

**Gitano Evangelism:
the Emergence of a Politico-Religious Diaspora**

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Gitano Evangelism: the Emergence of a Politico-Religious Diaspora

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This article deals with the various imaginative and practical links that the Gitanos of Jarana,¹ a neighbourhood in the south of Madrid, make with other Gitanos and Gypsies elsewhere. As we all know, at the core of non-Gypsy models of Gypsiness - for example, those upheld by linguists and folklorists in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and also by academics such as anthropologists, historians or sociologists then and later - lies a concern with the unity of the Gypsies. This unity has both been phrased and challenged in a variety of terms, including cultural, linguistic and biological. Most often, academics have seen Gypsies as forming one people in spite of the wide differences in life-style, world-views and modes of interaction with the dominant population that characterise Gypsies in different areas of the world. In other words, to non-Gypsy academics, Gypsies make up a transnational, global diaspora, even if Gypsies, unlike the archetype of the diasporic population, the Jews, do not have a land of origin or any kind of overarching political project to be debated or shared. Indeed, according to the ethnographic record, most Gypsy groups have until very recently displayed no interest in bringing about any kind of cohesion: for over five hundred years, the Gypsy diaspora has been characterised by its extreme political and structural fragmentation, so that many different Gypsy groups exist avoiding interaction with each other and rarely attempting to bridge their differences except in the vaguest imaginative terms.

My aim here is to explore how the Gitanos with whom I worked position themselves vis-à-vis other Gitanos in Spain and vis-à-vis Gypsies elsewhere: what kind of diaspora do the people of Jarana see themselves as belonging to? The context to my investigation is the recent spread of Gypsy Evangelism throughout Spain and, to a much lesser extent and only for comparative purposes, the growth of Gypsy international political activism, which builds upon non-Gypsy notions of identity and personhood (drawing heavily on human rights discourses) and which has so far bypassed Jarana completely.

¹ The name Jarana, and the names of all persons in the article, are pseudonyms. I carried out initial fieldwork in Jarana in 1992 and 1993 as part of my doctoral project, which was supported by New Hall, Cambridge. Subsequent periods of fieldwork were supported by Girton College, Cambridge. This has led to a variety of publications, including a monograph (1999).

Among the Gitanos of Jarana who have not yet converted to Evangelism, political relations are governed by the ever-present fear of feuding among patrigrups. This fear, as I have explained elsewhere (1999, 2001), generates a whole series of centrifugal forces in the organisation of everyday relations among Gitanos. It also shapes the Gitano imagined community so that non-converts disregard social harmony or coherence as paths to shared identity and display no interest in establishing contact with unrelated Gitanos in Spain or with other Gypsies elsewhere. These Gitanos see the Gypsies as forming a community in the sense of 'commonality', rather than 'communion'. Their attitude contrasts with the emphasis that converts - who call themselves *Aleluyas* - put on creating social contexts where unrelated Gitanos might come together and where an ideal of a cohesive Gypsy community might be rehearsed. *Aleluyas* see themselves as the spearhead of a politico-religious movement that will eventually transform the lives of Gypsies everywhere, bringing them together as God's chosen people.

I start below by considering the social and political relations that support these three Gypsy diasporic modalities (non-convert and covert as they develop in Jarana, and activist elsewhere) and go on to focus in particular on how, in Jarana, Evangelism is transforming the non-convert construction of '*los Gitanos*' ('the Gypsies') as an imagined community. At the core of my argument is the notion that each of these three diasporic modalities can be seen as a distinct attempt by Gypsies to position themselves within a non-Gypsy world that they perceive as being rapidly and radically changing.

The Context

Before I provide the reader with some introductory information about the Gitanos of Jarana, I want to clarify my usage of the terms *Gitano* and *Gypsy*, and how it relates to the world-views of the people of the neighbourhood. North-Euro-American academics use the term *Gypsy* to refer to Gypsies generally and *Gitano* to refer to one Gypsy sub-group, the Spanish Gypsies. This is the terminology that I adopt here as well. The Gitanos of Jarana - like Spanish-speaking academics - use the term *Gitano* in such a way that it translates

directly to our usage of *Gypsy*: they apply it to themselves and also to other Gitanos and Gypsies everywhere. However, the people of the neighbourhood know that Gypsies outside Spain speak different languages, and have different customs and life-styles from their own. This means that they use the phrase '*los Gitanos*' (the Gypsies) to refer to a wide variety of imaginative units, which are sometimes nested and sometimes placed along a continuum of nearness and farness.

