

The politics of evangelism: Masculinity and religious conversion among Gitanos

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This article analyses the impact of Gitano Pentecostalism on the political life of a group of Castilian Gitanos in Madrid, focusing on the sphere of relations among patrigrups. The article begins by outlining the background against which Gitano Evangelism works as a political force, centring on Gitano modes of managing conflict and of allotting masculine prestige. The second part of the article discusses how the growth of Gitano Pentecostalism is affecting these masculine hierarchies. The article suggests that the act of transferring prestige and authority from older to younger men—through mechanisms enabled by the adoption of Pentecostal Evangelism—represents a Gitano attempt to take social change in their own hands in the face of the spread of drug-dealing and drug-addiction among Gitanos, and of the strengthening and expansion of control in the part of the Spanish State.

Since the first conversions of Spanish Gitanos¹ in the 1950s, and thanks to its rapid growth, Gitano Pentecostalism has had a profound and ongoing impact on the fabric of Gitano social life, affecting converts and non-converts alike. Gitano political organisation is one of the areas where this impact has been particularly salient: in current day Madrid, the *Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia* (Evangelical Church of Philadelphia)² shapes not only the way in which Gitanos relate to others outside their patrigrup, but also how Gitano prestige hierarchies are constructed, and how relations between Gitanos and non-Gitano (or *Payo*)³ neighbours, social workers and

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local authorities develop. Whereas elsewhere I have discussed the influence of Evangelism on the politics of Gitano married life, focusing particularly on the lives of women (Gay y Blasco 1997), in this article my aim is to analyse the more obviously public sphere of relations among patrigrups and, more specifically, the role of men in shaping such relations.

I begin below by outlining the background against which Gitano Evangelism works as a political force—in particular Gitano modes of managing conflict and of allotting masculine influence and status. In the second part of the article I discuss the growth of Gitano Pentecostalism and its effect upon these masculine hierarchies. My overall aim is to suggest that the act of transferring prestige and authority from older to younger men, through mechanisms enabled by the adoption of Evangelism, represents a Gitano attempt to take social change in their own hands in the face of, firstly, the spread of drug-dealing and drug-addiction among Gitanos, which has captured the Gitano imagination as *the* major current threat to the survival of the Gitano community; and secondly, of the strengthening and expansion of control in the part of the Spanish State, which determines multiple aspects of the Gitanos' daily lives, from where they are made to settle to the economic activities they are allowed to pursue. More broadly, the growth of the *Iglesia de Filadelfia* demonstrates how Gitanos actively incorporate elements of the dominant non-Gitano world-views and do so in creative ways that facilitate both the Gitanos' survival as a distinct community and the transformation of Gitano political institutions. By converting to Evangelism many of the Gitanos who live in Madrid are trying to embrace what they perceive as unavoidable change while remaining Gitano.⁴

The spatial focus of this article is a 'special Gitano neighbourhood' which I call Jarana, and which was built by the State in the southern outskirts of Madrid in 1989.⁵ There are sixty-five Castilian Gitano families—approximately three hundred individuals—living there, together with nine non-Gitano families and six mixed ones. Before being resettled in Jarana they had lived in shanty towns or in temporary housing also provided by the local government in various peripheral areas of the city (Montes 1986). Between 200,000 and 400,000 Gitanos are thought to live in Spain, and at least 16,000 in Madrid (Fresno García 1993, Montoya 1987, Vázquez 1986, San Román 1994). Unlike many Gypsy groups elsewhere, who are nomadic and/or speak Romani, most Gitanos are settled and speak only Spanish.⁶ Like other Gypsies, however, they experience strong pressures to assimilate into the non-Gypsy majority.⁷ In particular, the Gitanos of Jarana, like most

in Madrid and Spain more widely, live under the constant surveillance of and pressure from the non-Gitano social services, who make very determined efforts to change their moral values and life-style, for example through compulsory re-education schemes (Rodríguez Martín 1995, Gay y Blasco 1999: 22–3).

It is also important to stress that some of the inhabitants of Jarana engage in drug-dealing and there is at least one drug-addict—always a man⁸—in every extended family in the neighbourhood. As a consequence, AIDS is rampant in Jarana. More importantly, the vast majority of the people who live there perceive Gitano involvement with drugs—*la droga* as it is referred to by Gitanos and Payos—as the main factor endangering the future of the Gitanos as a people with a distinct morality and life-style. In the words of a middle-aged man from Jarana, ‘drugs are fine as a way of earning a living. The problem is that if you have them at home, your sons or grandsons will want to give them a try: if you grow pears you and your children will eat pears. The same happens with drugs, and *the end of the Gitanos is near*’. In Jarana, converts present Evangelism as the only force capable of keeping in check the spread of *la droga* among Gitanos, and they enumerate the multiple and often successful campaigns and detoxification programmes organised by the Church of Philadelphia every year. They also repeatedly place *la droga* at the centre of their accounts of conversion to Pentecostalism—and this is true both of ex-addicts who tell of giving up drugs after converting, and of non-addicts who tell of relatives and acquaintances who ‘were healed after meeting the Lord’. For their part non-converts tend to portray the Church’s activities regarding *la droga* as one of the positive or at least less harmful dimensions of Evangelism. Thus, whilst *la droga* is by no means the only factor to be taken into account when assessing the success of Gitano Pentecostalism, it has nonetheless become a master symbol in the Gitanos’ descriptions of themselves, and also—as I explain below—essential to the processes through which intra-community hierarchies and inequalities are constructed and contested.

