craftsmanship among Nomad metal workers in New York City during World War II.
Non-Gypsies have attempted to protect themselves from Gypsy frauds mainly through legislation. Many cities, including Los Angeles and New York, have local ordinances against fortune-telling.* Most anti-Gypsy prejudice, however, has less social merit; for example, there are landlords that refuse to let stores and houses to Gypsies. Also, Gypsy informants complain that public utilities (e.g. telephone companies) and public services (e.g. welfare bureaus) sometimes discriminate against their applications for service.

Nomads have attempted to adapt their culture to prejudice in the United States. Fortune-telling, for instance, has traditionally been associated with the mobility and deceptive behavior of its artists. The traditional forms of mobility and deception that were practiced by the Gypsy in Europe have proven to be of little service to him in the contemporary United States. International and interstate flights from the authorities have become

*Anti-fortune-telling ordinances in Los Angeles date from the early 1900's. At least as early as 1907 the City Council had legislated against fortune-telling in order to increase "public peace, health and safety". That ordinance was amended in 1915 (#32688), 1917 (#35599), 1919 (#39093), 1932 (#71928), and 1934 (#15009). The Los Angeles Municipal Code was codified in 1936, institutionalizing the existing anti-fortune-telling ordinance (#43.30).
extremely difficult to accomplish here. So have the crudest kinds of ruses. The contemporary Nomad has, therefore, introduced a formidable finesse into his traditional economic behavior patterns in the United States. The highly organized and urban-based economic union, discussed below, is one such innovation.

2.4 The structuring of Nomad society in the United States

The problems associated with achieving an accurate enumeration of the Gypsy population in the United States are legion. Nothing more rigorous than "guestimation" has ever been accomplished. Brown (1929:146) suggested that from 50,000 to 100,000 persons in the United States were members of the Gypsy culture group. Cotten's (1955:29) more recent appraisal places the figure between 100,000 and 300,000.

Most of the Gypsies in the United States are probably Nomad Gypsies from Eastern Europe, the majority of these being Kalderas and Macvaya tribesmen. Formal structuring of Nomad Gypsy society in the United States is aligned with the cultural distinctions found among its members and has spatial significance. Each Nomad Gypsy culture-bearer has a personal recollection of intricate kinship ties and group
affiliations, facts that help to explain his behavior at any time or place in the United States.

There have been several attempts made by Gypsiologists to classify members of the Gypsy ethnic population in the United States (Brown, 1929; Cotten, 1955; Lee, 1967; et cetera). The categories of "western", Asian, Nomad and Sedentary Gypsies are primarily descriptive tools used by Gypsiologists. This is to say that the Gypsies do not make such gross distinctions among themselves; these categories are much too inclusive to have much practical value to a Gypsy. The contemporary Gypsy in the United States has no written history of his people and usually does not remember back past two or three generations (where his history begins to turn into legend). He lives a family-oriented existence and his concept of his people grows increasingly vague as he attempts to describe social units larger than the extended family. To illustrate, a Nomad informant has described how he and his friends once met a group of Spanish Gypsies (Gitanos) in a Coney Island bar. All the Gypsies present had musical instruments. Both groups proceeded to play for each other in a vain attempt to "prove" to the other which of them were the "real" Gypsies. Their musical tastes were different. The Nomads sang in
Romani, the Gitanos sang in Calo.* The Nomads exhibited their Eastern European heritage. The Gitanos carried an aura of Spain and Moors. In sum, both groups were Gypsy yet neither would admit to the other's claim. Only their mutual love of music was established.

Nomads, particularly the Kalderas, do recognize some form of tribal distinction. In addition to tribes there are also Nomad nationalities, groups of patrilineally related extended families (vitsa), single extended families (familia) and nuclear families.

2.4.1 Nomad tribes

Cotten (1955:22) has described the Nomad Gypsy tribe as the largest grouping of Nomad Gypsy individuals in which each member would concede that another is the same as himself. M. H. Fried (1966) has contested the usefulness of the term "tribe" as a classification of human social units. Similarly, Cotten (1955:22) has referred to Nomad tribes as "tenuous" social units, further indicating that tribes are not functional units in Nomad society and that members

*Calo, the language of the Gitanos, lacks many of the European loan words that characterize Romani, indicating that Gitano ancestors may have migrated across the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea rather than through Europe via Greece.
of the same tribe might function separately in social, economic, religious and political matters. Also, it has been the experience of this investigator to find that the Nomads use the term "tribe" as a synonym for vitsa. This is particularly true among the Macvaya. Tribe, as used by Gypsiologists, usually expresses a social unit made exclusive by some key cultural attribute recognized as common in its membership. Whether the tribal distinction means the same thing to the Nomads as it does to their students is a problem that cannot be resolved here.

Kalderas and Macvaya tribeswomen, according to Gypsiologists, can and do tell fortunes. Macvaya tribeswomen have already been introduced as fortune-telling specialists. Cultural distinctions between the Kalderas and Macvaya may be steadily decreasing in the United States (Ougevolk, 1935:123); for decades the members of both groups have been establishing blood ties on a very selective basis. According to Gropper (1967:1051), the Macvaya forms ties with the aristocratic branches of the Kalderas. The Kalderas is a much larger and more diverse tribe than the Macvaya and its membership covers a larger range of the Nomad social spectrum.

Jan Yoors (1967) has described two other Nomad tribes in Europe, the Lowara and the Churara. Cotten (1955:26)
indicates that these tribes have relatively few members in the United States.

2.4.2 Nomad nationalities

The nationality of a Gypsy identifies the country in which his ancestors were found before their migration to the United States (Lee, 1967:12). Members of the Maćvaya tribe are Serbians but not all Serbian Gypsies are members of the Maćvaya tribe, or Nomads for that matter. National distinctions among the Nomads in the United States are becoming particularly confused (Lee, 1967:40). There can be little doubt that an American Nomad Gypsy is in the making. The old European designations may soon cease to be applicable. In the meantime Nomad Gypsies continue to identify with the homelands of their ancestors.

2.4.3 Nomad extended family groups (vitsa)

The major functional units in Nomad Gypsy culture are the individual extended families (familia) and the extended family groups (vitsa). Gropper (1967:1051) has estimated that the size of the vitsa varies from under 20 to over 200 adults. A vitsa may take its name from a prominent patriarch or matriarch common to a group of Nomad families. Each vitsa has its leader, who is also the leader of one of the families in the vitsa.
Nomad economic unions and Gypsy "kings". — The basic elements for efficient social organization that are found in the vitsa have provided the Nomads with a framework for highly organized political activities in the United States. Nomads are able to form powerful economic unions in some American cities. These unions wield impressive political influence. The organizers of these unions are usually elected as chiefs. The chiefs collect taxes among union members and disburse funds in the name of the economic union.

The chief of the economic union often styles himself as the "king" of the Gypsies when he is addressing himself to non-Gypsies. This "king" is often a mature and intelligent Gypsy who commands the respect of all members of the economic union. Union members can, however, exert moral pressure on any "king" that abuses his position of power. The expenses of the "king" are paid by the union members. His house is kept as the showplace of his vitsa (Cotten, 1950:156 [see Figures 2 and 3]).

Several Nomad leaders in the urban United States have elevated their vitsa to prestigious positions in Nomad society by using them as nuclei for the formation of economic unions. There are numerous benefits in belonging to a large vitsa in an urban center where security and
"King" George Adams (1901-1964). — This Macvaya tribesman was chief of the Nomad economic union in Los Angeles from the early 1940's until his death. The photograph was taken in 1958 (courtesy of the San Francisco Chronicle).

The "king's" house; showplace of his familia. — It is not certain whether the Egyptian motif is simply another calculated deception aimed at the already bewildered non-Gypsy or if it is an honest cultural artifact. Because Gypsies do not trace their blood lines back beyond three or four generations there is little reason for them not to want to act out a fantasy that places the conception of their peoples amid the splendor of some majestic "Egyptian" dynasty. This house is located near Western and 7th Streets in Los Angeles. Once externally immaculate, the interior is reported to have been decorated "with royal purple — carpets, rugs, furniture and wallpaper — and golden bedspreads" (Los Angeles Times, October 9, 1964).
protection have been guaranteed by a Gypsy "king". Also
the power of the "king" is enhanced by the increasing num-
ber of his subordinates in the city. For this reason the
local benefits of the economic union are even made avail-
able to Gypsies of other vitsa and tribes - for a price.
Cotten (1950:137) reported that such client groups sacri-
fice much of their own functional autonomy for the oppor-
tunity to practice their culture life in a city that is
dominated by an established economic union.