The spatial focus of this article, Jarana, is a 'special Gitano neighbourhood' built by the Spanish State in the southern outskirts of Madrid in 1989. There are sixty-five Gitano families - approximately three hundred individuals - living there, together with nine non-Gitano families and six mixed ones. Before being resettled there the people of the neighbourhood had lived in shanty towns or in temporary housing also provided by the local government in various peripheral areas of the city. Like most other Spanish Gypsies - there are between 200 000 and 400 000 - the Gitano families of Jarana have been largely sedentary at least since the mid-1950s when, like many non-Gypsies, they abandoned the countryside and moved to the growing industrialising cities. Since then they have experienced an increasing encroachment on their lifestyle by the non-Gypsies. They have been subjected to growing control from local authorities, to forced resettlements, and to the demise of the most lucrative and flexible of their ways of earning a living. When the 'benefits' of the welfare state were extended to the Gitanos, the perpetuation of their distinctiveness came under greatest threat.

These developments have taken place against a complex framework of radical social, economic and cultural change in the country as a whole. In 1976 the Francoist dictatorship ended and Spain began the process of democratisation. Then came the incorporation into the European Community, the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, and the recovery of the 1990s. During the last decade, Spain has become a target for migration from Latin America, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the Philippines and North Africa. Social relations are in a process of profound change, and mores and ways of perceiving the nation, the local community and the self are similarly being transformed. The Gitanos, as a distinct group competing for space and resources in the crowded peripheries of the large cities - a group

that rejects the dominant work ethic and signs of communal identity - have come under growing pressures to conform. Firstly, Gitanos have been the object of large numbers of violent protests. Secondly, the 1990s have witnessed unparalleled attempts towards their institutionalisation: through an ever-growing expansion of the social services the Gitanos have been brought, more than ever before, under the control of the State. This represents the culmination of a trend that started at the end of the dictatorship, when local authorities throughout the country began to reassess their policies towards the Gitanos. Since then, thousands of Gitanos have been resettled from shacks into blocks of flats or into houses. Some are now living among the non-Gitanos, but others await their turn in state-planned 'provisional Gitano colonies' or still in the shanty towns that grew in the peripheries of the main cities in the 1950s and 1960s. Most often, these resettlement programmes are accompanied by lengthy compulsory re-education schemes aimed at encouraging the Gitanos to adopt the lifestyle of the non-Gitanos or Payos.

The Gitano Diaspora: Non-Convert Perspectives

I am sitting by the kitchen window, peering through the curtains into the patio. Its only two months since I begun my fieldwork and I do not want to interrupt the important proceedings outside. A large group of Gitanos has gathered. Many belong to the Juanes *raza* (patrigroup) - they are the Gitanos I know best. The others are Escopeteros, from another area of Madrid. The Escopeteros are in the midst of a blood feud: one of their number shot and killed a young man and seriously wounded another, and they have had to leave their neighbourhood and all their possessions behind in an attempt to escape retaliation. They have come to Jarana because Tía Tula, the wife of the Juanes patriarch, is the sister of one of the elders of the Escopeteros. The two groups are linked again and again through marriage ties and the Escopeteros can count on the support of the Juanes.

Half way through the afternoon I hear shouts of 'the old Gitanos! The old Gitanos are coming!'. Four cars arrive in the street outside, and four elderly Gitanos, their small retinues around them, get out and enter the patio. They are all wearing fedora hats and

carrying elaborately carved walking sticks. Juanes and Escopeteros make way for them and allow their own elders to greet them. The visitors are 'men of respect' (*hombres de respeto*) - old Gitanos well known for their knowledge of Gitano custom who have been called to act as neutral mediators. They have already visited the relatives of the victims and hope to reach a solution that will satisfy all the parties involved. After much heated discussion, an agreement is reached: the Escopeteros will from now onwards never enter the south of the city, down from an imaginary line that stretches East to West across the Rastro flea-market. They will have to abandon their homes for good - the local authorities will hopefully find for them alternative accommodation. They will also lose access to some profitable vending and, given that the Valdemingómez rubbish dump is now out of bounds, some will have to start thinking about how to earn their livelihood. The aim of the settlement is to prevent the Escopeteros and their enemies (called *contrarios* by the Gitanos) ever to set eyes on each other again. If they do, the assumption is that their fury and hate for each other will make them want to fight and the feud will be rekindled. In fact, fear of feuding is so strong among the Gitanos that, even when large numbers are forced to live side-by-side, as in Jarana, they avoid contact with non-kin as much as possible.