Intra-group politics

Those reified rules and norms of conduct that, according to the Gitanos of Jarana, mark out proper Gitano ways and make Gitanos different from Payos—the *leyes Gitanas* or ‘Gitano laws’—emphasise the primary allegiance of individuals to their *razas*. These *razas* are described by the Gitanos as

groups of men and women who trace patrilineal descent from a common male ancestor four or at most five generations back.⁹ Solidarity among members of a *raza* should be realised above all in the obligation to join together in attack or defence when one of them has either committed or received an injury. In the practice, all the members of a *raza* do not usually concentrate in the same geographic area or even know each other (San Román 1976: 116),¹⁰ and it is small groups within *razas* that most often work on this basis of solidarity, with subgroups of any one *raza* being liable to collaborate and, more rarely, to enter into conflict with each other. These subgroups have male elders at their head, called by the Gitanos *tíos* or ‘uncles’. They are men past their fifties who command the respect and hence deference of other members of their *razas*: while they have little actual power their influence is great. Those elders who acquire a reputation beyond their kinship group and beyond the neighbourhood, town or city where they live become ‘men of respect’ (*hombres de respeto*), mediators that are called to arbitrate in conflicts between Gitanos belonging to different *razas*.

Disputes between members of different *razas* are most often transformed into feuds (called by the Gitanos *quimeras* or *ruinas*), where the fighting is expected to escalate as each kin group reciprocates the injuries received by its members. It is the obligation of all the agnatic kin of an offended, injured or killed individual to attempt to insult, attack or kill any other members of the *raza* who attacked their relative. These feuds—which may result in several deaths—are settled with the help of neutral ‘men of respect’. They mediate through dialogue, in a process that culminates with the physical separation of the two parties involved: the ‘men of respect’ allot to each *raza* an area of the city or the country and ‘set up a law’ (*ponen una ley*) that forbids the enemy *raza* to enter that territory, so that whole families are often obliged to leave their houses, livelihood and possessions behind. The two parties will theoretically remain ‘enemies’ (*contrarios*) for life. The fact that any quarrel, however small, may escalate into a fully-fledged feud puts strong limits on daily-life sociability among non-kin (Gay y Blasco 1999: 43).

Knowledge and respect

‘Men of respect’—also called ‘old Gitanos’ (*Gitanos viejos*)—reach their positions of prestige and authority through their exemplary behaviour during their whole life-time. The Gitanos of Jarana say that these men have more ‘knowledge’ (*conocimiento*) of what is right according to the Gitano ways

than other Gitanos. As a consequence they also deserve more ‘respect’ (*respeto*) from other Gitanos. In Jarana, knowledge and respect are the two basic principles through which hierarchies are constructed and prestige is assigned (Gay y Blasco 1999: 49). *Conocimiento* is the ability to behave adequately according to the age/gender group to which one belongs; it is often equated with control over emotions and desires—for example, over the drive to retaliate in a feud. *Respeto* involves the right to obedience and deference from others with lower status, and the obligation to give it to those who rank higher. It is dependent on knowledge because those individuals who display more knowledge are granted more respect—they are ‘more respectable’ (*más respetables*). At the top of the hierarchy are men like Tío Javier, a Gitano man from Jarana who is called to mediate in conflicts among Gitanos both in Madrid and beyond. His ability managing difficult situations and finding solutions that satisfy people with opposed interests have caused his prestige among the Gitanos to increase steadily over the last twenty years.

As embodiments of Gitano virtue—that is, as figures or representations—‘old Gitanos’ or ‘men of respect’ incarnate those virtues that reveal great *conocimiento*. They are said to be truthful and consistent: their word can be trusted. Gitanos describe them as polite, conscious of shame and also as self-controlled, generous, and ready to support other Gitanos in their needs. Most importantly, they are thought to have a deep knowledge of the Gitano laws. ‘Men of respect’ are meant to have a great understanding of what is proper in moral terms, as well as of character and what middle-class, non-Gitano Spaniards would call ‘human nature’ (*la naturaleza humana*). As a middle-aged woman from Jarana put it,

In our race the old Gitanos are the most respected, and this is why people pay attention to them. They bring peace, not war. Take Tío Javier: he is a Gitano with shame, with respect, a Gitano who has known how to teach, a Gitano who is a model. These are men whose word comes true, no matter what, they aren’t men with two words, or changing men, what they say is true. Whereas with others you can’t believe them, they are laughable, they don’t know what they are talking about.¹¹

Respect and knowledge have an ascribed character: Payos, women and younger people are thought inherently to have less knowledge and hence inherently to deserve less respect than Gitanos, men and older people. However, individuals have to behave up to or above the standards that the age/gender group to which they belong demands in order to be entitled to the respect that it implies. In this sense respect and knowledge have an

achieved character. The combination of these achieved and ascribed elements places individuals in hierarchical and unequal positions vis-à-vis each other, while also providing the ground for contestation. Achievements in the political arena that I am describing here make it possible for some particularly talented or well-positioned men to raise above their peers and, through their activities as mediators, extend their influence outside their own kin group and into the lives of other Gitanos. However, the authority of the ‘men of respect’ is dependent on the acquiescence of other Gitanos, who are well aware of the mediators’ precarious position. Payo politicians and social workers, as well as the police, by contrast, call these men ‘patriarchs’ (*patriarcas*) and often attempt to treat the better known ones as rulers over the Gitano population of the city at large.