In short, the "king" is a business manager who exposes
himself to non-Gypsy society as the official representative
of his people. He attempts to imbue himself with enough
of the wisdom and graces of the non-Gypsy legal process to
be able to provide the members of his economic union with
acceptable living conditions in an often hostile environ-
ment. The condition of the economic union, therefore, is
very much influenced by his ability (1) to direct his
people to the most productive, yet least obtrusive, eco-
nomic opportunities, (2) to occasionally curb the personal
ambitions of any Gypsies in the locale where they might
interfere with the general welfare of the economic union
and its membership, and, allegedly, (3) to bribe appro-
priate non-Gypsies (e.g. policemen).
2.4.4 Nomad extended families (familia) and nuclear families

The extended family (familia) may range from twenty-five to fifty persons (Cotten, 1950:152). Nomad familia are usually designated by Americanized names such as Adams (from Adamovich) or Guy (from Guich), etc. Nomads from different tribes and vitsa may, as is commonly the case, use identical familia names. Stanley, for instance, is a familia name common among Russian, Serbian, and English Gypsies in the United States. In order to protect themselves the Nomads will not use the same familia name with any regularity when dealing with non-Gypsies, thereby confusing their identity from place to place.

It is possible for an extended family to evolve into a vitsa, or it may attach itself to an existing vitsa. The different extended families in a vitsa may exhibit different cultural traits because they are greatly influenced by the personalities of their respective leaders. The "big men", as the powerful family patriarchs are often called, are, in their turn, influenced by vitsa chiefs and local "kings".

The nuclear family may either add itself to its growing extended family or, in some cases, it may form its own
extended family and determine its own socio-political affiliations to supplement the ones it has inherited.

2.4.5 Key Nomad socio-economic institutions

Although the Nomad Gypsy culture is not uniform among the different tribes, nationalities, *vitsa*, *familia* and nuclear families in the United States, all the individual Nomad culture-bearers are made jealous of their ethnic unity by a variety of Nomad social institutions. These are highly centripetal forces in their culture lives. As a result, the cultural attributes of a Nomad include xenophobia and the systematic deception of those persons to whom there are no reasons for divulging the actual mechanisms of Nomad culture life. Certain of these mechanisms are recognized by Gypsiologists as having been fundamental to Nomad Gypsy cultural continuity. These include an organ of justice called the *kris*. Others are manifestations of Nomad abilities to overcome inherited difference and organize themselves into temporary economic and political alliances called *kumpania* and *wortacha*.

The *kris*. — The Nomad organ of justice is called the *kris*. It is a traditional institution of moral persuasion among the Nomads that ideally commands more respect than any other social responsibility. The *kris* may be activated whenever a Nomad Gypsy endangers another Nomad Gypsy, or
Nomad society as a whole, through his irresponsible actions.
The confidence of the Nomad Gypsy in the kris, in addition
to birthright, legitimizes the right of a person to share
fully in Nomad Gypsy culture life. As a prescribed ritual
resembling a trial, the kris provides a sober atmosphere
for a restatement and review of the traditional laws. De-
cisions reached during a kris serve to standardize the be-
havior of all Nomad Gypsies. These decisions may eventual-
ly become common knowledge to all Nomad Gypsies in the
United States.

The personnel required to direct these court trials
ideally includes the most powerful, just, and astute mem-
bers of local Nomad Gypsy society. Only such men are able
to command the respect of the participants. The reputation
of a Gypsy leader is often made through his able management
of a proceedings in which the participants are quite cap-
able of a violent disruption.

It appears that the kris has been a part of the social
life of Gypsies and a source of their social cohesion since
their Indian emigration. Contemporary Gypsy-like tribes in
India, including the aforementioned Dom, practice a strik-
ingly similar system of justice called the panchayat. As
described by D. N. Majumdar (1944:203) the main purpose of
the panchayat appears to be exactly that of the kris;
to regulate activities of members who are showing disregard of the interests of the group and producing social chaos.

Sources of dysfunction within the Nomad Gypsy social system that might be arbitrated by a kris are murder, rape, marriage disputes, accusations of theft, and claims for money due from communal holdings or work done in common. Communicable diseases may also be prevented from spreading among the small Nomad population by a decision to enforce isolation upon an infected individual or group.

The frequency of the kris in the United States during the past few decades may be declining. Nevertheless, a body of traditional law circumscribes Nomad Gypsy behavior that extends beyond the formal proceedings of the kris. A Gypsy may also be excluded from interpersonal relationships with other Nomad Gypsies by a less formal consensus of opinion among his peers. They might judge him, according to his undesirable behavior, to be "blocked" from Nomad Gypsy social and economic life. He is then considered to be maxrime by all Nomads; these endanger their own social position by continuing their association with the defiled.

It is extremely important to the continuance of covert activities by Nomads in their habitats that they are able to arbitrate disputes and resolve antagonisms before publicity arises and the non-Gypsy eventually interferes.
It is a rare occasion that one observes a dispute between Nomads being arbitrated in a non-Gypsy courtroom.

Changing spatial patterns of the Nomad Gypsy in the United States are often guided by whatever reputation has been earned by an individual or his family. Undesirables and outcasts forced to the fringe of Nomad social life are subject to living a marginal existence in this country until the time that they can reclaim their reputation. This can be an expensive process. The contemporary Nomad in the United States knows that his opportunities to occupy and utilize space in an efficient manner are finite. There are places where he has kinfolk and will be welcome. There are also places where he will not go for fear of his life; such is the seriousness of Gypsy feuding. Should his own people deny him there will be few, if any, places where he can practice his familiar living pattern. The social and economic livelihood of the outcast is extremely limited in time and space. Excluded from the comprehensive social organization of the Gypsy culture life in which he was raised, the outcast is a completely disoriented person. Brown (1929:165) suggested that there is probably no community in the Western world where the moral effect of public opinion is as strong as in Nomad Gypsy society.
The kumpania and wortacha. — The kumpania is an aggregate of Nomad Gypsies bound by a common economic goal. It may bring together members of different vitsa and familia in order that they might share the labor, expenses and profit involved in completing a given job. Traditionally, once the profits have been divided the kumpania dissolves. The wortacha is a smaller economic union, more resembling a partnership. Kumpania of Nomad metal workers might contract the repairs of a large brewery vat while wortacha handle less formidable jobs such as fender repairs on automobiles.

The concept of the economic union may be extended to include those kinds of socio-economic unions that are established when Nomads in a city join together for their mutual benefit under the leadership of a resident Nomad chief. This large economic union could be considered to be a highly structured kumpania with strategic rather than tactical designs for localized economic enterprise.

2.5 Nomad culture history in the United States

Some of the first Gypsy immigrants in the United States arrived involuntarily.* However, the Eastern

*The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (1890, 2 [1]: 60-61) reported that Gypsies were once deported to the Americans as field hands.
European Nomad Gypsy immigrations of 1886, 1907-1909 and 1911-1913 were of a different character. These large and voluntary migrations were recorded by a few Gypsiologists. As a result of these immigrations the Western Hemisphere became inundated by a tide of Kalderas and Macvaya culture bearers that brought their complete socio-economic systems to the Americas and attempted to continue practicing their traditional culture patterns (Brown, 1929:145).

2.5.1 Two eras of Nomadism in the United States

Nomad Gypsy culture history in the United States may be discussed as covering two eras. These are the eras of Rural Nomadism and Urban Nomadism. The era of Rural Nomadism corresponds to the period of a predominantly rural America, those years between Nomad Gypsy immigration and that period of rapid urbanization in the United States that commenced shortly after the First World War. It was a time when the revolution in manufacturing was only in its incipient stages. There were adequate markets for the self-employed Nomad craftsman, fewer federal controls, poorer communications and therefore greater freedoms of movement for the Nomad. The impressions of one famous Nomad chief who lived at that time were recorded by Joseph Mitchell (1942:28):
The U. S. was a Gypsy heaven. Everybody was real ignorant . . . and had horses to trade. And every woman had some pots with holes in them . . . and there wasn't no motorcycle cops, and you could camp anywhere. Private property wasn't even heard of.

The term "urban America" describes a subsequent period of rapid social and economic changes in the United States. Cotten (1950:26) has suggested that the transitional period between Rural and Urban Nomadism lasted for almost a decade after 1925. As part of the massive influx by rural peoples into the cities during and subsequent to this transitional period the Rural Nomads became Urban Nomads. Lee (1967:41) has described their urban invasion:

They moved to the cities and took houses and as far as North America in general is concerned, vanished into the yawning jaws of its melting-pot and ceased to exist as a distinct people.

Each era of Nomad Gypsy culture life in the United States, the Urban and the Rural, can be discussed in terms of its characteristic spatial patterns.

The era of Rural Nomadism. — The era of Rural Nomadism has been called a "camping situation" by Cotten
(1950:26). It was a time when political and social circumstances in the United States permitted the Nomads to continue in the life style that they were accustomed to living while in Europe. This life style established a place for the Nomad in the romantic history of the United States as the exotic flavor of the overt Nomad existence stirred the imaginations and the pens of many non-Gypsies. Outfitted with horses and painted wagons, distinctively dressed, the Nomads practiced their traditional activities throughout a predominantly rural United States whose inhabitants awed, feared and distrusted them.