Unlike many other acephalous minorities whose singularity and lifestyle survive under the pressure of dominant majorities, and indeed unlike some other Gypsies, the non-convert inhabitants of Jarana do not premise their image of 'the Gitanos/Gypsies' as a group on an ideal of unity. There are strong centrifugal forces governing Gitano sociability but, in particular, it is kinship that gives relations among Gitanos in Jarana and Spain more broadly their fragmented character. In the neighbourhood, as in the country at large, the Gitanos organise themselves into patrigrups (*razas*) that often enter into lengthy blood feuds which in turn are solved through the separation in space of the kin units involved, as my example above illustrates. The fact that the *razas* are named, and that they tend towards endogamous marriage, means that it is easy for the Gitanos to conceptualise them as bounded units, distinct from others, which are seen as potential enemies. [It is important to emphasise that converts to Pentecostalism, who reject feuding in principle as I explain below, are nonetheless subject to many of these pressures: families most often include converts and

non-convert members, and converts have to juggle their attachment to the church and to their kin groups. Moreover, converts are as liable as non-converts of being made the objects of retaliation in feuds.]

Because they know that any quarrel, no matter how small, can easily develop into a full-blown feud, in Jarana the Gitanos live with their backs to each other, purposefully restricting daily interaction to their own kin. In fact, my Gitano friends often state that they would much prefer to live dispersed in small groups of kin among the non-Gypsies, and that they have only come together into a Gitano-only neighbourhood through the resettlement policies of local authorities (as has happened throughout Spain). By distancing themselves from their neighbours, while drawing upon relatives - who may live outside Jarana - for sociable purposes and for political support, the Gitanos assert their belonging to their kin and deny that cohesiveness with non-kin may be a path to shared identity. They also reject the non-Gypsy model of identity where place and sense of self are intertwined: they have ended up living in Jarana, they say, just as they might have ended up in Los Pitufos or El Ruedo - other 'special Gitano neighbourhoods' built in Madrid by the State.

And yet, the Gitanos' sense of commonality, their awareness that they share with each other in the neighbourhood and with Gitanos and Gypsies everywhere who they are - their identity - is extremely strong. The Gitanos believe that they are different from the non-Gypsies and are proud of this fact. And indeed, the specific characteristics of the Gitanos' image of themselves as a group correspond to the dispersed nature of their everyday life. The people of Jarana do not see themselves as belonging to a society in the traditional anthropological meaning of the term: they have no concept of a structure of statuses or roles that individual Gitanos or Gypsies elsewhere would occupy and vacate upon death, and they also disregard any notion of communal harmony or social cohesion as paths to shared identity. Instead, they conceive of 'the Gitano people' (*el pueblo Gitano*) - which includes all Gitanos and, more vaguely, all Gypsies everywhere - as a scattered aggregate of persons, of undefined size, origin and location, who are similarly positioned vis-à-vis the rest of the world and who uphold the Gitano laws (hence the Gitano statement that 'one is a Gitano/Gypsy in as much as one accepts and upholds the Gitano laws'). And, although the Gitanos of Jarana know

that there other kinds of Gypsies who live outside Spain, and indeed believe that there are Gypsies in all the countries of the world, they do not attempt to establish any practical links with them.

A particular kind of imagined community (or imagined diaspora) emerges out of this description, one that does not depend on past, present or future connections with a shared territory or with a land of origin, on cohesiveness or even harmony among its members, or on the exaltation of a shared past (the most usual supports of ethnicity in contemporary Europe) but rather on the belief that each Gitano man and woman upholds the Gitano morality in the here and now, whenever and wherever that might be. Rather than on a shared political project modelled on non-Gypsy nationalist or ethnic movements, the emphasis is on the person as the performer of the proper Gitano morality and hence as the generator of the difference between Gypsies and non-Gypsies. Nonetheless, links to other Gitanos and Gypsies are constitutive of who persons are: identities are interdependent and each person is thought to bear the worth of 'the Gitanos' as a whole. The ideal of the group revolves around the ideal of the person and the two are tied by a metonymic link. The word 'community' in relation to the non-converts of Jarana thus refers to their awareness of each other and of other Gypsies and Gitanos elsewhere as moral beings. Divisions and fragmentations - territorial but also, and more important from the Gitano point of view, to do with customs and life-style - are not seen as impediments to the realisation of Gypsiness, and there is no sense that they have to be transcended in order for a sense of commonality to exist. Instead, these fragmentations are incorporated as essential to what being a Gypsy is about. This is therefore a diasporic modality that is premised on the very notion and experience of dispersal - an extreme diaspora, if you like.