Shifting political contexts: The expansion of drug-dealing and drug-addiction

The inhabitants of Jarana stress the fact that, in the ‘proper Gitano life’ (*la vida Gitana de verdad*), conflicts among Gitanos are dealt with through the mediation of ‘men of respect’. They also explain how a key concomitant of the Gitano involvement with drugs is the undermining of ‘proper’ hierarchical relations within their community: drug-addicts and dealers often do not respect the elders. However, taking into account the work of San Román (1976, 1986a, 1990, 1994) and Ardevol (1986), I want to argue that the spread of drug-abuse and trafficking among Gitanos has accentuated processes of political change that have been in place at least since the 1950s. It was then that the majority of Gitanos who are now urban abandoned the countryside and began to settle in the poorer areas of large cities such as Madrid or Barcelona. According to these authors, this move facilitated the interference of Payos—as officials or private individuals practising charity—with Gitano hierarchies; an interference which was encouraged by the political climate of Francoist Spain and which provided novel bases for the acquisition of influence by some Gitanos. Ardevol explains how, by the 1980s, power relations that she describes as ‘foreign to the Gitanos . . . supported and fed from the outside, from the wider Payo world’ had become consolidated (1986: 80).¹² She mentions Gitano *caciques* and ‘Mafia-like hierarchies’—that is, ‘those who use the name of their people to obtain personal benefits’ (ibid.).

Both Ardevol (1986) and San Román (1976) set up a dichotomy between a ‘traditional’ Gitano political mode—symbolised by the figure and activi-

ties of the ‘man of respect’—and a ‘non-traditional’ one—symbolised by the *cacique* and enabled by sedentarisation, urbanisation and Payo interference. Thirty years after San Román’s first fieldwork, the Gitanos of Jarana describe political relations through a parallel dichotomy between the ‘proper’ (*de verdad*) Gitano ways and those of deviant Gitanos. The *etic* model of these two anthropologists thus replicates the *emic* one of the Gitanos with whom I worked. Whereas in the anthropological accounts it is *caciques* with particularly good access to Payo resources that appear as irregular, in the accounts of the Gitanos of Jarana it is drug-dealers and drug-addicts. However, the ethnographic material that I present in this article demonstrates that, in the practice, ‘proper’/‘traditional’ and ‘non-proper’/‘non-traditional’ modes of managing conflict or of exercising authority intertwine; and that the Gitanos of Jarana use this ideal dichotomy when evaluating particular behaviours from standpoints that are always interested.

A good example of the interweaving of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘non-traditional’—to use the anthropologists’ conceptual framework—is provided by Tío Javier’s position among the Gitanos of Jarana and of Madrid at large. On a winter evening he explained to me what he called ‘the truth’ behind the attempt that, together with other well-known ‘men of respect’, he had made at stopping drug-dealing by Gitanos in Madrid—an attempt that had been on the front page of the national newspapers on and off for several weeks. According to his account, the police commissioner in charge of one of the districts in Madrid with a highest number of Gitano dealers had come to see him one afternoon. The Payo man, aware of the prestige that Tío Javier commanded among the Gitanos of the city, asked him to join other respected elders and, all together, order the Gitano drug-dealers to stop selling overnight. Tío Javier, who had moved to Jarana wanting to remove his younger sons and grandsons from the influence of drug-dealers and drug-addicts, agreed to give it a try—‘just to please the little Payo’, he told me with a twinkle in his eye. He was driven by his sons around several neighbourhoods and, together with other ‘men of respect’, tried to talk Gitano dealers into stopping to traffic. Many did so, ‘out of respect’ for the elders. Very soon drug-addicts found that they could no longer rely on their regular suppliers, and the price of hard and soft drugs soared. This worked to the benefit of Payo dealers and of those Gitanos who had not stopped dealing, but led to numerous fights between the latter and those Gitanos who had stopped trafficking. Tío Javier reported with scorn how many dealers refused to stop trading because they were aware that Tío Pedro—one of

the elders who called for the ban on dealing—was himself a well-known trafficker, and suspected that, while they would be out of business, he would make his fortune. The problems that inflation in the price of drugs caused were so grave—with many drug-addicts dying after using heavily adulterated drugs—that within days the police commissioner came back to Tío Javier and to the other ‘men of respect’ and asked them to lift the ban on dealing. Tío Javier’s story ended on a bitter note: that day he had seen Tío Pedro on television being awarded a medal by the Mayor after the publication of the memoirs that he had ‘written’ in collaboration with a local reporter.