As Rural Nomads the Nomad Gypsies did not have the technical potential to make any lasting modifications on the landscape. Their pattern of living centered on their mobility and was characterized by the absence of cultural artifacts found in their wake. The most evident explanation for the lack of landscape modification by the Rural Nomads in the United States can be found in the character of Nomadism itself; Nomadism is an advanced and specialized mode of life that leaves little opportunity for the construction of cultural immobilia. Rural Nomadism provided little more than scattered piles of coals and trampled meadows — a tinker's legacy — to indicate its physical passing.
The spatial pattern of Rural Nomadism developed when Nomad Gypsy groups began to organize purposeful, often seasonal, systems of travel between points of socio-economic interaction in the United States. Initially haphazard, these functional patterns, or itineraries, gradually became systematized.

The systematization of different itineraries among Rural Nomads reflected the differences that existed among the Nomad culture-bearers. Nomad Gypsies arrived in the United States in groups of different sizes and compositions. The largest groups could frequent both the more productive and the potentially hazardous places. Smaller groups, unless they had systematized their wandering at an early date and were firmly entrenched, became relegated to marginal areas or assimilated into a larger group.

Differences in economic behavior among Rural Nomads also appear to have had spatial significance. Groups of horse-traders, metal workers and fortune-tellers each evaluated potential locations for their socio-economic interactions with a special consideration for their own capabilities. Functionally dissimilar Nomad Gypsy groups could not be expected to organize the same spatial patterns of livelihood. The spatial consequences of these differences was the development of different itineraries. While
most itineraries were unique, certain places of socio-economic interaction, particularly in and near cities, could be found on many different Nomad Gypsy itineraries. As the era of Rural Nomadism drew to a close most of these groups began to extend their urban visits, eventually settling into specific communities along their seasonal migratory routes.

The typical itinerary of the Rural Nomad could be compared to a string of beads let fall across a map of North America. Each bead represents a place, a camping site that was selected by its Nomad floating industrial population because it represented a potential socio-economic opportunity. Members of a certain vitsa, for instance, would gather each July at a woods on the outskirts of a small Ohio town; there were usually several social matters, a kris, some weddings, etc., to attend to in the few weeks that these Nomads remained camped together. They would eventually break camp, some going to Toledo, others to Chicago, or across the international border into Canada. Each familia had its own functional region and timetable to maintain.

Some of these functional regions characteristic of the era of Rural Nomadism remain to the present, though they are becoming increasingly rare. The itinerary diagrammed in
Figure 4 (A) is an example of one such functional region organized by T. N., a Russian Nomad tinplater. Briefly, his systematic travels connect points of economic interaction with his non-Gypsy clients (bakers, cafeteria managers, etc.) in towns small enough to still require the services of an itinerant tinsmith such as himself. T. N. guarantees his clients that his work will last two years, thereby guaranteeing himself that his services will probably be in demand if he makes a regular appearance at two year intervals. For this reason he has also organized the alternating itinerary which he services every other year (see Figure 4 [B]).

Cities dominate his culture life as they appear to dominate the culture lives of most Nomad Gypsies in the contemporary United States. Cities are the primary points of social interaction between his nuclear family, which accompany him, and their kinfolk in different places throughout the nation. Often a city is used as a base for an extended stay, in which case he also services the surrounding areas.

The era of Urban Nomadism. — The impersonality of the city makes it a desirable place for the Nomad Gypsy to be. He and his people are easily lost within it; their activities are often unnoticed amidst the continual stir of people
Figure 4

A Spatial Expression of Rural Nomadism. — Maps A and B were constructed from field notes by the author and depict an actual alternating itinerary followed by a small floating industrial population of Nomad Gypsy tinsmiths during the late 1950's. Los Angeles was their winter residence. They were ordinarily on the road, plying their trade and visiting relatives, during the fair weather months of late spring, summer and early fall. When winter weather became a distinct threat they were forced to discontinue their annual circuit and return directly to Los Angeles.

**Itinerary A**

- origin, Los Angeles
- Portland, Ohio
- Tacoma, Wash.
- Seattle, Wash.
- Spokane, Wash.
- Missoula, Mont.
- Butte, Mont.
- Helena, Mont.
- Billings, Mont.
- Casper, Wyo.
- Rapid City, S.D.
- Grand Island, Neb.
- Lincoln, Neb.
- Omaha, Neb.
- *Topeka, Kan.*
- *Oklahoma City, Okla.*
- Texas
- destination, Los Angeles

**Itinerary B**

- origin, Los Angeles
- Needles, Cal.
- St. Louis, Mo.
- Indianapolis, Ind.
- Detroit, Mich.
- Windsor Bridge
- Canada
- Buffalo, N.Y.
- Pennsylvania
- Akron, Ohio
- Canton, Ohio
- Finley, Ohio
- Youngstown, Ohio
- Marion, Ohio
- Dayton, Ohio
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- Louisville, Ky.
- Wisconsin
- Minnesota
- destination, Los Angeles

*Places where an extended stay was anticipated.*
Figure 4
and their machines. On the other hand, small-town America has gradually become more hostile towards the Nomad. It would be difficult for the contemporary Nomad Gypsy in the United States to avoid cities and continue to survive. Moreover, it is questionable whether the Nomad ever did have a real aversion to city life in the United States. Probably, once it was discovered that all the necessities for efficient Nomad Gypsy culture life could be found in the cities, they became desirable habitats.

Cotten (1951:24) has suggested that the emancipation of the Nomad female from a subordinate role in socio-economic activities may have coincided with, and possibly accelerated, the process of Nomad urbanization. Fortune-telling, unlike some of the other Nomad occupations (e.g. itinerant metal working) has become a lucrative trade in the United States. Many Nomad craftsmen have gradually come to depend on the abilities of their women to earn an income at fortune-telling. As principal wage earners the women have increased their role in Nomad society. The itinerant life apparently lost its glamour first among the womenfolk. Perhaps reluctantly, but nevertheless, the men came to realize that city living was a necessary evil; welfare funds were there in the city where the fortune-teller's market was probably most concentrated.
Recalling the analogy of the string of beads, once the era of Rural Nomadism began to wane in the United States each bead that represented a city became increasingly precious. Smithery, horse-trading and fortune-telling in rural areas provided a quite acceptable standard of living for the Nomad at a time when there was no reason for him to frequent urban places. During the era of Rural Nomadism the resources of the city were barely tapped by most Nomads. It was only when the "camping situation" began to appear to be an impractical economy of effort that the potential for a life in the city commanded the respect of the Nomads. Nomad groups began a search for the means to protract their lives into an urban environment. Urban places that once only demanded the tactical consideration of the Rural Nomads became the foci of their strategic planning. The Nomads descended on the cities and became faced with over-population and competition for a market.

The era of Urban Nomadism has always been characterized by the limited market that it could provide for the traditional Nomad crafts and services. The major problem of Urban Nomadism became the establishment of markets and their protection. The familia, and even the vitsa, were usually too small or dispersed to accomplish these tasks by themselves. The stage was set for the development of the
highly structured economic union.

An example of a modern, urban-based economic union is depicted in Figure 5. This actual situation developed in the State of Michigan; The City of Hamtramck and the City of Highland Park are both municipal enclaves within the boundaries of Detroit City. The City of Hamtramck was the functional region organized and maintained by some Russian Nomad Gypsies of the Gonest family, Nicholas familia. The City of Highland Park was not controlled by any particular Gypsy group. Detroit City was the service area organized by a different Russian Nomad vitsa led by "king" Tom Stanley. The members of the Detroit economic union were prohibited from practicing their trade in Hamtramck by the Hamtramck economic union. Similarly, members of the Hamtramck economic union were dissuaded from working in Detroit. The "king" of each economic union administered a variety of conventions that regulated the competition among the union members in his own domain. As long as these conventions were respected all members in the economic union could perform their work efficiently and be confident that they were economically secure and would prosper accordingly.

There was a determined attempt to regulate the size and the behavior of the membership of the economic union
The Stanley familia of Detroit City coexists with the Nicholas familia of Hamtramck. Each familia forms the core of two competing economic unions. The members of each union are discouraged from seeking their clientele in the domain of the competing economic union. The boundaries of each economic union approximate local municipal boundaries. Highland Park, another municipal enclave within Detroit City, does not appear to be dominated by either Nomad group.
according to the economic opportunities that were available at any given time. The "king" was, at times, unable or hesitant to enforce the regulations of the economic union directly because his position, and that of his familia, might have been jeopardized in the process. The result was that the "king" reputedly used his position as economic union chief to distribute bribes earmarked for local non-Gypsy police and administrative officials. These non-Gypsies were paid to protect the interests of the local economic union against the disruptive threat of non-union Gypsies. The result was that the pattern of these Urban Nomad functional areas came to approximate local non-Gypsy administrative areas.
CHAPTER III
NOMAD GYPSIES IN LOS ANGELES

3.1 Introduction

The history of Nomad Gypsy settlement in the Los Angeles area in many ways typifies the early days of Urban Nomadism throughout the United States. In many cases the Nomad settlers were influenced by the success of syndicated crime in their new environments. Nomad tribesmen like Steve Kaslov, Tinya Bimbo, Pete Angelo and George Cooper were among the first Nomad chiefs to tackle the problem of urban settlement. It was they who first learned to make Nomad culture survive in the cities of North America. These legendary figures molded the traditional Nomad socio-economic structure into large and powerful organizations that were capable of uniting Nomads, albeit temporarily, beyond the family level.