Out of this brief description, we can extrapolate the key features that characterise the non-convert diasporic modality. Firstly, it lacks an overarching or all-encompassing political structure or any institutions that would bring large numbers of Gitanos and other Gypsies together. Most importantly, the will for such structures is also absent. Secondly, sociable relations are characterised by violent interaction and avoidance of unrelated Gitanos. Thirdly, unlike nationality, Gypsiness is not imposed from above or from the centre, but

rather is dependent on the performances of particular Gitano persons. Concomitantly, there is no concern with the size or location of other Gitano or Gypsy communities elsewhere. Fourthly, the past is disregarded as a source of identity, and downplayed throughout most spheres of social life.

The Gitano Diaspora: Secular Transformations

To the general public, the better known alternative to the mode of being a Gitano that I have just described is represented by the growing numbers of Gypsy NGOs and self-help organisations who call for Gypsy unity, for international recognition of minority status for Gypsies, and for the application of human rights to Gypsies throughout the world. The diasporic modality that they embody draws heavily on dominant Western models of ethnicity, identity and personhood. It is very important to underline that in Jarana these organisations - the most important ones in Spain being the *Unión Romaní*, the *Asociación Secretariado General Gitano*, and the *Asociación Presencia Gitana* - have no grass-roots support. The Gitanos who live there are overwhelmingly unaware of their existence and their aims, even though the movement towards politicisation began to develop in Spain and elsewhere as early as the mid-1960s, and has undergone a huge growth in the last few years, hand in hand with the expansion of the European Union.

Some of these organisations recognise the performative essence of Gitano identity- and community-building. Vega Cortés (1997), a Gitano activist, explains in the website of the International Romani Union, the largest of these organisations how

Uno es gitano en la medida que acepta y cumple las leyes gitanas, porque esas leyes han probado ser buenas y positivas para el conjunto del pueblo. Son leyes que nos han permitido vivir en medio de una sociedad hostil, manteniendo nuestra cohesin de grupo. (One is a Gypsy in as much as one accepts and upholds the Gitano laws, because these laws have been shown to be good and positive for the whole of the Gitano people. They are laws that have allowed us to live in the midst of a hostile society, sustaining our cohesion as a group).

However, the most striking characteristic of this movement is its heavy ideological and practical dependence on non-Gypsy political modalities and structures. See the following account from the same website:

ROMA FROM THE WHOLE WORLD UNITE

Romani representatives from 44 countries met yesterday in Malmoe. One of the purposes of the meeting was to unite IRU, International Romani Union, and RNC, Roma National Congress. And it succeeded. - This is a great day for us, says Victor Famulson, the chairman of the world wide IRU. IRU represents 12 million Roma in the world.

The President of the Spanish Romani Union Juan de Dios Ramirez-Heredia has got from NATO's General Secretary Javier Solana the certainty that the Alliance forces will protect the Roma ethnic minority living in Kosovo from any attack they could receive on the part of the ELK extremists. He also acceded to the request of the Spanish Romani organisation to have a meeting with him and with the presence of some Kosovian Roma, who know better than nobody the tragedy they are suffering.

This small text indicates a way of imagining and creating the community/diaspora very different from the one I have described for the non-converts of Jarana. It calls for practical unity of Gypsies everywhere ('Roma from the World, Unite'); it proposes an overarching transnational, global political framework in the form of the Romani Union itself; and it assumes identity of interests and purposes of Gypsies world-wide (so that a Spanish Gypsy can challenge NATO's General Secretary about the situation of Gypsies in Kosovo). The use of the term *Roma* to refer to Gypsies encapsulates all these features: it has been diffused in the last two or three years as a politically correct mode of referring to Gypsies, and is completely foreign to the Gitanos of Jarana.

These organisations therefore embody a novel conceptualisation of the Gypsies as a global diaspora which is premised on an awareness of shared identity that actively transcends national boundaries and other kinds of fragmentations. This emergent diasporic identity is

premised on particular practical and institutional supports, which include but are not restricted to: participation in non-Gypsy political bodies; the creation of practical and imaginative links with Gypsies elsewhere in an attempt at transcending the barriers of ethnic affiliation, language, customs and life-style; the production of written material in the dominant language of law and politics (even if to argue a point against the grain of dominant understandings, such as the validity of Gypsy marriages versus legal ones); and, lastly, access to education, money and technology. Ultimately, the transformation relies to a large extent on recent changes in the attitudes of the dominant society, that is increasingly portraying as legitimate these Gypsy attempts at self-legitimation.