And yet, Tío Javier’s authority itself is built on both so-called ‘proper’ and ‘non-proper’ bases. Much of his prestige derives from those modes of allotting status that the Gitanos insist are ‘truly Gitano’ (*Gitano de verdad*). These revolve around a clear-cut age/gender hierarchy as I have described above: he is a very respected man and an excellent mediator. However, he also heads the largest *raza* in Jarana, and has managed—through coercion rather than through persuasion—to impose a ‘law’ that no drugs are to be sold in the neighbourhood. Many of the Gitanos who live there resent deeply the power that the ‘Javieres’, as his *raza* is known, hold over the rest of the Gitanos of the area. Tío Javier also has very good relations with the local Payo authorities, who are grateful for his ability to keep drug-dealers out of the neighbourhood. He and his wife are the only married couple in Jarana who, despite living alone, have been granted a large house with a garden—as other Gitanos are quick to point out. From this perspective Tío Javier appears more as a *cacique* than as a ‘man of respect’. Tío Pedro, on the other hand, is the head of a *raza* that has become powerful thanks to its involvement in drug-dealing. His authority rests on his position as leader of a ‘Mafia-like’ organisation rather than on what the Gitanos of Jarana call ‘the Gitano law’. And yet, both men were taken by the Payo commissioner as representatives of the ‘Gitano people’ in a move that was an instance of yet another method of ascribing authority. It is events like this one, which make it clear that Gitano men have at their disposal multiple bases from which to attempt to exercise influence among their people, that form the background to the pages that follow.

The Gitano Evangelical Church has developed in tandem with these different political modalities, all of which co-exist within Gitano daily life. Convert Gitanos, as well as many non-converts, are adamant that the activities of Gitanos like Tío Pedro are eroding the ‘true’ Gitano way of life. One of the key purposes of Evangelism, they say, is to curtail the influence of

these ‘dealer Gitanos’ (*Gitanos traficantes*). And yet, converts also attempt to distance themselves from the kind of life-style and political relations that Tío Javier represents: these they evaluate both as ‘truly Gitano’ (*Gitanos de verdad*) and as ‘backward’ and ‘uncivilised’ (*atrasados, sin civilizar*). At the centre of the converts’ strategies is a blend of permanence and change that they explicitly recognise and that has also been identified by Williams in his analysis of Evangelism among the French Manouches (1991). Converts emphasise that Evangelism enables Gitanos to ‘remain Gitano’ (*seguir siendo Gitanos*) while ‘becoming modern’ and ‘more civilised’ (*más modernos, más civilizados*). The principles of ‘knowledge’ and ‘respect’, as I explain below, continue to work as bases for the ascription of prestige and authority, but do so in ways that contradict non-convert age hierarchies.

Gitano evangelism

The Gitano Evangelical Church—*Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia*—is part of a wider spread of Gypsy Pentecostal Evangelism throughout Western Europe. According to the memories of the older converts of Jarana, in the early sixties French Gypsy missionaries came down to the Peninsula to preach ‘the word of God’ to the Gitanos—the first conversions of French Gypsies having taken place in the early fifties (Jordán Pemán 1990, Williams 1991, Cano 1981). In Spain, the Gitano Evangelical movement was recognised by the State in 1969 (Jordán Pemán 1990) and, although there is no data as to the number of Gitano converts in the country, there is a church in every area where Gitanos live. In Jarana almost half 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 Gitanos of the neighbourhood. The practices and beliefs of non-converts do not adhere to any formalised religion: the majority of the non-converted Gitanos of Jarana, like their convert neighbours, practice a comparatively un-ritualised form of ancestor worship which revolves around name avoidance and simple mourning rules; their relations with the Catholic Church are non-existent or very tenuous. Although the Gitanos acknowledge the importance of Payo Evangelism, they strongly emphasise that Gitano Evangelism is the most faithful to the spirit of the early Church. Gitano missionaries target only other Gitanos, and only Gitanos participate in activities related to the Church of Philadelphia.

The Gitano Evangelical Church is premised on an ideal of both transformation and continuity with what, in the eyes of the Gitanos, being Gitano

means.¹³ It preaches the rejection of those aspects of the Gitano life-style that do not conform to the Evangelical ideal of love and forgiveness, while simultaneously encouraging converts—called by the Gitanos *Aleluyas*—to act according to the Gitano ideal of knowledge and respectability. Converts stress that one continues being a Gitano once one becomes an *Aleluya*; moreover, one becomes a better Gitano. Converts and non-converts often state that the authentic or proper Gitano values and lifestyle are being ‘lost’ (*se están perdiendo*) through the spread of *la droga* and the perceived concomitant corruption of proper Gitano morality: converts very often picture Evangelism as the only hope of reversing this process which would otherwise lead to ‘the end of the Gitanos’ (*el fin de los Gitanos*).

Conversion is expected to transform key areas of daily life—such as husband-wife relations, the management of conflict among *razas*, and patterns of association and interaction within neighbourhoods (Gay y Blasco 1997, 1999). The picture, however, is a complex one, and results from the uneven spread and short history of Gitano Evangelism in Spain: the Evangelists of Jarana are first or second generation converts, and *razas* always include convert and non-convert members. It happens often that converts stop attending services at the local church for a significant period or give up altogether so that their identity as such fluctuates and becomes dubious. A similar lack of uniformity is visible in the explanations Gitanos give for their behaviour—explanations which tend to make reference to the moral superiority of Gitanos over Payos. At times, Evangelists describe their actions as being proper of *Aleluyas* and specifically set themselves apart from the non-converts; at other times they describe their behaviour as being simply ‘Gitano’. Evangelical stereotypes answer, contest or reinforce non-Evangelical ones, and are never completely detached from them. The uneven spread of Evangelism and the coexistence of Evangelical and non-Evangelical practices, ideals and expectations means that it is not adequate to suggest a dichotomous picture of ‘before’ and ‘after’ Evangelism. Instead, it is clear that Evangelism has come into play as yet another medium through which to define personal and communal identities within a framework of rapid social change and of great pressures for acculturation or assimilation. And, because of the intersection of kin-based and religious interests, the groups to which these communal identities refer are not fixed but have a fluid, circumstantial composition. Most importantly, and even though the first conversions took place more than thirty years ago, the people of Jarana think of Evangelism as a new phenomenon whose full implications remain to be

seen. They describe Gitano life as being in the midst of a process of profound change brought about by the Evangelical Church. It is this ongoing transformation—with the concomitant emergence of ways of thinking and of organising life that synthesise the old and the new—that has captured their imagination.