As these economic unions grew in size and influence great power struggles between Nomad chiefs erupted within the larger cities. Some of the more deplorable incidents that were perpetuated by Nomads against other Nomads included bombings and extortions. One may conjecture that the reason that these incidents rarely came to the
attention of non-Gypsies is because non-Gypsies were rarely directly involved. Nomad gangsterism was indistinguishable, in the eyes of the general public, from the highly popularized non-Gypsy gangsterism of the same period.

3.2 Organized Nomad Gypsy fraud

One can question whether the majority of misdeeds committed by members of the economic union against non-Gypsy society are correctly categorized as organized crime. Organized delinquency might be the more appropriate designation. Gypsy peoples have always behaved as if a fundamental difference existed between themselves and non-Gypsy peoples. They have characteristically deceived and tricked non-Gypsies throughout their world-wide migrations. The Romani word that denotes the generic non-Gypsy is gaje, which, in a generous translation means "the simpletons". Organized Gypsy frauds, then, may be considered to be associated with their general disrespect for the members of any social system but their own.

To the knowledge of this investigator, the Nomads have never ventured, in earnest, beyond the organization of fraud in the United States. Organized prostitution, for instance, would be unthinkable among the Nomads. Some of the more notorious frauds perpetrated by members of Nomad economic unions involve the debasement of traditional
Some work in Ohio for a Nomad Gypsy tinplater. — In this instance three large bakery bowls are in various stages of completion. Nomad Gypsy tinplating, as this investigator has been able to ascertain through first-hand experience, is a trade that entails craftsmanship, salesmanship, bravado and luck. The tools used are inexpensive, makeshift, and portable, thus facilitating nomadism. The skill is a symbol of family pride, often a family project, handed down through generations. The advent of stainless steel has severely damaged the market of the itinerant tinplater. Fraudulent tinplating is not unknown and is the bane of the honest transient Nomad tinsmith in small-town America. This photograph and the one below it date from the early 60's and have been contributed by a Nomad informant.

Fender-fixing, an almost universal stand-by occupation practiced by Nomad Gypsies in the United States, also requires very little capital investment. The obvious intense fury of mallets and dollies is performed under the equally intense inspection of a concerned customer. Should the customer step out of the heat for a beer, the real "art" of Nomad fender-fixing might commence; the art of making shoddy workmanship look good.
Nomad crafts and services. Fortune-telling, for instance, in the hands of some Nomads, is merely an introduction to a variety of cruel deceptions involving those non-Gypsies that are least capable of defending themselves: the superstitious poor, elderly and desperate. A variety of Nomad metal working artifices appear to demand as much skill as legitimate crafts, indicating again that proving the non-Gypsy the fool may be as rewarding to the Gypsy as his actual remuneration. Gypsy craftsmen, for instance, have been accused of fraudulent stove-repairing, fender-fixing and hydraulic jack and shopping cart rejuvenations.

The introduction of the urban economic union by Nomads may have diminished the prospect of wholesale Nomad fraud in some portions of the United States. The Nomads have learned that it pays to restrain themselves at times. Any excess of Gypsy frauds in one city threatens all Nomads living there with the kinds of non-Gypsy reprisals that could disrupt all of their socio-economic patterns.

The economic union protects itself by consciously controlling local Nomad activities. Subsequently, the economic union discourages economic trespass among all local Nomads and even forces emigration whenever necessary. By being vigilant the economic union reduces those kinds of stressful situations that introduce conditions of in-
stability and inefficiency into the Nomad socio-economic system and ultimately threaten the survival of that system.

3.3 Los Angeles and its fortune-tellers*

Since the beginning of the era of Urban Nomadism in the United States, Los Angeles has been the home of Macvaya fortune-tellers. This, despite the fact that an anti-fortune-telling ordinance exists in the City. In order to understand this apparent contradiction one must appreciate whatever socio-economic opportunities that Los Angeles offers its Nomads. The Macvaya have prospered in Los Angeles because there is a large market for their services. Also, local socio-economic stability has been provided by local Nomad "kings" for almost four decades.

The fortune-telling market in Los Angeles grew steadily with successive immigrations of particular kinds of people to the City during the early twentieth century. In 1920 there were over 500,000 persons in the City. During the following ten years the population had doubled. Immigration to Los Angeles at that time was dominated by persons from small communities in the Middle West.

*Some of the following information, particularly that which concerns the historical development of the local economic union, was given in confidence and has been generalized wherever necessary in order to protect informants.
Los Angeles biographer Carey McWilliams (1946:158) has described their cultural baggage as including a complete stock of rural beliefs, pieties, superstitions and habits. New arrivals during the subsequent Depression years included large numbers of lower middle-class persons. McWilliams (1946:328) described Los Angeles during the 1930's as being a "vast conglomeration of unending boulevards, vacant lots, oil derricks, cardboard bungalows, retired farmers [and] fortune-tellers."

The fortune-tellers that McWilliams referred to were probably just as pleased with the prevailing political situation in Los Angeles as they were with the socio-economic conditions in the City. McWilliams (1946:239) noted that in 1927 the Los Angeles District Attorney was even sentenced to San Quentin for bribery and that the national press considered the political situation in the City to have been "near insanity". The people of Los Angeles, meanwhile, were left to the mercy of numberless prophets, and had grown accustomed to living amidst "modern idolatry, sorcery and superstition" (McWilliams, 1946:268).

The only major obstacle between the fortune-telling Nomads and their market in Los Angeles was, and still is, the anti-fortune-telling ordinance (see Appendix A).
Section 43.30 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code currently prohibits fortune-telling or its advertisement. The fortune-teller has learned to both disobey and circumvent this law. In both cases the fortune-teller initially minimizes the chance of a conviction through bribery. Besides purchasing immunity from prosecution, a common way to tell fortunes and evade punishment has been to reside outside the City limits and forage about within them for a clientele. Normally the police power of a municipality does not extend beyond its borders. There are numerous cities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area in which to base a fortune-telling operation, if necessary (see Figure 8). The Nomad, ever mobile, will use many of them. The notorious Mother Mary (Rachel) Uwanawich, for instance, practiced fortune-telling as a resident of Temple City, Los Angeles and Newport Beach between 1951 and 1953 (Mirror News, August 20, 1953). Thus, the municipal diversity of the Los Angeles metropolitan area works to the advantage of the fortune-teller.

Attempts at circumventing the anti-fortune-telling ordinance in Los Angeles have always been popular with the resident Nomads. Very soon after the introduction of ordinance 43.30 to the municipal code the fortune-tellers happened upon Section 43.31 (Fortune-Telling - Exemptions)
THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

SHOWN AS A PART OF ITS METROPOLITAN AREA

Figure 8
in their search for some legal means to practice their traditional craft (see Appendix B). In brief, these exemptions allow Nomad spiritual advisors and priests, of sorts, to be recognized as religious corporations with the attendant "fund-raising" advantages. Local Nomad Gypsies have experienced mixed success with this ploy, only intermittently suffering prosecution (see Appendix C). Fortune-tellers that operate under the protection of these exemptions often consider their behavior to be in harmony with the realities of contemporary American economics, which, to their way of thinking, is stealing with a license.

More than the individual Nomad's efforts, it has been the efforts of the local Nomad economic union in Los Angeles that has made the city a popular Nomad habitat. The local economic union was able to secure the economic welfare of its members from the early 1930's until 1964, when it was destroyed.

3.3.1 Nomad behavior in Los Angeles

The fortune-teller practices her trade, at present, in much the same way as she did a few years ago despite the increased possibility of her arrest and conviction due to more intensive police surveillance. Fortune-telling establishments within the City limits are almost indistinguishable, externally, from adjacent structures. These
An ofisa outside the Los Angeles City limits: Nomad Gypsy fortune-tellers are licensed as respectable businessmen in many cities of the United States. This particular ofisa is hard to miss and reminiscent of a desert oasis. Note, again, the Sphinx. The proprietor may be a Mason and a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. This is a particularly valid assumption if he intends on extending his ministries into the proximate municipality of Los Angeles. Authorities in Los Angeles City might hesitate to extradite him, the respected businessman, and members of his family from their place of residence over minor frauds.

An ofisa inside the Los Angeles City limits: One is immediately impressed by the contrast between this sedate fortune-telling establishment and its seductive counterpart, pictured above. Both establishments are occupied by members of the Macvaya Nomad Gypsy tribe and they reflect a similar affection for palms, alabaster pots and aluminum awnings.
ofisa, as the Nomads call them, are ordinarily located on a major thoroughfare for at least two reasons: (1) The clientele is potentially larger, and (2) visiting relatives can easily find the place. (3) Their superstitions keep them away from dark, quiet streets.