The Gitano Diaspora: Evangelical Transformations.

In Jarana, where this form of Gypsy political activism is completely unknown, it is through the growth of Gypsy Pentecostalism that the Gitanos are developing a new diasporic modality. Like Gypsy activism, Gypsy Pentecostalism represents a Gypsy attempt at transforming the meaning and experience of Gypsiness both for Gypsies and for others. However, whereas activism is premised on non-Gypsy models of personhood - where all persons are entitled to the same human rights, effectively working as equally valuable units of humanity - Pentecostalism fully maintains the Gitano belief in two kinds of persons, Gypsies and non-Gypsies, which are endowed with incommensurable moral differences and who are therefore differently positioned in the world. Gypsy Pentecostalism thus goes on upholding the key non-convert, non-activist ideological emphasis on the Gypsies' need to maintain their difference from the dominant non-Gypsy majority.

Gypsy Pentecostalism

The Gitano Evangelical Church - Iglesia Evanglica de Filadelfia - is part of a wider Western European Gypsy Evangelical movement. In the early 1960s French Gypsy missionaries - themselves the product of a Evangelical mission campaign carried out by a non-Gypsy in the 1950s - came down to the Peninsula to preach the word of God to the Gitanos (Williams

1991; Jordán Pemán 1990; Cano 1981). The Spanish Gitano Evangelical movement begun to grow, was recognised by the State in 1969, and has experienced its greatest development during the late 1980s and 1990s (Jordán Pemán 1990: 10). Currently, there are no data as to the number of Gitano converts - who call themselves *Cristianos* (Christians) or *Aleluyas* - but my experience is that there is a church in practically every area where Gitanos live. In Jarana approximately a third of the adult Gitanos consider themselves converted and Evangelism, in one form or another, is part of the daily life of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

The Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia is premised on an ideal of both transformation and continuity with what, in the eyes of the Gitanos, being Gitano means - that is, the 'Gitano way of being' (*la manera de ser Gitana*). Converts stress that not only does one continue being a Gitano once one becomes an *Aleluya*: one becomes a 'better Gitano' (*mejor Gitano*). During services ministers preach the rejection of those aspects of the Gitano lifestyle that do not conform to the Evangelical ideal of love and forgiveness, while simultaneously encouraging converts to act according to the Gitano ideal of 'knowledge' (*conocimiento*) and 'respect' (*respeto*).

I conceptualise Gitano Evangelism as an emergent mode of being in the world, both for the self and in terms of the networks of social relations that converts construct. The reason is that, even though Gitano Evangelism was born in the mid-1960s, it is only in the last ten years that it has begun to undergo its greatest expansion. This means that, today, converts see themselves very much as initiating a new way of being a Gypsy: they emphasise novelty and see themselves as bringing about a complete transformation to the Gypsy way of life. In fact, the Evangelical 'way of doing things' and the non-Evangelical 'way of doing things' - to use the Gitano terminology - compete with each other, and particular individuals, whether defining themselves as converts or not, may choose to interpret their actions according to either ideal model. Therefore, it is not adequate to suggest a dichotomous picture of 'before' and 'after' Evangelism. Evangelism has come into play as a key medium through which to define personal and communal identities within a framework of rapid social change and of great pressures for acculturation or assimilation. My portrayal of the convert and non-convert diasporic modalities represents an attempt at pointing to the innovations that

Evangelical Gitanos have introduced into the fluid context of life in Jarana. The non-convert ideals and activities that I described above work as the base line upon which converts elaborate and innovate, very often verbally.

A Religious-Political Diaspora

There are clear parallels between the emergent Pentecostal and activist diasporic modalities, and they become apparent when we consider the *Aleluya* anti-drugs campaign that I describe below. At that event, as at other Pentecostal arenas, local converts from different *razas* came together both for worshipping and for sociable purposes, and with them were Gitanos from other areas of Spain and some Gypsies from outside the country. The aim of the campaign was to address what is seen by the Gitanos who live in Madrid as the current greatest threat to the survival of the Gitanos as a people: the growing spread of drug-addiction among young men. As such, the campaign was seen as a step in the process of eventual redemption and unification of all Gitanos. In other words, the campaign showed up the converts' concern with transcending fragmentations and with achieving cohesion and social harmony among Gitanos - a concern that, in a very different form, lies also at the core of the activists' aims and perspectives.