Evangelism and the management of conflict

Whereas the ideal for non-convert Gitanos is to deal with conflict through feuding and mediation, as I have described above, converts often put pressure on their relatives to solve conflicts solely through dialogue. They reject violence and revenge, and they also reject the idea that the parties should remain enemies for life. As individuals within *razas* they may simply refuse to follow the rules of the game, and to use violence as a means of supporting their paternal kin. As Tío Javier explained,

Now, one of the Negrillos (a very large *raza*) has killed a man, and then he has shot the man's son who is now really ill in hospital. But since many of them are Christians (Evangelists), and Christianity is what has changed completely the life of the Gitanos, nothing has happened. The mediators have thrown out of their houses the family¹⁴ that has done the killing, but the brother of the one who did it has remained in his own house, because he has not wanted enmity, he has not come out in defence of his brother, he has not gone to fight, he has not done anything. There has been a death, and shooting, but they do not want feuding, because they belong to the Church and have changed completely, they get along with their lives, even though it is his brother he has not got involved. Their *contrarios* have let it be, although if they had had a different mentality they would have gone to the flat and killed them there.¹⁵

Thus, *razas* often become divided as their convert and non-convert members attempt to face disputes in different ways. With more and more Gitanos converting to Evangelism, new modes of managing crises are being crystallised very fast. The Gitanos themselves are aware of this trend and often stress that feuding is in decline because of the growth of Evangelism. During my fieldwork in Jarana, I witnessed the development of two conflicts. One begun with a marital quarrel and ended with two dead men and eight nuclear families having had to abandon their houses and to be resettled by the social services in another area of the city. The other started with a fist-fight among two young men. The *raza* of one of them had convert and non-convert members: the non-converts immediately run to their houses

to get fire-arms and knives. By contrast, most of the kin of the other man were converts. The convert relatives of the two men, together with the local Evangelical ministers and convert and non-convert elders from the two kin groups, settled the issue within hours through dialogue: one of the young men was told to move out of the neighbourhood for a couple of months and further escalation was prevented. Two days later the most prominent covert members of the two *razas* participated in an Evangelical reconciliatory service at the local church, lead by a Portuguese Gypsy minister who asked them to embrace each other and to proclaim their forgiveness—which they did under the worried gaze of their non-convert relatives.

The growing spread of Evangelism means that, when the members of the more powerful *razas* within any locality become Evangelists, they are effectively extending their influence through a new set of means and in a new context. Tío Javier often explained to me how he viewed conversion both as a matter of belief and as a way of placing a stake in a dimension of intra-community politics whose significance is growing by the day. Simultaneously, members of weaker *razas* have a clear interest in joining forces through the media provided by the Church: conversion in their case works to strengthen a political framework where kin allegiance and *raza* size are not as important as in the ‘in the world’. Evangelism can then be seen to serve the differing interests of two distinct social groups.

Converts not only rely on ‘men of respect’ when attempting to settle conflicts, but draw on the help of Evangelical ministers or of widely respected convert men, who are usually much younger in age than the better established mediators. Whereas the prestige of the ‘men of respect’ increases with age, the same is not necessarily true for Evangelical ministers. For example, despite being only thirty-eight, Bastián—great-nephew of Tío Javier—is considered an extremely respectable man and a great minister, and often arbitrates in conflicts in Jarana together with his great-uncle, who is an extremely prestigious mediator. This gap between the average age of the mediators and that of the Evangelical ministers is particularly significant because the degree and kind of authority that ministers have over their congregations are very similar to those of the male elders over their *razas* or of the mediators over the people who call them to arbitrate. Ministers decide the punishment of wrong-doers and manage the church’s money. More importantly, they are called to mediate in conflicts that involve converts, sometimes together with some elders, sometimes on their own—marital problems, quarrels over selling locations, fights, feuds and so on. As

happens with the ‘men of respect’, the influence of Evangelical ministers extends beyond their kin group and the area where they live. And, just as in the case of the Gitano elders who mediate in feuds and conflicts, the ministers’ authority depends on the acquiescence of those who call them to settle confrontations: congregations are enthusiastic about new ministers for a couple of months when they start putting pressure on them until they get them to leave. Lastly, ministers, no matter their age, are the recipients of deference in much the same way as older men are: they are given the best places to sit and the best food to eat, and are served the first ones by the women. In the remaining part of this article I extend this exploration into the ways of allotting prestige that are developing in tandem with the growth of the Gitano Evangelical Church. The analysis has to be rooted in a discussion—however brief—of Gitano understandings of masculinity.