Unless residency has been fairly established in the City the fortune-teller does not burden herself with many household items. This explains the sudden apparition of a fortune-teller in a neighborhood as well as her equally swift disappearance.

Fortune-tellers frequently work and socialize in the same building unless the situation (e.g. a wedding) demands that a hall be rented. An astute passerby may be able to sense the exotic Nomad culture at those times when it is asserting itself behind colorfully draped ofisa windows. The "secret ways" that are made available inside the ofisa are sometimes suggested by certain articles, located on the porch or in the window, that smack of the Orient. Golden jewelry and long bright skirts commonly adorn the proprietress. The house numbers of the ofisa are made unusually large, indicating that the Nomads anticipate returns from their subtle newspaper and radio advertisements.* Large house numbers also help out-of-town visitors

*"Sister Roberts", for instance, occasionally advertises her availability to solve personal problems on several spiritual-hour broadcasts on Sundays in Los Angeles area.
find their way. Many ofisa have "For Rent" signs displayed. These help explain to curious neighbors why so many people come and go from there.

Social hours in the ofisa (it is safe to say that Nomads live from one party to the next) are dominated by the sounds of music, dancing, and heated discussions of family affairs. Tea is always served and the aromas of spicy foods prevail. A family altar is usually located high on one wall; it is used for offerings and for the exhibition of family icons. On another wall there may even be a pay telephone; Gypsies make great use of long distance telephone service. Amidst the cigarette smoke and the heavy drinking a total cultural experience unfolds that is quite alien to anyone raised as part of the modern American culture. When marriage proposals are discussed, they are discussed in terms of bride price and often concern juveniles who have never met. Work is discussed without reference to bosses and timecards. Laughter constantly arises at the expense of the gaje clientele. Tea is sipped from a saucer. The "western" guitar is restrung "Serbian style". Taboos guide the movements of the women as they cross the room on endless errands of hospitality. And, of course, Romani is spoken.
3.3.2 Local Nomad culture history

The Los Angeles Police Department arrests approximately thirty-six fortune-tellers each year. Police informants (interviewed June 8, 1968) maintained that almost all fortune-tellers operating in the City were Gypsies. In the estimation of the police 5,000 Gypsies reside permanently in the City. The reliability of this figure may be contested on at least two accounts: (1) Police estimates may not appreciate those Gypsies whose activities are law abiding, and (2) the supposed permanency of Gypsies in Los Angeles does not account for seasonal variations in the local population that do, in fact, exist.

A Nomad informant (interviewed in City of El Monte, March 10, 1969) has expressed his opinion on the matter of Gypsy population size in the City of Los Angeles: He estimated that possibly half of the Gypsy population in Los Angeles during the winter months of 1964-65, roughly 2,000-3,000 persons, were Macvaya. The other half, according to this source, were mostly representatives of the Russian, French, Argentine, and Greek Gypsy nationalities.

Newspaper reports may also be utilized to provide both raw data about the local population and the spatial and temporal parameters that make this data finite and more amenable to interpretation. Critical periods in the lives
of members of the local Gypsy population are ordinarily accompanied by the assembly of local tribesmen and their appropriate rituals. Not only rites of passage (e.g., birth, marriage, death) but intra-group disputes, reunions, illnesses and arrests are social events for the local Gypsies. In these occasions Gypsies become more exposed to the curious and uninitiated non-Gypsies that share their Los Angeles habitat with the Gypsies. When Gypsy society suddenly surfaces for a celebration it provides the general public with a popular news item. As these incidents are recorded over a period of several years in one place they become a crude directory to Gypsy activity there.

The library of the Los Angeles Times contains numerous examples of Gypsy activities in the City that have been reported during the past four decades. Names, places and activities have been collected in most instances. Notwithstanding the possibility of an occasional reporting error and misinformation there is enough evidence in the totality of this data to enable the following generalizations to be made: (1) Members of the Macvaya tribe of Nomad Gypsies form the majority of all Gypsies reported; (2) Macvaya and other Nomad tribesmen have been organized locally as members of an economic union for at least four decades; (3) the course of Nomad socio-economic history in the City
during the past four decades has been dominated by the Adams família. More specifically, the data indicates that a succession of Macvaya Nomad chiefs have directed the affairs of a local economic union that has operated for over thirty years in the Los Angeles area.

Evidence at Calvary Cemetery in East Los Angeles further establishes the residency of the Macvaya Nomad Gypsies as well as indicates something of their blood ties (see Figure 11). Local Nomad família have been using one section of Calvary Cemetery in East Los Angeles for at least three decades. Most of the elegant tombstones and vaults bear photographs that portray the deceased in the prime of his or her life, usually colorfully attired. The accompanying epitaphs sometimes declare the national origins of the deceased. Some família interrelationships may be inferred from the proximity of the various grave-sites. The concentration of all Nomad gravesites in a relatively small area of the large cemetery provides one more indication of Nomad social solidarity.

Historical outline. — The following history outlines the development of the Nomad economic union in Los Angeles. It has been compiled from (1) local newspaper reports, (2) interviews with non-Gypsy persons whose jobs have led them to an acquaintance with the local Nomads (e.g. policemen,
Gypsy gravesites in Calvary Cemetery, East Los Angeles: Members of the resident Los Angeles Nomad Gypsy community are laid to rest in this, one of the oldest sections, of Calvary Cemetery. Noting the relative locations of the deceased, one to the other, reveals something of their family ties. Their gravestones are often quite unique in both structure and composition. This field drawing has been compiled by the author.
Identifiable Gypsy family names in Calvary Cemetery: Adams, Lee, Merino, Marks, Uwanawich, Mitchell, Guich, Miller, Stevens
welfare workers, etc.) and (3) interviews with Nomads.

The first Gypsies to visit Los Angeles were probably not Nomads recently from Eastern Europe. Lee (1967:40) has indicated that there were already English Gypsies in Los Angeles before the arrival of Gypsy tribesmen from Eastern Europe. The two groups eventually intermarried. Most Nomads arrived by wagon, then automobile, from the Eastern United States and from Mexico. It is likely that Nomad immigrants in America wandered to the east of the Rocky Mountains until cross-country travel became more practical and safe.

A large encampment of Nomads was reported to have occurred in a Los Angeles suburb in 1929. Nomads gathered there to elect a chief from among themselves. Reportedly, Steve Uwanawich won the confidence of most Gypsies present. Two years later Mark Adams achieved the same honor during another encampment in San Pedro. It appears, in retrospect, that a power struggle between the Uwanawich-Merino familia and the Lee-Adams familia was in its incipient stages at that time. Apparently the idea of a large organized effort to conventionalize Nomad economic activities in Los Angeles appealed to both familia. Their activities coincided with an influx of Macvaya tribesmen from the East, particularly Chicago, where the indomitable
Tinya Bimbo was then organizing his own power base at the expense of many Macvaya tribesmen who were forced to emigrate westward.

The ambitions of Steve Uwanawich and Mark Adams appear to have entered on a collision course when each attempted to construct the framework for a social hierarchy among all Nomads in the Los Angeles area. The impact, however, was not to be focused on their generation. The theme of Nomad activity in Los Angeles during the 1930's was "building together for the future". Macvaya familia contracted politically sound marriages among their younger members in order to unify the local Nomads. Members of the growing economic union tested the anti-fortune-telling ordinance in the City and attempted to influence, and even infiltrate, local law enforcement agencies.

In 1940, seven months after Tom Merino, the son of Steve Uwanawich, had applied for an appointment as a police officer with the Los Angeles Police Department, Mark Adams died. Mark Adams' son, George Adams, now the brother-in-law of Tom Merino, had been groomed for his father's job and showed great potential as a leader for the growing economic union. He had not, however, proven himself as an able administrator. Local Nomads expected that their chief be no less than an unimpeachable leader, businessman, and
arbiter.

The War years in Los Angeles provided George Adams with many tests. In 1941-42 many Nomads moved to the Pacific Coast from the East. George Adams was determined to find room for them, first through the reorganization, then the expansion, of the economic union that his father had been instrumental in organizing and defending for his people. The problems inherent in expanding the service area of the economic union were complicated by attempts among his own tribesmen to discredit him. Also, he had to continually deal with a large number of Gypsies in the City who owed him no allegiance at all. Not being acceptable for membership in the economic union, these transient Gypsies displayed little concern for the resident Gypsies upon whom their behavior was being reflected. Despite these problems George Adams was able to expand the economic union beyond the City limits of Los Angeles.

Following the War another major migration of Nomads to the Los Angeles area occurred. When Steve Uwanawich passed away in 1946, Tom Merino began to increase his position among local members of the economic union. The following year marked a major assault on the position of George Adams in the person of another George Adams. The usurper attempted to use the non-Gypsy legal system to bring
down the chief, but failed.