It is a summer evening and my first visit to Jarana after the end of my fieldwork. My friend Clara and her husband Lolo greet me warmly and tell me how lucky I am: it so happens that tonight a big anti-drugs Pentecostal service has been set up down in La Fresneda - the nearby neighbourhood where Gitanos live in tower blocks among the non-Gypsies. Both Lolo and Clara belong to convert families, and Lolo has been a pastor of the church since his early twenties. We arrive just as the service is starting. A platform has been erected in the middle of the local park, and there are about one hundred and fifty Gitanos sitting in rows in front of it. To one side there is a family-sized camping tent: Clara tells me that, for two days now, a chain of prayer has been going on inside. We sit among the women whilst Lolo takes his place amongst the male pastors and trainees on the platform. I notice that, although in the audience there are a good number of non-converts from several different kinship groups, no non-

Gypsies are present. The pastor who is these days in charge of the local church opens up the service. He comes from outside Madrid, has no kin in the area, and was posted to La Fresneda about three months ago. He preaches for a short while to the accompaniment of shouts of *Aleluya* and *Si, mi Seor*, then asks the choir to start singing. The Gitanos, many of whom are sitting among non-kin, pray aloud and some start crying, speaking in tongues or prophesising. After the song, the key speaker delivers his sermon. He is a Portuguese pastor well known for his ability to cast off demons. Back in Portugal he has set up several anti-drugs campaigns: Clara tells me that many young men have converted and given up drugs with his help. He preaches for twenty minutes and then asks local drug-addicts to come forward and declare that they accept Jesus as their personal saviour. A handful do, they are prayed over and some break down in tears or faint. The service goes on, blending preaching, music and prayer, for another three hours.

By contrast with the way the non-converts of Jarana imagine and construct the Gitano community, the Evangelical pattern goes a long way towards emphasising unity and towards rejecting heterogeneity as a path towards the realisation of Gypsiness. These themes are very clearly apparent across multiple arenas of everyday life in Jarana. Activating links with Gitanos outside the kin group is of particular significance to converts, and *Aleluyas* reject feuding as a method for solving conflicts. Converts tell endless stories about life-long enemies forgiving each other after embracing Pentecostalism: they pride themselves in dealing with confrontations through dialogue and reconciliation, rather than through revenge. Once retaliation becomes less of a threat, avoidance of non-kin also becomes less necessary. In Jarana, converts come together at services, prayer meetings and anti-drugs campaigns at the local church, in the streets of La Fresneda, and even at each other's houses. In the course of their daily lives, those converts who are most active within the Church - ministers, trainees and their families particularly, but also many others - often build up close relations with convert non-kin and in the process transcend kinship affiliations. Friendships among such unrelated converts develop regularly and particularly among men, who are more mobile than women because they do not need to take care of the children or the house. They meet to pray, visit other churches, or socialise and drink coffee together at the church's bar.

The converts of Jarana also display a novel interest in other Gitanos and even other Gypsies, and attempt to reach them through such things as anti-drugs campaigns, missions abroad, and even web-sites that broadcast the activities of the Church. They regularly visit other churches, and a few times every year thousands come together in religious assemblies called *convenciones* which are national and even transnational in character, bringing together Gitanos and Gypsies from Portugal, France and North Africa. In so doing, converts challenge *raza* affiliation as the structural basis of Gitano life: the Gitano-*Aleluya* imagined community is still diffuse in its size and location, but it is no longer a community made up of people who are the same as yet hostile to the self, as happens in the non-convert world.

Together with the emphasis on the transformation of social relations to fulfil the model of Gitano cohesion, we see the development of a hierarchy of political statuses whose authority transcends divisions between *razas*. The organisation of the Iglesia de Filadelfia itself is premised on an institutional hierarchy that transcends barriers of kinship, region, ethnic affiliation and so on, and that binds Gitanos in any particular area with Gypsy converts elsewhere within a world-wide, God-given plan for action. This hierarchy has a president at the top, regional delegates beneath him, and then local pastors and trainees at the lowest levels. The workings of the highest levels of the hierarchy are obscure to most converts in Jarana, as are its relation to the rest of the Gypsy Evangelical movement outside Spain, but all know that the regional delegate and the president keep a close eye on each local church - for example deciding which pastor is to take charge of which church and for how long. Sure enough, just like the 'men of respect', pastors throughout the hierarchy must uphold a rigorous moral code. If they do, however, they are able extend their influence much further than the traditional mediators and are coming to replace them more and more often. Most importantly, whereas Gitano men can only become 'men of respect' after a long life of righteousness, convert men as young as twenty become pastors. It happens often that a pastor in his twenties is called to arbitrate in a dispute together with an elderly mediator. The amount of authority they exert, and the prestige they derive from it, can be described as equivalent.