Convert masculinity

The following is an extract from a conversation that I had with Isabel, a convert woman from Jarana. She explained,

About ten years ago, the Gitanos said you were mad if you were a convert, they said that you brought bad luck . . . Nowadays the ‘people of the world’ (non-converts) know that the Church is something good, because through the Church many drug-addicts have given up drugs . . . the Church is against drugs, against alcohol, against doing dirty things, adultery, feuds, fights. Now we are in peace and get along with each other. Before there used to be feuding all the time. At the shanty-towns men would kill each other, they were not like now, their minds were more closed and everything was different, they did not live with Payos, there were only Gitanos, there, living in shacks, and made each other angry easily. Now life has passed. I am twenty-six and in twenty-six years my family has not been in a feud. Those at the shanty-towns were savage Gitanos, they did not know or understand, they were out of control, but now, just because somebody slaps a man, he is not going to bring a feud on his whole family, he shuts up and that is it.¹⁶

This statement provides a positive and progressive picture of change in the Gitano community, organised around a double Gitano/Payo-convert/non-convert axis. New patterns of masculine behaviour, and hence new ways of dealing with conflict are portrayed as essential to this change. And, although Isabel attributes the transformation to the circumstances—‘life has passed’—she also clearly emphasises the role of the Church. Isabel’s statement illustrates how converts attempt to distance themselves from the non-convert

past and from aspects of the non-convert present—shanty-towns and feuding are very much alive, as are drug-dealing and drug-addiction. Out of the different activities and attitudes that contribute to the Gitano definition of what men are and should be like, converts make a point of rejecting those that suggest lack of control—those that ‘in the world’ would indicate lack of knowledge and of the capacity of eliciting respect and that are seen as a concomitant of male youth. Gitanos stress that male converts should not smoke, drink, have affairs with non-Gitano women or beat up their wives—activities that play an important role in the Gitano definition of masculinity but from which the most respectable men, the mediators, are clearly distanced or detached. Specifically, converts should not consume or deal in drugs, and in fact some men take and give up drinking, smoking, using drugs and beating their wives as their attachment to Evangelism fluctuates. Convert understandings thus address the most central elements of the Gitano gendered morality, the principles of ‘knowledge’ and ‘respect’.

Drug-addicts are considered by converts and non-converts alike the least respectable of all Gitano men because they breach all the ideals of Gitano masculinity: they steal from other Gitanos, beat up their wives daily, and do not respect the elders; ‘their illness makes them like children’ (*su enfermedad les hace ser como niños*). Converts say that drugs are ‘of the Devil’ (*del Diablo*), and make very strong attempts to convert and redeem drug-addicts—for example through campaigns aimed at helping them through the detoxification process. Endless stories are told about men giving up using or dealing in drugs after ‘finding the Lord’ (*encontrar al Señor*) and converts are always ready to point out that many ministers are ex-addicts or even ex-dealers. They also often state that ‘we are not the Gitanos who sell drugs, those are other Gitanos, we are different’ (*nosotros no somos los Gitanos traficantes, esos son otros, nosotros somos distintos*).

Together with this rejection or even purification of the non-respectable—of drugs and what they stand for—converts put forward an ideal of manly behaviour that takes up those aspects of the Gitano ethos that work to sanction high status and hierarchy, transforming them in the process: convert men struggle to present themselves as respectable, the elite of the Gitano community, by disassociating both knowledge and respect from their age context, and by emphasising their achieved rather than their ascribed component. The result is a changed pattern of hierarchy and leadership.

Young men attempt to distance themselves from those symbols of masculinity that Gitanos link to youth and lack of self-control or recklessness.

Young male converts are forbidden and themselves make a point of not wearing long hair because it is tied to youth and its associations—mainly sexual promiscuity and courage without ‘knowledge’. In a similar vein, very young men are given positions of authority within the Church—men as young as 20 become ministers. Isabel’s husband Lolo was in his late teens and a drug-addict when a minister had a vision which told him that Lolo should become a minister. Lolo converted, gave up drugs, trained as a minister, and led his first church when he was 22. Thus, converts go to great lengths to separate age from the capacity to act in an exemplary way, and put great emphasis on the commendable morals of ministers: among the ministers’ virtues it is more their righteousness—measured in terms of the Gitano ideal of male knowledge and respectability—than their doctrinal knowledge that is considered significant.

From an instrumental perspective, conversion provides younger men with possibilities of advancement that are closed to them in ‘the (Gitano) world’ (*el mundo*). It generates a combination—young and respectable—which can not be realised outside its parameters. And it does so while providing enough of a continuity with principles that are explicitly recognised by the Gitanos as central to the ‘proper’ Gitano way of life: the enthusiasm with which converts emphasise masculine knowledge and respect demonstrates how fundamental they are to the Gitano world-view and social relations. The masculine identities that emerge are undoubtedly Gitano, but are also different from the non-convert ones. Thus the convert appropriation and transformation of the notion of respectability leads to multiple and contextual social hierarchies, based on an ideal ‘inside/outside the Church’ division: converts and non-converts give respect and hence authority to men on the basis of principles that, although different, are inextricably intertwined.

Secondly, converts promote not only an image of respectability but of modernity (*ser modernos*). This is clearly visible in the physical appearance of male Evangelists. They dress more like Payo businessmen—with dark suits, black shoes, starched shirts and ties—than like other Gitano men—who tend to appear much more dishevelled and who almost never wear ties. Similarly, and unlike other Gitanos who greet each other with a mere nod of the head, convert men go to great lengths to shake hands, like Payos do. Converts thus distance themselves not only from those symbols of low morals that other Gitanos also reject, such as drug-addiction or drug-dealing, but also from ‘backwardness’ and ‘lack of civilisation’, that they say the

Gitanos themselves, rather than the Payos, incarnate—and here converts explicitly include not only dress or appearance, but feuds, male sexual promiscuity, drinking, drug-dealing and drug-addiction. This reveals a view of the Payos that still thinks of them as immoral and yet implicitly values some aspects of what Gitanos view as the Payo life-style. The statement by Isabel is a clear example.