There were no appreciable setbacks in the economic union from 1947-55. The Los Angeles area, in fact, became a preferred residence among Nomads in the United States. In Gypsy-carnival jargon the City had been "sewed-up". The success of the economic union in Los Angeles had much to do with the long tenure of George Adams. It is said that he did not often attempt to inspire terror in his subordinates, nor did he try to control them through brute force. He is described as having been a benevolent leader and extremely popular with the majority of the union members. Certain non-Gypsy individuals must have found him equally affable and dedicated because with their help he was able to eventually extend the power of the economic union beyond the County limits of Los Angeles.

In 1955 the antipode of George Adams, Tom Stanley, chief of the Detroit economic union, arrived in Los Angeles to test the resiliency of the popular Los Angeles chief. Stanley left shortly after his arrival. Local witnesses of that confrontation recall that Tom Stanley impressed everyone as a "big flash of diamonds" and little more.

In 1957 a far more serious threat to local Nomad solidarity occurred. George Adams was sued over a matter
of inheritance monies in the non-Gypsy courts by Tom Merino, who finally settled for $5,000. The operations of the local economic union were endangered for the many weeks that the two "big men" squared off in the courtroom. At the height of the crisis George Adams was able to correctly sense that through his display of traditional ethics and self-control his position had become more secure than ever. He remarked, with some levity, to reporters who had inquired into Tom Merino's rapid retirement from the courtroom, "He's afraid for his life".

Generally speaking, during the years of his leadership George Adams performed impeccably. Recalling that Los Angeles prosecutes on the average of thirty-six fortune-tellers each year, George Adams would not only hire the best legal services but personally supervise most of the courtroom proceedings and step forward to pay the usual twenty-five to fifty dollar fines. His applications of tact and patience are legendary among Nomad peoples across the United States. In the early 1960's, for example, some Gypsies brought a troublesome automobile body-repair racket into the City. Although George Adams could always threaten the newcomers with police harassment, in this case he rented a hall, partied the racketeers, and highlighted the festivities by publicly admonishing them.
Due to certain administrative changes in the early 1960's fortune-telling began to come under a more critical public investigation in Los Angeles. City officials began to have a better appreciation of the organized nature of fortune-telling. The economic union, however, was at the peak of its strength so the police investigation proceeded cautiously.

The death of George Adams in July, 1964, provided local law enforcement agencies with an opportunity to undermine the strength of the entire Los Angeles fortune-telling organization. The matter of succession to the leadership of the economic union could not be immediately settled to the satisfaction of all union members. The police were able to capitalize on the situation through the use of "divide and conquer" tactics.

The obvious person to fill the void left by George Adams was his son, John, then 27 years old. John Adams, although he apparently had the support of his uncle Tom Merino, had to contend with some other would-be potentates. There was George Adams' brother, Blancy, and some "big men" from out-of-town who came to claim the vacated throne. Ordinarily there would not have been so many qualified Gypsies available for leadership in Los Angeles. George Adams' death, however, came on the heels of a crisis in
New York's Nomad colony and probably coincided with the resulting dispersal of many Nomads from that City.

The competition among the aspirants continued for over a year. The stresses of competition undermined the efficiency of the Los Angeles economic union; over two hundred fortune-tellers were arrested in 1964 owing largely to a combination of Nomad backbiting and police pressure. During this time John Adams attempted to prove his ability to reunite the City's fortune-tellers into another powerful economic union. His efforts were negated in 1965, however, when he eventually bribed himself into a clever police trap. He finally pleaded guilty to a charge of giving a large sum of money to a police officer in order to protect a number of fortune-telling establishments in Los Angeles.

Although some years have passed since John Adams was convicted and sentenced, vigilant police surveillance of local Nomad fortune-telling activities still prevails in the City. Nevertheless, Nomad tribeswomen are still telling fortunes. During the past few years there have been some renewed attempts among the Nomads to rebuild their economic union. This is a long and dangerous process. Policemen and key officials must be bribed. Often such bribery is ineffectual. The Police Department, for instance, rotates its officers in and out of the Fraud
Division partly as a deterrent against bribery. Similarly, bribed City officials, subject to regular election procedures, may not serve in office long enough to insure Gypsy interests.

There has recently been some evidence of a reassertion of the Adams' dynasty; John Adams has been released from prison and continues to reside with many of his tribesmen within the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

An analysis of the fortune-telling market. — The patterns of socio-economic activity demonstrated by Nomad tribesmen in Los Angeles City during the past thirty years can be subjected to a spatial analysis. While local Nomads normally limit their social interactions to intra-Gypsy activities, their economic interactions demand a direct confrontation by the Nomads with their non-Gypsy fortune-telling market. This confrontation often takes place at or near the ofisa, which is also the area where many Nomad social activities are concentrated. It may be that Urban Nomad fortune-tellers, if at all possible, work and socialize in those parts of the City to which they are economically bound by their common trade and intricate ties. The Los Angeles Police Department has identified the location of seventy incidents involving fortune-telling activities during 1967-68. This index to fortune-telling
activities in the City has been supplemented by twenty-five additional incidents including either Nomad social activities (parties, wakes, etc.) or additional fortune-telling activities as they have been reported by the Los Angeles Times newspaper over a period of thirty-five years. The distribution of these ninety-five incidents in the City has been depicted in Figure 12.

It is interesting to note in Figure 12 that the incidence of Nomad activity within the City does not have an even distribution and that there is a concentration of such activity near the City's Civic Center. Moreover, it appears that Nomad activity has shifted in a westerly direction during the past thirty-five years; the twelve incidents indicating Nomad socio-economic activities prior to 1945 apparently predominated in a small area directly to the south of the Los Angeles Civic Center while the same activities recorded since 1945 are more dispersed and predominate more to the west of the Civic Center.

The explanation for the apparently intensive occupancy of Nomad socio-economic activity in only certain parts of the City during the past thirty-five years may be found in an examination of the location of the fortune-telling market during the same period. The Los Angeles Police Department suspects that the fortune-telling market
Each dot or triangle represents one account of Gypsy socio-economic activity in the city, usually fortune-telling.

- ▲ to 1945
- ● 1945 to 1969

Not part of Los Angeles City

This data has been collected from police files and newspaper reports representing a thirty-year period, 1939 to 1969.
in Los Angeles has consisted largely of superstitious aged, minority, and low income persons with urgent problems. It is possible to locate the distribution of a fortune-telling market within the City by utilizing recent census data.

(1) Superstitious aged persons: The disproportionate-ly large numbers of aged persons in Los Angeles did not escape McWilliams (1946:230) who referred to the City as "a mortician's paradise". The Los Angeles area has had a substantially higher percentage of its population aged sixty-five years and over during the past five decades when compared to the national average (Meeker, 1964:22).

It seems reasonable that persons somewhat younger than sixty-five also might share conditions of biological maturity that might result in their searching out the services of a fortune-teller. The condition of menopause, for instance, that is shared by many persons over age of fifty is symptomatic of biological maturity. Menopause can be accompanied by increased anxieties that could lead a person to seek some solace in a fortune-teller. There is therefore, some reason to generalize aged persons, as they relate to the fortune-teller, into a group whose minimum age is forty years. Figure 13 diagrams concentrations of aged persons in the City in places where the median age
Figure 13

THE AGED IN LOS ANGELES CITY

Census tracts in which the median age of the total population is over 40 years.

Abstracted from Brewster Map based on 1960 census
of the population, by census tracts, was forty years and over in 1960. Figure 16, which, in part, superimposes the locations of Nomad socio-economic activities over Figure 13 demonstrates that much Nomad activity has been observed to exist in close proximity to concentrations of the aged.

(2) Superstitious minority persons: The two principal minorities in Los Angeles City are the Negro (7.6% of the total population in 1960) and the people of Spanish surname (9.5% of the total population in 1960). Individuals in both of these groups, as well as members of other minority groups, may be superstitious. The Los Angeles Police Department has, however, specifically presumed that members of the Negro minority make up a large part of the fortune-telling market in Los Angeles.

It is true that American romanticists (e.g. Mark Twain) have attempted to popularize Negroes as particularly superstitious members of American society. There are, however, more rational explanations for singling out superstitious Negroes as major components of the Los Angeles fortune-telling market.

One might ask, "Why specify the Negro component and not the Mexican-American?" Although there were more people of Spanish surname in the City in 1960 than there were Negro persons, many of them still relied on their Spanish
Figure 14

THE NEGRO MINORITY IN LOS ANGELES CITY

Over 7% of the total population by census tracts is Negro

Abstracted from Brewster Map based on 1960 census
language instead of the English language employed by the majority of fortune-tellers operating in the City. The fortune-teller's success is her spiel. English is already her second language, after Romani. Apparently not very many of the local fortune-tellers are operational in Spanish.