These transformations in ways of organising daily sociability, of dealing with conflict, and of allotting prestige and authority demonstrate how Gitano Pentecostalism transforms the structure of Gitano socio-political relations. Through the Iglesia de Filadelfia certain key institutions are discarded and new ones are incorporated. It may be even fair to say that the Church itself becomes the structural basis for Gitano life: *Aleluyas* begin to see themselves and act as members of a society in the traditional anthropological meaning of the term (as a coherent body of institutions, statuses and roles) or, to use Patrick Williams' expression, begin to act as a 'people'. In other words, conversion transforms the way Gitanos position themselves in the world as members of a diaspora.

In this sense it is particularly significant that, at the core of these Evangelical innovations, lies a changed perception of the self and the group in time. The non-converts of Jarana - like many other Gitanos and Gypsies elsewhere - put much conceptual work into downplaying the effect of the past on the present, and refuse to invoke the 'before' as a justification of the 'now'. This goes hand in hand with their emphasis on the person as the performer of the Gitano morality in the present, the real creator of 'the Gitanos' as a people. Activists, by contrast, draw on non-Gypsy academic theories and take up the notion that Gypsies come from India. In claiming for all Gypsies a land of origin and also a shared history of persecution and nomadism, they move away from the performative model of identity to the same emphasis on historical and biological continuity that lies at the core of dominant Euro-American ethnotheories. Like the activists, the converts of Jarana look to the past but they claim that all Gypsies are Jews that got lost during the forty years of exile in the Sinai desert. As Jews, the Gitanos are a chosen people who now - through their conversion to Evangelism - are about to fulfil God's plan for humanity. The version of the past that converts put forward is not only biblical and prophetic, but also developmental and generative: the Bible, together with a series of accounts of the birth and spread of the Church of Filadelfia, have become the history of the Gitanos. This interest in the past does not mean, however, that Gypsiness does not need to be performed or enacted in the 'now': salvation in the eyes of the *Aleluyas* comes firstly through conversion and secondly through a changed way of life. Gypsiness still has to be performed by persons - albeit now they must do so also by upholding the Gospel, and the person thus remains at the centre of the

Aleluyas' views of the Gitanos as a people. However, amongst the converts of Jarana the Bible has become the written codification of Gypsines, and *Aleluyas* constantly look for parallels between Gitano and Jewish customs as described in the Bible. The written word, consequently, has become extremely important: converts teach each other to read (the vast majority of Gitanos are functionally illiterate), write and publish histories of the Iglesia de Filadelfia that are used for teaching purposes within the church, and also publicise their activities through such things as videos and websites.

In fact, the *Aleluyas* of Jarana think of themselves as existing on a particular point of a temporal trajectory that extends into the future - they are ahead of the non-converts around them but also awaiting the conversion of all Gitanos and the end of time. And they talk of the present that they - but not the non-converts - inhabit through the idiom of 'modernity'. They themselves are 'modern' (*modernos*), 'advanced' (*avanzados*) and 'civilised' (*civilizados*), whereas non-converts are 'rancid' (*rancios*), 'backwards' (*retrasados*) and 'uncivilised' (*sin civilizar*). Non-converts are 'people who wear feathers like Indians' (*gente de pluma como los indios*), and they are also 'hairy' (*peludos*) - that is, dirty and untidy, with matted hair: in the eyes of the *Aleluyas*, non-converts have failed to move on from the past, a time when all Gitanos used to 'lived in ignorance, fighting each other like cats and dogs' (*vivian en la ignorancia, peleandose como los gatos y los perros*). Converts, by contrast, refuse to engage in feuds, and in so doing testify to their modernity. They also demonstrate this modernity in other areas of their lives such as their dress (wearing dark suits and ties, the image of the city businessman), their forms of address (shaking hands rather than merely establishing eye contact), the establishments they patronise (cafeterias where the women spend their afternoons eating American pancakes with cream and chocolate sauce, and drinking Fanta and Coca-cola) and the entertainments they engage in (young married couples going in groups to the movies or the fun park).