Some reflections

Gitano ideas and values are neither autochthonous, nor simply a reaction to the non-Gitano world. The fact that they represent a constant reflection and elaboration on difference does not preclude a constant exchange of meanings and ideas—as the adoption of Evangelism, an originally Payo religious movement, illustrates. Social changes of a complexity far beyond the scope of this article have enabled Gitanos to adopt Evangelism as an essentially Gitano institution that permits transformations in the content or make-up of Gitano identity while allowing for the clear barrier between Gitanos and Payos to remain. The fact that in Spain the identity of the dominant majority has been for centuries and still is tied up with Catholicism obviously plays an instrumental role enabling this process. Within this context, the shift of authority from older to younger men—which draws on the Gitano idioms of ‘respect’ and ‘knowledge’ for its justification—can be seen as a reaction to a series of changes of which Evangelism is both a part and a manifestation. Evangelism can be seen as an attempt by many Gitanos to take social change in their own hands and away from a) what they see as disruptive developments such as the harmful spread of Gitano involvement in drugs and the concomitant development or strengthening of Gitano ‘Mafias’; and b) the increasingly organised and consistent control of the Payos. And it is important to stress that the Gitanos of Jarana themselves are adamant that their life is undergoing great transformations and explicitly establish links between these changes and the growth of Evangelism.

Evangelism has had a clear effect on the way the Gitanos perceive themselves and act as a group distinct from the Payo majority. In Jarana, the Gitanos’ awareness of the existence and characteristics of other Gitano and Gypsy groups varies from individual to individual, according to their personal histories and the opportunities they have had of meeting such groups or hearing about them. Their communal identity relies on the recognition of particular individuals as Gitano, rather than on exact knowledge of the size, location and composition of the community or on the awareness of a

shared origin or history (Gay y Blasco 1999). The organisation of authority remains within the *raza* or within the extended family, and there is no institution encompassing different Gitano groups. However, Evangelism has promoted the generation of a new social memory among the Gitanos—in which a Jewish past and a link with the Holy Land are proclaimed—and has given a new dimension to the Gitanos' perception of themselves as a group and of their connections to other Gitanos: with the spread of the Evangelical Church, the Gitanos, like the Manouches that Williams describes, 'begin to speak of themselves, to think of themselves and even, in some occasions, to behave as a "people" (1991: 88).¹⁷ Thus, the evangelisation of non-convert Gitanos is phrased as a primary concern. New modes of mobilisation, which transcend or even challenge the traditional affiliation on the bases of kinship, have cropped up. Lastly, the Church has provided a new way of organising authority outside the *raza* and has made available to young men new ways of exerting influence that contradict the age-group structure.

Moreover, the separation of Payos and Gitanos is re-phrased once the religious difference is emphasised: it becomes a religious and not merely a moral divide. Evangelism thus becomes another way of constructing and thinking about the distinction between Payos and Gitanos. In Jarana, converts continue to perceive Payos in essentially negative terms. However, they value positively both modernisation and respectability, and reject stereotypes that define the Gitanos as for example cunning thieves—stereotypes that many non-converts are happy to embrace. These attitudes illustrate the fact that the Gitanos are as concerned about the image that they project to the Payos as much as about the image that they may project to each other.

Once this kind of processes is taken into account, it becomes impossible to interpret the Gitano Evangelical Church strictly as either change from within or change from without. It is clear that it is driven by forces that are at once internal and external, and that the Gitanos' response to and participation in social changes within and outside their community cannot be taken to be merely an instance of acculturation. The Evangelical Church makes it clear that the lives of the Gitanos can change considerably, and in ways that affect those institutions that have been described by anthropologists as most essential to the success or perpetuation of the Gitano lifestyle (San Román 1986a) while allowing for the creation of personal and communal identities that are both viable and essentially Gitano. The growth of the Church also illustrates the fact that social and cultural transformations among Gitanos are not restricted to adaptations to changed economic circumstances through a set of flexible survival strategies: in-

stead, they affect the very basis of Gitano identity and Gitano life-style.

Notes

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1. A note on the usage of the word 'Gitano' is necessary. Anthropologists and historians writing on the Gitanos have traditionally portrayed them as Gypsies, descendants of those groups that, having arrived in the Peninsula in the fifteenth century, are also documented in other areas of Western Europe (Sánchez Ortega 1986: 18). They distinguish them from *Húngaros*, or Rom Kalderash, who arrived from Eastern Europe in later migration waves during the nineteenth century, and who have maintained an identity and life-style which are different both from the non-Gypsy population and from the Gitanos (Mulcahy 1988). They also tend to gather together Castilian Gitanos and Gitanos from Extremadura into a single category, and to distinguish them from those from Andalucía, Catalonia, and from non-Catalan Gitanos who have migrated to that region during the second half of the twentieth century—known as *Cafeletes* (San Román 1976: 60; Ardevol 1986: 64). Their argument is that these groups differ in some aspects of their social and cultural organisations. The Gitanos among whom I carried out my research uphold a somewhat different classification: they distinguish among *Húngaros*, Gitanos *Castellanos* (from Castile)—who are the majority of those in the neighbourhood—and Gitanos *Extremeños* (from Extremadura)—who are a very small minority in Jarana but live in other areas of Madrid in great numbers. In this article I conform to their usage and, since I am writing in English, I employ the term *Gypsy* loosely to refer to Gypsies generally—including the Gitanos—and the term *Gitano* to refer to the Spanish Gypsies who are not *Húngaros*.
2. The name *Iglesia de Filadelfia* is borrowed from the Apocalypse (3: 7–13).
3. *Payo* is the pejorative name that the Gitanos give to the non-Gypsies. When used by the non-Gitanos themselves, however, the word loses its pejorative connotations.