Local Negroes, on the other hand, speak English and are found concentrated in one section of highly segregated Los Angeles. Census tracts in Los Angeles where Negroes made up over seven per cent of the resident population in 1960 are shown in Figure 14. Figure 16, which, in part, superimposes the locations of Gypsy socio-economic activities over Figure 14 demonstrates that much Gypsy activity has also been in close proximity to concentrations of the Negro minority in the City.

(3) Superstitious low-income persons with urgent problems: East Los Angeles and the Central City, according to Meeker (1964:35) are the two areas with the lowest median family incomes (less than $5,000 per family per year) in Los Angeles. Figure 15 depicts all those study areas in the City that have been classified by the Welfare Planning Council as "low income". Again, Figure 16, which, in part, superimposes the location of Gypsy activities over Figure 15 demonstrates the proximity of Gypsy activities
Study areas in which the median family income is below $5,500.

Data provided by Welfare Planning Council based on 1960 census.
to low income families in the City. While superstitious members of all income groups in the City are faced with urgent problems at one time or another, the low income group probably has the least alternatives for the solution of these problems. Fortune-tellers are not only proximate and moderately priced, they actively fill the role of the poor man's psychiatrist.

Taken individually, Figures 13, 14 and 15 only demonstrate proximity to Gypsy socio-economic activities which are depicted on Figure 12. Figure 16, which superimposes Gypsy socio-economic activities over a combination of all three aspects of the suggested fortune-telling market in Los Angeles, demonstrates that Gypsy fortune-tellers have concentrated their activities in the suggested market area during their years of residency in Los Angeles.

The data also indicates that the market for fortune-telling in the port areas of San Pedro might also attract Nomads (Appendix C provides evidence of such activity in that area). No specific instance of Nomad activity in that area has, however, been recorded for inclusion in Figure 12. Nevertheless, because the market apparently does exist, it must be assumed that Nomads have worked and resided in the area at one time or another. Further investigation, possibly a larger sample, may uncover more evidence.
Each dot or triangle represents one account of Gypsy socio-economic activity in the city, usually fortune-telling:

- to 1945
- 1945 to 1969

ền Aged, Negro, low income areas
Gypsy socio-economic activities in Los Angeles pose some questions beyond their relative locations in the City. The apparent dispersion of Gypsy activities from the area immediately south of the Civic Center in the years after 1945 might be explained by a progressive urban blight that has rendered the downtown section of the City less suitable for residence.

The downtown section of Los Angeles has had a population loss during the past few decades while the City suburbs have been booming. Gypsy activities eventually dispersed from there for a variety of reasons, including a concern among Gypsy persons for their personal health and safety. This situation reached a critical point during the War years, according to a Nomad informant, when American soldiers roamed the downtown streets rudely accosting Nomad women and often accusing the Gypsies of excessive criminal activities. Many Nomads moved away from the Civic Center though they continued to solicit business there.*

*Photo-booth operation was a popular War-time Nomad occupation. A City ordinance also prohibits this trade. Nevertheless, soldiers and sailors liked to have their pictures taken with their girl friends and the Nomads were happy to oblige. Accessories such as artificial flowers were made and sold by Nomad women.
Today there are few ofisa near the Civic Center despite the fact that the data indicates that a market remains there for the fortune-teller. A Macvaya fortune-teller may advertise heavily in the downtown section but prefer to live elsewhere. Interested clientele, on the other hand, can take a bus from City Hall and travel less than two miles in order to be in the neighborhood of many fortune-tellers. The obvious clusters of Gypsy socio-economic activities today begin to appear a few miles west of the Civic Center and can be attributed to a gradual exodus from Civic Center areas. The potential fortune-telling market in areas of present Gypsy densities is excellent. Also, the recent home of the late Nomad "king" is in their vicinity; vitsa members still prefer to live near one another in the area. Non-Gypsy businessmen have been able to capitalize on the relative density and free spending of Nomads in the area by stocking their meat markets, music shops and pawn shop windows with products that are in demand among the Gypsy residents.

*His father, the previous "king", resided in a downtown area that is now quite delapidated.

**Popular Gypsy foods include sheep's heads and tripe. Macvaya musicians (e.g. Harry and the Horribles) have released a few records that are quite popular in the local Gypsy community. Pawn shops near the Civic Center always have gold trinkets in the windows for their Gypsy clientele.
It must also be noted that Gypsy socio-economic activities are not limited to Los Angeles City although such a limitation has been constructed as Figure 12 for research purposes. The Los Angeles metropolitan area extends far beyond the City limits of Los Angeles and supports many Nomad culture-bearers, fortune-tellers and otherwise. The Los Angeles Police Department has suggested that a large concentration of Gypsies can also be found in Pomona, California.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Gypsy social structuring and cultural continuity

The singularity of Nomad Gypsy society apparently owes little to the benevolence of non-Gypsy peoples in the world. It might be more realistic to suppose that it has been the prejudice of the non-Gypsy against the Gypsy everywhere that has facilitated that practical structuring of Nomad society which has, in its turn, enabled Nomad Gypsy culture life to protract itself for centuries without sacrificing its integrity.

One essence of survival built into the highly structured Nomad social system appears to be its conditioned response to stressful situations. It is a major attribute of Nomad society that its members may frequently part from one another only to be joined together again at some future time and place; to be able to achieve orderly segregation or systematization of social units as the situation dictates — be it opportunity or catastrophe — has been a major successful design of Nomad cultural continuity.
Some significance in Nomad socio-economic systematization in Los Angeles

Rapid urbanization and a manufacturing revolution in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century have dictated that the local Nomad Gypsies systematize their techniques of livelihood or else face, once again, the specter of economic dependency and eventual assimilation. Nomad fortune-telling specialists in Los Angeles were able to organize a powerful economic union over a thirty year period. Although their group effort resembled traditional kumpania formation, it was more highly structured and less temporary than the traditional economic union. The Los Angeles economic union was, in all actuality, a strategic vehicle for Nomad cultural continuity in place rather than a tactical response to some fleeting economic opportunity. It manifested an attempt to sustain and promote an interest shared by no other members of the immediate habitat — Nomad cultural survival. Although the local police had been able to capitalize on a temporary political instability in the Nomad economic union in 1964 and thereby threaten the economic welfare of its members, the fact that fortune-tellers continue to practice their trade in the City on a much less organized basis and are now attempting to rebuild their economic
union demonstrates the traditional tenacity with which Nomads protect their cultural integrity.

The appearance of the Nomad economic union in Los Angeles may be doubly significant. First, it appears to demonstrate a contemporary example of the transition of a tribal society into a chiefdom. Second, it introduces an example of territorial behavior among members of a contemporary human social group.

It is possible that the highly structured Nomad economic union, as it appeared in many American cities during the era of Urban Nomadism, was actually an incipient chiefdom. The Nomads, in settling in these cities and subsequently realigning their traditional socio-economic structure in order to capture markets, were advancing from tribalism into a social, economic and political system that is, by definition, more complex. *

Anthropologist Peter Farb (1968:135) has suggested that a chiefdom can arise when a populous culture becomes relatively fixed in space and experiences an economic surplus. One recalls that during the days of Rural Nomadism

*Variability in the size of Gypsy socio-economic units in the past has been noted by Gropper (1967:1055). The complex kumpania, possibly the chiefdom, may have emerged on other occasions during Gypsy culture history.
in the United States the Nomad floating industrial population wandered in rather small bands and depended upon a highly fluctuating market for its livelihood. The possibility that the subsequent urbanization and nucleation of these Nomads might have been a catalyst for the advancement of previously decentralized Nomad bands into chiefdoms in the United States introduces an interesting hypothesis.

The development of Nomad chiefdoms in the United States would also help to explain the occurrence of what appears to be territorial behavior among many Nomads living in its larger cities. Territorial behavior, according to Bartholomew and Birdsell (1953:484) is a concept that includes the entire complex pattern of behavior associated with the defense of an area. The concept, however, has been mostly advanced by animal ecologists and there have been few serious attempts to discuss the biological concept in terms of its human social implications. Nevertheless, the techniques of territory maintenance, the precise factors responsible for it, and its significance vary from species to species among social animals (Bartholomew and Birdsell, 1953:484). Territorial behavior among human social groups is, in fact, highly probable. If it does exist, it is geographically significant.
Farb, (1968:151) in his discussion of the development of human social units in pre-industrial North America, has suggested that the acquisition and defense of living space is one characteristic of the chiefdom. He described chiefdoms whose sizes and compositions were fixed by both topographic features and centripetal forces generated by the chief himself. Recently, Gropper (1967) has described competition between Nomad chiefs for living space in New York City. Similarly, the history of the Nomad economic union in Los Angeles has demonstrated how a local chief has been able to supplement his own charisma and moral persuasion with a power base and thereby consolidate a territory that eventually transcended the City's administrative boundaries. This economic union provided an operational framework for the local chiefdom. Its highly organized social structure minimized the stresses of the urban existence by (1) conventionalizing the patterns of conflict that would be permitted among its members and (2) attempting to eliminate all inefficient energy expenditures taking place within its service area. The ultimate significance of this social development in the City of Los Angeles is that it permitted an unpopular ethnic minority to protract itself for several decades and remain relatively independent from the pervasive modern American
urban culture that surrounded it.