Whilst Gypsy activism both mimics the way international politics are organised and models itself upon non-Gypsy paradigms of identity and personhood, the Iglesia de Filadelfia takes up non-Gypsy institutional models and notions, as I have just explained, but paradoxically rejects their most basic ideological premise - the notion that Gypsies and non-Gypsies are

the same kind of moral persons. In common with Gypsy activism, the convert diasporic modality takes as its starting point the assertion of a common destiny for all Gypsies but - unlike Gypsy activism - it uses this assertion to exalt the uniqueness and superiority of Gypsies over non-Gypsies. This is because of the converts' sustained rejection of the moral and religious worth of non-Gypsies, even Evangelical ones - a disposition that they share with their non-convert friends and relatives. This attitude is made strikingly clear in a video film that the men of the Jarana church put together during my fieldwork, which dramatises for teaching purposes the dangers of not embracing salvation. In the film, a Gitano man who refuses to accept Christ as his saviour comes back from work one day to find his house empty. He turns on the radio and hears a non-Gypsy presenter reporting that 'whole Gitano families are being seen ascending up to heaven on clouds'. The next scene is an image of Hell, populated by non-Gypsies and non-convert Gitanos alike - the protagonist included. In this film, failing to convert is equated with the utter moral degradation of the non-Gypsies that Gitanos so often emphasise in their daily lives. The Iglesia de Filadelfia, thus, aims not only at transforming what being a Gitano is about, but at reinforcing the moral barrier between Gitanos and non-Gypsies. To the *Aleluyas* of Jarana, non-Gypsy Pentecostalism is a second-rate option for a second-rate group of people: when, some months into my fieldwork, I invited a non-Gypsy Pentecostal pastor to visit Jarana's church, he was not asked to preach as a visiting Gitano pastor would have been, and the congregation remained staunchly resistant to pay him and his wife any attention or engage in conversation with them.

Emerging Themes

What, then, is the political significance of the Iglesia de Filadelfia as an emergent diasporic modality? In what ways does it replicate the effects of the work being done by Gypsy activists throughout Europe? And, do the similarities between the two movements mean that Gypsies everywhere are engaging with the complexities and tensions of the modern, so-called 'global' world in the same ways?

In his well-known work on beauty pageants in Belize, Wilks investigates the nature of modernity and explains how

we are not all becoming the same, but we are portraying, dramatising and communicating our differences to each other in ways that are more widely intelligible. The globalisation of hegemony is to be found in structures of common difference, which celebrate particular kinds of diversity, while submerging, deflating or suppressing others (1995:118).

Both the Gypsy NGOs and the Iglesia de Filadelfia wish to reformulate the meaning of Gypsiness and have turned to the non-Gypsy world for instruments through which to dramatise their respective reformulations. But there is a clear difference between the two movements. Gypsy activism has, to use San Roman's phrase, reduced Gypsiness to its minimal cultural prop, akin to a badge that symbolises nothing but itself. Activists not only adopt the institutional supports for identity offered by the non-Gypsy world: they also rephrase the contents of that identity on the basis of non-Gypsy values and cultural models. Thus, the radical ethnocentrism of the Gitanos is abandoned and Gypsies become a 'persecuted ethnic minority' which must be accommodated within the political structures of a unified Europe. Activists fight to secure human rights for Gypsies - including such things as education for Gypsy children, opportunities for personal development for Gypsy women and decent housing - and engage with the global arena of high-level politics in its own terms in order to do so.

By contrast, the *Aleluyas* I worked with attempt to keep up with a changing world without compromising what, in their eyes, makes them Gitanos: their difference from, and superiority over, the non-Gypsies. The Gitanos of Jarana – whether converted to Pentecostalism or not – refuse to accept the label of 'ethnic minority' that is so important to the activist discourse: they stress that it is the Gitanos that occupy the centre of the world, and the non-Gypsies that are marginal, peripheral and morally inferior. The implications of this self-conceptualisation are, I believe, essential to understanding Gitano Evangelism as a politico-religious diaspora. On the one hand, in tandem with the spread of Gitano Evangelism, new

political structures are transforming radically both the pattern of life in Jarana and also how the Gitanos who live there think of themselves vis-à-vis other Gypsies and the rest of the world. These Gitanos are downplaying the importance of the patrilineal organisation that has provided the structural support for their community for the last five hundred years, and are beginning to act as a community in terms that are recognisable to the non-Gypsies that surround them. In so doing, they are refashioning themselves as members of a new politico-religious Gitano diaspora. On the other hand, the purpose to which these new concepts and institutions are put is, unlike in the activist case, the perpetuation of Gypsiness not only as a distinct identity but as a distinct way of life, one that cannot be reduced to a badge but which dictates the whole shape and texture of the person's existence and relations to others, setting her apart and above from the non-Gypsies.

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