4. The reader will identify clear parallels between my approach and Williams' analysis of Evangelism among French Manouches (1991). I want to acknowledge the fact that I have found Williams' work extremely enlightening of the Gitano situation.
5. The name of the neighbourhood as well as all the names of persons in this article are pseudonyms, used at the request of my informants in order to protect their anonymity.
6. Catalan Gitanos speak both Spanish and Catalan.
7. See San Román ed. (1986b); Calvo Buezas (1990); Cebrián Abellán (1992); Fresno García (1993); Gay y Blasco (1995); Gómez Alfaro (1992); GIEMS (1976); Liégeois (1987); Montoya (1987); Pasqualino (1995); San Román (1976, 1986a, 1990, 1994).
8. It tends to be only Gitano men who take drugs. According to the Gitanos of Jarana this is because it is only men who smoke: in the case of women, smoking is very badly looked upon and I have never seen a Gitano woman smoke. In fact, I only know of one drug-addict Gitana.
9. See San Román (1976), Gamella (1996) and Gay y Blasco (1999) for three extended and contrasting discussions on the *razas* and their role among the Gitanos.
10. 'Razas are dispersed. A lineage can be spread over different points in Spain' (San Román 1976: 110). The 'Gitanos themselves ignore the exact number of people that make up their lineages' (ibid.: 116).
11. 'En nuestra raza los Gitanos viejos son lo más respetado, por eso la gente les hace caso. Traen la paz, no la guerra. Por ejemplo Tío Javier: es un Gitano de vergüenza, con respeto, un Gitano que ha sabido enseñar, un Gitano que es un modelo. Esos son hombres que lo que dicen es verdad, sea como sea, no so hombres de dos palabras, no son hombres que cambian, lo que dicen es verdad. Mientras que con otros, no puedes creer lo que dicen, son unos risiones, no saben de lo que hablan'.
12. The full quotation goes as follows: 'se van introduciendo progresivamente otras jerarquías que son ajenas a los gitanos y que se introducen, se apoyan y alimentan desde el exterior de la comunidad, desde el mundo payo mayoritario. Aparecen así las organizaciones de interés como las asociaciones gitanas o como las cooperativas, pero también los caciques, los compañeros de correrías delictivas, las jerarquías mafiosas, también los que utilizan el nombre de su pueblo para obtener ventajas personales. Todas estas cosas van penetrando el sistema tradicional

- roto y debilitado de algunas comunidades gitanas' (Ardevol 1986: 80).
13. See Williams for comparative material among Manouches (1991).
 14. The word 'family' here refers to a patrigroup made up of a man and his wife, their unmarried children, and their married sons with their wives and children.
 15. 'Ahora, uno de los Negrillos ha matado a un hombre, y luego ha disparado el hijo que está ahora muy mal en el hospital. Pero como muchos son cristianos, y eso es lo que ha cambiado completamente la vida de los Gitanos, pues no ha pasado nada. Los viejos han echado de sus casas a la familia del que lo ha hecho, pero su hermano se ha quedado en su casa, por que no ha querido contrariedad, no ha salido a defender a su hermano, no ha ido a pelear, no ha hecho nada. Ha habido una muerte, y tiros, pero no quieren ruinas por que son de la Iglesia y han cambiado completamente, y aunque sea su hermano no se han metido. Y sus contrarios les han dejado, aunque si hubieran tenido otra mentalidad habrían ido y los habrían matado allí'.
 16. 'Hace como diez años los Gitanos decían que estabas loco si te habías convertido, decían que traíamos mala suerte. Ahora la gente del mundo sabe que la Iglesia es algo bueno, por que con la Iglesia muchos drogadictos han dejado la droga. La Iglesia está en contra de las drogas, del alcohol, de las cosas sucias, adulterio, ruinas, riñas. Ahora estamos en paz y nos llevamos bien los unos con los otros. En las chabolas se mataban los unos a los otros, no eran como ahora, tenían la mente más cerrada y todo era distinto, no vivían con Payos, estaban allí, Gitanos viviendo en cuatro chabolas, y se provocaban los unos a los otros. Ahora la vida ha pasado. Yo tengo veintiseis años y en veintiseis años mi familia no se ha metido en una ruina. Los de las chabolas eran Gitanos salvajes, no sabían ni entendían, pero ahora, solo por que alguien le da una bofetada a un hombre, pues no va a arrastrar a toda la familiar a una ruina, se calla y ya está'.
 17. '(C)ommencent à parler d'eux-mêmes, à se regarder, à se penser et peut-être enfin, en certaines occasions, à se comporter comme un "peuple" (Williams 1991: 88).

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