Much of the success of Nomad fortune-telling in Los Angeles can be attributed to the effectiveness of the economic union. This success is also somewhat commensurate to the failure of local non-Gypsy society to protect some of its weaker human elements from organized Nomad frauds. Fortune-telling among the Nomads must be considered to be more than an occupation. It is a major cultural attribute, the core of a complicated trait-complex, that appears to remain impervious to the kind of legislation that has been directed against it.

More stringent legislation may eliminate local Nomad fortune-telling but may not be the most humanitarian way to handle the situation. An alternative, no legislation at all, might eliminate whatever competitive advantage local fortune-tellers have acquired during their years of local residence. Less scrupulous Gypsies might then be attracted to Los Angeles to exploit the lucrative market for Gypsy fraud. Neither the existing fortune-tellers nor their clientele could benefit in such a case.

Another alternative might be for non-Gypsy society to concentrate on educating the fortune-teller's clientele rather than to persist in legislating against the fortune-teller. Agencies like the County Commission of Human
Relations, that presently do not collect statistics regarding the Gypsy minority in the Los Angeles area, might assume the responsibility for sponsoring research, eventually providing data about the local Gypsy community and its socio-economic behavior for public enlightenment. This data could also be used to compare the character of Gypsy culture in Los Angeles to that found in other American cities. Such comparative studies need to be encouraged.

Further investigations might ask whether Gypsies are to expect a collective destiny in the United States or eventually relinquish their common heritage and disappear into the American melting-pot. Nomads have experienced both waning itinerancy and increased persecution for their fortune-telling activities. How many key cultural attributes can the Nomad afford to abandon and yet retain his cultural integrity? Some answers to this question may lie in the past where the ancestors of the contemporary Nomads solved similar problems through adaption, compromise and emigration. It is in the present, however, where solutions for unprecedented social and economic problems might demand unprecedented Nomad behavior. It is conceivable that in the near future local Nomads might ask for non-Gypsy federal, state and local aid in preserving their
Until that time the Nomad in Los Angeles will probably persist in his traditional economic versatility and adaptability. Local fortune-tellers continue to operate and have welfare checks to cushion their hard times. If the stress of cultural attrition becomes too great for the Nomad in America he still has recourse to emigration — to Europe, to Australia, to Brazil — wherever the gaje need "fixing and fleecing".

The studies of evolving cultures and the microevolution of man himself may provide some insight into the future of Gypsy culture. Human territorial behavior, for instance, illustrates both the desire and the ability of a social group to initiate its own patterns of survival in time and space. The culture of the American Indian has already suffered great stress simply because this initiative was taken away. American governmental officials that knew very little about the relationship between Indian territorial behavior and Indian social solidarity greatly demoralized the American Indian, perhaps purposely, by forcing him to stay on irrelevant pieces of land, enacting

*In early 1970 a federally supported school for Gypsy children, instructed by a non-Gypsy teacher fluent in Romani, was opened in Richmond, California, near San Francisco.
laws to regulate his use of that land — and then calling it Indian territory. Some contemporary American Indians show more reverence for a sterile island on San Francisco Bay, recently "captured" by their own kind, than all the acreage of reservation allowed them by the Federal Government. Undoubtedly, human territory is more than a segment of earth surface; it is a total, complex, changing and personal relationship between a human group and its immediate habitat.

In conclusion, as regards Nomad Gypsies there are two basic realities facing contemporary American non-Gypsy society: (1) Urban Nomads have organized practical relationships between themselves and the many cities in America in which they live and work. They oppose non-Gypsy attempts to modify these relationships. (2) Unsociable Nomad behavior presents non-Gypsy society with a complex urban problem. Can these Nomads be made more amenable to civic responsibility?

Most Nomads would not be surprised if they were forcibly extricated from the cities. They fear and disrespect the non-Gypsy and expect the worst from him. They remember that their ancestors and relatives have been routed from their camps, shot at, beaten and jailed by Americans for being and behaving Gypsy. Subsequently, the
Nomad does not feel like fighting American wars or paying American taxes. For this he could be criticized; America has rewarded much Nomad resourcefulness with its affluence. At the moment he hopes mainly to be left unmolested and, possibly, to be acknowledged for expecting as little of his non-Gypsy neighbors as his father once did.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Section 43.30 Los Angeles Municipal Code;

Fortune-Telling

No person shall advertise by sign, circular, handbill or in any newspaper, periodical or magazine, or other publication or publications, or by any other means, to tell fortunes, to find or restore lost or stolen property, to locate oil wells, gold or silver or other ore or metal or natural product; to restore lost love or friendship or affection, to unite or procure lovers, husbands, wives, lost relatives or friends, for or without pay, by means of occult or psychic powers, faculties or forces, clairvoyance, psychology, psychometry, spirits, mediumship, seership, prophecy, astrology, palmistry, necromancy, or other craft, science, cards, talismans, charms, potions, magnetism or magnetized articles or substances, oriental mysteries or magic of any kind or nature, or numerology, or to engage in or carry on any business the advertisement of which is prohibited by this section.
APPENDIX B

Section 43.31 Los Angeles Municipal Code;

Fortune-Telling - Exemptions

The provisions of the preceding section shall not be construed to include, prohibit or interfere with the exercise of any religious or spiritual function of any priest, minister, rector or an accredited representative of any bona fide church or religion where such priest, minister, rector, or accredited representative holds a certificate of credit, commission or ordination, under the ecclesiastical laws of a religious corporation incorporated under the laws of any state or territory of the United States of America or any voluntary religious association, and who fully conforms to the rites and practices prescribed by the supreme conference, convocation, convention, assembly, association or synod of the system or faith with which they are affiliated. Provided, however, that any church or religious organization which is organized for the primary purpose of conferring certificates of commission, credit or ordination for a price and not primarily for the purpose of teaching and practicing a religious doctrine or belief, shall not be deemed to be a bona fide church or religious organization.
Fortune Telling

Defendants were charged with violation of Section 43.30 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. Mary Merino was found guilty and Deana Merino, not guilty.

The evidence showed that on June 26, 1942, Officer Carver noticed a sign in a window in San Pedro which read, "Spiritual Science Readings." There he was asked by Defendant Mary Merino to come in. He asked what kind of readings she gave and she told him different kinds for different prices and that for Two ($2.00) Dollars, she would tell him everything he wanted to know. He told her that she might as well make it Two ($2.00) Dollars and then went into the room. The officer stepped into the room and laid his hand on a black book. He told Defendant Mary Merino that his wife disappeared a few days ago, to which she responded, "Well, you don't need to worry about her, she will be back soon - within three days." She then told him that he was going to get two letters and that one of them would have money in it and the other would cause him to take a trip and that he won't leave the State. She also asked him if he ever loaned people money that they hadn't paid back. He said, "Yes". She said, "Well, when you get one of those letters it will have some of that money in it." He then told her he had been a seaman and asked her if she thought he would ever go back to sea, to which she replied, "Yes, you will go back, you have got it in your mind." She also told him that he was suffering mentally and said, "That other woman is in love with you," and that he was going to get a letter because someone near him was sick. That two people had died for him in the last year and that two more were going to die in the next year. In response to his question of how she knew all those things, she said that she just saw those things.
Officer Carver paid Defendant Mary Merion Two ($2.00) Dollars and signed a receipt for Two ($2.00) Dollars, using the name "Timothy Sales." He was not told that it was a donation to the Church, nor did she state that she was a minister or representative of the American Church.

The Defendants defended on the ground that they were duly ordained ministers and had received their certificates of ordination on May 14, 1942, from the American Church, a religious corporation incorporated under the laws of California on September 11, 1928, of which William F. Rice was President.

Mr. Rice testified that he is President of the American Church which has been functioning since 1928. That he issued certificates of ordination on May 14, 1942, to these Defendants, and that the American Church had branches operating in several cities. He also testified that Mary Merino was in charge of the Church at San Pedro; that he paid her a salary and received from her the collections taken in by her for the Church. He stated that two Sunday meetings had been held at the San Pedro Church before the arrest, and that the place at San Pedro hadn't as yet been established as a branch church.

Mary Merino testified that she attended school up to the 4th or 5th grade; that Mr. Rice taught her to go into a trance and get messages; that she gets messages from dead people - her grandfather - through vibrations.

For more detailed facts, see Transcript.

MEMO.
(Prepared by Court)

The evidence together with the inferences that may properly be drawn therefrom amply support the implied finding of the trial court that appellant violated section 43.30 of Ordinance 77,000, Los Angeles Municipal Code, and that she was not exempt under section 43.31 of said ordinance.

BY THE COURT.

FOX
Acting Presiding Judge.

KINCAID
Judge.